

## **Board of Vocational Rehabilitation**

**March 27, 2019**

McCrary Gardens Visitor's Center  
631 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue – Brookings SD

**Members Present:** Eric Weiss, Cole Uecker, Beth Schiltz, Lisa Sanderson, Kristi Eisenbraun, Kendra Gottsleben, Kim Ludwig, Brad Konechne, Peter Bullene, Kevin Barber, Patty Kuglitsch, Colleen Moran and Jolleen Laverdure. **Members Excused Absence:** Kristina Allen, Bill McEntaffer and Joe Vetch; **Others Present:** Bernie Grimme, DRS Assistant Director; Sylvia Bulboltz, DRS District Supervisor; Jordan Trumbo, DRS Program Evaluation/Program Specialist; Shelly Pfaff, BVR Staff; Julie Paluch and Rick Norris, Interpreters; and Mark Sternhagen, member of the public, joined the meeting later.

**OPENING ACTIONS:** Patty, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at approximately 8:35 am. She invited all to introduce themselves and share one thing they like about Spring. Patty moved to the next item. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Patty asked if all had had an opportunity to review the agenda. She asked if there were any changes needed to it. Patty requested to add under “Other Business” a letter received from the Coalition. **MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS AMENDED – MADE (M), SECONDED (S) AND CARRIED (C).** REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Patty asked if there were any changes to the draft minutes. Hearing none – **MOTION TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER MINUTES AS MAILED – MSC.** REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES – Patty asked for any changes. Hearing none – **MOTION TO APPROVE THE FEBRUARY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES – MSC.**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Patty asked if there were any announcements needing to be made at this time. Bernie handed out a “Save the Date” flyer on the 2019 Fall Conference and provided some initial information on it. He invited members to let staff know if they wish to participate in the conference. Shelly hand out a revised BVR Committees listing and Annual Activity Calendar. Kim handed out information on an ADA workshop to be held in Rapid City in July.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Patty asked if anyone present wished to make public comments. No members of the public were in attendance at this time, thus no comments followed. Patty invited Eric to provide his report.

**DRS DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Eric Weiss, DRS Director, thanked members for coming and their continuing commitment to the work of the BVR. (1) Eric recognized Steve Stewart's 20 years of service with the State of South Dakota and his role with

DRS as a Rehabilitation engineer, ADA expert, assistive technology resource and team member who worked on the Social Security reimbursement claims. Steve was hospitalized last summer, and then was unable to return to work, and he retired in December. (2) Eric addressed the current Legislative Session which began January 8<sup>th</sup> and ends this Friday. There was no legislation coming from DHS that impacted DRS programs. He invited Patty to address HB1122, which she did – a bill that passed and was signed into law addressing language changes in statute to “deaf and hard of hearing.” (3) Eric explained how certain budget aspects are fairly predictable, while others, such as case expenditures, vary from year to year. He also explained how factors beyond DRS control often impact case expenditures. To date, SFY2019 case expenditures are down from the previous year. One result of this trend is staff has greater opportunity to make more contacts with referral sources to ensure they are aware of all the services VR has to offer people with disabilities to meet their workforce needs. (4) He addressed the federal request for FY2020 for the Rehabilitation Services Administration. It includes an inflationary increase, but sequestration was not factored into the budget. There are no funds in this budget for Supported Employment State grants. This is the President’s budget request, which is a starting point for the budget process. (5) Eric then shared the data report – first, shared at the last meeting – reflecting data from the last quarter. His “takeaways” were: there has been a decline in applications; this also reflects in a decline in the total number of individuals served; and even though you see variances from quarter to quarter, it is difficult to identify trends at this time. Eric also shared data on case closures and reasons for closure. (6) Eric provided a couple of graphs relating to the employment rate of people with disabilities. This information is from the Disability Statistics Annual Report (<http://www.disabilitycompendium.org/>). Eric concluded his report at this time. Patty thanked Eric for this report.

Patty called for a short break so equipment would be set up for the next agenda item. The meeting resumed after a 10-minute break.

**COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CSNA):** Eric introduced Bob Jahner, a consultant from Wyoming who has vast experience in the vocational rehabilitation program and has assisted both VR agencies in South Dakota with the completion of the CSNA previously. Bob joined the meeting via teleconference and used a PowerPoint presentation to assist with his presentation. Bob explained that the CSNA is a review and assessment of the agency’s service history with an emphasis on the past three program years (2017, 2018 and 2019), an assessment of what is expected to be needed in the next three years (2020, 2021 and 2022); and this information is then used as the basis for refreshing the statewide goals and strategies of services for the next three program years. He reviewed: how the assessment is planned and designed – considering the federal format and the state’s unique needs;

gathering information; and how the outcome of the assessment will fit into the State's Unified or Combined State Plan. He further described the composition of the executive committee that will be involved with this process, as well as a proposed timeline for the completion of various stages of the process. Dialogue followed on effective ways to gather input from the voice of those served e.g., face-to-face, using technology. It is expected that Bob will be at the next BVR and Board of SBVI meetings, since this process involves both agencies. Eric thanked Bob for his time.

**PROJECT SEARCH:** Eric introduced Larry Ayres, Project Coordinator, SDSU/ Brookings Project SEARCH. Larry began by handing out an invitation to the Class of 2019 Graduation Ceremony, a project brochure and his business card. He then explained that this is a High School Transition Program, which involved three 10 to 12 - week job rotations. The program is in its sixth year, and Larry has been with the project since the beginning. Prior to this, he was in special education. Larry explained that “interns” – those accepted into the project – have a 7:30 AM to 2:30 PM day, five days a week. It begins with a short period of time in the project office working on employability skills, and the remainder of the day is spent “on the job.” The project provides the interns with a stipend, as well as a clothing allowance, if needed. In years 1 through 5, 34 interns have entered the program with 30 successfully finishing it. To successfully complete the program, an individual must be working 16 or more hours at minimum wage or more. At this time, 85% of those employed at the time of completion of the program are still employed. They have six interns this year, and four are already employed. For the coming year, they have accepted five of the applicants and are interviewing one later today; two have been declined. Part of the application process is that the individuals must come to the campus to see “what they are getting into” so they are not surprised when they arrive on campus. Partners in SDSU/ Brookings Project SEARCH are: Brookings School District, SDSU, Career Advantage, SD DHS – DRS, DSBVI and DDD, SD DOLR, Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP), Independent Living Choices (ILC) and DakotaLink. Upon completion of Larry’s presentation, BVR members and others made their way over to the SDSU student union for a tour of some of the employment sites. They also had an opportunity to briefly visit with some of the current year interns at their employment sites and the project’s office, as well as some of the SDSU staff working with the interns.

Upon completion of the tour, the group went to Larson Commons for lunch and then returned to McCrory Gardens for the continuation of their meeting. DRS staff provided them with a list of the Project SEARCH graduation events for all four projects – Aberdeen, Brookings, Rapid City and Sioux Falls – inviting members to participate, if they would like to do so.

## **MASTER DEGREE IN REHABILITATION AND MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING:**

Eric introduced Dr. Alan Davis. Dr. Davis is the director of this degree program at SDSU. He provided a presentation focusing on: (a) the MSRC program being established at SDSU in 2006; (b) its accreditation by CORE in 2008; (c) the mission being to prepare professionals to facilitate social and economic independence of persons with physical and psychiatric disabilities; and (d) the reality that graduates have found employment in state rehabilitation offices, mental health centers, supported employment programs, community-based vocational programs, schools and other commercial and non-profit organizations. The present enrollment is 15 students. The program is a 48-credit hour program, and it has seven full or part-time staff, as well as several adjunct staff. The program also has a program advisory committee, and the directors of the two VR state agencies are members of the committee. The program initiated online coursework in Fall of 2007, and the results have been excellent, without detracting from the capacity of the program to fulfill regular objectives and responsibilities. Dr. Davis spoke to funding provided by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to provide scholarship assistance to students in rehabilitation counseling, and he explained the role and purpose of CORE – Council on Rehabilitation Education. Dr. Davis also explained the role of the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification. Some questions and answers followed the completion of the presentation. At the conclusion, Eric thanked Dr. Davis for this time and presentation.

