

Approved Minutes
VERMONT STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (VTSRC)
Annual Retreat
Thursday, October 12, 2022, 9:30 AM – 2:30PM

Meeting called by:

Cari Kelley, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:42 a.m.

Members Present:

- Andrea Bacchi
- Courtney Blasius
- Sherrie Brunelle
- Nick Caputo
- Diane Dalmasse (non-voting)
- Gina D'Ambrosio
- Asher Edelson
- Rocko Gieselman
- Robin Ingenthron
- Helena Kehne
- Cari Kelley
- Sarah Launderville
- Nancy Richards
- Ana Russo
- Cara Sachs
- Laura Siegel
- Joseph Soares
- Emily Wagner

Members Absent:

- Abby Levinson
- Sarah Sterling
- Laura Flint
- Bill Meirs

Interpreters:

- Nicole Comtois
- Jennifer Raney
- Kristal Haynes
- Sara Collins

Guests:

- Tom Van Meter

Speakers or Presenters:

- William Pendlebury
- Emily Shiels

SRC Liaison:

- James Smith

SRC Coordinator:

- Janice Leonard

- 1) **Welcome & Introductions** (Cari Kelley, Chair)
 - a. Those in attendance introduced themselves.
 - b. Cari and Diane welcomed members and thanks to all members who are leaving the board
 - c. **Review of Agenda (Cari Kelley)**, Cari reviewed the agenda and there was no further discussion.

d. Conclusions:

Thanks to everyone!

e. Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

2) Open for Public Comment (Cari Kelley)

a. Discussion:

No Public Present

c. Conclusions:

d. Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

3) Getting to Know You

a. Discussion:

The group went around the table and each person answered:

- *What's one thing you would like others to know about you?*
- *What brought you to the SRC? OR
What's one talent, skill, or driving value that you bring to this work?*

4) Accomplishments

- Diversity Equity & Inclusion, DEI, Will Pendlebury
See PowerPoint
- Vermont Career Advancement Project, Emily Shiels
See PowerPoint
- Opiod Pilot Project

Director's Report:

HireAbility Vermont continued to reap the benefits of our rebrand. Referrals are up. We identified a few areas of marketing focus for this past year. We developed materials to reach out to Vermonters with chronic health conditions. People who have a chronic health condition often do not consider themselves as having a disability yet they may be eligible for HireAbility services. We obtained the input of health care providers, our community partners and people with chronic health care conditions in our materials and outreach strategies. I am happy to share our video and print materials with anyone who asks.

We are competing in a very tight labor market for the very best VR counselors. We wanted to share what a great place Vermont is to live and that HireAbility is a great place to work. We created a video showcasing actual HA counselors talking about what Vermont has to offer and how much

they love working for HireAbility. This video is being shared across many rehabilitation counseling master's programs in New England and beyond.

We are in the second year of our 5-year DIF grant, the Vermont Career Advancement Project (VCAP). This is a system's change grant with the goal of assisting Vermonters with disabilities to move out of poverty and have choice in their lives. Every HA participant can have a career pathway of their choice leading to credential attainment and higher wage jobs. Our counselors are becoming Career Pathways Navigators. The grant is in total alignment with our dashboard's lead indicators which in turn are slowly improving our Common Performance Measures.

VCAP has enrolled 239 participants in the grant to date, half of whom are actively engaging in education towards their career goal including registered apprenticeships with 52 completed degrees, certificates, or credentials. By the end of the grant, HireAbility will have developed a system of Earn-and-Learn opportunities and best practices for supporting participants and meeting the needs of the business customer. The results of this effort will lead to increased use of apprenticeship programs, credentials held by working Vermonters, and partnerships with business customers, education and training providers, and community partners.

HireAbility is entering year two of our commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access. We have written an implementation plan with four main objectives:

1. Develop a workforce that reflects the diverse populations we serve.
2. Effectively reach all populations that are eligible for our services.
3. Ensure staff have access to the tools and knowledge and feel competent to serve all participants in a culturally appropriate way.
4. Strengthening our existing communication loops to ensure staff are informed and can contribute.

A stakeholder has been formed for each goal area to include HA staff and subject matter experts. Each group will complete an action plan with accountability measures and do the work.

HireAbility remains in a strong fiscal position drawing down significant reallocation funds for the third year. We have fully expended our award each year by investing in Vermonters with disabilities in a variety of creative ways with our community partners. Allowing HireAbility to assist Vermonters with disabilities to advance in their chosen career pathway.

As always, I look forward to continuing our robust and productive partnership with the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council.

Diane P. Dalmasse, Director, HireAbility VT

5) VR's Big Priorities in the Year Ahead

a. Discussion

- WIOA State Plan for June of 24 to June of 28
 - See PowerPoint
- Continuation of Diversity Equity & Inclusion, DEI
- Continuation of Vermont Career Advancement Project, VCAP
- Continuation of Opioid Pilot Project

b. Conclusions:

c. Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

6) Committee Breakouts

Committee chairs facilitated breakout discussions. Participants read through committee descriptions and accomplishments and discussed questions from the participant packet. They provided the following report outs to the large group:

a. AOE Committee,

- 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).
- Market DIF DVBI grant to improve transition services for youth.
- Educate Vermonters policy makers, etc. on Our Time is Now Time report re: people with chronic health conditions.
- Advocacy for rural transportation solutions.
- Educate on the value of remote work and asynchronous training for people with disabilities to allow maximum flexibility for work and training.
- Educate Vermonters on Long Covid.

