

Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

December 2nd, 2021, 1-3pm EST

Please note: this meeting was held virtually.

Meeting was called to Order at 1:00pm by the Chair.

Attendees:

- **Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Executive Committee Members:** Inez Canada, Joe Bellil, Steve LaMaster, Naomi Goldberg & Olympia Stroud
- **Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Members:** Christine Tosti, Lusa Lo, Ronaldo Fujii, Cheryl Scott
- **SRC Ex Officio Members:** Deputy Commissioner Kate Biebel, Amanda Costa, Sarah Wiles
- **Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Staff:** Manel Desvallons, Bill Noone
- **Public:** None

Introductions: The group went around and introduced themselves, sharing an icebreaker response to “what superpower would you choose to have if you could pick any superpower?”

Minutes Approval- Ms. Canada

- Ms. Canada called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Ms. Stroud motioned for approval of the minutes. Ms. Goldberg seconded. Minutes were approved with no corrections.

Old Business:

Update on Annual Report – Chair Inez Canada

- An updated version of the SRC annual report was shared with the group. Many thanks were given to SRC members for sharing committee report content and to Colleen Casey, Communications Director, for her tremendous efforts in designing and organizing the report.
- The Annual Report will be sent to the following groups in the order listed, for review and approval before public dissemination: (1) Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS); (2) the Governor’s Office; (3) Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). Once approved, the National Coalition of Statewide Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) has requested a copy of the annual report to post on the national website.

SRC/VR Orientation – Chair Inez Canada

- The National Coalition of Statewide Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) has SRC orientation materials on their website, and they are in the process of being revamped. They will be made public in February of 2022. When those come out, SRC Executive members will brainstorm how to engage the full SRC council with said materials, including attending trainings or discussions on how to best use the materials.
- Karen Stanfill will be supporting the upcoming SRC orientation being hosted on December 7th from 10-12pm. It will provide an introduction to what vocational rehabilitation does, presented by VR staff member Kathleen Pignone, the role of the SRC presented by Karen Stanfill, Client Assistance Program Supervisor for Disability Rights Texas. She is also a former SRC Chair and former VR Counselor. The closeout will include how to best approach attending an SRC meeting hosted by Chair Canada. Ms. Stanfill, Ms. Pignone, Chair Canada, and Ms. Costa met this week to finalize content and develop a strong structure for the orientation. Chair, DeAnn Elliot, and Members of the Mass Commission for the Blind Rehabilitation Council will also be in attendance.

- There was a question regarding if this orientation can be recorded. This orientation will not be recorded as there is not enough time to get member consent, but recording will be considered for future orientation sessions.

New Business:

- a. December 16th Agenda- the group finalized the primary agenda items:
 - i. **Approval of Minutes-** 5 minutes
 - ii. **Commissioner Message-** 20 minutes. The group discussed providing MRC Commissioner Wolf with five minutes for updates and leaving the other fifteen minutes open for a question-and-answer session to offer an opportunity for SRC members to share what is on their mind. The full SRC will be sent out a request for questions in advance and Mr. Fujii and Ms. Scott volunteered to moderate the question and answer.
 - iii. **Health Management Associations** will present on the Diversity Equity and Inclusion strategic plan from 1:30-3:00pm.
- b. Committee Reports
 - i. **Policy Committee (Ms. Goldberg):** The group is focused on ensuring vendors are prepared to serve those with diverse cultural and linguistic needs. There is exploration regarding having vendors have a language line, or another approach through the procurement process, to focus on cultural responsiveness. When consumers need a particular thing purchased and it's not already available on an existing MRC contract, is it possible to have a third party be a conduit for purchases to avoid extending the wait time is a question being explored. The group is also visiting the shortage of tutors and working on a way to get feedback from Vocational Rehabilitation counselors on their opinion of priority procurement problems. Contact has been made with VR Assistant Commissioner Joan Phillips to discuss how to best get this feedback. Ms Goldberg is working to invite MRC Director of VR Operations, Jessica Cimini, to the meeting to discuss procurement issues and develop a working plan. In the future, the group will tackle the issue of involvement in MRC Fair Hearings as SRC should receive copies of Fair Hearing Decisions and helping MRC find qualified Fair Hearing Officers. Next meeting Feb 3, 2022 at 11am.
 - ii. **State Plan and Interagency Relations Committee (Mr. Bellil):** There was no meeting in November. Next steps for the group are working on supporting Committee workplans to ensure people are making progress in addressing their MRC recommendations. Future activities include reviewing the schedule of state plan and annual report development and reviewing of standard operating procedures for obtaining recommendations. Reviewing SRC DEI activities will be considered. Next Meeting is February 9th at 11am. Joe Bellil, Cheryl Scott, and Bill Noone will connect as the Workforce State Plan Advisory Committee has developed a timeline that may impact scheduling.
 - iii. **Consumer Satisfaction and Needs Committee (Ms. Stroud):** There was no meeting in November. There is a Request for Quote (RFQ) being posted by MRC to secure a

