

## **Quarterly Meeting Minutes**

**June 8, 2022 – Hybrid Meeting**

**Harris Building (100 S. Grand Avenue East, Springfield, IL) & Zoom**

### **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 11:39am.

### **II. Attendance**

**Council Members Present:** (in person) LaDonna Henson, Hershel Jackson, Shelly Richardson, David Friedman, Erin Compton, Rahnee Patrick, Kelsey Thompson, Debbie Einhorn; (via Zoom) Robert Gould, Barbara Moore, Cindy Montgomery, Julie Baker, Amie Lulinski, Tracy Wright

**DRS Staff present:** (in person) Christina Pean; **(via Zoom)** James Knauf, Wolfgang Arterberry, Kristin Wagner, Nathan Painter, Labraya Harris, John Gordon, Eric Hanson, Ingrid Halvorsen, Francisco Alvarado

**Other Guests:** Diane Compton

***A quorum of the SRC was determined.***

### **III. Agenda**

Agenda attached. It was **Moved** (Einhorn), **Seconded** (Jackson), and **Carried** to approve the June 8-9, 2022 SRC Meeting Agenda.

### **IV. Approve November 9, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

It was **Moved** (Richardson), **Seconded** (Jackson), and **Carried** to approve March 8, 2022 SRC Meeting Minutes.

### **V. Needs Assessment Discussion**

J. Knauf acknowledged the need to amend the agenda to include sufficient time to discuss the Needs Assessment based on discussion at last week's meeting. These concerns include how interviews will be conducted and recorded in an appropriate and accessible manner. Discussions addressed steps that can be taken to ensure that focus groups and surveys (administered via Qualtrix) are accessible to participants who are Deaf/hard of hearing and blind/visually impaired.

The Needs Assessment is intended to focus on three questions:

- What are your needs
- What needs are not being met?
- How can we meet those needs?

The group considered the practical implications of having SRC members organize, administer and interpret focus group findings. Concerns were also raised about SRC volunteers' ability to effectively reach and recruit participants. The intent of the Needs Assessment is to reach unserved and underserved consumers with an emphasis on those with significant disabilities. L. Henson reiterated that the information obtained in the Needs Assessment is intended to drive our State Plan and guide the long-term work of DRS and the SRC. For this reason, it is essential that the SRC approach this project with diligence. In the previous Needs Assessment conducted in 2017, it was recommended that the SRC consider contracting with an outside organization to reach a greater number of respondents and to incorporate a variety of methods to ensure fair and equitable participation from people with disabilities across the state in targeted communities. The previous Needs Assessment reached 1,540, which was acknowledged to be an insufficient sample size.

Director Patrick agreed to speak to the DHS Secretary to explore the possibility of doing a change order on the current deliverables in the Satisfaction Survey RFP. Clarification was provided by the Director on the Government Accountability and Transparency Act, which necessitates time and scrutiny when contracting with outside consultants.

Thus it was decided that the SRC would not proceed with the Needs Assessment as previously discussed and will instead restructure the project to consider contracting with a third party while still ensuring that DRS/SRC members are able to be involved and provide input/direction. Groups and interviews that have already made significant progress will continue as planned.

Time was given for any other comments or ideas. Cindy and Debbie noted the importance of adding parents to the list of targeted audiences.

**ACTION ITEM:** J. Knauf, W. Arterberry, Director Patrick and the Executive Committee will work further to discuss how to proceed given this new direction.

## **VI. DRS Staff & Liaison Reports**

### **A. Bureau of Administrative Hearings (Richard Madison, Deputy General Counsel)**

No report was received.

### **B. Client Assistance Program (CAP) (Julie Baker, Acting Manager)**

A written report on CAP activities was submitted by J. Baker on June 7, 2022 and presented today. There has been much focus on the transition of CAP services from DRS to Equip for Equality, which will take effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>. CAP staff are working collaboratively with Equip for Equality to ensure that needs of existing clients are not interrupted. Equip for Equality will continue to update SRC as CAP has done in the past. Statute dictates that we will continue to have a CAP representative on the SRC, which J. Knauf will oversee. The Council thanked J. Baker for her service to the SRC and to DRS customers.

### **C. Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Christina Pean)**

A written report on Services for Deaf/Hard of Hearing (SDHH) was submitted by C. Pean on June 8, 2022 and presented today. C. Pean shared a handout from the National Deaf Center and spoke about educational and advocacy activities with the National Service Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Helen Keller National Center, Deaf Professional Network and the National Deaf Center.

