

Minutes – June 5, 2014

SRC Performance Review Committee

SRC Performance Review Committee		
Thursday, June 5, 2014	10:00 am – 12:00 pm	White River Craft Center 50 Randolph Avenue, Randolph, VT 05060
Meeting called by	Adam Leonard, Chair at 10:06 am.	
Members Present	Kerry White, Samantha Brennan, Patti Shane, Whitney Nichols, Alaina Clements, Leslie Mitchell, Anthony Williams and Ellen Vaut	
Members Absent	None	
SRC Liaison	James Smith, VR Budget and Policy Manager	
SRC Coordinator	Rebekah M. Stephens	
Interpreters	n/a	
Speakers/Presenters	n/a	
Facilitator	-----	
Guests	Michael Kingsbury, VR Counselor and Dan Thompson, VR Counselor	
1. Today's Agenda		
-----	-----	
Discussion	Alaina Clements moved to accept. Ellen Vaut 2 nd .	
Conclusions	Today's agenda accepted.	
2. Approval of Minutes - April 3, 2014 Committee Meeting		
-----	Adam Leonard	
Discussion	No discussion. Alaina Clements moved to approve. Ellen Vaut 2 nd .	
Conclusions	April 3, 2014 minutes approved.	
Action Items		Person Responsible
Upload approved minutes to www.VTSRC.org		Rebekah Stephens
Deadline		
6/13/2014		
3. Discussion/Panel – “Why do 40% of mental health disability (psychiatric disability) consumer cases close unsuccessfully prior to IPE?”		
-----	Panel: Samantha Brennan, Michael Kingsbury and Dan Thompson	
Discussion	The PR Committee invited Michael Kingsbury and Dan Thompson, general VR counselors, along with Samantha Brennan, general VR counselor and PR Committee member to participate in a discussion on today's topic – “Why do 40% of mental health disability (psychiatric disability) consumer cases close unsuccessfully prior to IPE?” The panel of VR counselors provided excellent insight into this topic. Mental health diagnosis is spread over a wide spectrum. In order to fully address this question, it must first be discerned, which particular diagnosis is seeing a higher unsuccessful case closure rate? Dan Thompson believes that it is possible to pull data by specific diagnosis because counselors code each disorder differently. Dan feels that the higher rates may be seen in populations with both substance abuse and mental health disability diagnosis. Sam Brennan shared that the data made her look at the questions, “how is VT VR doing compared to other states. Is it possible to determine if any other diagnosis ie: cognitive issues are being lumped in with mental health disability diagnosis? Is the lack of CRT support adding to this high percentage of unsuccessful closures? And it would be interesting to know if the changes to the Department of Mental Health (DMH) manual have effected how people are qualifying for different DMH programs? Is it possible that these manual changes have added to this percentage of unsuccessful case closures?” Kerry White asked the panel, “how are VR assessments currently being handled?” Dan shared that counselors go by what the consumer tells them during the assessment conversation. The more discussion, hopefully, the more information will be gleaned from the consumer. Michael Kingsbury added that a consumer's medical information is also requested. Ellen Vaut shared that parents can be a great	

