**Louisiana Rehabilitation Council Board Meeting Minutes**

**January 24 and 25th, 2013**

The Louisiana Rehabilitation Council (LRC) met at Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Louisiana located at 3400 Tulane Avenue, Ste. 1000, New Orleans, LA 70119.

Present: Jennifer Bollinger, Pranab Choudhury, Karla Cummings, Larry Dale, Jean Hansen, Warren Hebert, Billie Ruth Kvaternik, Pat Mascarella, Laura Nata, Derek White, Kay Rone-Wilson

Absent: Pamela Allen, Laura Breaux, Angelle Driggs, Gayla Guidry, Joseph Kelley, Ronald Key, Edward Rispone, Amanda Vinson, John Yent, David Young, Mark Martin

Guests: Rosemary Yesso, Ken York, Judy Trahan, Teresa Milner

**Thursday, January 24, 2013**

**WELCOME**

Derek White called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. He announced that a quorum would be achieved when Pranab returned to the room. Kandy Baker would be filling in for Paige Kelly the next two days while she was out for a funeral.

**INTRODUCTIONS**

All members, LRS staff, and guests introduced themselves.

Derek announced that the public forum would take place from 12:30- 1:00 PM. He also stated that LRS Director, Mark Martin, is still recovering from his surgeries but sent an update this morning. He thinks that he will be returning the following week on a part time basis. Ronald Key is also unable to attend this meeting due to pneumonia.

**LIAISON REPORT**

Kandy Baker provided the LRS Liaison Report. She first reported on the current vacancies on the Council, which include Laura Breaux, Jason Weill, Joe Kelley, and Henry Bateman. There are two pending applications with Boards and Commissions and LWC will name a representative to replace Edward Rispone. The LRC has a budget of $27,000 for the 2012-2013 year, with the current expenditure of $4,441. Father Pat had a question regarding the online ethics training and stated he was having issues with visual accessibility. Judy Trahan added that the JAWS software is not capable of reading the ethics test and that someone in the office would be happy to go through the test with him.

**CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT**

Derek presented to the Council the potential logo designs, submitted by the Outreach Committee, to replace the current logo. The proposal discussed by the Executive Committee prior to the start of this meeting was a composite logo made up of the smaller blue state of Louisiana, with the gold font, in a larger and bolder print. The issue of the slogan below was not decided. Derek asked if the Council was ready to adopt a new logo or postpone for a later point. Gayla made a motion to table the vote.

Derek addressed the frequency and location of the LRC meetings scheduled for the upcoming year. When the LRC met six times per year, the complete rotation of designated meeting sites was met every two years. Now with four meetings per year it will not be possible. Per Ron’s suggestion, Derek researched which are LRS’ largest service areas. The largest number of people served is in Baton Rouge, followed by Shreveport. However, he announced that there appears to be no opposition to the original proposal: 1 meeting each year in Baton Rouge; one meeting in the New Orleans metro area, which includes: New Orleans, West Bank and Northshore; 1 meeting in North Louisiana: Shreveport, Monroe, Alexandria; 1 meeting in South Louisiana: Houma/Thibodaux, Lake Charles, and Lafayette. Based on the adoption of this proposal the rest of the year would be scheduled accordingly: the April 4-5th meeting in Baton Rouge; the July 25th-26th meeting in Shreveport; the October 24-25th meeting in Lake Charles.

**PUBLIC FORUM**

Several individuals were present for the public forum and were given an opportunity to introduce themselves. One of the guests, Ken, asked whether or not LRS had considered redefining the order of selection (OOS) categories to create broader definitions, to incorporate more individuals served under Category 1. Rosemary Yesso and Ken York both responded that this would not address the funding issue, the lack of money to serve these additional individuals. Teresa mentioned that LRS is currently looking at other state models, including states with three orders of selection groups. Rosemary reiterated, in spite of funding issues, LRS will continue to evaluate the defining of OOS groups. Jean Hansen inquired as to the number of individuals on delayed status for order of selection Group 2. Rosemary Yesso commented on a trend that has developed over the last five years, in which the Order of Selection Group 1 has increased in those served since the Order of Selection Group 2 has closed. Counselors have to be innovative in serving these larger caseloads. Father Pat urged LRS to look at what Mississippi is doing to service their clients and get a future update from Mark Martin as to what they were able to adapt from the neighboring state. The conversation then shifted to discussing pulling down LRS’ portion of the federal match left on the table. Paula suggested looking at Florida’s model in addressing the state legislature as they had similar issues in the past. Derek said the council would decide a strategy to address the legislature and begin working on next year’s session. The guest, Ken, suggested tracking the SSDI recipients who are getting off their benefits would be a powerful persuasive tool with the legislature.

