

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU ARE NOW A MEMBER OF THE STATEWIDE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Being a governor-appointed member of the SRC gives you the power to vote on proposals, decisions and recommendations that will impact the lives of individuals with disabilities seeking employment. That is a big responsibility to the disabilities community and to ensure you will do your best, please keep in mind:

ATTENDANCE

- 1) **Participation and punctuality are very important!**

WHY?

We only have so many meetings during the year and everyone's time is valuable. If you have a good reason to be late, give us a heads-up and strive to ensure it does not happen again. We schedule our meetings way in advance to make them easier to plan around.

- 2) **Missing meetings can happen, but we need to count on you for the long run.**

WHY?

If you happen to know you will miss most of our meetings, please consider participating as a member of the public and not a voting member of the SRC. Voting members are very important when we need a quorum (11 of 21 members) present to vote on issues and decisions. You may still contribute and impact our community as a participant, but if you are not available you will not delay the Council's work and unintentionally slow progress in the community we intend to support.

PARTICIPATION AND CONTRIBUTION

- 1) **Come prepared to our meetings and take time to read the documents in advance.**

WHY?

The quality of your contributions will depend on how prepared you are for the topics that will be discussed. To be present at a meeting and not contribute may happen, but we would like to hear from you, and we would like to materialize the value you can bring to the Council. If you cannot do the preparation needed to contribute in a meaningful way, please consider being a public participant and not an appointed member.

- 2) **Understand the scope of our work within the vocational rehabilitation system.**

WHY?

You will receive several materials to help you understand the scope of our work within the vocational rehabilitation system. Understanding the Council's opportunities and limits will allow you to help you come up with recommendations that are relevant, actionable and uphold our mission and vision. If our recommendations are not relevant, actionable or within scope, they will likely not be accepted or effective.

- 3) **Be engaged with the disability community.**

WHY?

Interacting with disability community members, vocational rehabilitation counselors and other people in the disability and employment space will broaden your horizons.. This will help you get to know the vocational rehabilitation and the disability worlds beyond the basics. It will also help you stay focused on the Council's work and to identify diverse individuals that could contribute and would be willing to participate in SRC meetings, or be recruited as Governor-appointed members.

4) Be mindful of the contributions of others and stay on topic.

WHY?

You may learn a lot from the perspectives of others. To have an effective Council, it is key that all participants contribute.. Help those who are not participating to bring their ideas to the table. Be aware if you are dominating the discussion and not allowing others to weigh in during the meeting time. If you have many important things to say that are not on topic, please make a note of them and say it during the "open mic" portion of the meeting. For issues and ideas within the scope of the Council, raise the issue or idea with the Chair or respective committee chairs if you would like it to be on a future meeting agenda.

5) Ask for a Reasonable Accommodation to participate in meetings.

WHY?

If you have a disability that makes it difficult for you to access or participate in meetings in anyway, you can request a reasonable accommodation by contacting the Council Chair. Not everyone with a disability may need a reasonable accommodation to participate. The Council or MRC staff may not be aware of your need for a reasonable accommodation even if they know you have a disability. Be sure to ask. Each request will be evaluated and decided on a case-by-case based on the laws that apply.

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1) Learn about Open Meeting Law and other governance documents we need to follow.

WHY?

Our meetings are open to the public and are conducted under a set of state and federal laws to promote transparency and accountability while avoiding conflicts of interest. You will see these themes in our By-laws, policies, and procedures. For example, under the Open Meeting Law, Council meeting agendas must be posted for the public a couple of days before meetings. This awareness gives anyone an opportunity to participate if topics on our agenda are of interest to them.

2) Three warnings due to issues with either attendance, participation, governance, or any combination of these could result in loss of your appointment.

WHY?

We need to ensure there is a way to reduce the risk of negative impact on the work of the Council and ultimately the disabilities community. Most of us have limited time to dedicate to the Council and we want to use it as wisely as possible. Absences may affect quorum. Lack of

focus in meetings leads to incomplete tasks. Not respecting laws and regulations may result in legal liability. Attendance, focused participation, and governance work together to make it possible to accomplish the work of the Council, such as, gathering feedback to deliver recommendations that improve vocational rehabilitation services for jobseekers with disabilities, submitting an annual report on vocational rehabilitation, and spreading the word about MRC services.

Brainstorm on member policies

Possible names

- Guidelines for Mutual Respect & Expectations (Steve, Joe proposed; Inez)
-

General Expectations

- Come prepared to meetings - plan time for review, etc.
- Develop an understanding of scope of SRC advisory role
 - Role expectations
 - Authority
- Be on time
- Ask for Reasonable Accommodations, if needed
- Commit to sticking to agenda, with needed flexibility (Open Mic?)
- Requesting topic to be on the agenda through the Chair
- Work on federally mandated tasks
 - See Joe's email
- Connect to public/constituents you represent via two-way comms and awareness
 - Find ways to bring forth news on SRC
- Discussion/deliberations happen within meeting to comply w/ Open meeting law
 - Link to OML section
-

Notes

- Keep policy simple and link relevant docs
 - Create Membership section to house policies
- Send generally needs
- Links to disability orgs.
- Find ways to share with each other events, etc. (newsletter, FB page)
-

<https://rsa.ed.gov/about/programs/vocational-rehabilitation-state-grants/SRC-independent-commission-resources>

State Rehabilitation Councils

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) collaborates with the VR agency in administering the VR program. Among its several responsibilities, the SRC reviews, evaluates, and advises the VR agency regarding its performance and effectiveness in delivering services, including the effect of service provision on the achievement of employment outcomes by individuals with disabilities. The SRC also seeks input from community advocates, business and industry representatives,

and disability groups, as agencies develop and implement policies and procedures that directly affect the individuals served by the VR agency.

