

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

Thursday December 7, 2024, 1:00PM – 3:30PM  
Virtual Meeting

**Meeting called by:**

Chair, Cari Kelley, called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Courtney Blasius

Gina D'Ambrosio

Laura Flint

Helena Kehne

Cari Kelley

Jacqueling Kelley

Brandy Reynolds, Non-Voting

Nancy Richards

Ana Russo

Tara Shatney, Non-Voting

Laura Siegel

Emily Wagner

Amanda Wheeler

**Members Absent:**

- Bill Meirs, excused
- Sherrie Brunelle, excused
- Diane Dalmasse, Non-Voting (Excused)
- Andrea Bacchi, excused
- Nick Caputo, excused
- Angela Allard, excused

**SRC Liaison:**

- Amanda Arnold
- James Smith

**SRC Coordinator:**

- Janice Leonard

**Interpreters:**

- Bobbi Nicole Comtois
- Lisa Bixler

**Speakers or Presenters:**

- Tara Howe
- Liz Harrington
- Cindy Seguin

**Guests:**

**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. Ana moved to accept the agenda and Helena seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 13-0-0.

**Conclusions:**

Motion passes: today's agenda accepted

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

- Upload approved agenda to SRC website, **Janice Leonard, 4/30/2024.**

**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 1, 2024** (Cari Kelley)

**Discussion:**

Cari asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the February 1, 2024, minutes. There were none. Laura moved to approve the minutes and Helena seconded. No discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 13-0-0

**Conclusions:**

Minutes from February 1, 2024, were approved

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

- Upload approved minutes to SRC website, **Janice Leonard, 4/30/2024.**

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

**Discussion:**

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

- AOE Committee
- Performance Review Committee
- Policy & Procedures Committee
- Steering Committee

Helena moved to approve, and it was seconded by Emily. No further discussion. Vote unanimous 13-0-0

**Conclusions:**

Consent agenda items approved

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

- Upload to SRC website, **Janice Leonard, 4/30/2024.**

**6) Director's Report** (James Smith)**Discussion:**

Diane Dalmasse the HA Director was on medical leave and was not able to attend the SRC meeting, so no Director's report was submitted.

James Smith the HA Deputy Director gave a brief verbal summary including the following:

- An update on the Congressional appropriation that did not include the COLA for the VR program.
- Outcome results from the Career training offset showing 72% of participants who received the offset achieved a credential
- That the Kessler foundation has indicated they will fund the achievement payments for SSI/SSDI beneficiaries who achieve employment at higher levels
- An overview of HA's continued Diversity Equity Inclusion and Access efforts

**Conclusions:**

Thank you, James, for the update!

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

n/a

**7) Opioid Project** (Cindy Seguin, Liz Harrington, James Smith)**Discussion:**

- Pilot programs are in Chittenden and Orleans Counties
- The group presented a very informative presentation with a PowerPoint. See attachment.

- They use a wraparound approach with dedicated full time staff to the Opioid Pilot:
  - Vocational Counselor
  - EAP Clinician
  - The Employment Consultant
- The teams have established relationships with over twenty local partners including recovery centers, community mental health agencies, treatment court, rehabilitation programs, probation and parole and many others.
- As of December 2023:
  - 215 individuals have been referred to the pilots
  - 111 have opened HA Cases and engaged in services
  - 29 have been placed in employment
  - 12 have enrolled in education
  - 3 have received a credential
- They have a marketing program. Their Slogan is, "Where Recovery Meets Opportunity. They also have a 30-second marketing video. To see it, select this link: <https://vimeo.com/884173020?share=copy>
- Challenges and Lessons Learned:
  - Stigma of being in recovery
  - Recovery is not a linear process
  - The teaming approach is critical
  - Maintaining employment focus has been key to participant's success
  - Having staff with lived and professional experience is essential
- Thank you for the Great success stories and sharing this great information.
- Mayor of Burlington has said the death rate is going down. Is this program part of this success?

**Conclusions:**

Program had a solid quick start but will take another year for more definite outcomes

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

**8) HA Regional Manager Updates (Tara Howe)**

**Discussion:**

- This is Tara's first SRC Meeting presenting as an RM.
- Successes:
  - In each of her offices, they started leadership meetings with peers and partners on a monthly basis
  - In each of her offices, they started "Teaming Days"
  - Working on Vision Statements

- The Barre office assisted with transitional housing that happened March 18 to the 22<sup>nd</sup> and were present in the morning as individuals were transitioning.
- A transition counselor is working on forming a partnership with a new alternative school called "Connected Circles".
- She shared some great success stories
- Tara has seamlessly taken over and is doing such a great job.

