



Realizing Human Potential

The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is appointed by the Governor. We seek new members who have a wide range of interests and talents to help improve the services offered by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to the citizens of Vermont with disabilities. If you are interested in applying to become a member of the SRC, please contact Rebekah Stephens, Coordinator.

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State Rehabilitation Councils (SRCs)

Joelle Brouner, Executive Director of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council; used by permission.

State Rehabilitation Councils were born out of the tradition of effective advocacy by people with disabilities committed to the success of the publicly-funded Vocational Rehabilitation program. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was the first disability civil rights law to be enacted in the United States. The victory was marred when the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) delayed endorsement of the regulations needed to implement the law.

By April of 1977, frustration mounted and disability-rights advocates took direct action by leading sit-ins in Washington, D.C., New York, and San Francisco to pressure HEW to issue the regulations. While the protests in Washington and New York were short-lived, advocates in San Francisco persisted. They occupied

the offices of HEW for four weeks. As a consequence, Joseph Califano, the secretary of HEW, endorsed the regulations. The Rehabilitation Act is the federal law that establishes the publicly-funded Vocational Rehabilitation Program as we know it today.

The advocacy did not end in 1977. Since that time disability-rights advocates have continued work in service of a system that affords opportunities for customers of the Vocational Rehabilitation program to have more choices on their journeys toward employment. During the reauthorization process of the Rehabilitation Act in 1993, advocates built on their tradition of effectiveness by persuading Congress to create State Rehabilitation Councils (under Title I, section 105) as a mechanism to support people with disabilities receiving vocational rehabilitation services to take an active role in shaping the services they receive.

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The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council

Vermont's State Rehabilitation Council advocates for consumer-directed and effective vocational services and for the creation of resources and services that will result in equal opportunities for Vermonters with disabilities.

Under its mandate in the Rehabilitation Act, it "shall review, analyze and advise the designated state unit regarding the performance of the responsibilities of the unit...particularly responsibilities relating to...eligibility (including order of selection); extent, scope and effectiveness

of services provided; and functions performed by state agencies that affect or that potentially affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving rehabilitation goals..."

To meet its mission, the Council meets on a bimonthly basis five times a year. (There are no meetings in July or August.) SRC committees meet between full Council meetings to help conduct Council business.

www.vtsrc.org

From the Chair of the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council

During 2013, the SRC Steering Committee, as always, diligently performed its charged task of considering and deciding upon necessary SRC business between meetings of the full Council. I had the honor, as Chairperson of the SRC from April through October of the year, to chair these Committee meetings.

The Committee set agendas for the full Council meetings which take place on alternate months - considering topics most pertinent and timely, as well as those necessary and routine. It also was responsible for planning the very constructive SRC annual Retreat held this year on October 10th at Seyon Lodge State Park in Groton. I am proud to report that Retreat 2013 included a presentation on the critical VR Consumer Satisfaction Survey, as well as important planning sessions on future SRC direction. Also offered were presentations for the edification of new Council members.

Among relevant issues considered both in Steering Committee and before the full Council were a possible formal SRC position on S. 1356, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) reauthorization and embedded Rehab Act reauthorization. Provisions contained therein can potentially impact VR programs and services. Also high on the Committee's priority list was the planning and analyzing of SRC-sponsored testimony before the Vermont House Committee on Human Services concerning improving successful employment outcomes within the Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) program – a joint effort of DVR and the State Department of Mental Health (DMH). In addition, toward the latter part of the year, an effort was made to highlight an exciting national initiative, termed the

CareerACCESS project, which would begin to eliminate barriers to employment and is designed for low-income youths within the SSI entitlement program.

At the suggestion of VR Director, Diane Dalmasse, it was decided to include, for the first time, SRC members in the organizational Baldrige survey. In addition, the Steering Committee discussed ways to support our military veterans – from both a homelessness and disability viewpoint. And, of course, the Committee – with the lead taken by Coordinator, Rebekah Stephens - actively developed and pursued ways to recruit new Council members, taking into account prescribed positions, as well as the skills and diversity to craft the best possible mix of members. On a related topic, constructive discussions took place on how best to improve attendance and participation in committee meetings during a year of membership transition.

Not in the least, the Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS) initiative was followed, as was the closely associated employer satisfaction survey. And...the transition and integration of the Assistive Technology (AT) Council within the general SRC was successfully completed.

