

Minutes – April 7, 2016

Vermont State Rehabilitation Council (VT SRC)

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Thursday, April 7, 2016		12:30 PM – 3:30 PM	Waterbury VR HC 2 South – Cherry A Room 280 State Drive Waterbury, VT 05671
Meeting called by	Adam Leonard, Chair at 12:34pm		
Members Present	Sam Liss, Olivia Smith-Hammond, Martha Frank, Leslie Walker Mitchell, Nancy Breiden, Julia Burakian, Ben Wimett (via phone) and Samantha Brennan		
Members Absent	Spencer Lemons, Alaina Clements, Diane Dalmasse and Michele Hubert		
SRC Liaison	James Smith, DVR Budget and Policy Manager		
SRC Coordinator	Rebekah M. Stephens		
Interpreters	n/a		
Speakers/Presenters	VR Regional Managers – Hib Doe, Stephanie Jackson, Leo Schiff and Mark Ciociola		
Guests	Mark Hastings (SRC member applicant), Michelle Paya (SRC member applicant), Jessalyn Gustin (SRC member applicant), Sherrie Brunelle (SRC member applicant) and Kate Krauthamer (VR intern attended with Samantha Brennan)		
1. Today's Agenda			
2 minutes	Adam Leonard		
Discussion	Sam Liss moved to accept. Martha Frank 2 nd . No discussion.		
Conclusions	Today's agenda accepted.		
Action Items		Person Responsible	Deadline
None		n/a	n/a
2. Approval of Minutes – February 4, 2016 SRC Meeting			
3 minutes	Adam Leonard		
Discussion	Leslie Walker Mitchell moved to approve. Sam Liss 2 nd . Nancy Breiden asked for clarification on item #4 “Discussion and Vote – Proposed Changes to SRC Bylaws” around the approved language and the language being sent back to the P&P Committee. It was confirmed that the action items under #4 are correct. No further discussion.		
Conclusions	Minutes approved.		
Action Items		Person Responsible	Deadline
Upload approved minutes to www.VTSRC.org		Rebekah Stephens	4/15/2016
3. Consent Agenda			
5 minutes	Adam Leonard		
Discussion	Consent agenda includes – Approved minutes: Policy & Procedures Committee - January 7, 2016, Steering Committee – January 7, 2016 and Advocacy, Outreach & Education Committee - January 7, 2016 and the Coordinator's Report. Sam Liss moved to accept. Leslie Walker Mitchell 2 nd .		
No discussion.			
Conclusions	Consent agenda accepted.		
Action Items		Person Responsible	Deadline
None		n/a	n/a
4. Update – AWARE			
10 minutes	Leo Schiff, VR Regional Manager		
Discussion	Diane Dalmasse was unable to attend today's meeting. Leo offered to give a brief update. Leo sits on the VR AWARE Adaptation and Steering Committee. Two weeks ago, 16 VR staffers participated in a 2-day AWARE training. Leo found AWARE a little visually complex however the software allows several ways to accomplish the same task so that is a good thing. Any adaptations that will need to be made to AWARE to make it more efficient to use are included in the overall one-time cost of the software. If customization is needed it will be an extra charge. An adaptation example is – how long can a system user		

