

**Approved Minutes**  
**Vermont State Rehabilitation Council**  
**ADVOCACY, OUTREACH, AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Thursday, January 4, 2024

12:15 PM – 1:45 PM

Virtual Meeting

**Meeting called by:**

Courtney Blasius called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

**Members Present:**

- Courtney Blasius, Chair
- Angela Allard
- Sherrie Brunelle
- Diane Dalmasse (ex-officio, non-voting)
- Cari Kelley
- Jacquie Kelley
- Abby Levinsohn
- Brandy Reynolds (non-voting)
- Ana Russo
- Laura Siegel

**Members Absent:**

- Bill Meirs, excused
- Nancy Richards, excused
- Helena Kehne, excused
- Abby Levinsohn

**SRC Liaison:**

- Diane Dalmasse

**SRC Coordinator:**

- Janice Leonard

**Speakers or Presenters:**

- Taya Tarr, DBVI
- Olga Pschorr, DBVI
- Fred Jones, DBVI
- Mackenzie Floyd, DBVI

**Guests:**

- n/a

**Interpreters:**

- Bobbi Gravier
- Mareike Larsen

### **1) Introductions** (Courtney Blasius, AOE Chair)

#### **Discussion:**

The group went around and introduced themselves and included their favorite memory of this holiday break.

Courtney will be using Speech Assistant to help us all to better understand her speech.

#### **Conclusions:**

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

None

### **2) Approval of Agenda** (Courtney Blasius)

#### **Discussion:**

Courtney asked for any proposed additions or changes to the agenda. Cari moved to accept the agenda and it was seconded by Sherrie. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 8-0-0

#### **Conclusions:**

Motion passes: today's agenda accepted

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

Finalize agenda and upload to SRC Website, **Janice Leonard, 1/30/24**

### **3) Open for Public Comment** (Courtney Blasius)

#### **Discussion:**

No members of the public were present.

#### **Conclusions:**

n/a

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

None

#### **4) Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes (Courtney Blasius)**

##### **Discussion:**

Courtney asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the Minutes from September 7, 2023. Laura gave the correct Spelling for Denee MacKenzie and moved to approve the minutes with this change. Laura moved to approve the minutes and it was seconded by Cari. No discussion. Vote unanimous 7-0-1

##### **Conclusions:**

September 7, 2023 minutes were approved.

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

- Upload approved minutes to SRC website and link emailed to members, **Janice Leonard 1/30/24.**

#### **5) Election of AOE Chair**

##### **Discussion:**

Nominations for the Chair of the AOE Chair were sought. The following were the nominations:

- Courtney Blasius self-nominated, Sherrie seconded the nomination

**The vote was held and she was voted as the new chair,** Vote unanimous 8-0-0

##### **Conclusions:**

Courtney Blasius will continue to be the chair of the AOE Committee.

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

#### **6) Department for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) Grant**

Fred Jones was here with staff (contact any time for more information:

Fred Jones, Blind Services Director, [fred.jones@vermont.gov](mailto:fred.jones@vermont.gov)  
Taya Tarr, Blind Services Assistant Director, [taya.tarr@vermont.gov](mailto:taya.tarr@vermont.gov)  
Mackenzie Floyd, Program Manager, [mackenzie.floyd@vermont.gov](mailto:mackenzie.floyd@vermont.gov)  
Olga Pschorr, Program Coordinator, [olga.pschorr@vermont.gov](mailto:olga.pschorr@vermont.gov)

##### **Discussion:**

The team presented us information on the Vermont Pathways to Partnerships (VT-P2P) grant that they received.

Vermont has demonstrated commitments to school and community inclusion for children and youth with disabilities. Vermont also has a

strong track record for innovation in transition, employment, and postsecondary services and systems. However, many children and youth with disabilities do not have adequate transition plans, cannot access all supports, and subsequently have lower rates of employment.

VT-P2P is proposed as a unique partnership to address these needs. Our partners have committed to a common vision that *Vermont will build a culture of high expectations for youth with disabilities who are transitioning from high school to adult life*. This partnership will change context of transition by bringing statewide and local leaders together to lead high expectations and streamline effort to improve outcomes for youth. VT-P2P partners will improve the outcomes of indicators 13, 14 and the summary of performance for all students with disabilities.

