

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation
March 5, 2020
Vocational Rehabilitation/DLR District Office; 2330 Maple Ave
Rapid City, SD

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lisa Sanderson, Eric Weiss, Cole Uecker, Beth Schiltz, Kristi Eisenbraun, Kim Ludwig, Joe Vetch, Colleen Moran, Brad Konechne, Brooke Lusk, Bill McEntaffer, Peter Bullene, and Kevin Barber. **MEMBERS ABSENT:** Jolleen Laverdure, Kendra Gottsleben, Kristina Allen. **OTHERS PRESENT:** Bernie Grimme, Jessica Hovland, Heather Hoeye, Gloria Pluimer, Catherine Greseth, Patrick Czerny, Justin Rhodes, Stephanie Rittberger, and Colette Wagoner. Interpreters were Julie Paluch and Katie Peterson.

OPENING ACTIONS: Lisa Sanderson, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 8:30 am. She welcomed everyone and asked for introductions. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA** – Lisa asked if there were any changes to the agenda. **MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS MAILED – MADE (M), SECONDED (S) AND CARRIED (C).** **APPROVAL OF DECEMBER MINUTES** – Lisa asked for changes to the draft December 2019 minutes, noting one change. **MOTION TO APPROVE THE BOARD’S DECEMBER 2019 MEETING MINUTES WITH NOTED CHANGE, MSC.** **APPROVAL OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 5, 2020,** the minutes contain two organizational requests for financial assistance. The Executive Committee approved \$1,366 for the SDSU/Brookings Project SEARCH application to send staff to an international conference and \$2,000 in support of the 2020 Lighting the Way Conference. **MOTION TO APPROVE THE FEBRUARY 5 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES, MSC.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS: There was none.

PUBLIC COMMENT: There was none.

CAREER LEARNING CENTER (CLC) OF THE BLACK HILLS/ADULT EDUCATION/ADULT STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Gloria Pluimer and Stephanie Rittberger provided an overview of the CLC, available services/programs for students, adults, and territory covered. Staff includes five employees of which three are special education teachers. Approximately 350 students will attend and come to classes in a year. Diversity of student population includes 40% of students identify being Native American; over 20% of the population identifies with another minority or two ethnicities. Over 80 community-based organizations are part of the wrap around services. Students who gain assistance are 60% more likely to go onto post-secondary or training. Twenty-nine percent of current students have a self-disclosed disability. Stephanie highlighted the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE),

LINCS and COABE as resources to information, research, and intervention strategies. Stackable credential options are available, where skills and credentials add up, resulting in a degree. Staff utilize trauma informed practices working with students and employers to problem solve employment related issues. Workable solutions have been identified for those who have endured trauma e.g., updating business policies, providing reasonable accommodations. Two videos were shown: Historical Trauma and Graduate Success Stories. Links to the videos can be found at:

Woksape (Adult Education Historical Trauma):

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ufwbev5nxmh04te/AAAoOZDwuJq0BSFZ-1RN99q3a?dl=0>

GED Graduates: <https://youtu.be/MjQpFYldHKw>

Staff are writing a grant in response to the Department of Labor and Regulation's (DLR) request for proposal. These are four-year grants requiring annual updates. In addition to the DLR's Title II funding, CLC receives funding through the Bush Foundation (trauma informed practices) and the Vucurevich Foundation. It was noted that the GED test is a rigorous test aligned with college readiness. The involvement of the community partners has demonstrated more students accessing services through DLR and VR. Bill shared that distance learning also provides options for individuals as well. In response to a question about trends, staff spoke to utilizing research based instruction with a focus on the individuals' career pathway. Staff encouraged Board members to advocate for students as well as encourage them to seek out services of the CLC's across the state.

