

Minutes – February 7, 2013

Vermont State Rehabilitation Council (VT SRC)

Vermont State Rehabilitation Council (VT SRC)		
Thursday, February 7, 2013	12:00 PM – 3:30 PM (Working Lunch)	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation 156 South Village Green Middlebury, VT 05753
Meeting called by	P. Neal Meier, Chair at 12:00 PM.	
Members Present	Karen Hussey, Allen Evans, John Alexander, Adam Leonard, Sam Liss, Laban Hill, Ellie Marshall & Diane Dalmasse	
Members Absent	Jennifer Whitmore (approved leave of absence) Whitney Nichols, William Pendlebury, John Spinney & Sarah Launderville	
SRC Liaison	James Smith, DVR Budget and Policy Manager	
SRC Coordinator	Rebekah M. Stephens	
Interpreters	-----	
Speakers/Presenters	Middlebury VR Staff: Mark Ciociola, Regional Manager, Lisa Young, Associate Regional Manager, Mary Ellen Giglio, Business Account Manager, and Sam Trudel, Enhanced Work Incentive Counselor	
Guests	Kerry White, Client Assistance Program Advocate	
1. Today's Agenda		
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Discussion	Neal Meier suggested moving agenda item "Honoring P. Neal Meier" to right after "Election of SRC Chair and Vice-Chair" as he is not feeling well today and once a new chair is elected his service to the SRC is technically finished. Therefore new chair would take over facilitating meeting.	
Conclusions	Change in agenda approved unanimously.	
2. Approval of Minutes – October 4, 2012 SRC Meeting		
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Discussion	None.	
Conclusions	Approved unanimously.	
Action Items		Person Responsible
Put approved minutes on website www.VTSRC.org		Rebekah Stephens
		Deadline
		2/28/2013
3. Approval of 5th Annual Retreat Report – December 6, 2012		
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Discussion	None.	
Conclusions	Approved unanimously.	
Action Items		Person Responsible
Put approved 5 th Annual Retreat Report on website www.VTSRC.org		Rebekah Stephens
		Deadline
		2/28/2013
4. Consent Agenda		
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Discussion	Consent agenda includes: Approved minutes: Steering Committee – September 6, 2012 & November 1, 2012, Policy & Procedures Committee – September 6, 2012 & November 1, 2012, Advocacy, Outreach & Education Committee – September 6, 2012 & November 1, 2012 and Coordinator's Report. No discussion.	
Conclusions	Approved unanimously.	
Action Items		Person Responsible
Put approved Coordinator's Report on website www.VTSRC.org		Rebekah Stephens
		Deadline
		2/28/2013
5. Election of SRC Chair and Vice-Chair		
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Discussion	Neal Meier called for nominations from the floor. No nominations from floor received. Sam Liss has been nominated for Chair. Ellie Marshall has been nominated for Vice-Chair. Ballots were	

