

**Draft Minutes**  
**VERMONT STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (VTSRC)**

Thursday April 6, 2023, 1:00PM – 3:30PM  
Virtual Meeting

**Meeting called by:**

Chair, Cari Kelley, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Andrea Bacchi	Robin Ingenthron
Courtney Blasius	Cari Kelley
Sherrie Brunelle	Sarah Launderville
Nick Caputo	Bill Meirs
Diane Dalmasse, Non-Voting	Abby Rhim
Gina D'Ambrosio	Nancy Richards
Asher Edelson	Ana Russo
Rocko Gieselman, Non-Voting	Laura Siegel
Marlena Hughes	Sarah Sterling

**Members Absent:**

- Helena Kehne, excused
- Laura Flint, excused
- Calla Papademas
- Cara Sachs

**SRC Liaison:**

- Amanda Arnold

**SRC Coordinator:**

- Janice Leonard

**Interpreters:**

- Nicole Sargent
- Jen Rainey

**Speakers or Presenters:**

- Melissa Conley
- Andrea Bacchi
- William Pendlebury

**Guests:**

- n/a

**1) Introductions** (Cari Kelley, Chair)

**Discussion:**

Those in attendance introduced themselves.

**Conclusions:**

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

None

**2) Approval of Agenda** (Cari Kelley)

**Discussion:**

Cari asked for any proposed additions or changes to the agenda. Asher moved to accept the agenda and Nick seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 17-0-0.

**Conclusions:**

Motion passes: today's agenda accepted

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

- Upload approved agenda to SRC website, **Janice Leonard, 4/30/2023.**

**3) Open for Public Comment** (Cari Kelley)

**Discussion:**

There was no public comment given.

**Conclusions:**

n/a

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

None

**4) Approval of Minutes for February 2, 2023** (Cari Kelley)

**Discussion:**

Cari asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the February 2, 2023, minutes. There were none. Asher moved to approve the minutes and Courtney seconded. No discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 17-0-0.

**Conclusions:**

Minutes from February were approved

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

- Upload approved minutes to SRC website, **Janice Leonard, 4/30/2023.**

**5) Consent Agenda** (Cari Kelley)

**Discussion:**

Cari asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the following consent agenda items:

- AOE Committee March 2, 2023
- Performance Review Committee February 2, 2023
- Policy & Procedures Committee March 2, 2023
- Steering Committee March 9, 2023

Nick moved to approve, and it was seconded by Sherrie. No further discussion. Vote unanimous 17-0-0.

**Conclusions:**

Consent agenda items approved

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

- Upload to SRC website, **Janice Leonard, 4/30/2023**

**6) Director's Report** (Diane Dalmasse)**Discussion:**

Diane reviewed what is going on with the murder at the Homeless Shelter, Morningside House, in Brattleboro. The Brattleboro office is grieving and involved with this. HA is very involved in the housing area right now. For all staff **SAFETY IS FIRST**. Our thoughts are with the Groundworks team and clients, and the Brattleboro community and District Office following the tragic events at Morningside House. We know this is a challenging time as you deal with stress, trauma, and grief.

Our hearts go out to Leah Rosin-Pritchard's family and friends, the Groundworks team and clients and all those who worked with her. Her death will be a great loss. She was on our caseload in Middlebury. By all accounts Leah was a changemaker who devoted her life to helping others. Her dedication, generous spirit, and compassion will be greatly missed by all those who knew her. Her legacy of service and compassion is something we will carry forward with us, even those who did not have the opportunity to work with her directly.

Across the state individuals and organizations provide essential services to Vermont's most vulnerable, going above and beyond to support people in addressing trauma, building resilience, and moving forward in their lives. AHS staff and our community partners who do this work often focus on others rather than ourselves. As we come to grips with how this trauma affects us, I want to make sure we all take the time and access the resources we need to heal and move through these events. We believe we each process things in our own way and that there is no right way. Please, make time to care for yourselves, your families, and each other. Support each other and reach out for help if we need it.

There is the [988 Emergency Response to Imminent Risk](#) line, which is there to help all Vermonters.

The SRC wants the staff, families, friends to know that we are thinking of them and are sending our best. We will try to send a virtual card or a note or something.

The Director's report:

**HireAbility Vermont accomplishments in the last year:**

***VT Career Advancement Project:*** Full roll out of a five-year federal grant to further advance the systems change effort to move from assisting people with disabilities to find a job to finding a career pathway. Six new Career Pathways Navigators hired, a VCAP Governance Team and Employer Advisory Group created contracts for Student Advisors at CCV and VTC executed.

***Summer Career Exploration Program:*** Developing, implementing, and evaluating the SCEP for the second year and launching third year. Each year has improved the experience for all involved staff, employers and most importantly students and their families.

