

**9<sup>th</sup> Annual Retreat Report**  
**Vermont State Rehabilitation Council**

Thursday, October 13, 2016

9:30 am – 3:30 pm

Three Stallion Inn Stock Farm Road Randolph VT 05060

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This year's Retreat had two topics of focus: The VR Consumer Satisfaction Survey results and the SRC 2017 priorities. The morning session was a presentation, review and discussion of the 2016 VR Consumer Satisfaction Survey results. During the afternoon session, the SRC Committee Chairs and DVR Director provided their 2016 summary reports. And then the Committees broke out to identify their priorities for 2017. The members came back together at the end of the Retreat to identify a few general 2017 priorities for the SRC.

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**Retreat Goals:**

- Understand the 2016 VR Consumer Satisfaction Survey results
- Provide overview of 2016 Accomplishments
- Determine 2017 Priorities

**Retreat Participants:**

- Max Barrows, guest (SRC appointment in process)
- Karen Blake-Orne, guest (VR Field Services Manager)
- Samantha Brennan, SRC member
- Sherrie Brunelle, guest (SRC appointment in process)
- Julia Burakian, SRC member
- Alaina Clements, SRC Vice-Chair and Chair AOE Committee
- Tyler Cliche, guest (Max Barrows' Job Coach)
- Diane Dalmasse, DVR Director and SRC member
- Hib Doe, guest (VR Regional Manager)
- Martha Frank, SRC member
- Chris Kane, SRC member
- Sarah Launderville, guest (SRC appointment in process)
- Adam Leonard, SRC Chair and Chair PR Committee
- Sam Liss, Chair P&P Committee
- Michelle Paya, guest (SRC appointment in process)
- Ashley Pulaski, guest (SRC appointment in process)
- Brian Robertson, Market Decisions Representative
- Brian Smith, SRC member
- James Smith, DVR Liaison
- Rebekah Stephens, SRC coordinator

The Retreat began with a fun introduction activity involving a ball being tossed around the room, as each member introduced themselves and the member prior to themselves. This activity was followed by the icebreaker, "Candy Lover – A fun meeting icebreaker where people are encouraged to talk about things they love." SRC members were asked to randomly choose a candy bar with a number 1 – 6 on the

bottom. Each number represented a different question. Questions ranged from “What is your favorite book?” to “What is one stressful thing about your life you wish you could improve?” Members enjoyed the activity and learned some interesting details about each other.

### **Discussion/Presentation – 2016 Consumer Satisfaction Survey Results:**

VR managers, Hib Doe and Karen Blake-Orne joined the SRC members during the morning of the Retreat. Brian Robertson, Market Decisions’ representative, presented a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation on the 2016 Consumer Satisfaction Survey results for the SRC members and VR managers. A summary of the information covered is listed below:

- 700 surveys were conducted by telephone and/or mail. 10% of the surveys conducted involved the use of a proxy. A proxy may be used if a survey participant is a minor or has a disability that prevents them from participating directly.
- “87% of consumers were satisfied with Vermont’s VR program.”
- “94% of consumers indicated it was easy to access VR services.”
- “97% of consumers reported that VR staff treated them with dignity and respect.”
- Outcomes and Meeting Goals are probably some of the lowest percentages. On page 44 of the PowerPoint, “For 2016, 78% of consumers agreed that VR services were helping them become more financially independent.” Even though this number is still relatively low, it has gone up from 2013, which showed 66% for this same question. This is a positive move.
- Overall consumer satisfaction has increased from 2013 to 2016. Pages 76 and 77 provides a summary of this upward trend.
- “84% of working consumers were satisfied with their current job.” The general working public job satisfaction rate is 50%. VR consumers are much more satisfied with their jobs than the general working public.
- High School students were not surveyed in 2016. A separate set of metrics will need to be designed for this group. Currently, a significant amount of services is being provided to students that may never become VR consumers. The way VR surveys will need to be adjusted to collect this data.

During the presentation, SRC members made specific comments on some of the results. Here is the summary of those comments:

- Page 55 – “78% of consumers indicated they were able to receive(d) needed services even when their VR counselor was not available.” This percentage is moving in the right direction from the 69% in 2013. When a counselor is not available, a consumer may work with a program tech. For example, coming in to a VR office to get a bus pass. The program tech can get the bus pass for the consumer, so the consumer doesn’t have to make an appointment with their counselor and come back later.
- Page 58 – “For 2016, 42% of consumers were able to access benefits counseling through VR.” Only about 30% of VR consumers receive SSDI (Social Security Disability Income) benefits, so this number is not unexpected.
- Page 59 – “96% of consumers receiving benefits counseling found it to be valuable.” This is 96% of the 30% that receive SSDI.