VT-P2P will place youth with disabilities at the center, position project staff as facilitators and establish schools and community non-profits as hubs of transition service innovation to reach the following goals:

1. *Establish Partnerships and High Performing System of Support.* VT P2P will form interagency partnerships across an array of stakeholders to establish a comprehensive set of systems and strategies to achieve postsecondary success for youth with disabilities.
2. *Center Leadership, Advocacy, and Engagement of People with Disabilities and Their Families.* Students will be prepared as self-advocates and serve as primary contributors and decision-makers regarding their transition plans and services.
3. *Improve Career and Post-secondary Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities.* VT-P2P will improve employment, community participation and post-secondary education outcomes for youth with disabilities.

On January 4, 2024, the DBVI team met with the SRC to outline project goals and identify ways to keep informed moving forward. The project is in Year 1, the planning year. Year 2 will be the pilot year, with a projected scale up each year so that 80-100% of Vermont districts are accessing resources and innovative products funded by this project in Year 5.

The VT-P2P will pioneer a communication system that includes resource mapping in 12 regions of the state and the development of a web portal with information, multi-media on best practices in transition and supporting young adults with disabilities; further, youth, families, school teams, service providers, and community partners will access technical assistance.

A powerful innovation of VT-P2P is the shared community organization and involvement of leaders within the disability rights and independent living movement as partners with state entities and community non-profits, including organizations funded by the Administration for Community Living. This is novel for Vermont, a state divided geographically by mountain terrains and inconsistent access to technology. With a mission to ensure access, equity, and opportunity regardless of zip code, VT-P2P will increase workforce development, self-advocacy skills and peer learning opportunities through youth-centered activities geared toward postsecondary success.

**Next Steps:**

1. Get Approved through Joint Fiscal.
2. Get Grant agreements signed
3. Memorandum of Understanding

**Conclusions:**

We look forward to working with them and in supporting them on this project. Thanks for attending!

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

**7) Part II: Retreat Priorities Review (Courtney)**

**Discussion:**

Topics from previous meeting:

1. Promote access for students and adults to educations and training that leads to credentials and higher wage jobs (dual enrollment in schools and CTOs for adults).
  - a. **Dual enrollment with this program and an IEP and 504 plan**
    - i. **Information Gathering for this group. Have someone come and present to this group, also ask Martha Frank to come and speak to us.** – Ana will f/u
    - ii. Day of testimony during the Card room event? Education Committees, video to run.
      1. There is already a testimony video, show at the next AOE and the card event.
      - 2.
2. Market DIF DBVI grant to improve transition services for youth.
  - a. DBVI just received a grant for transportation and transition. They have many partners. **Fred Jones, the Director of DBVI could be invited to come to the meeting to discuss this 5-year grant.**
  - b. Bellows Falls was selected to be a site for this grant

3. Educate Vermonters policy makers, etc. on Our Time is Now Time report re: people with chronic health conditions.
  - a. Sarah Launderville is a lead on this, the report is not yet completed/ released. Table this for now.
  - b. Summary: We are reaching our and marketing HA services with people with Chronic Health Conditions. Currently this group doesn't consider themselves to have a disability, but they are potentially eligible.
  - c. **Denee McKenzie and Hib Doe can do a presentation** about this.

**Additional Topics to discuss this meeting:**

The following topics were reviewed:

1. Advocacy for rural transportation solutions.
  - a. Ask Ross McDonald or someone working in transportation to be on the Council?
  - b. There is a bill for deaf and hard of hearing - Ask Bill Sponsor to speak to this Committee Senator Hasaam? – Bring to Steering Committee?
2. Educate on the value of remote work and asynchronous training for people with disabilities to allow maximum flexibility for work and training.
3. Educate Vermonters on Long Covid. (May be too soon, Kate LaRose come to speak with us?)

AHS Accessibility Conference asked us if we would like to present? Maybe HA staff. Jacquie can be contacted if you want to be involved.

**Conclusions:**

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

**8) Other Business (Group)**

**a. Agenda Setting: March 7, 2024**

**Discussion:**

- Dual Enrollment Information – Martha Frank or Check with Ana Russo for someone who can talk to us about Dual Enrollment
- Review priorities and prioritize
- Our Time is Now Update, Sarah Hib or Denee

**Conclusions:**

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

**9) Adjournment** (Courtney Blasius)

Sherrie moved that the meeting adjourn, it was seconded by Cari.  
Courtney called the meeting adjourned by consensus at 2:38 p.m.

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

- Finalize agenda and upload to SRC Website, **Janice Leonard, 1/30/24**
- Draft minutes for this meeting, send to Committee Chair for comment then upload to SRC website, **Janice Leonard, 1/30/24**
- Finalize approved minutes for last meeting and upload to SRC website  
**Janice Leonard, 1/30/24**