***HireAbility Vermont Rebranding and Marketing Initiative:*** Partnering with the Place Creative to develop a new name, brand and look and feel for the division. Completion of a major cross media marketing effort that was extremely well received by staff, community partners, and the general public. Continuing that effort with outreach efforts to Vermonters with Chronic Health Conditions, a staff recruitment video and materials, and a video to promote apprenticeships and learn and earn opportunities.

***Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access Effort:*** Committing to a multi-year effort to achieve workforce diversity and cultural competence through a contract with Social Contract and Leadership Development work with Karen Proctor. An assessment has been done and delivered, vision statements created and the development of a blueprint for the work begun. We are breaking new ground and the work is difficult and rewarding.

***Opioid Employment Pilots:*** The legislature in the last session funded two pilot projects to provide HA VT services to Vermonters in recovery towards the goal of education and training, employment, and continued recovery. This project was part of the Governor's recommended budget. The pilots in Newport and Burlington are fully staffed and enrolling participants. A strong partnership with VDH is established and relationships with the Recovery Centers and the Hub and Spoke entities.

***Performance Management:*** HA VT has maintained a strong focus on continuous improvement and performance management through staff development, data driven

*decision making and quality assurance. We have continued to improve staff onboarding, the creation of Individual Development Plans, promoting from within wherever possible, and creating vehicles for staff to believe their input is vital to HA. We continue to refine our Dashboard, our case review process, and our customer and employer satisfaction surveys.*

***Greatest challenges facing HireAbility Vermont in the last year:***

***RSA Monitoring Review:*** *RSA scheduled a three-day on-site audit of HA VT in June of 2022. While required to review the agency every three years their last review was in 2013. A five-person team was on site meeting with a core group of CO, select field personnel and Business Office staff. They were following their 100-page RSA Monitoring Guide. They scheduled three 2-hour Teams meetings in advance of the site visit. The preparation for this audit was massive, stressful, and refocused key CO personnel for two plus months. The RSA team left without an exit interview so we were on our own to determine what their findings might be. We focused on about 10 to 12 items we identified as potential findings. We received the draft report in late November. There were no programmatic findings, but several findings related to the fiscal management of the program with programmatic implications. We and the DAIL Business Office were alarmed by one of fiscal findings which questioned the accuracy of our financial reporting and threatened to put our grant at risk. Bill Kelly and Linda Ducharme engaged with RSA to provide further information about our Federally Approved Cost Allocation Plan. We wrote our response to RSA regarding the remaining findings. We were then asked to respond to the fiscal finding which Bill and Linda did in collaboration with the AHS fiscal staff. We continue to wait for RSA's final report. We continue to work on our anticipated Corrective Action Plan in response to the remaining findings.*

***DHR:*** *The lack of timely responses and clear decisions to personnel matters by DHR has created stress for both CO staff and the field. Disciplinary and performance management plans are critical to improved overall performance. Vacancies create significant burdens on remaining staff. DHR is chronically short staffed and those with authority to make decisions create bottlenecks that are very disruptive to division operations.*

***What are the HireAbility Priorities in the coming year:***

*All six areas of accomplishment identified in question 1 are priorities needing attention in the coming year. The **DEIA work** is a major focus and requires strong leadership at all levels to implement successfully. There is much work to be done in the recruitment, hiring and retention of staff from diverse backgrounds. The development and delivery of cultural competency training will require a comprehensive effort. Perhaps most importantly ensuring the leadership needed is available to create work environments that are safe and welcoming for all staff and consumers alike.*

***Shifting the service delivery system to assist people with disabilities to successfully access the career pathway of their choice and obtain higher wage jobs.*** *We have made much progress and there is a long way to go. My priority is to hold that vision in front of staff,*

*consumers, partners and all stakeholders and to hold everyone accountable to move toward this goal.*

***Continuous improvement and performance management** are an ongoing effort for all. Increasing the skills of managers to review, analyze and act on data is a priority for the CO leadership. The use of the probationary period, performance evaluations, written supervisory feedback, progressive discipline, the merit bonus system and other reward and recognition strategies are all foundational to having a high performing organization. Improving our internship pipelines and recruitment strategies, i.e. new video currently under development, are key efforts to recruiting highly qualified candidates.*

**Conclusions:**

Thank you, Diane, for the update!

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

n/a

**7) Committee Chair Updates** (Cari Kelley)

**Discussion:**

**A. Advocacy, Outreach, & Education Committee**

**B. Policies & Procedures Committee**

**C. Performance Review Committee**

**D. Steering Committee**

See the meeting minutes for additional information.

**Conclusions:**

Thank you to the committee chairs!