At this time, Eric asked for an opportunity to introduce Mark Sternhagen. Mark was a teacher at SDSU, as well as a past recipient of VR services “a long time ago,” according to Mark. Mark was invited to share a few thoughts. Mark thanked the Board for the opportunity. He spoke to his story of experiencing polio, and his post-secondary journey at USD-Springfield, as well as USD. He also spoke of the realities he faced when seeking employment and all things being equal with other applicants, the need to “prove himself” due to the presence of his disability. Mark taught for over 20 years at SDSU, and he shared some of the difficulties he sees at the university related to access and accommodations. Mark expressed his surprise and pleasure with seeing the level of involvement of individuals with disabilities on the Board. He also shared that he has written a book, Normal for Me, which he said was available. Eric and members thanked Mark for joining the meeting and sharing some of his story. He was invited to stay for the remainder of the meeting.

**CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY:** Lisa, as one of the Consumer Services Committee members, introduced this topic, as well as identified other committee members. She spoke to the task before them, the work they have completed thus far, and then she invited Bernie to provide further detail on the topic. Bernie explained that DRS currently sends out three surveys (31, 32 and 33), and they have taken several

steps to increase survey responses – (1) added language to the application packet about individuals being contacted during the case process for feedback on their satisfaction with services and employment outcomes; (2) instructed staff to correct any incorrect email addresses and make an extra effort to acquire these addresses; (3) for those with emails, send out an email prior to sending the survey; (4) when surveys are returned with bad addresses, staff attempt to contact the individual for the correct address and resend the survey; and (5) sending out a mail survey for those not responding to an email request. Bernie shared that Lisa and Patty had suggested some language changes to improve readability, and these have been incorporated into the surveys (see attachment). Bernie then spoke to changes resulting from the Consumer Services Committee work: (a) a fourth survey has been added (34) to gather information from individuals whose cases were closed unsuccessful; (b) piloting the new survey with clients from the Sioux Falls office – too early for reliable data results; and (c) met with IT staff to start programming the VR case management system so emailing surveys to those with email addresses will take place on a scheduled basis, as well as follow-up mailing to those not responding to the email survey. Bernie thanked committee members for all their work. **MOTION TO ACCEPT THE COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES TO THE CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY PROCESS – MSC.**

**BUSINESS SPECIALIST REPORT:** Kim Ludwig, DRS Business Specialist, began her report by providing more details on the ADA training in July, which will be held in Rapid City. (1) Project Skills/Employment Skills with State Government Initiative – Kim briefly explained the focus of the initiative and reported that since DRS began tracking in 2014, 48 individuals have had work experiences in state government. Currently, there are four individuals participating in this type of work experience. (2) 2019 VR Pre-Employment Transition Services Initiative (previously known as VR’s Summer Initiatives) – DRS and DSBVI are again offering funding for initiatives providing Pre-employment transition services to secondary students with disabilities. The training provided focuses on workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, instruction in self-advocacy, and information about VR services and other programs available to assist individuals with disabilities. Eleven entities submitted a total of 12 proposals. A review team of DRS and DSBVI personnel met to review and approve funding. Kim provided a handout listing of the approved proposals. (3) Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills and Sioux Falls Business Resource Network Contract Updates – Both are in their final year of a five-year contract. The contract years track with the FFY cycle. DRS will be issuing a Request for Proposals on April 1<sup>st</sup>, and both will have an opportunity to respond to it. The deadline for proposal submissions is June 3<sup>rd</sup>, and the anticipated award decision or contract negotiation date is July 1<sup>st</sup>. (4) Business-Led Groups Updates – Kim provided an update on the purpose, activities of these groups supported by DRS in

Aberdeen, Brookings and Yankton. Each group is continuing to develop or complete outreach within their communities to promote and market the purpose of their groups. (5) Ability for Hire – The website is continuing to evolve, and Kim reported that a recent change has been the removal of information for job seekers. The site is now targeted to businesses and workforce needs. There has been some resulting updating of related marketing items e.g., banner, handouts to reflect this change. Kim reported that website traffic is trending down, but pages per session has increased slightly. (6) Business Specialist Report – Kim explained that the report for her position activities has been revised for SFY 2019. She has a goal of a minimum of 36 business- initiated contacts – to date she has made 30; a goal of 40 outreach contacts – to date she has made 32; 480 job announcements distributed – to date 774 have been distributed; and a goal of 15 presentations – to date 3 have been made. Kim concluded her report by highlighting upcoming VR and provider training she will be involved with, as well as community meetings or trainings she will be participating in in the coming months. Patty and others thanked Kim for her report, and noted the helpfulness of the numbers related to her position.

**CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT:** Bernie Grimme, DRS Assistant Director, addressed some of the history of this approach, and the reality that it was not a part of the Rehabilitation Act until 2014. He highlighted essential elements of customized employment – (a) best used to meet the needs of employment seekers with disabilities who have not been or are unlikely to be successful with traditional or supported employment; (b) its individualized approach – one job for one person; (c) the “no fail” approach – presuming that all individuals can work; (d) provision of this service in the community or in businesses owned by the individual; (e) negotiation of job duties; (f) negotiated pay of at least minimum wage; (g) use of job development “agents” to represent the job seeker; and (h) an outcome of self-employment or wage employment as chosen by the individual. Bernie provided information on the Discovery Process, as well as steps taken to plan for and develop customized employment. Currently, 10 provider staff and nine VR staff have completed training, and four teams are working with an actual job seeker as part of a pilot project. They are presently in the Discovery phase of the process. He hopes to bring real examples of this service and its outcome to the Board at future meetings. At this time, he shared the story of an individual who has been successful with the receipt of these services, from a national source.

**SILC UPDATE:** Eric reported that their last meeting was held via video and teleconference on December 11<sup>th</sup>. The next meeting will be held at Western Resources for Independent Living in Rapid City on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. He reported that the SILC is currently seeking nominations, and he encouraged members to submit

nominations. He directed members to the State Boards/Commissions portal for further information on the SILC.

**BVR STAFF REPORT: BVR NOMINATIONS PROCESS** – Shelly started by reporting that the nominations process continues. Presently, two current members eligible for re-appointment have indicated an interest in being re-appointed, and two nominations have been received in the office. **GOVERNOR’S AWARDS PROCESS** – Shelly reported that they are close to hosting a meeting of the joint committee. It is expected that the call for nominations for awards will go out in mid-April with a two-month window for submission of nominations. **NDEAM PROCESS** – Shelly asked for feedback on the 2018 Event summary; hearing none, she moved on to reporting on the outcome of the 2019 Request for Funding process. A total of 12 proposals were received to support events in 13 communities. The total requested funds were \$37,760. The joint committee recommended funding all of them with 20% reduction of some not demonstrating local match, and a need for some to increase business/community involvement in planning and actual events. Committee members from the BVR added some comments on their participate in this process and recommendations. **MOTION TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDED FUNDING LEVEL WITH ASSOCIATED COMMENTS – UP TO A TOTAL OF \$32,225 IN SUPPORT OF 2019 NDEAM EVENTS – MSC.** **STRATEGIC PLANNING FUND REQUEST** – Shelly reported that the BVR had received a request for \$2,000 in support of the 2019 Lighting the Way Conference from SD Parent Connection. The Board has provided support of past LTW conferences, and their support is only a slight portion of the total event budget. **MOTION TO APPROVE \$2,000 OF STRATEGIC PLANNING FUNDS IN SUPPORT OF 2019 LIGHTING THE WAY CONFERENCE – MSC.**

**OTHER BUSINESS:** Patty brought forward a letter received from the Coalition seeking donations. She asked if the Board wished to take any action. No response was received, so she moved to the next item.

**CLOSING ACTIONS: FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS** – The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, Indicator 14 Report and time to complete discussion on transition programs such as Augie Access were raised as items for the next meeting agenda. If the meeting is held in Rapid City, other suggestions were the Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills and Project SEARCH of Rapid City. **SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING** – Due to the fact that we’ll be trying to coordinate with the Board of SBVI, no specific date was chosen. Staff will consult with the DRS Director on moving forward with arrangements. It is expected it will be in June. **ADJOURNMENT** – Patty thanked all for their participation. **MOTION TO ADJOURN – MS.** Meeting adjourned at 3:40 pm.