Minutes – June 5, 2014

SRC Performance Review Committee

resource for counselors, however, including parents in a VR case when the consumer is an adult can be problematic. Michael shared a consumer success story that included the use of creative work solutions and VR acting as an intermediary for the consumer. VR was able to speak to the potential employer on behalf of the consumer and provide the employer with insight into the consumers circumstances. The consumer secured the job and has been successful to date. Michael also shared that he has been seeing an increase in consumers that have a diagnosis of both substance abuse and psychiatric disability. As a result, he has witnessed the complex issues that arise out of these situations. Long term support is needed in the majority of these cases and the support is not always available. Dan shared, that in his experience, getting people to work has a healing effect and a feeling of greater self-worth. Whitney Nichols shared that discrimination towards individuals with psychiatric disabilities is an ongoing problem within the employment environment. Dan shared that VR can help a great deal by providing conversations with employers on behalf of consumers. James Smith summarized today's discussion; there is a higher unsuccessful closure rate for this population. These consumers are found eligible for services but for some reason are disengaging and are unable to get to a plan. The rehab rate for this population has consistently been in the low 50% for the last 5 years. If folks from supported employment were removed from this number the successful number would fall even lower. Supported employment cases are opened just prior to successful employment being achieved so it inflates the successful number in the psychiatric disability category. James admits this is a challenge. The data has been fairly consistent over time. How does VT VR compare to other states in this area? James shared that the data for other states does not go down to that level of detail for accurate comparison. Because other states compile their data differently it may be misleading to compare data. The federal rehab rate for the overall VR program is 55.8%. If VT VR served only individuals with psychiatric disabilities, VT VR would fail that standard. Ellen Vaut asked if a case is not progressing because a consumer walks away from VR due to a psychiatric episode or related difficulty, how do VR counselors handle the decision to keep the case open or close the case? The panel shared that each case is handled based on its individual circumstances. Patti Shane asked if telecommuting or remote working solutions are available to VR consumers. Dan shared that Hugh Bradshaw is very successful at identifying the legitimate telecommuting and remote opportunities and more are coming available but is a small pool of opportunities. Kerry White asked if everyone is coding cases the same across VT? Alicia Wein has been doing work around this issue to ensure greater consistency in case coding. James feels comfortable with saying that most counselors are coding correctly. Kerry asked if this is an area that may need improvement and if a deeper dive by VR and the SRC would be beneficial? James shared that a quality review in this area has not been done. Michael shared that he secures as much documentation from the consumer to support a claim of a diagnosis so that the coding will be accurate. James explained that a long time ago VR used to have a doctor on staff that would validate consumer claims of a psychiatric diagnosis. However, VR found this process to be very intrusive to the consumer and dropped the position. Discussion of a consumer's psychiatric diagnosis is a sensitive area and it can sometimes be difficult to get a consumer to admit they have a psychiatric disability. Sam shared that the new EAP program has streamlined the process of getting services for a consumer with a psychiatric disability services because the evaluation process is now much quicker. James stated that VR could do a deeper dive into the diagnostic categories that are under this general psychiatric disability category. Sam brought the coding sheets that VR is currently using to code the diagnosis of a consumer. The PR Committee members reviewed the sheets. The PR Committee would like to see how much of the data is linked to consumers that are incarcerated. Cases are put on hold and sometimes closed depending on how long a consumer is to be incarcerated. VR counselors are able to enter in reasons for closure under each closure code. Sam shared that motivational interviewing tools should help considerably with assisting consumers with overcoming personal feelings of inadequacy due to their psychiatric disability. Michael shared that sometimes consumers in this population