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go along in the system before a reminder for information is given by AWARE. The whole process is moving along nicely.		
Conclusions	Thank you, Leo!	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
None	n/a	n/a
5. Discussion and Vote – Proposed Changes to SRC Bylaws “Article VII, Section 4 and Section 5”		
15 minutes	Sam Liss	
Discussion	The new language will read: “Article VII, Section 4. The Chair of the Council, or the Vice-Chair if the Chair is unavailable, shall: (A) Chair meetings of the Council; (B) Approve the agenda for Council meetings; (C) Decide whether a scheduled Council meeting should be cancelled due to the likelihood of a quorum being reached, inclement weather, natural disaster, or other circumstances; (D) Approve changes in the location of Council meetings; (E) Approve any out-of-the-ordinary Council purchases; (F) Respond to direct Vocational Rehabilitation consumer contacts made to the Council; (G) Determine, in consultation with the Division, when input or approval of the full Council is required outside of a normally scheduled meeting, or when other circumstances dictate that a full Council meeting is required outside of a normally scheduled meeting; (H) Make such other decisions as necessary to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the Council.” “Article VII, Section 5. In the event the Chair and Vice-Chair are unavailable to exercise any of the responsibilities described in Section 4, the first available Committee Chair will be approached to exercise those responsibilities.” 2/3 majority of Council members are present for today’s vote. No discussion. A vote was taken; 6 Ayes and 0 Nays.	
Conclusions	New language for SRC Bylaws Article VII, Section 4 & 5 approved.	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
None	n/a	n/a
6. Discussion – VR Regional Managers		
1 hour 25 minutes	Leo Schiff, Mark Ciociola, Stephanie Jackson & Hib Doe	
Discussion	The regional managers were asked 4 questions: 1. What is working well in your region? 2. What has been challenging in your region? 3. What are the future plans in your region? and 4. What has been the impact of WIOA in your region? The VR managers answered one question at a time. 1. What is working well in your region? Hib Doe shared that he has been in this position for about 10 years. Successful rehabs have doubled in the Newport region in the past 10 days. Progressive Employment and CWS (Creative Workforce Solutions) has really pushed those successful rehabs. The PETS initiative (Pre-employment Transition Services) has had a smooth rollout in Newport. We have some great transition Counselors (TC) on our team. Communication between VR and VABIR staff is really great. MI (Motivational Interviewing) has been a great tool. There has not been a lot of staff turnover the past few years. This is all good. St. Albans has a federal hiring initiative each year with US Immigration and Naturalization Services. People with disabilities can apply for non-competitive positions with the INS. Stephanie Jackson shared that she has been doing this for 4 years. There was a large turnover of staff when she first took over but the new staff has developed some really good working relationships. White River Junction is seeing an increase in wages and retention within their successful outcomes. The WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) has allowed staff to move into rolls they really love. Business relationships with some hard to break into businesses have started to open up - Dartmouth and EHV Weidmann. This is really encouraging. The partnerships with the other employment partners are very strong. Leo Schiff shared that staff are really prepared for change. The staff are exploring new avenues to assist consumers in gaining employment. VR has handled the communicating of changes to the staff very well. Partnerships with employment partners are strong. Brattleboro has a summer farm to table training program each year. The staff is stable and as a	