As I step down from the Council and relinquish my duties, I view the opportunity I have had as precious and am grateful for it. Employment services for people with disabilities should be an intensive effort toward the betterment of all of society.

*Sam Liss, Chair
Vermont State Rehabilitation Council*



From the Director of the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Voc Rehab Vermont assisted 1821 people to go to work during the last federal fiscal year. Thanks to our very committed staff and to the staff of the Vermont Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation for their outstanding work.

During the past year we rolled out a division wide initiative to train all staff on Motivational Interviewing (MI) – both the spirit and the intervention. Other VR agencies have demonstrated improved outcomes using MI as a counseling strategy. Staff have been energized and very positive about this new tool in their toolbox. When the roll out is complete we will have provided basic and advanced training to counseling staff, completed graded audio tapes, established coaching circles, and a train the trainer series. I believe the spirit of MI will change our practice and improve the experience for our customers.

The Vermont Office of Child Support approached us about developing and implementing a pilot project to serve unemployed dads who were not able to make child support payments. We have served over 200 individuals with disabilities in the pilot. Early data shows that we have increased employer paid child support payments fivefold. Perhaps most important, the feedback from participants is that they welcome the support and assistance to become contributing dads for their children. The pilot has been extended for two additional years.

Staff have been working with Transcen and the Vermont Community College to develop and deliver a curriculum to provide training for employment staff. In addition to a basic

module on job development and placement there will be four additional modules that are population specific to working with youth, TANF recipients, people with severe mental illness and people with developmental disabilities. This training will be delivered on-line and result in a certificate.

Voc Rehab Vermont in partnership with the SRC conducts a customer satisfaction survey every two years. An outside vendor conducts telephone interviews with about 900 customers across the state. We have been doing this for about ten years and until this year every survey documented statistically significant improvement in the overall satisfaction with services. While overall results this year continue to be very high, we took a slight dip in the overall satisfaction level. In response, we have conducted focus groups of survey respondents to take a deeper dive into the reasons for the decline. The results will be presented to the SRC and the management team. Each office has developed an Agency Improvement Project to improve customer satisfaction. We focused our annual all staff training day on customer satisfaction. In partnership with the SRC we intend to bend the curve in an upward direction.

We continue our strong alliance with the State Rehabilitation Council. Together we will continue to improve our service delivery system and assist ever more people with disabilities to be employed and to participate in their local communities.

*Diane P. Dalmasse, Director
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation*



The Year in Review — Summary SRC Committee Reports

Policy and Procedures Committee

Allen Evans, Chair

Kerry White, Co-Chair

The Policy and Procedures (P and P) Committee works on a three-year cycle in order to accomplish its defined tasks. This committee systematically reviews and comments on all of the policies and spending guidelines that guide the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) personnel in their work. It is also our task to periodically review the SRC By-Laws to ensure that the Council is in compliance.

By-Laws

The SRC By-Laws were reviewed and recommended changes adopted in 2011. The Committee determined that another review in 2013 was not necessary.

Policy and Procedure Manual Review

In 2013 the P and P Committee continued working with the updated DVR Manual; reviewing Chapter 303 – “Maintenance”, Chapter 304 – “Occupational Tools, Licenses, Equipment, Stock and Supplies”, Chapter 305, “Personal Services”, and Chapter 306, “Rehabilitation Technology Services”.

As part of the review of Chapter 305 – “Personal Services” the definitions of Deaf and Interpreter for the Deaf were revised to read: Definition B (Deaf) - “An individual who is deaf has severe hearing loss that may require alternative methods of communication. Some examples of alternative communication include but are not limited to sign language, lip-reading, electronic communications such as texting or email, and cue speech. Some deaf people also have their own culture which means that they have their own language, ways of life, values and arts. Definition B (Interpreter for the Deaf) – “An interpreter (interpreters) is (are) hearing and should have the ability to speak both the verbal native language of

the consumer and sign language. Interpreters help facilitate communication between deaf and hearing speakers. Staff must utilize the State contract for ALS Interpreter services to ensure that the interpreters meet requirements. More information about qualifications/training can be seen at <http://www.rid.org/>. The Committee also recommended changes to policies for services to non-English speaking consumers.