**MINUTES ADOPTED**

The minutes from the October 4-5th meeting in Alexandria were adopted. Karla made the motion. Billie Ruth seconded the motion.

**LRS DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Ken York was present in Mark Martin’s absence; he was able to report Mark’s recovery progress. He anticipates returning to the office by mid-February but had hoped to come in briefly the following week. Ken received questions from the Council and hopes to cover all requested information in his presentation.

RSA MONITORING

The exit interview was held between RSA and LRS on November 8th via teleconference following RSA’s visit to Louisiana. Charles Sadler is the RSA liaison. The exit interview covered observations made by RSA and discussed what would potentially be reported as a finding. The report from RSA was to be received by December 10th and has not yet been received, which would only be a draft and subject to collaborative revisions and responses between RSA and LRS. Upon receipt of this draft, LRS will have an opportunity to provide input. There were three areas of review: organizational structure; transitional services; and fiscal integrity. No findings were found in the area of transitional services and organizational structure. Under fiscal integrity, RSA had questions regarding the consolidation of LWC, cost allocation of personnel, as well as third party agreements. LRS was not surprised by these findings but have past documentation of past opinion letters requested from RSA regarding these third party agreements, including the contract signed with Lighthouse for the Blind.

LRS AGENCY UPDATES

Currently there are 40 employee vacancies across the state. In the last three weeks, LRS is in the process of hiring new counselors. There are three vacancies being filled in the Baton Rouge area and two vacancies in Shreveport, based on demand and need. LRS was spared from mid-year budget cuts.

**CONDUCTING A VR COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Paula Pottenger apologized on behalf of Jeanne Miller who was unable to attend and present at the meeting due to illness. She mentioned that she would be doing a modified training on comprehensive assessment of statewide vocational rehabilitation needs. She mentioned that the federal regulations regarding this assessment have not changed but a guide was published for state vocational rehab agencies. The focus of the presentation would be what is a comprehensive needs assessment and how is one conducted. There are six steps to development of the needs assessment; including, planning for information; gathering information; analyzing results; developing conclusions; informing state plans, goals, priorities, and strategies. Paula recommended making guided questions in the survey to make the analysis easier. She also said it is important to engage community partners in the distribution of the survey; the Council discussed with Judy on having access to the survey early to distribute to their stakeholders. LRS said the questions would be available to the Council for input prior to the distribution of the surveys.

BREAK

CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT (continued)

Derek discussed the new committee structure, made up of the outreach committee, eligibility and planning, and employment committee. Currently Karla, David, Billie Ruth, Janet Wallace with Uplifted, Rebecca Ellis and Joe Kelley serve on the Outreach Committee.

The logo issue was brought up for discussion again. The consensus appeared to be the use of the smaller state, use of gold font, larger lettering, and the slogan had not reached a consensus. Warren suggested sending out additional suggestions for the slogan and resume the conversation in April. Father Pat questioned if the logo would be available in Braille.

The format of the 2013 meetings was also mentioned. Derek suggested with the new meeting format to hold longer meetings, using hotel conference rooms, which would alleviate other facilities closing early as well as having food catered. Rosemary reminded the Council that food could not be paid for by LRS. Derek said that food would be an incentive for a longer work day.

The Council discussed the status of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. Currently work needs to be done on that, which was distinguished from the Comprehensive Needs Assessment survey. The Council discussed reviewing the last survey and have the Outreach Committee present on the survey at the April meeting.

Bylaws Revision

Derek asked the Council to turn to the copy of the bylaws contained in the meeting packet, labeled with the January 24th date. He said these were the proposed changes from the October meeting regarding the committee structure and required 30 days’ notice prior to the vote for adoption. Those changes were denoted on pages 7-9 in the bylaws. This establishes the three new committees as well as assigns duties to each. The Executive Committee had approved these bylaws earlier.

**MOTION TO ADOPT BYLAWS REVISIONS- MADE BY GAYLA. SECONDED BY PRENAB.**

**ADOPTED.**

Derek provided an update that there was a current vacancy on the Executive Committee since Marla was no longer on the Council. He had approached Gayla about filling the position and she has accepted. Also, two members of the Executive Committee also serve as committee chairs. Derek mentioned both Pam and directed an invitation to Gayla to serve; she agreed. Tomorrow time will be allotted to firming up the duties assigned to each committee.

