**Louisiana Rehabilitation Council Board Meeting Minutes**

**October 4 & 5th, 2012**

The Louisiana Rehabilitation Council (LRC) met at the, LRS Alexandria Regional Office, at 900 Murray Street, Alexandria in the first floor conference room.

Present: Pamela Allen, Jennifer Bollinger, Pranab Choudhury, Karla Cummings, Gayla Guidry, Jean Hansen, Joe Kelley, Ronald Key, Billie Ruth Kvaternik, Pat Mascarella, Laura Nata and Derek White.

Absent: Laura Breaux, Larry Dale, Angelle Driggs, Warren Hebert, Marla Reissland-Dorsey, Edward Rispone, Amanda Vinson, Keita Rone Wilson, John Yent, David Young and Mark Martin.

Guests: Paige Kelly, Cassondra Holly-Glausier, Christine McGraw, Rosemary Yesso.

**Thursday, October 4, 2012**

Derek White called the meeting to order but acknowledged a quorum would be achieved when the twelfth council member arrived.

Introductions were made by all in attendance. Minutes were adopted from the July meeting.

Derek asked Paige to begin the meeting with announcement regarding the passing of Jason Weill in a car accident the day before. The Council expressed its condolences and discussed possible arrangements for Jason and a contribution on behalf of the LRC.

WELCOME

Christine McGraw, the Regional Manager for LRS in Alexandria, welcome the council to the regional office. She provided a brief overview of the Alexandria office and what was currently taking place. She mentioned that they were in the process of transitioning from one Randolph Shepard manager to another. Currently, the unemployment rate for the region is at 7.2%. The staff consists of seven counselors which cover an eight parish area; there are two business hubs and the rest are more rural areas. Catahoula and Concordia parish have the highest unemployment in the state. The biggest barrier in this area is the lack of transportation. This regional office operates with an employment focus: what do you need so that you can go to work? The office does not receive a lot of complaints; it has been 3 years since the last fair hearing. Christine mentioned that the office participates in the Work Pays Job Fair which will be held in two weeks. Pam asked if there are currently any counselor/position vacancies. Father Pat mentioned that DOTD buys vans to distribute to state agencies and the last he heard, there may still be some available.

Motion to Ratify decisions made in emergency session, absent a quorum, will be ratified when at least 12 of the 21 members are present. Gayla made the motion. Karla seconded.

CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT

Derek provided an update to the Counsel regarding a letter sent on behalf of the LRC to Paul Rainwater. Member Larry Dale met with the Commissioner to discuss funding and the federal match for LRS. RSA’s Charles Sadler will be in Louisiana the following week for meetings with staff and LRC Chair, Derek. This is part of the ongoing program monitoring. Derek said that he will be discussing the role of the LRC with the state agency and how it is a collaborative relationship. Karla added that Mark Martin’s presence at each of the meetings is appreciated.

Meetings

The Council discussed a recent change in the structure of the LRC was moving meetings from 4 to 6 each year which includes rotation of all LRS regions around the state. Derek created a handout listing the proposed meeting sites for the upcoming calendar year, which balances the issues of ensuring all LRS regions host a meeting as well as the cost effectiveness and ease of travel for the locations. The next two meetings dates proposed are April 4th and 5th in Baton Rouge and January 24th and 25th in New Orleans. Joe motioned to adopt these dates. Gayla seconded. The tentative dates set for the following two meetings are July 25th and 26th and October 24th and 25th.

Committee Structure

The Council discussed possible changes to the committee structure before breaking up into new groups on Friday. The VR Policy Committee would focus on how LRS does its business, broken up by eligibility and planning or employment- focusing on where the agency is wanting to go. The legislative committee would no longer exist and its duties would be divided up among the committees; the Executive Committee would be in charge of the information gathering and make recommendations to the full Council. The tasks of the Outreach Committee would include reaching out to other Councils. Laura Nata requested getting success stories from each region compiled every month. Tomorrow the membership will break up into groups and define duties. A motion to approve changes to the bylaws was made by Gayla; Karla seconded. All motions to change the bylaws must be given 30 days notice prior to the vote; the Council will vote on this in January. The Outreach Committee was assigned the task of updating the LRC logo.

Parliamentary Procedure

Derek provided a brief review of Robert Rules of Order and parliamentary procedure to ensure that all meetings are equitable, just, the majority rules, and the minority must be heard. Recommendations of committees are made in the form of motions. The minutes should be read to accurately reflect all action and votes of the Council. Any discussion may be tabled for a later vote, i.e. lay item on the table. Derek agreed that not all motions need to be formal but to foster discussion; the rules could be made less formal.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Rosemary Yesso was present, in place of Mark Martin, to provide an update of what is taking place within the agency. Mark was in Alexandria for the Second Injury Board and therefore was not at the LRS meeting. She reiterated the earlier news that RSA will be visiting Louisiana from October 22nd to October 26th. They have already sent requests for documents which have been supplied by the agency. The three focus areas of the visit include: the organizational structure of the agency, transition services, and fiscal integrity. The last visit was in 2008 and the focus is different this time. This visit and its findings and response will take about 3-4 months.