PROJECT SEARCH OF THE BLACK HILLS: Heather Hoeye and Justin Rhodes spoke about Project SEARCH of the Black Hills, a business led program. Host businesses are Monument Health in Rapid City and Sturgis. Partners include Department of Human Services (DHS), DakotaLink, and area school districts. The Project SEARCH Rapid City site video was shown, and can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2epe3wxQbM&feature=youtu.be>. Project SEARCH attendees are students with varying levels of disability, ages 18-21, who have met high school graduation requirements and are on an IPE with vocational rehabilitation. School year 2018/19 resulted in 100% employment, average starting wage for students was \$12.75, and hired interns work an average of 32 hours a week and all qualified for benefits. The 2019/20 information includes nine participants from five school districts, three students already hired at \$11.00 an hour with benefits. Internship opportunity areas include long-term care, admissions, patient transport, health information management and chef's assistant. Three year analytics reflect: 94% hire rate, average wage of \$11.03, 25 hours per week worked, and students working in a variety of career paths. Justin shared his perspective as an attendee. He spoke of the classroom, work rotations, choices, and areas he liked. He finished the program in May and was hired in the central sterile department. He wants to continue working there and eventually build

a home. Stephanie spoke about mindful placements with the student's interest at the focus, use of an integrated approach to mentorship, use of teams, and students being included in all functions of the workplace e.g., holiday festivities, potlucks, and team builders. More information can be found on the website about the application process, criteria, and more, at <https://projectsearchblackhills.org/>

BREAK

WORKFORCE DIVERSITY NETWORK (WDN) OF THE BLACK HILLS: Catherine Greseth, Executive Director, provided this update. WDN brochures were handed out. WDN is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization started in 2015 with funds from the Division of Rehabilitation Services. WDN networks with employers and businesses to help increase the understanding and benefits of hiring persons with disabilities. WDN sponsors numerous educational events on the topics of interest to employers and human resource managers. WDN provides information to employers regarding worksite modifications, accommodations, review of job descriptions/essential functions of positions, accessible websites, and interview practices. WDN works closely with the DHS' divisions to link employers to prospective employees with disabilities. WDN is starting its 6th year with the goal of getting businesses more involved. WDN will partner with businesses to host the National Disability Employment Awareness Month activity in October. Plans include bringing in a speaker from the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) to address hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities and include real life examples. Staff works with local/state partners, the Business Resource Network of Sioux Falls and Kim Ludwig, Business Specialist/DRS. WDN is in the midst of strategic planning with intent of further involving businesses with mentoring other businesses. Catherine thanked the Board for the invitation to speak about WDN and its activities.

BUSINESS SPECIALIST REPORT:

OPPORTUNITY CAREER EXPO will be held April 7 at Augustana University in Sioux Falls. Employers can register and have a booth and job seekers with disabilities can reserve a spot to attend and learn more about local services. Flyers were passed out and members were asked to share this information.

2020 VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION'S PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES (PRE-ETS) INITIATIVE: DRS and SBVI offered funding opportunities during the summer since 2016 for training opportunities to students with disabilities relevant to Pre-ETS (e.g., workplace readiness training, self-advocacy, and information on vocational rehabilitation and community resources). DRS and SBVI disseminated a memorandum and request for proposal/funding in December. This was distributed to VR staff, service providers, Tribal VR programs, Centers for Independent Living, school districts, and other community agencies. Eight agencies submitted 10 proposals. A handout outlined information on the proposals, identifying location and an

overview of the proposed trainings. Gloria Pluimer thanked the Divisions for the opportunity for these types of funding opportunities, which allow entities to work with students to prepare for Project SEARCH or competitive employment.