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result there are strong successful rehabs. Mark Ciociola shared that Burlington and Middlebury have done really well with their rehabs. They are equal with last year at this time. Staff is doing a lot of hard work. NH VR came to a recent Worklinks meeting and NH was really impressed with the partnership between VR and the employment partners and wanted to know how Burlington is doing it. Businesses are calling Burlington VR to obtain employees. Progressive Employment is an excellent tool. Middlebury had the most successful rehabs last year. Middlebury does a lot of in-house training for consumers. Burlington and Middlebury are moving closer to the goal of 1:1 ratio of VR counselors and employment staff. Burlington will be conducting several deeper dives into special populations to learn how to better serve these consumers. They just completed their first one on TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury). The 4-month review ended with a meeting and a panel of individuals that have a TBI or treat TBI. They will be looking at substance abuse next.
2. What has been challenging in your region? Leo Schiff shared that employment staffing has been a challenge. He has 4 VABIR vacancies in his office. Leo feels that the lower wages for VABIR staff may be one of the obstacles. Leo shared that \$14 is the average hourly wage for VABIR wages and that may be too low. He is hoping that the VR re-allotment money can be used to assist with this issue. Stephanie Jackson shared that she could use another transition counselor in her office. She does not have the ability to hire another counselor. Historically, White River Junction has higher case ratios per counselor than any other VR office. This is a VR office structure issue. Mark Ciociola shared that Burlington is holding its own, however, having only 1.5 VR counselors for adult consumers makes it a challenge and he cannot hire. Substance abuse is also a really big issue in Burlington. Burlington VR is partnering with Turning Point (a community substance abuse program) to address this growing problem. General Assistance has also been a challenge because GA (General Assistance) is tying their benefits with using VR services. However, the VR GA program ended last year. Conversations with GA around how to handle them sending their consumers to VR are in process. VR does not have the counselor capacity to handle this at this time since the program ended. Hib Doe shared that when WIOA was put into effect, CRT (Community Rehabilitation and Treatment) services were stopped. This has been a challenge because there are people that need these services in St. Johnsbury. People with major mental illness barriers needing additional training or assistance in working through the process are coming into VR offices and VR just doesn't have the resources to do the job as effectively as needed. The CRT needed supports are very intensive, time consuming and long-term. Leslie Walker Mitchell shared that VABIR is also unable to provide the level of support and time needed to effectively service the CRT population. Substance abuse in St. Albans is also a big issue. Adam Leonard asked if staff retention is okay in the other offices? All managers said that retention of VR staff is good. Leo clarified that VABIR staff retention is the bigger issue. The other managers shared that VABIR staff retention in their offices is good. Hib shared that if all VR offices added 3 VR counselors per office there are enough potential consumers to fill the caseloads in 6 months. The question was asked what are the obstacles in the way of raising VABIR staff wages? Hib shared that sustainability is the biggest issue. If you use re-allotment funds one year, those funds may not be there next year.
3. What are the future plans in your region? Leo shared that this question and the WIOA question (4. What has been the impact of WIOA in your region?) can be answered together. The biggest change has been PETS and VR has been slow in developing performance measures for its transition counselors (TC). TC's don't keep their consumers after they leave high school. The new performance measures will help to define the TC work and assist their consumers in getting higher wage jobs and better job retention. A future plan is to define these measures and possibly add specialized staff around PETS and beyond high school goals. Maybe increase VR's use of short-term training to move the retention of higher salary jobs upward. Stephanie Jackson shared that the PETS goal mentioned by Leo is also a goal in her region. She is interested in how can VR better serve more people with the resources already available. Additional partnerships with community partners is something she would like to look at in the near future.

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The goal is to serve people and serve them well. Sam Liss asked “how is VR serving those individuals that it may find to be more difficult to find employment for?” The regional managers responded that Progressive Employment and short-term training is key to this process. Hib shared a consumer story about a person who was able to attend a certification training and ended up getting a high paying position. Leslie Walker Mitchell agreed that Progressive Employment is the best way to go with consumers that may have significant barriers to employment. It gives people a chance to show what they can do. The question was asked if there any partnerships with CCV (Community College of VT) around manufacturing training? Burlington is working with CCV around this. Hib shared that some additional supports for consumers with criminal backgrounds is needed. A suggestion was made at the last VR managers meeting to have additional VABIR employment staff work with this population and the employers in the area. Leslie shared that additional training for VABIR staff around how to work with this population would be helpful. Mark Hastings shared that he has seen the benefit of intensive counseling for individuals while they are in the custody of corrections. Nancy Breiden asked if there is some grant money available to VR that would allow VR to focus on this population? Stephanie shared that there has been grant money but unfortunately grants run out. The new SNAP trial (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) will be incorporating some of this population as part of its trial period. Some of the eligibility criteria for the trial are 1. Being on food stamps (SNAP), 2. Homelessness, 3. Mental disability, 4. Correctional history and 5. Substance abuse.		
Conclusions	The SRC members thanked the regional managers for attending the meeting and their candor. Great discussion!	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
None	n/a	n/a
7. Order of Selection		
10 minutes	James Smith	
Discussion	James gave a brief summary of Order of Selection. VR is currently offering services to tier 1 and 2. Tier 3 individuals are not currently served unless approved by the SRC. 2 individuals have been found eligible under tier 3. VR is requesting services be opened for these 2 individuals. Is there any literature for consumers explaining the OOS system? There is a document that VR offers to consumers to explain the system. A new 4 th tier for OOS will go into effect in the new fiscal year. James answered some general questions around how VR currently handles OOS. Rebekah Stephens was asked to read the new tier 1-4 language. Under the new OOS, tiers 1, 2 and 3 will be open and tier 4 will be closed and will need SRC approval to open. Vote was taken to approve opening services for these 2 individuals. 7 ayes and 0 nays. Note: Tiers were previously referred to as categories.	
Conclusions	The SRC has given approval to open services for these 2 - tier 3 individuals.	
Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
None	n/a	n/a
8. Director's Report		
25 minutes	James Smith	
Discussion	Diane Dalmasse was unable to be present at today' meeting. James gave the Director's report. AWARE is on target. VR has settled into their new Waterbury office space. The WIOA Unified Plan has been successfully submitted to the US Department of Education and Labor. Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) are doing well. VR attended a retreat with the Agency of Education. It was very productive. Action steps in 6 areas were developed. The 6 areas are: “Goal #1: Resolving the problem of students who are eligible for DS graduate prior to receiving appropriate access to transition services, Goal #2: State level support for the development of meaningful PLPs that can carry on post high school exit, Goal #3: Early identification and intervention: All incoming freshman are staffed by a team representing DS-School-	