The employment initiative reflects a cultural change of the agency. Some of the recommendations and outcomes so far include: starting October 1st- a change to all of the supported employment model, only 4 milestones- not focus on process but more on outcome; payment method has changed- more money on back end with outcomes. Gayla questioned when vendor payment would increase.

The LRC wrote a letter to Paul Rainwater asking that funding stay at its current level which was given to the Commissioner when member, Larry Dale, had a meeting with him. Larry was optimistic regarding the meeting and its outcome. The Council also discussed the most recent change in state government staff positions, with Rainwater now becoming Chief of Staff in the Governor’s Office and Kristy Nichols becoming the Commissioner of Division of Administration.

There was a time for questions as well. Jean wanted to know the present LRS staffing situation, the empty positions versus the empty positions that would not be filled. Currently, there twelve frozen positions as a result of the Executive Order. The balancing issue is whether filling more vacancies would cut into client services. Karla asked if more vendors were being looked into for serving the autism community. Joe Kelley brought up that the criteria for eligibility is very specific. He mentioned this could create problems in heavy caseloads when people are weeded into the system.

CONSUMER STORY

The LRS office of Alexandria introduced Shadreka Ellison, one of their staff members and also a consumer, for the consumer story portion of the meeting. She shared her story of her Cochlear implant on July 23rd and how her hearing and communication has improved as a result of the assistance received by LRS and the employment modifications made for her. The Council had several questions regarding her implant and the effect on her daily life.

LIAISON’S REPORT

The budget for the LRC was approved at $27,000 for this fiscal year; $2755 was spent at the July meeting. The other issue brought up for discussion was membership and members who were repeatedly absent. Several members will be sending in their resignation, including Laura Breaux and Marla Reissland-Dorsey, Kay Rone-Wilson was reappointed. There are also two pending appointments. Officially there is one vacancy. Paige also reminded the Council that drivers can be reimbursed. Gayla asked if the meetings could be attended through Skype or video conferencing. It was believed that this would violate public meeting law but the issue will be further looked into. Father Pat reminded everyone that White Cane day will be held on October 16th.

Motion to Recess till Friday was made by Pam. Jennifer seconded it.

**Friday, October 5th**

WELCOME

Supported Employment (continued)

Derek announced that before the agenda was under way, the Council would revisit one issue of supported employment that was not discussed the day before. The qualifications of master counselors were discussed. Joe Kelley asked if the district level supervisors have their masters or are certified rehabilitation counselors. Jean responded that within five to six years all counselors have been certified. Derek suggested that the certification of counselors be a topic presented at the January meeting for further discussion, including what it takes to become certified and the benefits as well as evaluation process of these counselors.

CALL TO ORDER

Derek announced that there are several goals he’d like to accomplish as a group before the meeting is adjourned at 12:00 noon.

Production Report

The Council looked over the latest LRS production report. The Council discussed that as the order of selection has been closed except to category 1, the cases are getting harder and harder to close. Jean also mentioned some of the issue is that if a consumer refuses to go to work, it is considered an unsuccessful closure, even if their initial application stated a goal of employment. Derek mentioned a further study of the correlation between the order of selection and a successful closure. Rosemary reiterated this was a reason for an employment first initiative by LRS. Ron Key wanted to know which statistics in the production report were significant/valuable indicators. Rosemary stated that all statistics were significant in providing evaluative information. Father Pat noted that Mississippi is effective in their statistics and suggested looking to see what they do.

STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The room was divided into two committees – both to discuss and analyze how LRS does business. Derek discussed that while other states have many committees, based on quorum issues for the LRC that two committees would be sufficient. The question was raised under which committee would vendors fit or if vendor issues, including timeliness of payment and quality of vendor, could fit under both committees. The Council was divided in half based on seating to discuss issues that will be looked into for both eligibility/planning and employment. These assignments are temporary as the January meeting will address the bylaw changes to the committee structure. Jean and Derek would participate in both groups. For eligibility and planning committee, the following members were assigned: Ron, Laura, Jennifer, Paige and Pam. For employment: Prenab, Joe, Rosemary, Cassandra, Father Pat, and Gayla.

NEW BUSINESS

The Council spent several minutes remembering member, Jason Weil, by discussing his passion and the impact he made. Father Pat closed with a few words. Laura Nata mentioned including a write up about him in the Families Helping Families newsletter. Details of the arrangements would be sent out.

MOTION TO DISMISS

Joe made the motion to dismiss. Laura seconded it.

Meeting was recessed.