- Page 61 – “For 2016, 16% of consumers experienced problems with VR or the services they provided.” This number is down from the 21% in 2013.
- Page 62 – “The Most Commonly Mentioned Problems: Did not receive employment, VR could not find me a job – 13%.” This question is more of an expectation question. It is important to stress to consumers that this is a partnership between them and VR.
- Page 63 – “31% of consumers reporting problems indicated that VR worked to resolve their problems. Brian stressed that in all the States they have surveyed, not one has ever gotten above 40%, except for VT in 2008. Florida VR attempted to do a deeper dive but was unsuccessful in getting any concrete underlying reason. It may be an expectation issue on the part of the consumer. Also, sometimes consumers, don’t tell VR they have had a problem. An SRC member asked if a question around “Did you have a problem and did you tell someone that you had a problem” is included on the survey? Brian responded no. Maybe a question should be added because a problem can’t be solved if you don’t know there is a problem.
- Page 64 – “75% of consumers were informed they could address any problems with the Client Assistance Program.” Sherrie Brunelle shared that she gets the sense that CAP should be receiving more referrals. But she hasn’t been doing this job long enough to get a good handle on it. It is possible more outreach on the part of CAP is needed. Brian shared that sometimes consumers don’t remember they have been informed. It was commented, that sometimes informing is not enough, it is how the consumer perceives how they are informed. If they are handled a brochure they may not even read it. Sarah Launderville shared that CAP is mentioned 3 times during the VCIL (Vermont Center for Independent Living) referral/application process.
- Page 86, “Consumer Feedback (continued) – The one area that did see a sharp increase since 2013 was difficulties filling out and concerns about paperwork. In this case, the number of consumers expressing concerns about paperwork increased from 84 in 2013 to 129 in 2016. Specifically, it was difficult to complete the paperwork or the that paperwork was complicated, they needed help in completing the forms and there was simply too much paperwork, or that it required them to provide too much information.” Diane Dalmasse mentioned that counselors need to make sure they are helping consumers with the paperwork. Not just handing it to the consumer to fill out. Martha Frank asked, if the paperwork is accessible to those with disabilities? Specifically, the spacing and amount of white on the paper which would allow for easier reading. James Smith mentioned that the paperwork has not changed from 2013 to 2016. Hib Doe added that the only form handed to a consumer to fill out is the referral form. The counselor does help with the remainder of the paperwork. Julia Burakian shared that sometimes it is more the amount of paperwork then the actual forms. Diane wants to make sure VR checks in with each VR office to see what practice is being used in each office.
- Page 95, “Using Data for Quality Improvement.” Market Decisions suggests that a narrative specific to the State or District level be written “highlighting both the positive areas as well as identifying areas where changes may improve the consumer’s experience; adding in additional detail to the core metrics from individual questions as well as consumer feedback.” Hib Doe shared that after the 2013 survey, each district (region) was tasked with coming up with a plan on how to address the results and

identified issues. There is no template for a narrative because each district (region) is different.

**Committee 2016 Accomplishments and 2017 Priorities:**

2016 Committee Reports were presented at the Retreat by Adam Leonard – SRC Chair and Performance Review Committee Chair, Sam Liss –Policy and Procedures Committee Chair and Alaina Clements – SRC Vice-Chair & Advocacy, Outreach and Education Committee Chair. Each report provided a brief overview of the Committee’s 2016 accomplishments. Diane Dalmasse presented her 2016 Director’s Summary Letter. The following summary highlights the Director’s Summary Letter and each of the SRC Committee’s 2016 reports, along with 2017 Priorities.

▪ **2016 Director’s Summary Letter:**

- “VR Vermont assisted close to 1600 Vermonters with disabilities to obtain or maintain employment.”
- AWARE will be going live in less than a year (September 2017)
- Motivational Interviewing is going well. All training has been completed and there are MI coaches in every office. Each VR office holds a monthly MI meeting to discuss techniques and share success stories.
- Vermont VR has been awarded a “Work Based Learning Grant”. This is a 5-year grant of nearly \$9 million.
- Governor Shumlin has signed an Executive Order making Vermont a model for hiring people with disabilities. The model will be based on Creative Workforce Solutions and Progressive Employment.
- The final regulations for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) are now published. VR is busy making the necessary policy changes and writing memorandums of understanding (MOUs) in order, to be in full compliance with the new regulations.