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handed out to SRC members. 8 voting members present. Quorum met. Sam received 8 votes for Chair.		
Ellie received 8 votes for Vice-Chair. Sam and Ellie welcomed as new Chair and Vice-Chair.		
Conclusions	Congratulations to Sam and Ellie. The Council looks forward to their leadership over the next year.	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
None.	n/a	n/a
6. Honoring P. Neal Meier		
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Discussion	The Council members presented Neal with a wooden rice bowl filled with personal notes. Neal presented the Council members with custom made VT SRC pins. Neal had enough pins made so that many future members will be able to receive them. Neal also surprised the Council members with homemade chocolate covered strawberries.	
Conclusions	Neal thanked the Council for their notes and hard work. "You made it easy for me. It has been an honor to serve on this Council and a privilege to serve as chair."	
The strawberries were yummy. Thank you Neal for all of your hard work and dedication. We will miss you.		
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
None.	n/a	n/a
7. Middlebury Office – Vocational Rehabilitation Staff		
30 minutes	Mark Ciociola, Regional Manager; Lisa Young, Associate Regional Manager; Mary Ellen Giglio, Business Account Manager; and Sam Trudel, Enhanced Work Incentive Counselor	
Discussion	Middlebury is one of the smaller offices in Vermont. However, it is small and mighty. The staff works extremely well together. It is definitely a collaborative effort. Staff includes: 2 general counselors, 1 full time transition counselor, 1 half time Reach Up counselor, 1 shared benefits officer (shared with Burlington), 1 administrative position, 1 business account manager, and 1 full time employment consultant. There have been many staff changes this past year. The staff has worked hard to pull together and build a strong team. The transition counselor has been conducting some group meetings in the schools and is working with students researching available post high school opportunities. The transition counselor is getting to know the students. Middlebury has developed UFO (Unlimited Financial Opportunities) groups which focus on pre-employment skills. Training is a priority for consumers, as it increases their marketability to employers. The CWS (Creative Work Solutions) team is currently partnering with VABIR, Counseling Services of Addison County, Economic Services, schools, John Graham Shelter and the Parent Child Center to name a few. A number of individuals from the UFO groups have been placed in jobs. Middlebury staff has identified the "hospitality" field as the current "hot" employment area. Staff developed a model using progressive employment and innovative skills training to prepare consumers for employment in the "hospitality" field. The personal momentum gained by just attending an UFO group has been beneficial to consumers. Staff has identified 2 barriers to consumers in their area: Transportation and child care. Staff is working on assisting consumers with overcoming these 2 barriers to employment. The Middlebury office has increased their successful closures from 66 in 2011 to 92 in 2012. They attribute this increase to the increased use of progressive employment strategies by staff. Referrals for services are also up in Middlebury. Presently the staff are partnering with the local homeless shelter and as a result referrals have increased in the office. However, staff are finding that the majority of referrals are either not eligible for services or not ready for employment. Sam Trudel is scheduled to give a training to the homeless shelter staff on how to make a "good" referral and what services VR offers. Council members asked Sam "what is it like being a counselor in Middlebury?" Sam responded; "The community is small, so it allows for strong relationships with local businesses." Sam is seeing an increase in generational poverty	

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and health issues within the community. Sam stated that Middlebury staff; “Is a great team. Great communication between staff members.”		
Conclusions	The Council members thanked the Middlebury staff for their hard work. The presentation today was very informative and well presented.	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
None.	n/a	n/a
8. Partner Survey		
-----	Diane Dalmasse, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation	
Discussion	Diane went through the survey with the Council members. The question was asked; “What does culture can get over stretched” (page 3) mean? Diane believes it is referring to too many new initiatives or moving too fast between initiatives. Explanations to comments were not included in survey results. It was suggested that it may be helpful for Brendan Hogan to come and give an overview of the health care reforms. The Partner Survey provided beneficial information for VR to look at and incorporate into current practices. Adam Leonard wanted to know how many of the partners surveyed fall under the Vermont Department of Labor. Response was that none of the partners surveyed fall under VDOL. The relationship with VDOL has been rocky since the change in leadership. Budget concerns have caused a “bunker” mentality within VDOL. Protecting internal interests and not looking for outside partners. The question was asked; “What do you see, as the VR Director, as working well with partners?” Diane responded; “We have never seen a partner we didn’t like. We are stronger together than by ourselves. When a partnership is working it is a win-win for consumers, employers and VR. Vermont is small; so having access to partners is good.” James Smith added that the biggest success is that employment on the AHS level has been elevated. Focus is usually on service delivery instead of outcomes. It is a major challenge because there are always fires to put out.	
Conclusions	Council agrees that Brendan Hogan should provide an overview of the health care reforms during October 2013 Full SRC meeting.	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Contact Brendan Hogan and invite to October Full SRC meeting	Rebekah Stephens	6/17/2013
Put Brendan Hogan and Overview of Health Care Reforms on October 2013 SRC agenda	Rebekah Stephens	9/18/2013
9. Discussion on SRC Attendance at New Counselor Training (VR)		
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Discussion	Council members, 2 at a time, will be attending New Counselor Training in 2013. The intent is to determine if New Counselor Training is conveying an accurate message regarding the VR culture which management wants staff to carry forward into their daily work product and interactions with consumers. VR will be offering a 2 nd round of training later in the year. This will give all SRC members an opportunity to attend one of the training sessions. Allen Evans and John Alexander will be attending on March 12, 2013 in Randolph. Ellie Marshall and Sam Liss will be attending on March 29, 2013 in White River Junction. Karen Hussey will be attending on April 19, 2013 in Randolph. There is still one slot open on April 19, 2013. Council members will focus on answering 3 questions: 1. Is the training conveying the message of the VR culture that VR wants counselors/staff to carry forward after training (are VR values and principles being shared and carried forward by new trainees)? 2. Is the training conveying that the consumer is the center of the VR process (from Partner Survey – 3 legged stool concept)? And 3. What really worked at the training? What needs improvement?	
Conclusions	Council members are eager to participate in the training. They are hopeful that this will provide useful information for VR.	