The Committee spent considerable time reviewing Chapter 306, “Rehabilitation Technology Services”. Amber Fulcher, Program Director of Assistive Technology in Vermont provided extensive input into the rewriting of this Chapter. The Committee agreed with proposed changes to the Chapter including changing the name of the Chapter to “Assistive Technology Services”. Other proposed changes included Section II. General Policy; A. to read: “Assistive Technology services may be provided for a person at any stage in the rehabilitation process.” Assistive Technology services need to be directly related to the consumer’s vocational goals and in support and implementation of the IPE.” Section II. General Policy; B. to read: “When individualized prescriptions or fittings are needed, they shall be done by providers licensed and/or certified for such activity if required by law. If neither licensure nor certification is legally required, the consumer shall be so informed and the DVR staff shall describe the method(s) of obtaining the service so the person can make an informed decision.” Section III. Spending and Related Guidelines; A. Guidance: - “re: resources to be removed and wording added” – “Even though technological devices are exempt from comparable benefits and services, counselors should use reasonable judgment when determining if there are existing resources in the community.” Section III. Spending and Related Guidelines; B. to read: “The Division, with the input of the State Rehabilitation Council,

shall establish and maintain suitable spending, duration, and related guidelines for provision of these services. The guidelines will be reviewed annually. Adjustments may be made by the Division Director. While Counselors are not required to seek comparable benefits, there may be circumstances where employer and/or post-secondary schools may be required to provide benefits and should be explored”. Committee members recommended only one change to guideline amounts. It was recommended that the guideline amount for telecommunication and other communication equipment for the Deaf be reduced from \$800 to \$500. The Committee agreed that the remainder of the guideline dollar amounts were reasonable as stated in the Chapter.

Other Actions

Members of the P&P Committee along with other members of the SRC, joined together to draft a letter to the GROW (Gaining Recovery Outcomes through Work) Committee on the topic of “A systematic root cause analysis of performance of the Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) program, specifically regarding successful employment outcomes among its participants”. Committee members eagerly await a response from the GROW Committee.

Conclusion

As chair of the Policy and Procedures Committee, I must express my appreciation of the efforts made by the members of this Committee. Our members are dedicated and hard working. We look forward to 2014 and the work to be accomplished.



Advocacy, Outreach and Education Committee

Sarah Launderville, Chair

The AOE committee stayed informed on national and state issues regarding people with disabilities and employment some of which included the Medicaid for Working People with Disabilities (MWPDP), the BOND pilot project, reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act and sequestration.

The committee followed the MWPDP report presented to the VT Legislature on the MWPDP program by Bailit Health Purchasing, LLC. SRC members had a follow up meeting with the Commissioner of the Dept of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living regarding the lack of data available to pursue some of the options in the original legislative report and will continue to follow in the coming year.

Strong communication lines remained between the SRC and the VT Statewide Independent Living council with a focus on advocacy areas and education opportunities including the SILC networking breakfast and annual SILC Olmstead Meeting.

In May, the AOE committee changed Committee Chair from Sam Liss to Sarah Launderville. Sam is an amazing employment advocate and has been a wonderful leader of the AOE Committee. He will be missed.

Also in May the AOE committee brainstormed topic ideas to focus on moving forward including: continued focus on the mental health and employment initiative, public focus and education on the Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS), a Public Service announcement on the topic of "Employment for All" and funding of transition counselors.

The SRC presented in front of house human services regarding employment and the committee has stated that the SRC is welcome back in January 2014 to continue the discussion.

The coming year will include continued work on the priorities listed and connection to the ACCESS pilot project for youth at the national level.

The members of the AOE committee are dedicated and hard working individuals who have the best interest of the SRC at heart and we appreciate all of their effort over the past year.



Performance Review Committee

Ellie Marshall, Chair

*(Presented by Adam Leonard, PR Chair
as of 10/1/2013)*

The Performance Review Committee monitors and analyzes how well the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is serving its customers. It gives input to the full SRC regarding development of measures of performance. It reviews statistical data and measures on performance and makes recommendations to the full SRC regarding the content of the State Plan.

PR made it a priority to keep abreast of the information made available by VR's Clayton Clark regarding unsuccessful closures related to mental health disability consumers. While the data show that differences exist, nothing definitive was drawn from the discussions. Consumers receiving supported employment do better than those who do not. The committee would like to get more information from the GROW Committee, a joint effort between the State Department of Mental Health, regional mental health agencies, and VR that is addressing the Community Rehabilitation and Treatment Program and employment outcomes .

PR reviewed the State Plan targets and goals for 2013. Overall VR has met a steady increase in goals for the most part, except for numbers reflecting staff competencies to do their jobs. Staff turnover over the past two years has had an effect here. Consumer satisfaction however has increased.

