

5th Annual Retreat Report

Vermont State Rehabilitation Council

Thursday, December 6, 2012

9:30 am – 3:30 pm

Three Stallion Inn, 665 Stock Farm Road, Randolph, VT 05060

The Retreat was informative and productive. This year's retreat topics were CWS, Review of DVR Successes and Areas Needing Improvement and Review of the SRC Mission and Structure. SRC members worked well together.

Retreat Goals:

- CWS (Creative Workforce Solutions)
 - What is the good news?
 - What still needs work?
 - Observations
 - Opportunities and Questions
 - What are the next steps for the SRC?
- Review of DVR Successes and Areas Needing Improvement
 - Organizational Effectiveness
 - Prepared Job Seekers
 - Valued and Empowered Employees
- Review of SRC Mission and Structure
 - Overview

Retreat Participants:

- Diane Dalmasse, DVR Director
- Allen Evans, SRC member
- Karen Hussey, SRC member
- Christine Kilpatrick, SRC member
- Sarah Launderville, SRC member
- Sam Liss, Chair AOE
- Ellie Marshall, Chair PR
- P. Neal Meier, Chair SRC
- James Smith, Liaison DVR
- John Spinney, SRC member
- Rebekah Stephens, SRC coordinator

Retreat Facilitator:

- **Terri O'Shea** – O'Shea Training and Consulting: Sixteen years of experience in training, facilitation, and organizational development. Member of the Vermont Society of Training and Development. B.A. in Speech Communication and Anthropology from State University of New York at Buffalo. M.S. in Industrial Psychology from California State University at Long Beach.

CWS:

James Smith, DVR Budget & Policy Manager and Liaison to the SRC presented on this topic. James gave a brief overview of the CWS program and the June 9, 2011 SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) memo. Prior to CWS, there were several programs all doing the same thing but working independently. Employers were being overwhelmed with multiple contacts and staff turnover was causing loss of information. There was no capacity for pure employer outreach. VABIR, VR and Supported Employment staff members were splitting their efforts between caseloads and were unable to develop strong employer relationships. CWS took what already existed and made it more productive. CWS made two changes to the existing system. The first was the development of the BAM (Business Account Manager) position. The BAM position is mainly responsible for the development of working relationships with employers. The second was to coordinate the independently functioning employment programs within AHS. These programs now work as a team instead of in competition. Employment teams and staff now meet and communicate with the BAMs regularly. The BAM position has become a resource for all AHS employment programs. CWS is not a new program. It is a collaboration of the existing programs.

The Sales Force tracking system was designed to assist in this collaboration, track employer contacts and to prevent loss of information due to staff changes. Sales Force is a computer based account management system used for monitoring and sharing employer information. Sales Force archives all employer information and keeps track of all Employment Staff activities with the employers. This prevents duplication of staff efforts and unnecessary employer contacts.

The DOE (Department of Education) and the DOL (Department of Labor) do not participate in CWS. However, local collaboration between DVR, DOL and DOE is strong. DOL staff participates in employment work under the RUFA (Reach Up Family Assistance) program, and will interact with CWS staff for guidance.

DVR recently conducted separate surveys of CWS Employers and Employment Teams. CWS employers were surveyed via phone. All employers that had some contact with a BAM were asked to participate in the survey. CWS Employment Teams were asked to participate in the survey to provide an internal look at the CWS program. The surveys were just completed; however, James was able to secure the preliminary results to share at today's Retreat.

The goal of today's Retreat is to review the preliminary survey results and answer the following four questions as they relate to the CWS program:

- What is the good news?
- What still needs work?
- Observations
 - Opportunities and Questions
- What are the next steps for the SRC?

SRC members split into two groups: Group 1 reviewed the CWS Employment Teams survey results and Group 2 reviewed the CWS Employer survey results. The summary of each of those discussion groups follows:

Group 1: CWS Employment Team Survey Discussion

➤ Recommendations:

- Correlate process with outcome
- Look at functioning and performance results of individual teams
 - Identify areas of improvement for individual teams
- Get clear on team roles – have people clear on roles
- Need more effective ways to deal with toxicity on teams
- Strive to have job description include (team people) CWS participation
- How is CWS approach supported in my agency? Is there internal support? Add this to survey
- Create mentoring program for new team members (include Sales Force)
- Strategic sectors based on local economy and growth specialist. Might have team member specialize in a sector (possibility). Do have some of this going

Group 2: Employer Survey Results – 145 total survey respondents

➤ What is the good news?

- Question 12 – Access to Qualified Candidates: 23% Strongly agree and 50% Somewhat agree
- Question 9 – Satisfaction level of candidates: 22% Very Satisfied and 42% Satisfied
- Question 13 – Recommend CWS to other businesses: 93% Yes
- Direct Hire Involvement – BAM has done job

➤ What still needs work?