PROJECT SKILLS ARTICLE: SD Retailers Association completed an article featuring VR's Project Skills program in their December 2019/January 2020 edition of the Retail Prophet. The article contains information from interviews that were completed with Ken's SuperFair Foods (grocery store locations in the northeast part of the state) and with Kim. She circulated the article for members to read.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR)/DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND REGULATION (DLR) BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT STAFF TRAINING: The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law on July 22, 2014. This placed emphasis on helping job seekers access employment and training opportunities and stressed the importance of the workforce development system to provide effective supports and services to businesses to match them with skilled employees. DLR is currently working with a consulting firm (Maher and Maher) to offer training to their staff on business engagement and techniques to improve working with and providing services to businesses. DLR has extended this training opportunity to VR in which personnel are currently working with DLR personnel to coordinate the training. The training is scheduled May 13 - 14 in Sioux Falls. Approximately 28 VR staff will attend.

EMPLOYER SUPPORTS AND EMPLOYER MODULE STAFF TRAINING: training was held for VR staff on January 22 on the VR's Employer Supports and Employer Module. The training was intended for new and experienced staff to provide information and support to them on the purpose, importance of, and documenting employer support and services in VR FACES (case management system). VR is required to track services and support provided to businesses, which is one of WIOA's performance measures. A majority of staff attended.

VR'S PERFORMANCE MEASURE FOR EFFECTIVENESS IN SERVING EMPLOYERS (INDICATOR 6): WIOA requires the core partners to work with individuals or job seekers and to serve and work with businesses. There are six primary performance measures; one is Effectiveness in Serving Employers (known as Indicator 6). As of January 2018, VR began tracking services and supports being provided to employers. VR measures two approaches for Indicator 6: retention with the same employer (captures the percentage of participants who exit, employed with the same employer in the second and fourth quarters after exit); and repeat business customers (tracks the percentage of employers that use core program services more than once). This is a shared performance measure with other WIOA core partners (e.g., DLR) and is reported once per year on the WIOA Annual Report upon the end of the FFY. Kim referred to a document (entitled Vocational Rehabilitation's Employer Support Definitions and Services) which applies to services documenting employer

supports or services for the repeat business customers approach. The document categorizes definitions in eight categories and provides examples.

VR'S BEST PRACTICES FOR PROVIDING EFFECTIVE BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYER SUPPORTS DOCUMENT: This document provides guidance for VR staff on what business engagement is and its importance. Descriptions include the role of DRS business specialist, the priority of business engagement within DRS and SBVI operations, best practices or examples of how to provide effective employer/business supports, and how to communicate "rehabilitation language" into language that businesses will understand.

ABILITY FOR HIRE (AFH) INITIATIVE: DRS works with Epicosity, a marketing company in Sioux Falls on the Ability for Hire initiative. This initiative provides information and resources to businesses to help recruit and hire employees with disabilities. Ability for Hire/January 2020 Report contains information on the website analytics, comparing data from January 2020 to December 2019. AFH Digital Ads Document: digital ads were launched on Facebook and Google ads platforms; copies of the ads were shared. AFH Business Brochure Update: The Public Awareness committee met in February to review and discuss updates to the brochure. Kim responded to questions of common questions being asked or hot topic areas, she noted questions asked about the ADA, working with individuals with mental health issues, self-disclosure, reasonable accommodations, and modifications to policies. A comment was made that employers need assistance with identifying how persons with disabilities would fit in e.g., construction company would have multiple job classifications (clerical support, drivers, person preparing bids). Assistance has been provided to employers with reviewing job descriptions, identifying the essential functions, and job tasks. A suggestion was made that VR could help link businesses who have successfully hired individuals with disabilities to other employers/businesses that have questions.

WORKING LUNCH

DAKOTALINK: Patrick Czerny provided an overview of the DakotaLink program, funding, mission, goals and activities. Assistive Technology devices were defined as well as services done in the areas of evaluation, purchase, leasing, selecting, designing, customizing and coordinating with other entities. He spoke about universal design and gave examples and the need to look at products, communications, and the built environment to be more usable by as many people as possible. DakotaLink has seven technicians throughout the state. Rapid City office is the only location that provides a storefront operation. He outlined examples of assistive technology for reading, writing, math, speech, hearing, memory and organization. He included assistive technology and universal design for orientation, mobility and ambulation.