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Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Email 3 questions to all members	Rebekah Stephens	3/5/2013
10. Order of Selection		
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Discussion	James Smith explained the process of Order of Selection (OOS) for all new SRC members. OOS makes sure that individuals with the most severe (Category 1) and severe (Category 2) disabilities are served first. Category 3 (less severe) are eligible for services but approval by the SRC is needed before the cases can be opened. There are 3 individuals under Category 3 requesting services. James recommends opening up services for these 3 individuals. Ellie Marshall reminded Council members of Don Parrish's opinion on OOS. "Don believed that opening up services for Category 3 will spread resources too thin." James explained that re-allotment funds are still available and service to Category 1 and 2 Consumers will not be sacrificed if services are provided to these 3 individuals.	
Conclusions	Sam Liss called for a vote. Council members voted – 4 ayes and 1 nay. Sam did not vote. The ayes have it. Services are to be opened for these 3 individuals.	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
None	n/a	n/a
11. Director's Report		
-----	Diane Dalmasse, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation	
Discussion	Diane went through her report for Council members. Outcomes for the last federal fiscal year were great. There was a 10.3% increase in successful closures. Progressive Employment has really contributed to the increase in successful closures. "Progressive Employment is an evidence based practice that works and we are going to do more of it." VR was on budget until the refunds to families of the farm program. Adam Leonard asked if "expense authorization and budgeting are topics included in New Counselor Training?" James Smith responded that these items are included in the new case management system. The new case management system should assist counselors with staying aware of budgeting issues. Re-allotment money is staying at a high level, but actual numbers will not be available until September 2013. VR drew down \$5.9 million in re-allotment funds last year. The RSA (Rehabilitation Services Administration) audit was not a good experience. The finding that most upsets VR is in regards to transition counselors (TC). The RSA team determined that VR cannot provide any information or education to schools and parents without first opening a case for the IEP student. This would eliminate the meet and greets that transition counselors have been conducting to get to know the students, families and school staff. It would also eliminate any informal conversations between the TCs and students regarding possible interest in services. It is technically considered providing services to non-eligibles. This change will mean increased paperwork and process time for TCs, students, families and school staff. The TCs can still speak with special educators without opening a formal case, but a case would need to be opened before a TC could speak with a student. This could result in 100's of no action cases being opened or cases that could sit open for 3 years. RSA's formal draft report with findings was due to VR by December 21, 2012. VR has not yet received it as of this date. Once the report is received, VR will have the opportunity to respond. Adam Leonard shared that he felt the interaction with RSA team via conference call was less than warm last October (2012). The VR Retreat went well. The message was "Your Voice Is Important." "The VR expanded management team" participated in a one day overview on "motivational interviewing." This technique involves "client ownership" of issues that are creating barriers to getting employed and defining next step strategies. This type of interviewing skill will provide counselors with a tool for assisting consumers who have become "stuck". Diane suggested a future agenda item: "I want to explore an idea I had about tightening the connections and feedback loop between the I-Team (Implementation Team) and	