SDHH continues to advocate for a Deaf-centered service delivery model to best meet the needs of Deaf consumers in DRS. Bolstered by research conducted by the National Deaf Center, SDHH is hoping to partner with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to improve outcomes for Deaf students. Because ISBE has oversight of individual education plans (IEPs) while the Office of Civil Rights has oversight over 504 plans, Illinois is challenged to find and analyze important data for Deaf students.

### **D. Bureau of Blind Services (John Gordon, Bureau Chief)**

J. Gordon provided an oral report on the Bureau of Blind Services (BBS). J. Gordon is now the Chief of the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) and will serve as the Acting BBS Chief until a new Bureau Chief has been selected.

ICRE-Wood is open with COVID precautions to ensure social distancing and sanitation, which seem to be working well. ICRE-Wood will be collaborating with the Chicago Lighthouse to put on a summer camp for transition-age students. They will also be partnering with Malcolm X College to ensure that any students attending ICRE-Wood who have not yet completed a GED are able to accomplish that.

BBS continues to work on filling vacancies, including Rehab Instructors and Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Instructors; currently, DRS has one O&M Instructor in Region 4 and none in the rest of the state. Central Management Service (CMS) has proposed changing the hiring criteria to open these positions up to vocational instructors who may not have any experience in the field of blindness, which BBS opposes.

Field Services staff and Assistant Bureau Chief Halvorsen are exploring ways to bring new and innovative projects to the blind community especially in the area of technology. I. Halvorsen later provided an update on the BBS focus areas for the upcoming fiscal year, which include increasing transition services to high school students by vamping up outreach efforts to ISBE and encouraging schools with STEP contracts to refer students to DRS. BBS is updating its brochures to better describe the variety of services, which will be made available in accessible formats.

## **E. Bureau of Field Services (Eric Hanson, Bureau Chief)**

A written report on the Bureau of Field Services (BFS) was submitted by E. Hanson on June 7, 2022 and presented today by Mr. Hanson and K. Wanger, BFS Manager for Community Resources.

K. Wagner explained her role in managing all VR contracts statewide and supervising the advisors who manage those contracts. DRS continues to explore and seek out opportunities to partner with new community rehab providers (CRPs). The Division has seen an increase in Customized Employment providers as well as Milestone, Supported Employment and STEP providers. SRC members are encouraged to consider other community organizations who may be interested in partnering with DRS.

E. Hanson voiced appreciation for staff who have risen to the challenge of working remotely. Productivity has exponentially increased during this time period, including Home Services Program (HSP) referrals and completed redeterminations, which decreased wait time for customers. VR processing times from Referral to Plan have declined significantly.

This summer, BFS will increase outreach efforts to youth and has partnered with Family and Community Services, which runs a youth employment program across 30+ providers (the Illinois Youth Investment program). BFS has been helping to refer youth to these programs and also utilizing opportunities to generate referrals for DRS services, which has been mutually beneficial to both agencies. It has also generated interest in some organizations becoming CRPs. Most of these agencies are currently in Cook County with some sites downstate. It is hoped that this collaborative effort will continue for years to come and expand to reach more communities downstate. These programs offer minimum wage work experience at community employers (20-40hrs/wk). The expectation is that students work at least 90 days; students also participate in three months of prevocational training at the beginning and end of the program.

BFS is revisiting and expanding supportive college transition programs across the state and exploring ways to bring support services to students with disabilities, including mentoring and social supports.

Try Work evaluations (administered through an MOU between DRS and the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)) have continued. This initiative helps to determine a consumer's eligibility for DRS services and assists them in transitioning into competitive integrated employment. This trial program will be expanded to reach more CRPs and centers for independent living (CILs).

BFS has been demonstrating good communication with organizations serving Williams and Colbert consent decree customers. DRS is making a connection to educate these consumers about services.

The eventual transition from remote work back to a face-to-face modality depends on guidance from the Governor. The state is developing surveys and working on this process. In the meantime, they ensure that signage outside offices is accurate and that customers understand that the offices are not closed and that services are still available. Director Patrick shared that DRS has been authorized to send staff to attend IEPs in person.

C. Montgomery stressed the importance of offering internship opportunities that provide valuable work opportunities to students. E. Hanson spoke about efforts to increase access to internships apprenticeships, volunteer work and other work opportunities that will help customers to build a work history.