The SRC PR Committee looked in detail at the recent RSA audit findings regarding services for youth in transition from school to adult life. We are working with VR to understand the impact these findings will have on counselor practices and services for in school youth.

In preparation for the 2013 Needs Assessment members of the PR Committee observed VR new hire trainings. It was decided after the last Needs Assessment where we conducted the "Not So Secret Shopper" interviews that we would sample the trainings delivered by VR's Alicia Wein and staff. The committee wanted to see if the values and culture of VR are being effectively conveyed to new hires. Our conclusion was that VR gets quite a bit of essential information conveyed at these trainings, as well as the spirit and flavor of the organization as conveyed by staff presenters. A list of strengths and suggestions for change were submitted to VR.

Also preparing for the Needs Assessment, PR reviewed the Consumer Satisfaction Survey, Employer Satisfaction Survey, RSA Standards and Indicators, the Baldrige Survey, and the Employee Satisfaction Survey. These are being combed for issues and trends that will help us set a course for 2014 and beyond.



PR chair Ellie Marshall termed off the SRC in September. PR welcomes Adam Leonard as the new PR chair. With his professional business affiliation in human resources, the committee is in good hands.

It is with deepest gratitude that I thank the members of the PR Committee for their dedicated work. Volunteers of this caliber make it a pleasure to be on your team.

Respectfully submitted,

*Ellie Marshall
Adam Leonard*

Vermont State Rehabilitation Council Members, 2013

Steering Committee

Michele Hubert, SRC *Chair*

Allen Evans, SRC *Vice-Chair*

Allen Evans, Policy and Procedures Committee *Chair*

Kerry White, Policy and Procedures Committee *Co-Chair*

Adam Leonard, Performance Review Committee *Chair*

Sarah Launderville, Advocacy, Outreach and Education Committee *Chair*

Diane Dalmasse, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation *Director*

Policy and Procedures Committee

Allen Evans, *Chair*

Kerry White, *Co-Chair*

Michele Hubert

April Tuck

Advocacy, Outreach and Education Committee

Sarah Launderville, *Chair*

Diane Dalmasse

Whitney Nichols

Patti Shane

Anthony Williams, Jr.

Performance Review Committee

Adam Leonard, *Chair*

Samantha Brennan

Alaina Clements

Whitney Nichols

Ellen Vaut

Anthony Williams, Jr.

List In Alphabetical Order

Samantha Brennan

Alaina Clements

Diane Dalmasse

Allen Evans

Michele Hubert

Sarah Launderville

Adam Leonard

Whitney Nichols

Patti Shane

James Smith

April Tuck

Ellen Vaut

Kerry White

Anthony E. Williams, Jr.



VR's Contribution to Vermonters and Their Communities

Creating Opportunity, Creating Jobs

VocRehab Vermont's core mission is to realize human potential by putting meaningful work within reach of Vermonters with significant disabilities.

We help VR consumers figure out what work will work for them through careful assessment, counseling and guidance from our expert staff.

We capitalize on our extensive networks in the employer community to create job opportunities and

make good placements that match employer needs with jobseeker skills and help employers retain staff with disabilities.

We use our financial resources within Vermont communities to support our consumers as they transition to stable employment and our employers as they try out new workers.

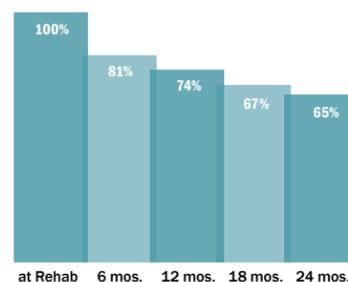
Change in Average Hours Worked Per Week FFY 2013