The SRC composition and responsibilities requirements are specified in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. §§ [361.16](#) and [361.17](#).

General Expectation

Member policy 2 -July 7

- Majority decision, reverse through proper channels
 - Using RR to record, disagreement and possibly resolve w/ explanation if not go through proper channels
 - See, bylaws voting and cite
 - Reminder: we are advisory body –SRC may disagree with MRC actions and voice and move forward
- Value teamwork as a council
- Articulate protocols re: voting vs. consensus to promote DEI
- Warning system/consequences for non-compliance:
 - Bring to Chair, MRC Liaison and one other Exec Comm member offline- w/ reminder
 - Check on Gov Boards and Commissions process/remedial action

These SRC member policies set forth the general guidelines for individuals joining the Council to advise the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) regarding its performance and effectiveness in delivering vocational rehabilitation services. These guidelines are aimed at helping members understand their responsibilities and increasing effective collaboration when carrying out those responsibilities. With the goal of providing meaningful input that assists the MRC with informed decision-making, SRC members agree to the following:

1. All members will develop an understanding of the role of the SRC as an advisory council, the scope of the council's authority, and the general expectation for those who serve.
2. As an advisory council, the SRC provides valuable input on Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission decisions. However, the final decision rests with the agency. The agency's authority to act on a decision is not hindered, if the SRC disagrees with the decision.
3. Members commit to being on time for the meetings, reviewing any materials sent prior to the meeting, being prepared to discuss and give input on the agenda items, and being ready to share ideas.
4. Members will follow the agenda in meetings to ensure that the council conducts business in a timely manner, while maintaining reasonable flexibility to adjust business items when necessary. Members who wish to add items to a quarterly meeting agenda should send a written request to the SRC Chair; members who wish to add items to a committee meeting agenda should send a written request to the appropriate Committee Chair.
5. To comply with the [restrictions on deliberations in the Open Meeting Law](#) in Massachusetts, all discussions and deliberations on agenda items must happen during the meetings.
6. Decisions of the SRC are by a consensus of a majority of the members present; any dissenting opinions should be noted in the meeting minutes. Final decisions will be supported by the entire Council regardless of whether the member agreed with the decision. Members who did not agree with a final decision may work through available channels to have the decision reconsidered should new information arise or a substantial change in circumstances occurs.
7. All council meetings should have an "Open Mic" segment to receive comments from meeting participants.
8. Member will share their talents and expertise to assist with federally mandated Council tasks (e.g., annual report, recommendations, etc.) using the shared values of equity and teamwork.
9. Members will connect to the disability community, their families, advocates and stakeholders to receive feedback on and raise awareness of VR agency initiatives.
10. In accordance with ADA Title II, which covers State and Local government, SRC members may request a reasonable accommodation to participate in any SRC meeting or event by notifying the SRC chair and initiating an interactive, confidential process.

Decision-making

Recognizing that rigid structures provide less opportunity for marginalized voices to speak up, the Statewide Rehabilitation Council has chosen to adopt a hybrid model for meetings. During our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion engagement, the Council agreed to make decisions using the [Consensus Decision-Making model](#). However, when taking votes that the SRC is required by law to record, we will use [Robert Rules of Order](#).

Consensus Decision Making

The Consensus model encourages shared ownership of decisions because members work together to clarify the issue, discuss the various perspectives, brainstorm and explore solutions that would take into account everyone's concerns and needs, and work toward a proposal that would be as beneficial as possible to everyone involved. Consensus allows the sharing of power that can provide a platform for minority needs and concerns in the group. Often, this model builds community and leads to better decisions.

Roberts Rules of Order for Votes

Roberts Rules of Order is the traditional model of parliamentary procedure that is highly structured and concentrates the authority of an organization in the Chair and his/her leadership Team. The formality of this structure often discourages open participation from members who are less familiar with the operation of board or councils. On advisory councils, like the SRC, where most members are volunteers, members are less likely to be familiar with parliamentary procedure, resulting in less equitable participation in discussions and decision-making. Therefore, the SRC chooses to increase equity and inclusion by limiting the use of formal parliamentary procedure to votes that must be on the record.

Per [Article XII of the SRC Bylaws](#), when the SRC votes on business decisions of the Council, the Council needs simple majority to approve a decision, unless the bylaws or applicable laws require more than a simple majority. Any concerns raised or opposing views that are discussed during the debate should be reflected in the meeting minutes.

Recourse for Non-compliance

- First time - written warning via email or mail; written follow up of action items
- Second time – meet with SRC Vice Chair + Committee chair; written notice that removal will be recommended with 3rd time
- Third time - meet with SRC Chair and MRC Deputy Commish/OIFE; written notice that removal recommendation will be sent to Governor