## **F. Workforce Development Unit (Labraya Harris, Acting Manager)**

Director Patrick thanked LaDonna for meeting with the Chair for the Facility Advisory Council (FAC) to reformat this unit, which is comprised of CRPs throughout the state. K. Wagner shared that the Business Development Unit was working with the FAC to explore methods to more effectively share job leads among different units.

Cindy shared that Tim Engstrom, a business owner, has submitted an application to serve on the Council. He will hopefully be attending tomorrow and will represent one of the Business & Industry roles.

D. Friedman provided an update from the Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB). The Career Pathways for Targeted Populations is a standing committee within the IWIB that focuses on WIOA-defined targeted populations that include people with disabilities, youth and returning citizens. They are creating subcommittees for each of those groups to identify and share best practices.

L. Harris later spoke about quality assurance efforts within the unit. WDU is currently recruiting a new manager. The unit continues its statewide workforce development efforts to ensure that customers are trained to meet the current workforce demands.

## **G. Updates from other Councils**

### **1. Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) (Shelly Richardson SILC Chair)**

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is in the process of collecting information for the State Plan for Independent Living. S. Richardson will coordinate with Director Patrick to coordinate and conduct listening sessions. There is a great deal of interest and need to share information between SILC and DRS in this regard.

On August 24<sup>th</sup>, SILC will be hosting a webinar for employers to educate them on the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. Robin Jones (Great Lakes ADA Center) will be presenting as well as Stephanie Light.

On September 7<sup>th</sup>, SILC will be meeting with Human Services Transportation Providers (HSTP) and Regional Technical Assistance Center (RTAC) to discuss the ongoing transportation challenges across the state for people with disabilities. SILC will be presenting at the RTAC conference to reach transportation providers across the state to speak about the importance of nonemergency transportation. This meeting is a big step in gaining ground on addressing these issues, which are also represented in the SRC's State Plan.

## **2. Blind Services Planning Council (BSPC) (Daniel Hawkins, BSPC Member)**

D. Hawkins was not present and no report was submitted.

## **H. Council Appointment Update (James Knauf)**

J. Knauf shared that Tracy Wright (Executive Director at Gateway Services in Princeton) and Amie Lulinski (ARC of Illinois) have made progress in their appointment process. Serena Herring and Tim Engstrom are in the process of approval through the Governor's Office.

## **I: Data Report (Wolfgang Arterberry, Program Analyst)**

### **1. DRS Data Summary**

W. Arterberry stated that he was unable to submit a report due to illness in his family. The SRC asks that this report be submitted when he is able. Today, W. Arterberry was able to share information from the Unified State Plan illustrating performance indicators for Program Years 22 and 23 (which equate to State FYs 23 and 24 respectively).

## **J. DRS Director Report (Rahnee Patrick, Director)**

**Agency Activity/Budget Update:** Director Patrick shared that the new fiscal year begins July 1<sup>st</sup>. At present, the Division has spent all funds and

paid 70% of what is owed to CRP agencies. Director Patrick feels pleased with the financial status of the agency compared to previous years.

### **Agency Accomplishments:**

Director Patrick has been visiting with ID/DD consumers in closed door sessions, including a virtual meeting with ARC clients. Outreach has also been done to contracted agencies (e.g. Gateway, Challenges Unlimited) to ensure open communication regarding sheltered workshops and subminimum wage transition. People with disabilities in these groups have voiced a need for on-demand transportation and support services (e.g. on the job and in the home). They have also expressed a desire for fair treatment on the job. This illustrates the importance of transportation advocacy mentioned in the SILC report earlier today.

DRS collaborated with other state agencies to hold a career fair for people with disabilities which had 250+ attendees. They are hopeful that many potential hires will come out of this event.

Presently, DRS data suggests that they have the lowest wait time for VR services in recordable history.

**Staffing Update:** DRS is prioritizing the need to fill positions at state-run schools (e.g., Illinois School for the Deaf, Illinois School for the Visually Impaired). Teachers are in demand and the State is working hard to recruit for these positions and compete with other schools. An overview of the state hiring process was provided, which includes CMS identifying knowledge, skills and abilities required of each job description. One unique solution to the agency's hiring needs is to utilize a continuous posting used to fill local offices, which allows for more applicants over an extended period of time.

### **Updates for special programs**

**Marketing outreach:** DRS struggles to get legal permission to utilize social media as it is considered "high risk". This hinders many online marketing efforts.