- vendor to develop a new consumer experience survey. In the next meeting, on December 20th, the group will cover the plan for MRC consumer data collection in 2021/2022 and are considering holding off on collecting data while a new survey is being developed. Instead, Committee will focus on a deeper dive into our existing data to better understand themes. Recommendations to involve Assistant Commissioner Joan Phillips and VR Director of Operations Jessica Cimini in a data review were suggested. Ms. Costa will work with Ms. Stroud to pose this suggestion to MRC leadership and brainstorm interim practices to see how consumers are doing during this lag in data collection.
- iv. **Business and Employment Opportunity (Mr. LaMaster):** The committee is interested in working with MRC Communications Director Colleen Casey to review information MRC uses to orient service users and business professionals to services and benefits of partnership. For the second committee priority regarding access to employment for individuals with disabilities across the Commonwealth, the Committee has continued to work with Bill Allen at MRC and will meet with MRC Commissioner Wolf to address the goal and connect to other state agencies to given the breadth of the issue. Ms. Biebel will support scheduling this discussion with the Commissioner.
- Additional topics for future meetings will include a focus on self-employment tools and how MRC can better support and provide resources to those wanting to focus on self-employment, including the development of a manual on self-employment for Counselors and consumers. Concerns were raised surrounding key performance indicators that focus on “obtaining employment” as entrepreneurship doesn’t fit those indicators in a clean way. Questions came up regarding whether or not MRC collects data on the number of people who have requested support for self-employment to create a model of peer-to-peer support, similar to the MRC job club model.
 - Suggestions came up to partner with agencies focused on self-employment like the Small Business Association (SBA), or smaller organizations. There is a national technical assistance center on self-employment the group will investigate. Another suggestion focused on building up tools and resources surrounding platforms like Etsy or Commonwealth Kitchen for food business incubators were discussed
 - The next Committee meeting will take place December 9th at 1pm to discuss actions for the coming year and next steps.
- v. Committee Chairs were asked to submit written committee reports for the December 16th full SRC meeting, including a summary of the future focus and activities being conducted as a recruitment tool for newly interested members.
- c. CSAVR 2021 Conference Report: members who attended the conference shared their highlights:

- i. Ms. Tosti provided a take-a-away regarding further reviewing a mandate from the Department of Justice (DOJ) upholding integration principles to not isolate people with disabilities, i.e., only putting them around other people with disabilities. People with disabilities need supported accommodations to get access to self-employment.
 - ii. Ms. Costa shared that her main takeaways were the presentation on the Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) model and the unique needs of the mental health population which makes up 41% of who MRC serves. Additionally, there was a presentation on equity and diversity that highlighted great content and Ms. Costa is going to outreach to them for resources to collaborate on the SRC DEI Focus.
 - iii. Ms. Canada discussed her two takeaways, including Amazon hosting a vocational rehabilitation counselor in-house and paying for that role in order to connect employees with disabilities to vocational rehabilitation services. The unique aspect of the business paying a counselor themselves is innovative and effective. There was another presentation on suggesting a youth council like the SRC where high school students are giving VR feedback on what young adults need from vocational rehabilitation services. The group brainstormed what it could look like to bring a young adult SRC to Massachusetts. The Department of Secondary Education, Department of Mental Health, and Worcester Regional Environmental young adult councils were brought up as models to build from. Considerations to ensure diversity in membership was important, as well as bringing in providers as part of the conversation.
- d. SRC Idea Brainstorm- due to time constraints, the brainstorm will be moved to a future meeting. The goal of the brainstorm is to come up with ways to infuse discussions into the SRC that may not be entirely focused on employment, but still greatly impact the disability community. Brainstorming also will include other organizations that can address some of these topical areas that may not fit under the SRC umbrella.
- i. An initial discussion came up regarding reviewing Census and other data to better understand the disability community to identify priority focus areas for these discussions.

The Chair called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Tosti motioned to adjourn. Mr. Fujii seconded.
Meeting was adjourned at 3:02pm