**April 3, 2014**

**Members Present:** Tommy Carnline, Pranab Choudhury, Karla Cummings, Larry Dale, David Gallegos, Jean Hansen (ex officio), Ronald Key, Billie Ruth Kvaternik, Mark Martin (ex officio), Pat Mascarella, Laura Nata, Laura Meaux, Libby Murphy, Derek White and Kay Wilson

**Members Absent:** Pam Allen, Cassidy Byles, Lanor Curole, Gayla Guidry, and Bob Lobos

**Non-member Staff Present:** Paige Kelly (Liaison), Kandy Baker and Rosemary Yesso

**Guests:** Lynn Blanchard, Lisa Richard, Sarah D’Avy, Julie Betz and Cassie Johnson (Legislative auditors)

**Welcome and Introductions**

LRC Chairperson Derek White called the meeting to order Thursday, April 3, at 12:30 p.m. A quorum was achieved and maintained through recess.

Motion to accept February minutes was made by Libby Murphy, seconded by Billie Ruth Kvaternick, and accepted unanimously.

**Liaison Report**

The next LRC meeting will be on July 24th and 25th in Monroe. Accommodations haven’t been finalized but will be announced ASAP. Of the total LRC budget of $27,000, $10,829 has been expended on council meetings and the consumer satisfaction survey. Membership vacancies remain the same; we still have five. Three members are up for reappointment and three applications remain at Boards and Commissions. Reimbursement turn around appears to be improving.

**Chairperson’s Report**

The Chair, Derek White, provided an updates on actions taken on behalf of the LRC and other items from the previous meeting.

Three public policy related issues that the LRC took action on. 1) The Chair communication to the Louisiana Association of Special Education Administrators (LASEA) support for their recommendation regarding pathways for students in special education. As Chair, White’s name as added to LASEA’s letter addressed to the state Superintendent of Education. 2) Regarding the transfer proposal of Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) from the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) to the Department of Health and Hospitals, the LRC decided to issue a position statement regarding the support of placement of LRS within LWC. That apparently won't be necessary as that proposal does not appear to be going forward. 3) We were asked by coalition of several other groups to support a proposal that would protect certain Medicaid funds in the budget provide a floor for LRS state appropriation at SFY 2014 level. The LRC’s vote indicated that support for the effort if LWC supported it. LWC's official position is neutral; therefore, the LRC remained neutral as well. The coalition of groups is still going forward: the LRC is not a part of it.

Next step planned was with sharing information with the legislature on the benefit of the VR program and how state appropriations impact the agency. Information was shared with House Appropriation Committee members in a letter and fact sheet. The next step that we had planned to do that would be in a few weeks at the appropriate time with Senate Finance Committee.

**Executive Committee Report**

Recommendations:

1. Include LRS consumers’ names in LWC’s HiRE and Star systems.
2. To facilitate collaboration with the Workforce Investment Council (WIC) establish a workgroup.
3. Request report from the Disability Navigator Program and an update on the Disability Employment Initiative study (regarding Business and Career Solutions Center tied with a specific navigator).
4. Contract with a third party to serve as a fiscal agent. This would protect the LRC’s meetings from being cancelled due to state spending freeze and result in quicker reimbursement disbursal.

Motion to accept recommendations with the exclusion of number 4, the fiscal agent recommendation, was made by Karla Cummings, seconded by David Gallegos, and unanimously approved.

**LRS Director’s Report**

Mark Martin, Director of LRS, reviewed the Randolph Sheppard program with the group. He provided an update on the lawsuit brought by the Randolph Sheppard Vendors of Louisiana. The issue went to arbitration and LRS won. The trust fund can be used to administer the program and defend the agencies actions in that regard, including lawyer fees. It will now go to court. Martin also provided an update on the Transition contracts with Local Education Agencies (LEAs). Referrals are coming in for kids who would be failing through the cracks. Despite the reduction in the budget ($762,000 state appropriation resulting in a federal reduction of $2,815,465 for a total loss of $3,577,465) order of selection 1 will not have to close due to the implementation of cost savings measures. However, the agency may need to consider implementing an economic need requirement for assistive technology services. Currently, there are only a few services in LRS’ VR program that are not based on economic need.

**Client Assistance Program (CAP) Report**

David Gallegos, the CAP representative, thanks Martin for reaching out to both LSU and the Advocacy Center’s benefits planning programs for assistance on the training for Counselors in May and June. Gallegos reiterated his concern about there being no LRS office in Orleans Parish, east bank. CAP recommended LRS provided more clarity to applicants who are not deemed not eligible due to order of selection. The CAP also stated collaboration with LRS is good as measured by handling issues at the lowest level possible.