**Customized Employment:** There are currently approximately eight agencies across the state that are doing Customized Employment,



which requires time spent on “discovery” to most effectively identify strengths of each client.

The MOU referenced earlier involves a training with representatives from agencies that assess people with ID/DD to see if they’re eligible for in-home waiver services. This training will train their staff and DRS staff to better clarify the nature of this partnership, expectations, rules, etc. Input from the recent survey included the need for more communication so it is hoped that this training will better facilitate that.

**CAP Update:** Director Patrick expressed her thanks to Julie Baker for her service and leadership in this area. The transfer agreement officially moving CAP services from DRS to Equip for Equality has been completed with confirmation from RSA.

## **VII. WIOA Overview (James Knauf and Wolfgang Arterberry)**

J. Knauf and W. Arterberry provided training for SRC members on the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA).

## Quarterly Meeting Minutes

June 9, 2022 – Hybrid Meeting

Harris Building (100 S. Grand Avenue East, Springfield, IL) & Zoom

### VIII. Call to Order

The meeting resumed at 9:10am.

### IX. Attendance

**Council Members Present:** (in person) LaDonna Henson, Hershel Jackson, Shelly Richardson, Erin Compton, Rahnee Patrick, Kelsey Thompson, Debbie Einhorn; (via Zoom) Robert Gould, Matt Fred, Cindy Montgomery, Julie Baker, Amie Lulinski, Tracy Wright, David Friedman, Serena Herring, Tim Engstrom

**DRS Staff present:** (in person) **Christina Pean;** (via Zoom) Wolfgang Arterberry, Labraya Harris, Ingrid Halvorsen, Lou Hamer

**Other Guests:** Diane Compton, Ling Huang

*A quorum of the SRC was determined.*

### X. By-laws Change (LaDonna Henson, David Friedman, Kelsey Thompson)

D. Friedman presented changes to committee structures and expectations of members as proposed in the by-laws revision. There was discussion on ways to ensure representation of individuals with disabilities, notably ID/DD. Time was given for questions and review of the by-laws document.

It was **Moved** (Friedman), **Seconded** (Richardson), and **Carried** to approve the by-law modification as distributed on May 25<sup>th</sup>.

### XI. Committee Assignments (LaDonna Henson)

L. Henson reviewed current committee assignments and chairpersons. SRC members were reminded that the by-laws require every SRC member to serve on a standing committee. Committee chairpersons were identified as follows:

- **Operations:** Friedman

- **Policy/Legislation:** Operations Committee will make appointments (Amie and Rob expressed interest in serving on this committee but will be unable to chair)
- **Membership Engagement:** Einhorn

## **XII. Election of Officers**

The Nominations committee presented a slate of officers as follows:

- Chair: Kelsey Thompson
- Vice Chair: David Friedman
- Secretary: Cindy Montgomery
- Member at Large: Debbie Einhorn

It was **Moved** (Richardson), **Seconded** (Jackson), and **Carried** to accept this slate of officers.

M. Fred and L. Henson will be completing their terms on the SRC this month. Chair Henson offered her thanks for the opportunity to participate and lead the Council. Council members thanked the Chair for her leadership and great efforts to increase engagement and focus of the SRC.

## **XIII. Technology Jobs for People with Autism (Ling Huang, Technology North, Inc.)**

L. Huang shared information about his organization, which assists individuals with autism in finding jobs in areas that include document digitization, software development and post-production in the motion picture industry. He shared that their organization has developed a successful business model that can be sustained and replicated.

## **XIV. Review of State Plan (LaDonna Henson)**

Focus areas of the State Plan were reviewed today.

**Satisfaction surveys:** W. Arterberry shared that the pricing for the satisfaction survey proposal had to be resubmitted for the third time, but in the new format they are hopeful that it will go forward. It should be sent out for bid soon. Unfortunately, the pricing has delayed the process significantly. The State Plan notes that we should implement an ongoing survey. In this regard, DRS conducts occasional internal satisfaction surveys, but customer communications will start to be more regular

including at the beginning and end of a case – especially those that are unsuccessfully discharged. This will be done through Qualtrix, which allows DRS to make this more of a standard process throughout the year.