- Company tour, job shadowing, work experience, on-the-job training and temp to hire- high number of employers not wanting to get involved in these programs. DVR pays the temp to hire fee, but not wages? These programs require less employer commitment. So what is going on in this area?
- Full survey with comments may answer some of these questions
- Review regional responses of survey

➤ Observations:

- Opportunities:
 - Take to Doug Racine ASAP – need sustainable funding
 - Positive
 - Dig Deeper into full results
 - Take data to CWS teams
 - Break out data into regional responses
- Questions:
 - Non-responders – How many employers actually asked to participate?
 - How long phone survey takes to complete?
 - Scheduled survey time with employer?
 - Methodology of survey?
 - Clarification on who pays what for temp to hire?
- What are the next steps for SRC?
 - Put on February 2013 SRC agenda – full survey with presentation by “Market Decisions”
 - Taking information to Doug Racine in concert with DVR
 - Not So Secret Employer – SRC sitting in on CWS team meeting
 - Longitudinal follow up to survey for quality purposes
 - Seeking proper balance between 2 consumer groups (employer and consumer). Performance Review Committee to look at quality versus quantity
 - Consider market penetration versus what is happening now

Review of DVR Successes and Areas Needing Improvement:

Diane Dalmasse, Director of DVR presented on this topic. On November 13 & 14, 2012, DVR held its first all staff conference since 2002. 230 individuals attended this 2 day conference. The goal of this conference was to involve all staff, increase the level of ownership within DVR, and bring the focus back to the job seeker with a disability. The conference was organized around four themes. They were: Valued and Empowered Employees, Organizational Effectiveness, Prepared Job Seekers and Collaborative Partnerships. The staff were asked to respond to each theme with “Prouds” (what DVR is doing well and should continue to do) and “Sorries” (what needs to be worked on). DVR’s senior management team has reviewed the responses and set preliminary priorities from each of 3 themes. The senior management team has not yet reviewed the responses from “Collaborate Partnerships.” Diane distributed the raw responses to the SRC.

The goal of today’s Retreat is to review the raw data and have the SRC members identify 3 “Prouds” and 3 “Sorries” priorities in each of the themes (excluding Collaborative Partnerships at this time). The SRC priority choices will then be compared with the priority choices of DVR’s senior management team. Today’s exercise will show if the SRC choices are in line with DVR’s senior management team priority choices or if there are areas of difference that may need to be considered by DVR.

SRC members split into three groups: Group 1 reviewed the Organizational Effectiveness responses, Group 2 reviewed the Prepared Job Seekers responses and Group 3 reviewed the Valued and Empowered Employees responses. The summary of each of those discussion groups follows:

➤ **Organizational Effectiveness:**

- Prouds:
 - Training
 - Management openness and receptivity
 - Keep using data
 - Sense of visions: missions (shared)
- Sorries:
 - Role Clarification
 - More guidance in workplace
 - Consistency of practices
 - Not getting pulled into crisis management
 - Referral process needs training, boundaries re: what we do
 - Success with organizational outcomes

➤ **Prepared Job Seekers:**

- Prouds:
 - Reaching consumers where “they are” (being realistic; job seeker phase)
 - Collaborate internal and external entities
 - Progressive employment is helpful
- Sorries:
 - Lack of time and resources
 - Quality vs. Quantity in jobs
 - Lack of efficiency – more people working smart
 - Counselor concern re: crisis management

➤ **Valued and Empowered Employees:**

- Prouds:
 - Staff understands mission
 - Flexibility, autonomy, ownership of staff in jobs
 - Positive work environment (leadership)
- Sorries:
 - Communication (redundancy is good thing)
 - Matrix environment (potential for conflict – mitigate)
 - Too many meetings and travel time (teleconferencing is a potential fix)

SRC members conducted the discussion of themes in a “fish bowl” method. The SRC members were encouraged to see that their highlighted priorities corresponded with the recommended priorities of the DVR senior management team.

Review of SRC Mission and Structure:

Sam Liss, the AOE (Advocacy, Outreach & Education) Committee Chair presented on this topic. Sam began his presentation with his interpretation of the SRC mission, “To serve in an advisory capacity with complementary advocacy, outreach and education roles to the Division of VR as it assists people with disabilities to secure and maintain employment within the context of dual customer approach.” The presentation was very informative and well presented. Thank you, Sam.

Round Table:

The SRC is encouraged by the collaborative efforts between the SRC and DVR. It was a productive Retreat. Neal Meier has enjoyed chairing the SRC. It has been a great experience. The members thanked Neal for his leadership. The SRC thanked Terri for another job well done.

Respectfully submitted for approval on December 22, 2012 by Rebekah M. Stephens, Coordinator, VT SRC
Approved by SRC on February 7, 2013
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