**Members Present:** Cassidy Byles, Tommy Carnline, Karla Cummings, Lanor Curole, David Gallegos, Jean Hansen (ex officio), Ronald Key, Billie Ruth Kvaternik, Bob Lobos, Mark Martin (ex officio), Laura Meaux, Libby Murphy, and Derek White

**Members Absent:** Pam Allen, Pranab Choudhury, Larry Dale, Gayla Guidry, Pat Mascarella, Laura Nata, and Kay Rone Wilson

**Non-member Staff Present:** Melissa Bayham, Brenda Bohrer, Ramona Guillory, Paige Kelly (Liaison), Rosemary Yesso,

**Guests:** Lyn Blanchard, Sandra Ledet, Sarah D’Avy, Cassie Johnson, Mylinda Elliott, Julie Betz, Lisa Broussard and Mitch Granger

**Welcome and Introductions**

LRC Chairperson Derek White welcomed members and guest who then introduced themselves.

**Liaison Report**

With regard to the LRC budget, year to date expenditures are $2,028. More expenditure will show from the consumer satisfactory survey. The survey was to consumers in mid-October selected at random from: 5% of the closes cases for 2012 - 2013 and 5% of the open cases. Approximately 98 surveys were completed and returned; about 6 percent. 250 were returned unable to be delivered. Through partial analysis, overall satisfaction is 75.5%. More information will be provided at the April meeting.

**LRS Director’s Report**

Mark Martin, Director of LRS, introduced staff in new positions, Brenda Bohrer, to establish relationships business and labor and Melissa Bayham in Support Employment. The current request to hire a fiscal staff person dedicated to LRS is pending. Martin discussed the Executive Budget proposal to reduce LRS’ state appropriation by $762,000 which would result in a federal reduction of $2,815,465 for a total reduction of $3,577,465 to Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS).   Martin discussed the third party agreements with schools in three parishes where transition students are being provided services and being guided through the school system to help them with achieving a successful graduation. Also, Martin provided information on current legislation that is being filed. Martin talked about the counselors being able to reduce VR spending on consumers assessments for eligibility by using consumers medical documentation, etc., possible changes to economic need, and assistive technology. Martin informed the Council that for the first time in a very long time all of the federal indicators will be achieved. Martin provided updates regarding average number of consumers per caseload and how this number has decreased due to cases being closed appropriately. Martin talked about the Monroe Regional Office being moved to a new location within the next couple of months.

The completion of the Director’s report was postponed without objection until Friday.

**Chairperson’s Report**

Chairperson’s report was postponed without objection to Friday morning.

**Client Assistance Program (CAP) Report**

David Gallegos, the CAP representative, thanked Director Mark Martin for always working so openly with the CAP. Gallegos expressed appreciation specifically for LRS working with him on revisiting the protocol between CAP and LRS. CAP continues to work complaints from lower to higher level within LRS. The CAP is seeing more complaints regarding order of selection placement and the time it takes to get services.

**Quorum**

Chairperson White recognized that a quorum was achieved.

**Member Reports**

Members representing mandated agencies/programs briefly described their respective programs and initiatives around employment.

**Training Presentation on “Overview of Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Act”**

Donald Leger of the LSUHSC Human Development Center - Louisiana Benefits Planning presented on the topic.

**Consumer Story**

LRC heard a story from a consumer of LRS, Emmett Simien from the Lake Charles area. He received training services, assistive technology and other equipment that helped with employment.

**Public Forum**

Mylinda Elliott, parent of a current recipient of services.

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**Ad hoc Committees**

Chairperson White named the following ad hoc committees, members and timelines.

* 2014 LRC Plan Development - Bob Lobos (chair), Cassidy Byles, Lanor Curole, David Gallegos, Laura Meaux, Libby Murphy, and Kay Rone Wilson. The committee will meet today and April 3 before presenting to the LRC April 4.
* Officers Nominations – Karla Cummings (chair), Tommy Carnline, and Gayla Guidry. The committee will provide its recommended slate April 4.