**Provider and staff surveys, school surveys:** Nathan Painter recently joined the Business and Planning Development Unit and will be working with data analysis. W. Arterberry has historically not had time to devote to extensive survey projects. N. Painter will be helping to launch more surveys now that they have an accessible and reliable surveying platform through QQualtrix. DRS recently conducted a survey of DD service providers and has another HSP survey about to go out. Wide scale surveying depends on the texting platform being made available. W. Arterberry shared that he is hopeful that regular surveying to customers will be rolled out in July. There is much value in surveying customers at the time of closure. SRC would appreciate these results being shared. Qualtrix has 10 shareable dashboards that can be shared with external partners. Surveys will be made available on the public-facing websites and can be shared broadly and at any time.

**ACTION ITEM:** W. Arterberry agreed to send out this public survey to the SRC as soon as it's approved and live.

**Work-based learning experiences for customers and youth:** W. Arterberry noted a number of projects and initiatives that focus on this goal, including trial work, internships and apprenticeships (which have been a key focus). The Workforce Development team is working on developing apprenticeship opportunities as reported by Labraya.

**Annual joint meetings with DRS for open communication:** The Council noted great progress in this area in recent years and thanked DRS staff for their collaboration.

**Increased coordination of meeting schedules:** L. Henson noted that the practice of scheduling all meetings for the year in advance has been helpful.

**Increase the use of data in decision-making across the agency related to outcomes, satisfaction and productivity:** The Council recognized progress in determining what data should be tracked; however, more work needs to be done to ensure consistent, regular reporting. The SRC asks to receive data reports monthly with discussion on these reports happening quarterly. If reports cannot be sent out monthly, it would help to receive

this information a few weeks prior to scheduled meetings so that SRC members have time to review.

**Increase competitive employment outcomes to 6,500:** W. Arterberry reported that DRS has seen 1,000 more successful closures compared to last year, but remains 1,000 lower than our goal (4,387 at present). This figure has undoubtedly been impacted by the pandemic with progress being made at certain times of the year. Closures are up 27% and referrals are almost at a pre-pandemic level. Data suggests that DRS is on our way toward hitting that target.

**Adopt a Career Pathways approach:** DRS was not able to offer any updates on this. D. Friedman noted that the rest of the workforce system is moving in this direction and it is important for DRS to align with that. Adaptations will need to be made to these existing models to ensure that they are appropriate for job-seekers with disabilities. L. Hamer (Chief of Staff) encouraged further discussion with Michelle Scott-Tervin (Training Unit) and Francisco Alvarado on this topic. F. Alvarado shared that DRS is developing a relationship with partners in the workforce system. All states must have a system in place to access these opportunities for all consumers in accordance with the State Unified Plan. The plan will be sent to Department of Labor for approval and then published for public review. Updates will be forthcoming. L. Henson and D. Friedman are active with Career Pathways for Targeted Populations, which will coordinate with DRS for further collaboration.

**Enhance community partnerships:** The SRC is looking forward to opportunities to compare 2017 results with those of the forthcoming satisfaction survey.

**Address transportation barriers:** SRC and DRS recognize the urgency of addressing transportation challenges statewide that can have tremendous impact on people with disabilities and their ability to find and maintain employment. W. Arterberry shared that DRS is looking for opportunities to expand services, including vehicle modification services. There was further discussion about remote home-based work as one way to mitigate the need for transportation and “level the playing field”. Several SRC members stressed the importance of community integration. T. Engstrom shared that as a business owner, transportation is one of the biggest challenges to hiring people with disabilities. S. Richardson shared that the HSTP Coordinator can only do so much as they have limited providers in each

area. The SRC should incentivize other providers to step up with accessible vehicles in the rural areas. The aforementioned meeting with HSTP, SILC and /RTAC in September will hopefully address this.

## **XV: Next Meeting**

Upcoming meetings were scheduled as follows:

- September 14-15, 2022
- November 16-17, 2022
- March (TBD in order to coordinate with the legislative calendar)
- June 14-15, 2023

## **XVI. New Business**

E. Compton shared that she will be speaking at the Illinois Statewide Transition Conference on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. She offered to share information about SRC and DRS. The SRC appreciates this opportunity and will look into making printed information available. Director Patrick will provide DRS information.

Director Patrick thanked LaDonna for her service as Chair.

## **XVII. Public Comment**

Time was given for public comments, but none were provided.

## **XVIII. Adjourn**

It was **Moved** (Thompson), **Seconded** (Jackson), and **Carried** to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 12:23pm.

## Attachments:



CAP Updates.docx



BFS Report - June  
2022.docx



SRC Agenda June  
2022.docx



Inclusion-Lesson-Lear  
ned-2022-06 v10.pp