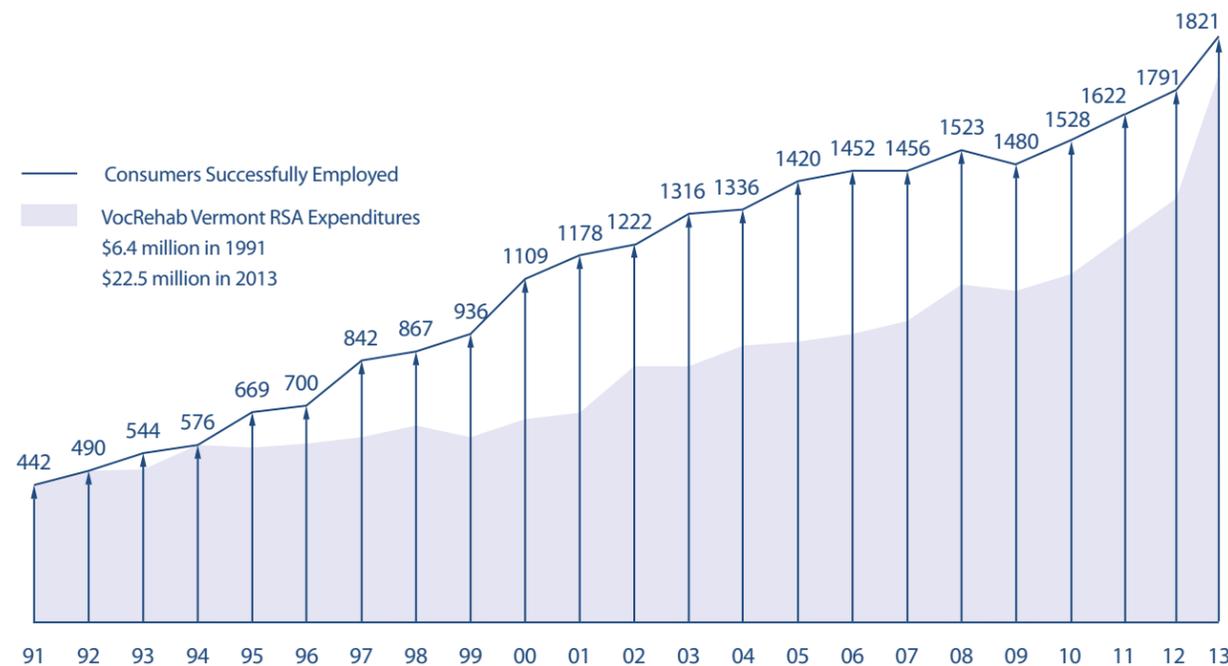
Change in Average Weekly Earnings FFY 2013



Employment Retention Rate, VR Consumers Closed Successfully FFY 2008-2010



VR Consumers Successfully Employed & VocRehab Vermont RSA Expenditures — FFY 1991-2013



Resources for Growth, for Our Future

VocRehab Vermont is funded primarily by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in the U.S. Department of Education. About 80% of our funding is federal money which goes into the local economies of Vermont towns—to local stores to purchase work tools and clothing; to health care providers and medical equipment suppliers; to community colleges and technical training programs; to transportation providers; and to Vermonters in community agencies who provide support services for workers with disabilities.

Vermont's Rankings

RSA ranks public VR agencies on their performance each year. Our record:

New VR applicants per million state population—We're doing a great job of reaching out to as many Vermonters as possible.

in New England: 1; in the nation: 1

VR employment outcomes per million state population—We're effective in getting Vermonters in for VR services and on to successful employment.

in New England: 1; in the nation: 1

Lowest average expenditure per employment outcome—We get results without spending more than we need to, leaving resources for others.

in New England: 1; in the nation: 3

Percent of VR clients on SSA disability with employment outcomes—We are experts at helping clients overcome significant challenges to create meaningful careers that provide independence.

in New England: 2; in the nation: 8

Ticket to Work Participation Rate—We help many SSA beneficiaries return to work and actively claim reimbursement from SSA for these services. As a result, we bring more federal money into the State to serve Vermonters with disabilities.

in New England: 1; in the nation: 1

Learning Together

Shortly after the close of the federal fiscal year, VocRehab Vermont held a two day retreat with every member of their organization and their primary partner, the Vermont Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation (VABIR). With so many new staff in both organizations, we worked to immerse our team in a culture that embraces four strategic themes: Valued and Empowered Staff, Organizational Effectiveness, Prepared Job Seekers, and Collaborative Partnerships.

The ideas collected from our energetic staff have laid the groundwork for success in 2013 and beyond as we work to increase satisfaction for both our customers - the job seeker with a disability and the employer.

Studying the Evidence

An independent evaluation found total earnings for participants in the VocRehab Vermont Rehabilitation Progressive Employment Program to be about three times those of nonparticipants with similar characteristics. During the study period nearly twice as many program participants were employed and, among the people who were employed, earnings were about 60% percent higher than those of non-participants.

Thanks to a 5-year research grant from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) VocRehab Vermont and the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMASS Boston will now work to establish Progressive Employment as an evidence-based practice.