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

n/a

**8) HA Regional Manager Updates** (Melissa Conley, HR White River Junction / St. Johnsbury)

**Discussion:**

- Senior Counselor hired and on Board in White River Junction. Suzie – so glad to have her back with HA.
- St J has a couple of new counselors as well. Heather & Misty are welcomed and bring such great backgrounds. Welcome
- She shared great stories of the work at her two sites. Great work!
- Successes:
  - St. J Construction 101 Training is going well.
  - Employer Panel in St. J was held and a couple participants were hired on the spot. Two from WRJ is participating in the

- JOBS at Clara Martin in WRJ. WRJ office got an award for their work with Clara Martin.
- Melissa shared a participant story. She wrote this as a way to express her appreciation for Clara Martin and HireAbility. Great story and great work to her as well as the staff!.

**Conclusions:**

Thank you for the updates Melissa!

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

None

**9) Judy Heumann,** (Introduction by Sarah Launderville & video by Rachel Maddow)

<https://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow/watch/because-she-made-a-fuss-judy-heumann-made-everyone-s-life-better-164606021818>.

**Discussion:**

- We presented a video that was done by Rachel Maddow, “Because she made a fuss”. This was about the life and accomplishments of Judy Heumann who died 3/4/2023.
- Sarah Spoke about Judy after the video and told us more about Judy and who she was. She shared a power point with so much more pictures, information and resources. She had a special relationship with Judy and shared special stories.
- Thank you so much to Sarah for sharing and especially to Judy Heumann and all she gave to our country, to all of us.
- Sarah shared more information that is available by Judy and about Judy. Janice will share the information with the full council.
- Key topics:
  - Relationships were a priority, connections.
  - Working with Youth was important.
  - International Work for people with Disabilities.
  - Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. US did not pass us being a part of it.

**Conclusions:**

- She was a great woman who will be greatly missed.

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

None

## 10) Hyperacusis (Andrea Bacchi)

### Discussion:

- Andrea gave a wonderful presentation on Hyperacusis. She has pain from noise.
- DST: Hearing disorder characterized by an increased sensitivity to certain sounds – decreased sound tolerance.
- Caused by:
  - Acoustic Trauma
  - Brain damage or neurological system
  - 1 in 50,000 people have this, but increasing
- Her PowerPoint can be access here: <https://bit.ly/Hyperacusis-Hearing-Disability-Presentation>

### Conclusions:

- Thank you so much for sharing your story and teaching us about Hyperacusis.

### Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

## 11) Update on DEIA (William Pendlebury)

### Discussion:

- Bill is one of two Field Service Managers. He covers the southern part of the state and St. J.
- Working with Social Contract to implement DEIA. Four phases are part of the contract:
  - Phase 1: Needs Assessment, get to know each other. Determine goals and stakeholders.
  - Phase 2: Started last summer, Data Analysis. Social Contract met with staff with focus groups and interviews. Also completed a Needs Assessment\*\*Currently deciding what the next steps are
  1. Phase 3: This spring and summer
  2. Phase 4: Later this year, end of summer and fall.

See attachment for full information.

### Conclusions:

- There is so much information that he tried to get into this presentation. He should come back, send out handouts. Wait for the vision statement then send it all out.



**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

- Get vision statement then send out the three documents, **Janice Leonard 4/30/23.**

**12) Card Room Debrief** (Cari Kelley)

**Discussion:**

- Cari and Courtney joined HA staff for a good day at the legislature
- Asher was there in spirit, transportation issues prevented him from attending.
- Thanks for the cookies Wendy!
- Great feedback about the rebranding.
- A lot of legislators stopped by.
- Nat kept a list of who he spoke to and talked to us. He counted 20 legislators. This was the best card room ever! There were 4-5 who even asked, "What do you need from us"?
- Worth doing once per year. The majority of the House Appropriations Committee stopped by.
- The signage was eye catching.

**Conclusions:**

- Do this again next year.
- Thanks to everyone involved.

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

**13) Other Business** (Cari Kelley)

**A. By Law Sub Committee**

If interested in being on By Law Sub Committee contact Cari or Janice

**B. Agenda Setting for June 1, 2023, meeting.**

- Let Cari know if you have any agenda items.
- Trauma should be included.
  - Tia Glen-Cooley is a FT resource for AHS. Ask her to attend the next meeting?
  - Ask Marc Adams, Director of Invest EAP can come to speak to us.
  - Pandemic Equity Coordinator at VCIL has been working with hospitals etc. Sarah will send us the information.

**Conclusions:**

**Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:**

Upload draft Agenda to the SRC website, **Janice Leonard, 4/30/23.**

Janice to send out information on VCIL event next Monday.

**15) Adjournment** (Cari Kelley)

Cari called the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

**Meeting Action Items, Person Responsible and Deadlines:**

- Finalize agenda and upload to SRC Website, **Janice Leonard, 4/30/23.**
- Draft minutes for this meeting, send to Committee Chair for comment then upload to SRC website, **Janice Leonard, 4/30/23.**
- Finalize approved minutes for last meeting and upload to SRC website **Janice Leonard, 4/30/23.**