**Member Reports**

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

IDEA Representative, Kay Wilson

Wilson discussed graduation requirement waivers for students with disabilities. Currently there are 423 which is the most in years. Typically approved waivers are due to reading problems. Wilson further provided information on the industry based certificates and the special education taskforce being formed by DOE to talk about how students with disabilities fit into the new jump start career diploma.

Parent Training Information Center Representative, Laura Nata

The PTIC’s newsletter sent by U.S. Mail and electronically provides families with information on a variety of webinars, workshops, and in-person trainings. The PTIC continues to provide trainings at no cost.

Statewide Independent Living Council Representative, Laura Meaux

Meaux revisited the mandate of the independent living centers to assist its clients in having what they need to be as independent as they can.

**Consumer Story**

Tonya Hill and Cassondra Jones, previous consumers, addressed the group regarding their experiences with LRS.

**Officer Elections**

Karla Cummings, who served as the Officers Nominating ad hoc Committee, presented the slate recommended from their meeting February 27. All the committee’s initial nominations accepted except that for Secretary.

**Nomination** by Pranab Choudury for David Gallegos to take that place on the slate; Gallegos accepted. No other nominations were made from the floor. Gallegos’ name was added to the slate without objection.

Final Slate:

Chairperson Libby Murphy

Vice-Chairperson Bob Lobos

Secretary       David Gallegos

At-Large Member Tommy Carnline

Eligibility & Planning Committee Chair Lanor Curole

Employment Committee Chair Derek White

Outreach Committee Chair Pam Allen

**Motion** to accept Final Slate by Laura Nata, seconded by Larry Dale. There was no further discussion. The motion passed without objection.

**Public Forum**

There were no attendees for the public forum.

**RECESS: The meeting recessed to Committees 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, April 4, at 8:30 a.m.

**Committee Reports**

The Outreach, Employment, and Eligibility and Planning Committees presented their reports/recommendations.

Outreach Committee Report on Activities:

1. Development of a Social Media Policy and Procedures for posting

2. Acquiring estimates for signage to help direct members and the public to meeting places.

3. Website ideas:

* Success stories.
* Dates to our meetings.
* Newsletter from the desk of the Director.
* Inclusion of accessibility icons.
* History of LRS.

Employment Committee

Report on Activities:

1. Development of a Plan to encourage an increase the number of Employment Support Professionals who successfully complete the Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) Exam.

Recommendation:

1. After summer trainings for rehabilitation counselors on benefits planning Advocacy Center WIPA program to report referrals. LRC will also request from the Human Development Center’s BPS.

Recommendation was approved by unanimous consent.

Eligibility and Planning Committee Report on Activities:

1. Overtime analyzing the number of transition referrals determined eligible, by age and an analysis of closures, by type.

2. Development of recommendations on the implementation of Economic Need Requirement for certain services.

3. Development of recommendations on the revision of Orders of Selection.

4. Development of recommendations on the provision of procedures for consumers with Substance Abuse diagnoses.

**Planning Ad Hoc Committee Report on the Development of the Plan for 2015**

1. Continue to educate the Administration and Legislature as to the value of the vocational rehabilitation program, its funding and to advocate for increase the state appropriation to LRS.

2. Research ways to increase third party matches. (Assign an ad hoc committee to seek input from other states such as Mississippi and from the CSAVR and NCSRC and provide recommendations to the full Council.)

3. Request LRS to reopen/move the New Orleans area office back to the New Orleans east bank.

4. LRS will seek input and guidance from the LRC on proposed policy and procedure changes.

5. Develop a marketing plan to improve integration LRS and LWC, including staff culture so that LRS is seen as an integral part of what LWC does.

6. Explore how LRC can better coordinate activities with agencies as mandated in federal law and state executive order (i.e., the State Independent Living Council, the Governor’s Office for Disability Affairs, the Special Education Advisory Panel, the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council, the Louisiana Behavioral Health Advisory Council and the Workforce Investment Council).

7. Increase Public Forums attendance

8. Collaborate with LRS and DOE to increase service to and promote early involvement with students in transition.

**Motion** to accept the recommended Plan made by Lanor Curole and seconded by Billie Ruth Kvaternick. Accepted without objection.

**New Business**

There was no new business.

**Adjourn**

White adjourned the meeting at 12: p.m.