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Mental Health- VR, Goal #4: Create a statewide community of practice/learning community, Goal #5:		
Develop more business/employer driven transition programs that promote career pathways, and Goal #6:		
Becoming a learning group together.” A work group to “set outcome indicators for in-school transition counselors” has been created. Please note these goals are not part of the Unified Plan.		
Conclusions	Thank you James! SRC members requested a copy of the VR portion of the Unified Plan.	
Action Items		
	Person Responsible	Deadline
Email SRC members VR portion of the Unified Plan	James Smith	5/1/2016
9. Other Business		
5 minutes	Adam Leonard/Sam Liss	
Discussion	Peter Boyd is retiring. MWPD (Medicaid for Working Persons with Disabilities) Enhancements is doing great.	
Conclusions	Thanks, Sam!	
Action Items		
	Person Responsible	Deadline
None	n/a	n/a
10. Parking Lot		
5 minutes	Adam Leonard	
Discussion	None.	
Conclusions	None.	
Action Items		
	Person Responsible	Deadline
None	n/a	n/a
11. Round Table		
5 minutes	Adam Leonard	
Discussion	Martha Frank was deeply disheartened by the information that it is so difficult for people who have been incarcerated to secure employment. VR is great. Mark Hastings understands that there is a lot that counselors have to do to help consumers move forward and it shouldn't be so difficult. In business, you come up with a solution and do something about it. Sherrie Brunelle is looking forward to being part of the SRC. She enjoyed hearing from the regional managers. Jessalyn Gustin took away a lot from the meeting. VR is doing a great job. Samantha Brennan enjoyed hearing from the regional managers. Kate Krauthamer enjoyed hearing all the different perspectives. Adam Leonard enjoyed how all of the VR managers wrapped up the presentation by saying they enjoy working for VR. Thank you to Samantha Brennan for her PR presentation. Nancy Breiden really was heartened to see how the regional managers are focused on solving the systemic issues. Leslie Walker Mitchell enjoyed hearing from the regional managers. Michelle Paya is excited to start seeing things from a different lens not just a provider lens. Sam Liss appreciated the honesty and knowledge of the regional managers. James Smith shared that he agrees that things shouldn't be as hard or complicated in state government but doesn't know of any way to fix things. Olivia Smith-Hammond dittoed everyone. Ben Wimett left the call early.	
Conclusions	A great meeting! Thank you to everyone for attending!	
Action Items		
	Person Responsible	Deadline
None	n/a	n/a
12. Adjournment		
0 minutes	Adam Leonard	
Discussion	Sam Liss moved to adjourn. Martha Frank 2 nd .	
Conclusions	Adjourned at 3:34 pm.	

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Action Items	Person Responsible	Deadline
Draft minutes respectfully submitted for approval	Rebekah Stephens	5/6/2016
Draft minutes emailed to all Committee members	Rebekah Stephens	5/6/2016
Draft minutes uploaded to www.VTSRC.org	Rebekah Stephens	5/6/2016
Minutes approved	Full SRC	6/2/2016
Approved minutes uploaded to website www.VTSRC.org	Rebekah Stephens	6/10/2016