DakotaLink operates the Medical Equipment and Recycle Program, which is affiliated with Medicaid. It provides gently used equipment to those who are eligible for services. A DME provider is utilized to deliver the equipment across the state. Individuals not eligible for Medicaid have an option of purchasing items from the list at a reduced price. DakotaLink also has up to \$80,000 worth of repossessed VR equipment that is cleaned and redistributed to other VR clients. Discussion continued on the different waiver programs and if there could be language incorporated in the waiver requiring that this listing be checked first prior to purchasing an item brand new through Medicaid.

DRS DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Eric thanked members for their participation and attendance, as a number of members had lengthy travels. Hosting the meeting in Rapid City has allowed members to hear and learn about a number of west river organizations. Eric referenced the **Quarterly Data Report** which was disseminated. The report reflects two quarters of 2019 data, and 2017 and 2018 data for total applications, eligibilities, total served and closed cases. Applications have stayed steady over the last few years and eligibility determinations have increased the last few quarters. Total consumers served has gone down. In response to a question regarding total consumers served, Eric outlined a few reasons for this e.g., more jobs available, less people with disabilities applying for VR services when the job market is strong, more employers willing to hire individuals with disabilities, and more case closures.

DIVISION BUDGET: In estimating budget costs, personnel and operating costs are easier to determine compared to case service expenditures. State FY 2016/17 and FY2017/18, VR exceeded its budget, and set a record for case service expenditures. Whereas FY2019 expenditures were down significantly which reflects the volatility of economy. The Division is looking at outreach efforts to connect with individuals with disabilities who would benefit from services.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION: Limited legislative days remain on the 95th legislative calendar, with March 30 being the final day. There were bills introduced that impacted people with disabilities, but no bills introduced that directly impacted the Division's programs or services. The legislative focus throughout session included finding more funding for service providers, state employee salaries and teacher's salaries. The Division did not request additional funding for the VR program. Program income also comes from the Social Security Reimbursement Program, which can only be utilized for programs under the Rehabilitation Act (VR or IL services). In order for the state to receive federal funds (78.7% match), the state must match federal dollars at a 21.3% rate.

CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT: Services are provided with the intent of creating an individualized employment relationship with employee and employer, in order to meet the needs of both. An example is creating a job that does not exist; it utilizes a different approach to better meet the needs of the individual with the most significant disabilities. These might have been individuals who have been considered “unemployable”. The Division contracted with Griffin-Hammis Associates to provide training to CSP providers and VR counselors. Training sessions have been completed in Sioux Falls and Aberdeen and one more event will be held in Rapid City. More training will continue over the summer to include new staff, as staff turnover will happen.

BOARD SUPPORT AGREEMENT: the SD Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities provided board support for over 20+ years and last year the Coalition ended the agreement. The Division issued a request for proposal in which Black Hills Special Services Cooperative responded; the contract was awarded to BHSSC to provide staff support for the Board and SILC.

MEASURABLE SKILL GAINS HANDOUT: RSA issued a report in January 2020 reflecting measurable skill gains by general agencies by state and the Division was ranked highest in the nation. This is one of six performance measures, which measures the percentage of participants who are in education or training programs related to their employment goal. Eric also referenced a disability compendium report which identifies South Dakota ranking second highest in the nation for employment of people with disabilities. Discussion of the Division meeting the indicator level of “baseline” for program years 2020 and 2021 in areas of employment, median earnings and credential attainment rate. This requires staff to record and document information to reflect gains made by consumers served more accurately. This is new to the Division and case file reviews will assist with monitoring.

STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (SILC) UPDATE: Eric explained that the Rehabilitation Act requires each state to establish a Statewide Independent Living Council in order to receive funds through the Administration of Community Living to support independent living services. The SILC is responsible for developing the State Plan for Independent Living, which it is currently developing. The SPIL will be submitted prior to the end of June and become effective 1 October. Some SPIL activities have included drafting goals and objectives, releasing a consumer satisfaction survey, and hosting a public forum in April. Eric serves as a member on the Council. The SILC met on December 3 and is scheduled to meet again on March 24. Regular reports include quarterly reports from DRS, BVR, DSBVI, workgroup updates and Centers for Independent Living reports. The SILC is called to coordinate activities with other entities, specifically the Board. Convening a joint meeting in the future could

be considered and identify agenda items or common themes pertinent to both groups for dialogue.

VR PROGRAM INITIATIVES: Bernie provided copies of the Division's 2019 Year End Data Report. He invited members to be in touch with any questions. **Unsuccessful closures:** Jessica provided this update referring to the handout and referenced the top three reasons for closures. Jessica met one on one with VR counselors across the state to discuss barriers for both the counselor and consumer. She identified areas: consumers are applying for services at a time of crisis; immediate assistance is needed. The tendency is consumers accepting the first position offered, that might not be the best choice, or losing clients after application due to time needed to verify eligibility. VR staff also work with a number of individuals who are transient, which makes maintaining contact with them very difficult. There has been an increase in applicants/clients served with mental health issues and addictions. It is a struggle to find resources that adequately support them towards wellness. There is a significant lack of employment specialists to provide services for individuals with significant disabilities. In working with youth, Division staff noted difficulty with establishing working relationship due to student/counselor schedule conflicts, VR and school staff turnover. There is also a noted difference in the description by VR staff regarding services (what services are available, to whom and when). This leads to misunderstanding and misrepresentation of VR services among teachers, schools, students and families. This is unfortunate and the Division is exploring how to best support staff and continue conversations in these areas. Before ending, Jessica reported that a case file review would be conducted in April with a focus on unsuccessful closures. Information will be shared with members once finalized. Division is conducting a pilot project in the Rapid City office to enable staff to communicate with consumers via text to see if this will improve communication with youth.

PRE- EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES (PRE-ETS) are designed to support the transition from school into adult life for high school students with disabilities. Services provide vocational exploration, hard and soft skills training, self-advocacy skills and paid competitive integrated employment opportunities. Fifteen percent of the federal award is required to be spent on Pre-ETS or the Division would need to revert federal funds. The Division disseminated a request for proposal in November to establish new services or expand current services. Seven proposals were received of which four agencies were approved. These included three schools (Harrisburg, Huron and Mitchell) and East Educational Cooperative.

CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY: The Consumer Services Committee assisted Division staff with updating the questions on the surveys; each survey contains six questions. The survey is disseminated at different stages of the VR process. The initial

survey conducted through Survey Monkey didn't work, which led to re-working it and it is now being disseminated through VR Faces.

2020 FALL CONFERENCE: a flyer was disseminated for the Fall Conference, which will be held in Deadwood on October 20-22. Bernie outlined featured presenters, pre session, and training tracks. If members are interested in attending, they should visit with staff.

STATE PLAN: copies of the Division's section of the Unified State Plan were made available. Bernie suggested reviewing the goals and strategies, as well as the report on progress which provides information on work completed. The Unified State Plan was submitted in early March, as there was conflicting information on the due date. The State Plan document can also be found on the Division's website.

BVR NOMINATION PROCESS: Colette reported that the current board configuration has four members who will term off at the end of June and five members' terms expire, and they are eligible to serve an additional term, if appointed. Of the five members, one member is not able to continue due to their workload. The solicitation for Board and SILC nominations was disseminated February 14 with a due date of April 10. To date six nominations have been received. Nominations are forwarded to the Governor for her final review and consideration.

GOVERNOR'S AWARDS PROCESS: Colette reported that the draft nomination packet for the Governor's Awards has been sent to a workgroup for review. The nomination packet recruits for five award categories. The workgroup is comprised of BVR, BSBVI and SILC members. The intention is to disseminate the finalized nomination packet by March 20 with a due date of May 1.

NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH PROCESS: Colette reported that a workgroup of BVR, BSBVI and SILC representatives met to review 12 community requests for funding to conduct NDEAM events. Total requested funds equaled \$30,455.64. The proposals outlined match of financial support or in-kind support of \$30,450. Workgroup comments consisted of partnerships and stakeholders are solid and growing; proposals reflect that events are being valued by other entities lending support (i.e., hotels donating meeting room space), and there is an increase in communities coordinating events and resources. After careful review and consideration, the workgroup is recommending that all 12 communities be fully funded. It was noted that the BSBVI and SILC have provided financial support of events in previous years and the BSBVI and SILC workgroup members will seek financial support at their upcoming meetings. **MOTION TO APPROVE THE WORKGROUP'S FUNDING RECOMMENDATION TO SUPPORT THE 12 COMMUNITY PROPOSALS OF \$30,455.64, MSC.**

COMPREHENSIVE TRANSITION PROGRAM DISCUSSION: Lisa reported that the Consumer Services Committee met yesterday and had a lengthy discussion about the Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Program and Augie Access. The committee reviewed information e.g., responses received from RSA; a Credential Attainment Guide for State VR Agencies; a Sep 17, 2019 US Dept. of Education Question and Answer document entitled “Increasing Postsecondary Opportunities and Success for Students and Youth with Disabilities; and the Division’s Program Guide “Financial Participation Requirements for Secondary and Postsecondary Training Programs. It was noted this is a very complex issue. Their discussion also included comparable benefits, cost appropriateness, success rate, programs of similarity. Department of Human Services, Department of Education and the Department of Labor and Regulation assisted with startup funds when Augie Access was initially started and it was designed for students with intellectual disabilities. Questions were asked whether VR should fund this type of program if designed as a college experience. The goal would need to support a student in order for them to benefit in terms of an employment outcome. An individualized approach was stressed. The committee was recommending that the board advocate that the Division and Augie Access have further discussions of current barriers of the program and the need for changes in order for VR to support students and youth with disabilities to attend/participate and extend an invite to other interested parties i.e., DLR. Further dialogue with the full board included: requirements of student or youth obtaining a degree or industry recognized credential; would student or youth benefit from services, look at comparable benefits, would program benefit the individual in terms of employment outcome; success rate, appropriate level of funding, obligation to expand opportunities for youth, consumer choice, measurable gains. **MOTION MADE FOR DIVISION TO HAVE FURTHER CONVERSATION WITH AUGIE ACCESS IN ORDER FOR PROGRAM TO MEET VR REQUIREMENTS, MS.** Further discussion continued of who would be involved in the meeting: Division staff, Board’s Consumer Services Committee, Bill agreed to be involved to represent DLR. Lisa agreed to contact Augie Access to initiate the meeting in her role as committee chairperson. **MC.**

OTHER BUSINESS: Colleen reminded members to spread the news of the census and encourage individuals to participate. Federal funding goes to hospitals, fire departments, schools, road, and other sources based on the census data. Colleen announced the 30th Anniversary of the ADA coming in July and celebration events are being planned in the Sioux Falls area and extended an invitation for individuals interested in attending; individuals can email Colleen for additional information.

CLOSING ACTIONS: Future agenda items: Augie Access; Ability for Hire (website and update on brochure); Rapid City VR cell phone pilot program; election of officers, recognition of outgoing members, followup on unsuccessful closures report, and

Indicator 14 Summary. Schedule Next Meeting: staff was asked to disseminate a doodle poll for the week of June 22, people noting preference for the 25th. Schedule consideration in future to host joint BVR/SILC meeting. **MOTION TO ADJOURN – MSC.** Meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00 pm.

Tour of the local VR and DLR offices was provided to those interested.