▪ **Policy and Procedures:**

**2016 Accomplishments:**

- SRC Bylaw language changes were finalized.
- Use of the term “consumer” was agreed upon for use in the VR Policy & Procedures manual.
- The following Chapters were reviewed:
  - Chapter 101, “Confidentiality”
  - Chapter 102, “Informed Choice”
  - Chapter 103, “Comparable Services and Benefits”
  - Chapter 104, “DBVI”
  - Chapter 105, “Appeals Process”

**2017 Priorities:**

- WIOA Policy and Procedures Changes
  - Reflections in the Manual
- Add motor vehicle purchases/repairs to P&P Manual
  - Review pertinent chapters, add language if necessary

- Highlight the topic
  - Identify Car Coach references in P&P manual
- Review spending guideline survey; clarify specific points in question
- **Performance Review:**
  - 2016 Accomplishments:**
    - Reviewed proposed changes to Order of Selection (OOS) system and provided feedback
    - Reviewed the 2016 Consumer Satisfaction Survey and provided feedback for future surveys
    - Reviewed VR's spending as it related to Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
    - Provided feedback on the 2017 Needs Assessment
    - Hosted a presentation on the VR Consumer Orientation process and provided feedback to VR
  - 2017 Priorities:**
    - Pre-ETS
      - Performance measures for transition counselors
      - Satisfaction of individuals receiving Pre-ETS services
      - Effect on guidance from Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)
      - Adding student (s) to Committee
    - Consumer Satisfaction Survey
      - Review results in depth
    - 2017 Needs Assessment
    - Review of services for students in corrections
    - Report back on effect of new OOS
    - Consumer Orientation follow up
- **Advocacy, Outreach and Education:**
  - 2016 Accomplishments:**
    - Monitored the effects of implementing the new WIOA regulations
      - Pre-ETS
    - Maintained several standing agenda items to monitor the ongoing progress of various areas of interest:
      - Medicaid Budget
      - Career Access Project
      - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
    - Kept informed of local and national disability initiatives through regular updates
    - Participated in an outreach event at the Statehouse
  - 2017 Priorities:**
    - Create an Action Plan around:
      - Career Access – education
        - Getting information on options out to people
          - Think College

- ABLE Act – education
    - Outreach
  - Educating the new Administration
  - SRC presence at employer recognition events
  - Pre-ETS: Family Outreach/Fact Sheets and Assistive Technology
    - Marketing of the Transition Tool Kit
    - Educating schools around Pre-ETS
    - Outreach to families explaining Pre-ETS
  - Youth Summit (combine with Disability Awareness)
    - Include stories of success and self-advocacy
- **Steering/SRC:**
- 2016 Accomplishments:**
- Set agendas for SRC meetings
  - Monitored WIOA and the impact on Vermont DVR
  - On-going planning of a Disability Summit
    - Sub-committee was formed
  - Planned and implemented an Annual Retreat
  - Ended 2-year partnership with the Assistive Technology Advisory Council (ATAC)
- 2017 Priorities:**
- Monitor impact of 76% reduction in VR re-allotment funding on VR
  - Monitor the outcomes based on the regulatory changes as mandated by WIOA
    - Presentation on what the Pre-ETS model looks like in a couple of schools
    - Add a standing agenda item to future full SRC meeting agendas – for Committee chairs to update the full SRC on any pertinent/important updates from their last Committee meeting (15/20 minutes total)
  - Broader Outreach
    - Presentation by MaryEllen Mendl (211 Director) on 211 system
    - Steering Committee to integrate AOE outreach topics into full SRC meetings making sure to include a diverse people group platform
    - Presentation from consumer family and/or student panel or people that use other forms of communication (AT)
  - Inviting VR regional managers to a full SRC meeting to hear what is going well (working), opportunities and challenges
  - Disability Summit
    - Continued support of sub-committee
  - Bring in some partner agencies to present and/or a panel
  - Keep in mind throughout the SRC process – “Nothing About Us without Us”

Respectfully submitted for approval on October 28, 2016 by Rebekah M. Stephens, VT SRC Coordinator