Minutes – June 5, 2014

SRC Performance Review Committee

<p>have a considerable unsuccessful employment history in a community and it can be difficult to overcome in order to secure employment. However, with hard work on the part of the consumer and support from the VR counselor successful employment can be achieved. Ellen asked if there are employers that are more likely to give a VR consumer a chance than others? Michael shared that each circumstance is unique and can be dependent on whether or not the employer has a history with the consumer already. Dan shared that trust in the relationship between VR or VABIR and the employer makes a big impact on an employer giving a consumer a job opportunity. If the employer trusts VR/VABIR they are more likely to give a consumer a chance. Employers tend to focus on what a person can do rather than what they can't do. Leslie Mitchell shared that is about knowing your employers and your consumers and finding the best fit for everyone. James asked the panel; if resources were not an issue what would you as counselors like to see done? Dan shared that wrap around services would be wonderful, more money for work experiences and more specific training for supporting staff on specific psychiatric disabilities. Adam wanted to know approximately how many consumers in this population would benefit from wrap around services? Dan believes that at least 50% of consumers in this category would benefit from wrap around services. Housing is a huge issue. Many consumers in this category are "couch surfing" and it is really hard to worry about work when you don't have a place to live, especially in the winter. Sam explained that this can sometimes be a snowball effect and not having access to dependable and consistent psychiatric services compounds the issues. Transportation is also a problem in most areas of VT. Funding is probably the biggest issue. Funding is being cut across the board and as a result services reduced. Consumers also worry about loss of benefits based on their income level. Consumers are aware that if they earn over a certain amount of money they will lose medical benefits but will not earn enough to continue to afford their medication. It is a terrible cycle. Whitney Nichols shared that systemic changes need to happen. The current system is not o.k. The work disincentives for older individuals need to be eliminated and should be a priority. Adam Leonard pointed out that one of the State Plan strategies is to improve services to the mature population. VR's "Planned Activities" around this population are to "increase outreach to and collaboration with organizations that serve older Vermonters, partner with Vermont Association for Training and Development to assist their clientele who have disabilities to find and maintain employment, conduct market research on the employment needs of the mature worker and why they may not apply for DVR services, have a DVR work group to assess the challenges in working with the mature workers and how DVR can best serve this population, develop a coordinator position to oversee services to the mature worker, and collaborate with Invest EAP and the Business Account Managers to identify older employees who may need assistance in order to retain a job." Adam asked if there is anything that should be added to this list? A member of the panel suggested training around expunging of criminal records would be helpful. VT is very poor on expunging of criminal records and the process is lengthy. Some states have an automatic expunging process based on a certain time frame. The SRC could advocate for a better expunging process or an automatic process by going directly to the governor. A minor criminal record can have a major negative impact on a consumer's ability to obtain employment.</p>	
Conclusions	<p>The PR Committee would like to take a deeper dive into the data under the general category of psychiatric disabilities. The intent of the deeper dive is to determine if there is a particular subset of individuals with the greatest need. By narrowing down who has the greatest need, VR can focus their efforts. The PR Committee would like further discussion on the "expunging of criminal records" issue. A discussion on this topic to be included on next PR Committee meeting agenda. Just a note – VR is launching a new training through CCV that will provide training on employment for CRT and VABIR staff. VR will be tracking to see how many staffers attend the trainings. VR would like to do a presentation on this new program for the PR Committee sometime in the future.</p>

Minutes – June 5, 2014

SRC Performance Review Committee

Action Items		Person Responsible	Deadline
Email VR counselor coding sheets to Rebekah Stephens for distribution to PR Committee members		Samantha Brennan	6/20/2014
Email VR counselor coding sheets to PR Committee members		Rebekah Stephens	6/20/2014
Include discussion on researching and advocating on/around “expunging of criminal records process- what is the current process and statutes – how can PR/SRC advocate to improve process?” on next PR Committee meeting agenda		Rebekah Stephens	11/19/2014
Gather data on subset of general psychiatric disability category to identify subset (disability category) with greatest need		James Smith	12/4/2014
Include discussion of subset data under general disability category on next PR Committee meeting agenda		Rebekah Stephens	11/19/2014
Include presentation on CCV employment training program on next PR Committee meeting agenda		Rebekah Stephens	11/19/2014
4. Other Business			
-----	-----		
Discussion	None.		
Conclusions	None.		
Action Items		Person Responsible	Deadline
None		n/a	n/a
6. Adjournment			
Discussion	Whitney Nichols made motion to adjourn. Patti Shane 2 nd .		
Conclusions	Unanimous vote to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 11:52 a.m.		
Action Items		Person Responsible	Deadline
Draft minutes respectfully submitted for approval		Rebekah Stephens	7/4/2014
Draft minutes uploaded to website www.VTSRC.org		Rebekah Stephens	7/4/2014
Draft minutes emailed to Committee members		Rebekah Stephens	7/4/2014
Minutes approved		Committee Members	12/4/2014
Approved minutes uploaded to website www.VTSRC.org		Rebekah Stephens	12/12/2014