b. PR Committee

The PRC has had a successful year. We have reviewed a lot of HigherAbility case data including how well we are serving the population of people with social emotional disorders. We looked at the factors that led to successful outcomes including wrap around services, appropriate accommodations, and progressive employment engagement. But most of our work was focused on the needs assessment. Each meeting has centered around a different aspect of the assessment including HireAbility services to people with disabilities and how the service has compared over the past few fiscal years. We looked more closely at youth and students with disabilities numbers. The next PRC meeting will look at other populations. Overall, the numbers show that the effect of COVID is still being felt (as of FY22 fewer persons served, fewer

closures except for under 25-year-olds – due to a focus on youth). However, the most recent data shows this trend is starting to move towards pre-Covid numbers.

The role of the committees

- What makes for a strong committee?
 - invested committee members.
 - diverse experience among the committee
 - personal experience with issues or experience with loved ones
 - willingness to devote time to the work.
 - engagement - asking thoughtful questions and being open.
- How do you see yourself contributing to us having this strong committee?
 - See above
- What are one or two things you would like to see the committee change or do more of?
 - Continue to receive high quality presentations as this has been very valuable to our work.
 - open more channels to receive direct feedback from consumers/make sure everyone can add their voice.

Afternoon committee breakout

- What would you like the priorities of your committee to be in the year ahead?
 - Complete the needs assessment review and then review of state plan
- What is the work plan including the goals and action steps to get there?
 - Move through the assessments and have any questions addressed. Ensure committee members are secure in their understanding of the issues and services.
- What should be the rules of committee members?
 - To be present, engaged, and aware of any missing areas in need of assessment.

c. P&P Committee

Accomplishments:

Self-employment

- Updating the self-employment policy has been in process for 3-4 years. It was very outdated and not user-friendly.

- Giffin & Hammis, Jamie Blondin (HireAbility Program Manager), Hib Doe (HireAbility Field Services Manager), Liz Harrington (HireAbility Regional Manager), Sue Zamecnik (HireAbility Counselor), James Smith and Sherrie Brunell created a work group that meets monthly to update the self-employment policy. The policy has been cut down to the basics that meet federal requirements and now the team is working on the next phase of the process. The goal is to create policy, guidance, and ideally also a separate guidance document for participants. Spending guidance will also be updated. There will also be training for all counselors about the new policy and an opportunity for interested counselors to become experts in self-employment.
- Laura suggested partnering with the Vermont Small Business Development Center and Sherrie shared that they haven't historically been open to partnering in the past. The work group needs to work on the materials more before getting input from local and statewide partners.

Confidentiality

- Create a complaint procedure for participants if their confidentiality has been breached.
- Change the language for when a staff member is being called to testify so they consult with legal council first.

Rate Setting

- RSA has required HireAbility to create a rate setting policy as a result of the last audit.
- RSA has the draft of the policy now and once they approve we can remove all of the spending guidance from the policy chapters to update them and create a single document counselors can reference. Guidelines can be exceeded on a case-by-case basis.

Priorities for the upcoming year

- Transportation to update the spending guidelines
- Separate the rehab technology policy chapter into two separate chapters. One for home modifications and one for assistive technology
- Review and revise any chapter from 2009 or older
- The family services chapter is currently under review
- How do we create an environment for meaningful input without crushing great ideas we can't move forward with because of state or federal regulations?
 - Review the policy as it stands as a committee first and share initial thoughts. Then James and Sherri draft the revisions based on feedback, regulations, and trends

from the field. Lastly, the committee reviews the draft together and shares final input before finalizing

- Is there a way we can use data to impact what policies the P&P committee prioritizes? For example, how many HireAbility participants receive financial support related to transportation?

7) Closing Thoughts (Group)

What are you feeling energized about in terms of the work of the SRC and your role in the year ahead?

- *Feel great, looking forward to exploring and focusing on the points we've made for upcoming year.*
- *Great priorities identified, looking forward*
- *Accomplished a lot, more opportunities to build on feels great*
- *Excited to be part of the group*
- *Will's project is exciting and the planning for the next year*
- *It's an honor and privilege to be part of the group*
- *Great day, great to see people in person/ face to face, great priorities for next year*
- *Nice to see people in person, some for the first time. Love the getting to know you section.*
- *Great to be in same room and outside of the boxes. Sad to lose people, glad to add people.*
- *Being together, energized by moving ahead and sharing with others what great work we do.*
- *Thanks for letting me be here. Interesting group and glad someone's keeping an eye on the work*
- *Good Point Recycling, first employee was a HA client. Work with diversity and was able to make a difference.*
- *Impressed, excited and energized by the ideas of this group. HA is open to listening and trying.*
- *Happy with the guidance document changes and the people.*
- *Excited to continue this work, sounds great*
- *Great to be part of this group.*
- *People and the work*

a. Conclusions:

b. Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

8) Adjournment

Asher called the meeting adjourned at 2:28pm

Meeting Action Items, Person Responsible and Deadlines:

- Draft minutes uploaded to SRC website, **Janice Leonard**, 10/31/2023
- Draft minutes emailed to SRC members, **Janice Leonard**, 10/31/2023
- Approved minutes uploaded to website, **Janice Leonard**, 10/31/2023