Legislative Efforts

Derek provided a brief overview of the efforts to reach out to the legislature regarding LRS’ budget. Larry Dale had expressed his agreement to continue serving as the legislative point person for the LRC because of the working relationships he has with members of the Legislature. Derek stated that a letter has been sent to then-Commissioner of Administration, Paul Rainwater, regarding the need to maintain funding to LRS to meet its federal match. The Council will this year also draft a letter, similar to the letter from last year, highlighting the fiscal benefits of funding to LRS. The letter will first get input from the Executive Committee and then go forward to the Council for additional input before the session begins. Karla suggested making each letter specific to each legislator, with facts from their own district regarding LRS services. Rosemary said that a conference call with the Voc Rehab agency in Florida would provide them with ideas, per the suggestion of Paula. David wanted to know what other steps needed to be put in place by the Council prior to the Legislative session. Derek said the letter would accomplish a lot, keeping the advocacy efforts short and sweet. Father Pat suggested having individuals on the waiting list for services send a letter.

RECESS

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 25TH**

INTRODUCTION

Derek welcomed everyone to the second day of the meeting. Today’s agenda will include breaking into two committee groups to discuss and determine information to be requested by the Council for LRS to provide at future meetings.

CONSUMER STORY

Ashley Knobles, LRS consumer, provided the Council with her own successes and experience while receiving LRS services. She was a client for six years, working with Barbara Rogers since her junior year of high school. She spoke very highly of her experiences and how she never would have realized the multitude of services available to her as well as attending UNO and receiving her undergraduate degree. Through the help of LRS, she was able to live on campus, had assistance with a laptop and books and supplies as well a van and ramp modification. Upon graduating she was offered a receptionist position at the LRS offices in Metairie and the Westbank, splitting time between both. She now would like to become a rehabilitation counselor herself and has begun the process of enrolling in online coursework. The Council was impressed with her outlook and achievements. Several members had questions regarding LRS transition efforts while she was in high school.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Derek divided the members into respective committees to expound upon the brainstorming which had taken place at the October meeting. Laura, Karla, and David would continue to work as the Outreach Committee. The Eligibility and Planning Committee would be made up of Jennifer, Prenab, Warren, Kay and Rosemary. The Employment Committee would be made up of Father Pat, Gayla, Jean, and Billie Ruth. The topics/issues placed under each committee would further be discussed today, to determine specific information requests to LRS. David made a formal request that LRS would correct all printed materials that have the incorrect address of the Advocacy Center. The committees met for an hour and a half to draft specific questions and information to be corrected.

Upon returning from the committee session, each committee shared the specific questions from their meeting. The Employment Committee wanted to ask from LRS the following: What is the process for vendors; What are the discrepancies of vendors by region; More information regarding informed choice; and what do counselors specialize in. The Eligibility and Planning Committee had the following information requests: to look at the various groups being served by ethnicity, type and severity of disability; the number and the reasons for not being servable by LRS; how many are receiving services but are not ultimately employed; more information regarding the order of selection; the caseloads by region; information regarding the case movement from application to closure; transition: how many times LRS reps are at IEP meetings and the successful closures for transition age kids.

Derek said the next step would be compiling these information/data requests and questions and submitting them to the agency.

Executive Committee Slate

Derek said a nomination committee would be needed to devise a new slate for the July meeting. Warren has agreed to serve as the chairperson for this ad hoc committee and will work with 3-4 other members to come up with a slate. The slate will consist of nominations for chair; vice-chair; 3 committee chairs; 2 members at large.

NEW BUSINESS

The Council discussed making a formal request to LWC so that the LRS portion of the LWC website would be user friendly as well as post the policies and procedure manual and technical assistance and guidance.

**MOTION FOR FORMAL REQUEST; MOTION MADE BY DAVID; SECONDED BY GAYLA.**

David said that he would draft the letter.

Father Pat had products produced at the Lighthouse for the Blind manufacturing facility passed around for the Council to view.

Warren commended the role of the self-advocates present on the Council and thanked them for their perspective. He also said that he would like to create an award in honor of Jason Weill and his advocacy efforts and passion presented annually by nomination of the LRC.

**MOTION MADE FOR LRC TO PRESENT ANNUAL AWARD HONORING AN INDIVIDUAL WHO HAS DONE AN EXTRAORDINARY JOB OF SELF ADVOCACY. MOTION MADE BY WARREN; SECONDED BY KARLA**

Kay suggested collaborating with the GOLD Awards hosted by the Governor’s Office of Disability Affairs.

The ad hoc committee will be made up of Kay, Warren, and Jennifer.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN MADE BY GAYLA; SECONDED BY WARREN.**