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the SRC". The I-Team is the tool that VR uses to look at VR performance, etc. "I think the work of the I-Team is integral to the performance review, policy and procedures, and the overall work of the SRC."		
Diane suggests the SRC consider making it a requirement for the SRC Chair or PR Chair to sit in on the I-Team meetings.		
Conclusions	Excellent report. The SRC is eager to review the RSA report with findings and VR response once completed.	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Put discussion on attendance of SRC Chair or PR Chair at I-Team meetings on Steering Committee May agenda	Rebekah Stephens	4/17/2013
12. Discussion on SRC Outreach Project – Making Employment a Priority for Individuals with Mental Health Issues		
-----	Sam Liss and Ellie Marshall	
Discussion	Sam and Ellie explained to the Council members that the AOE (Advocacy, Outreach & Education) committee was invited by Ann Pugh to testify in front of the House Human Services during this year's legislative session. The topic will be "Improving Successful Employment Outcomes for Individuals with Mental Health Disabilities". The AOE committee members are hoping to be put on the schedule sometime in March or April. Notification of the exact date and time will not be known until approximately 2 weeks beforehand. The testimony will consist of real life stories and some statistics. An informational packet, including the real life stories and statistics, will be put together and handed out to the House Human Services members on the day of the testimony. Laban Hill, Whitney Nichols and Ellie Marshall have offered to share their stories with the House Human Services members. Allen Evans offered to review the final product. Sam requested a formal vote of SRC members to approve AOE involvement in this project.	
Conclusions	SRC members voted: 5 ayes to move forward with project. 0 nays. The ayes have it. AOE will move forward with project. Sam did not vote.	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Follow up email to Julie Tucker regarding scheduling of testimony	Rebekah Stephens	3/4/2013
Provide written real life stories and statistical information to Rebekah Stephens	Sam Liss	3/15/2013
13. Parking Lot		
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Discussion	None.	
Conclusions	None.	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
None	n/a	n/a
14. Round Table		
-----	SRC members and guest	
Discussion	Adam Leonard congratulated Sam Liss and Ellie Marshall on their appointments. "I am looking forward to your leadership." Neal displayed a lot of passion. There is a lot of positive momentum in Middlebury VR right now. James Smith appreciates PR efforts on following the long string of data on the 28 closures. Ellie Marshall congratulated Sam on his appointment. And she is looking forward to serving as his vice-chair. Ellie appreciates the findings from Clayton Clark on Supported Employment. Kerry White thanked the SRC for allowing her to attend. Karen Hussey congratulated Sam and Ellie on their appointments. Karen appreciated the way that Neal was honored. The rice bowl was a great idea. Karen is very interested in "motivational interviewing." It is a great opportunity for VR staff. Allen Evans congratulated Sam and Ellie. Allen shared that he is excited about the chance to work on the inside of the VR process. Allen feels that VR is one of the most effective in state government. Laban Hill shared that he gathered	

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a lot of interesting and fascinating information today. He is glad to be able to have some input. It was a terrific meeting. Diane Dalmasse congratulated Sam and Ellie. “I will miss Neal. I hope he considers coming back in a year or two.” Sam Liss shared that “Rebekah Stephens is a pleasure to work with. She is helpful without being officious.” Sam congratulated Ellie. Sam welcomed Laban to the SRC. “Intelligent consumers are a necessary resource on the SRC.” Sam shared that “Allen with his WIB (Workforce Investment Board) background is a wonderful addition to the SRC.” Sam thanked Adam for his helpful input today.		
Conclusions	Today’s meeting was informative and productive. Thank you to all SRC members for your hard work and dedication.	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
None	n/a	n/a
15. Other Business		
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Discussion	Sam Liss announced the Annual SILC Networking Breakfast will take place on Thursday, March 21, 2013 from 7:00am – 9:00am in the Capitol Plaza – Montpelier Room. Everyone is invited. The theme is “Relating the Points of the Olmstead Plan to the SILC State Plan.”	
Sam also requested that the SRC and the SILC consider co-authoring a memo to VR requesting that VR reach out to its partners and consumers for input on the SPIL (State Plan for Independent Living). Adam Leonard wanted to know of what benefit would it be for the SRC and the SILC to co-author the memo? Diane Dalmasse stated that a memo is not needed. Sam just needs to ask. VR will need to see the questions that the SILC wants answered and by what means will the questions be presented to the partners and consumers. Sam will contact Diane and James Smith directly to work out the details.		
Conclusions	Mark your calendars for the SILC Breakfast.	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Contact Diane Dalmasse and James Smith to discuss SILC survey for SPIL	Sam Liss	n/a
16. Adjournment		
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Discussion	Ellie Marshall made motion to adjourn. Allen Evans 2nded.	
Conclusions	Meeting adjourned at 3:31pm.	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Draft minutes respectfully submitted for approval	Rebekah Stephens	3/8/2013
Draft minutes emailed to all Committee members	Rebekah Stephens	3/8/2013
Minutes approved	Full SRC	4/4/2013
Approved minutes uploaded to website www.VTSRC.org	Rebekah Stephens	4/12/2013