**Conclusions:**

Thank you for all you do as well as sharing the updates Tara!

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

None

**9) The Order of Selection (James Smith)**

**Discussion:**

- James is looking for the SRC support for a small change in our Order of Selection.
- The public vocation program that we are part of currently requires: If we do not have enough money to serve everyone who applies for services, then we're required to have an order of selection based on severity of disability. The idea is that those with the most severe disabilities are served first. The categories are:
  - 1) People who have four or more areas of functional loss requiring multiple services over a period of six-month or more are classified as **most significantly disabled**.
  - 2) People who have two to three areas of functional loss requiring multiple services over a period of six-month or more as **very significantly disabled**.
  - 3) People who have one area of functional loss requiring multiple services over a period of six months or more as **significantly disabled**.
  - 4) People who have one or more areas of functional loss requiring multiple services over a period of less than six months are classified as **not significant ly disabled**.
- The SRC was part of setting up these categories. When someone applies for services and they fall into the Not Severely Disabled category, currently they are not automatically able to receive services dependent on our availability of resources. What we found is that nearly no one applies who is in this last

category, so it becomes meaningless. Everyone who applies for our services is in one of the first three categories and receives services.

- Through the re-allotment of funds process, we receive extra funding, and we are able to serve anyone who walks in and meets the basic eligibility.
- Will SRC support the exit of this order of selection and state that we will serve anyone who meets our basic eligibility.
- **Cari moved that we open category four, Not Severely Disabled. This was seconded by Courtney.** Vote unanimous 12-0-0.

### **Conclusions:**

**We moved to open category four, Not Severely Disabled.**

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

#### **10) Works 2.0 (Betsy Choquette)**

##### **Discussion:**

- Betsy explained the Works 2.0 program. This program works with participants on SSI/SSDI to get work self sufficient.
- Most working beneficiaries “park” their earnings at levels that won’t impact their benefits.
- About 30% of HA participants are on SSI/SSDI beneficiaries
- The goal of the project was to
  - significantly change the way HA manages SSDI/SSI cases in two sites in Vermont.
- PowerPoint was presented, see attached.
- How this Pilot Program works differently:
  - Intentional Teaming
  - Focus on Training and Education
  - Reorienting the mindset of staff
  - Milestone Payments
  - Work incentive Counseling
  - Cases open longer
- Team members understand the goal is self-sufficiency, NOT benefits preservation. Change in historical understanding.
- Focus on Training and Education
- About 30% of HireAbility participants are SSI/SSDI beneficiaries.
- Each participant supported by a team:
  - A Vocational Counselor
  - A Certified Work Incentive Counselor
  - A Job Placement Specialist.
- Milestone Achievement Payments were designed to provide extra income at the point that beneficiaries were losing cash assistance.
- Data Snapshot as of 12/2023 (early data)

- Enrolled: 144
- Withdrew: 28 (during initial start up)
- Overall Participants: 116
- Employed: 88
  - Full time: 32 with average wage of \$18.46/hr
  - Part time: 63 with average wage of \$16.42/hr
- Achievement Payment Earned by 62 participants
- 26 people zeroed out their SSA benefit
- 37 enrolled in Post Secondary Education or Credentialed Training Program
- HA is replicating the features of WorkVT2.0 statewide

**Conclusions:**

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

None

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

**Discussion:**

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

**B. Policies & Procedures Committee**

**C. Performance Review Committee**

**D. Steering Committee**

**Conclusions:**

Quick agenda item. Neither Sherrie not Nick are able to be here today. Thank you Courtney for the updates!

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

n/a

**15) Other Business** (Cari Kelley)

**A. Agenda Setting for April 6, 2024, meeting**

The Steering Committee puts together the agenda but are always looking for ideas from the group. No one had anything to suggest.

- Front line members discussion
- MRC (Medical Reserve Corp) is not understood by many- would this be beneficial for members.
  - Group of medical and non-medical personnel who respond to emergencies. Also work prevention at events.
  - Will ask Jacqueline to give a presentation at the next meeting on MRC
- 6-8 months update on the Opioid Pilot project

## Conclusions:

### Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

Upload draft Agenda to the SRC website, **Janice Leonard, 4/30/24.**

### 16) Adjournment (Cari Kelley)

Cari called the Meeting adjourned at 3:08 p.m.

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

- Finalize agenda and upload to SRC Website, **Janice Leonard, 4/30/24.**
- Draft minutes for this meeting, send to Committee Chair for comment then upload to SRC website, **Janice Leonard, 4/30/24.**
- Finalize approved minutes for last meeting and upload to SRC website **Janice Leonard, 4/30/24.**



# Transcription