**Recess**

The full Council recessed at Thursday, February 27, at 3:30 p.m.

**Standing Committee Meetings**

Committees met to perform regular business.

**Call to Order**

Chairperson White called the meeting to order Friday, October, at 8:30 a.m.

**Training Presentation of “Development of the Annual VR State Plan”**

Teresa Milner, LRS Bureau Administrator and Judy Trahan, LRS Program Coordinator provided the training.

**Director’s Report** (continued)

Martin provided the Council with requested data on number of caseloads statewide – 104, average general caseload size – 122, number and locations of specialized caseloads in each region (Blind, transition and deaf specialist), number of counselors with masters degrees, and the number of REDS in each regional office. He provided information on open transition cases by Region, expenditures by services category, VR performance statistics, and open cases in each Region and the disability impairments for each of the Order of Selection groups. Martin provided information on the average amount VR spends on each consumer. Martin requested that the Council provide input/feedback on procedures for the Counselors in determining eligibility for individuals with substance abuse disabilities and economic need procedures. Martin provided information on the current integration of the IT system statewide.

**Minutes**

The minutes for the October 2013 meeting were accepted without objection with the correction of Tom Guarisco’s name.

**Chairperson’s Report**

White reviewed the Public Policy action plan/activity which was approved in October by the LRC to inform policy makers of the impact of the VR program and its funding.

1. Development of a Fact Sheet for VR – completed and revised post-Executive Budget for #3

2. Letter to the Commissioner Administration and the Governor’s Chief of Staff - completed

3. Letters to important House and Senate Committees.

1. Appropriations – completed
2. Finance

4. Opportunities for members to meet with legislators in their districts and in Baton Rouge.

Chairperson White presented five Executive Committee (EC) recommendations.

1) Proposed revision to the Bylaws indicating when new officers take office: June 1. There was previously no stipulation.

* Approved without objection.

2) Louisiana Association of Special Education Administrators (LaSEA) Diploma Pathways Recommendations to allow Individual Education Plan (IEP) Teams to determine diploma requirements if students in Special Education.

* Approved without objection.

3) Unprotected Programs

A coalition of advocates invited the LRC to sign on to an effort working to protect certain programs within Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) and the VR program by locking in provider rates and state appropriation level of LRS at the SFY 2014 level. Concerns were noted by about 50% of the LRC regarding confusion that could be incurred from such action. Also, it was unclear at the time of the meeting whether Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) supported the action. A motion was made to amend the EC recommendation to “Support the initiative if the LWC supports it.”

* The revised motion was approved without objection.

4) Transfer Proposal

A group of advocates had contacted legislators proposing moving LRS from the LWC to the DHH. It was unclear at the time of the meeting whether this proposal would move forward in the legislature. The recommendation was made by the EC to write a letter of “support for the current placement of LRS within LWC,” if this were needed.

* Approved without objection.

**Committee Reports**

The Eligibility and Planning Committee, Employment Committee, and Outreach Committee presented their recommendations.

Outreach Committee Recommendations:

1. Development of a Social Media Plan

a. consider using Facebook, Twitter, YouTube

b. establish a LRC email address

2. Signage to help direct members and the public to meeting places.

Recommendations were approved by unanimous consent.

Eligibility and Planning Committee recommendations:

No Recommendations.

Employment Committee recommendations:

1. Request LRS to report on how many more people could be served by LRS if it was fully funded.

2. Work to help facilitate Brenda Bohrer’s effort to connect with employers across the state.

Recommendations were approved by unanimous consent.

Other Recommendations from members; David Gallegos, CAP:

1. Revisit Counselors sending referrals to the CAP after closure.

Recommendation was approved by unanimous consent.

**New Business**

There was no new business.

**Adjourn**

White adjourned the meeting Friday, February 28th, at 12:25 p.m.