Call to order-Mikey welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. Quorum established.

Michael Adamus motioned to adopt the agenda; Ann seconded. Agenda adopted. Ann motioned to approve the minutes from 12/13, 1/10, 1/15-16 and 3/5. Judy seconded the motion. Minutes adopted.

Evaluation/Planning-Quorum established

- **Deaf and HH** (Cecil)-Ann thanked Cecil for sending out the average cost of services for Deaf, Deafblind and non-Deaf or Blind individuals. Ann asked Cecil what costs were associated with. Cecil said it was a snapshot of expenses but that deafness requires a lot of communication bridging, more time to help for employment; could be hearing aid costs, training for technology, ES providers, etc. Also, many face difficulties in stability on the job. Deafblind consumers are served longer because it’s difficult to rehabilitate the population; out of state training, 6 week evaluation and 2-7 week training period before returning to Florida. ES folks won’t work with them, employers won’t hire them and there’s not enough supports. VR has dual case partnership with DBS who provides orientation, mobility and independent living skills. There’s not enough interpreters and support services providers in the state who are competent in working with Deafblind population. Hard of Hearing-$5,000 average-not as many services needed. Cecil said last year, we spent 1.3 million for interpreters (not contract or staff interpreters). Added 9 positions through Service Source contract. 1/3 of interpreters have chosen not to get background screenings and Cecil speculated that some interpreters aren’t willing to pay the extra fee. Some have paid the fee when they work in the schools but that screening is not accepted by VR. Some aren’t available to accept a lot of interpreting assignments. They are watching it closely to see the impact. Judy said they’re having the same problem in the school system. Cecil added that Florida doesn’t have state standards to identify quality and that interpreting organizations have tried to get a bill passed for years. Allison said the IG required that interpreters need to be screened. There is discussion within DOE on utilizing the Clearinghouse. It’s $50-$100 every 5 years.

Questions and responses:

1) Coding-RSA set up a new functioning code in 2013 which labels a person related to their functioning, not their impairment. New code looks at the primary way of communication. The new coding is how the person connects to the world. VRCs are currently using old codes which RSA has
allowed via a “crosswalk”. VRCs haven’t been trained on new coding. The coding does not impact the budget but it impacts how we interact with the customer.

2) Survey for Deaf/HH-For the past 20 years, town hall meetings and focus groups have been conducted several times but not recently. Surveys for the population are a challenge because it’s difficult to connect. There needs to be more thinking and planning. To be effective, it should be in person.

3) Average cost of Deaf case-$8,370; Deafblind-$12,450; Hard of Hearing-$5,386; Not Deaf or Blind-$4,612

4) Outreach efforts in public schools to identify transition with who are deaf-No. VRCs go to schools but no guarantee they are connecting with the right people, i.e., students.

5) Ideas for things to be implemented in the private sectors to improve services–Ideally, Cecil would like to see a separate unit to oversee the population statewide like DBS, who serves individuals who are blind.

Ann said there should be more beefing up of this section; maybe I&E projects. Cecil said one of the big challenges is to get individuals with disabilities to stand up and speak to the legislature. They need to advocate for programs and services like other states do.

- **Financial Participation** (Don Alveshire)-Don went over the questions raised by the council at the January meeting and said they are looking at whether policy matches what they can do operationally. They are working with Legal and will get back with the council to voice concerns and support, hopefully at the April meeting. Ann asked if the current FP form could be sent out to members. Roy or Kim will send out.

- **CSNA** (Libby)-Chaz Compton will be attending and presenting the final report at the April quarterly. She asked if the council wants to let people know that Chaz will be presenting the final report at the quarterly but Ann did not feel the need to inform the public ahead of time.

- **Ombudsman** (LaRae)-Ann asked if the word “impartial” would be removed from the website. LaRae asked how they see the term related to the Ombudsman’s office. Mikey said he felt that “impartial” could be ok because one’s job description could be viewed as impartial. The term 3rd party was the issue because that would be an autonomous body. LaRae explained that the term 3rd party no longer shows up in any materials or presentations. It was not intended to imply they are outside the agency. They are unbiased because they go into each complaint with an open mind and no pre-judgement. If impartial is an issue, it can be taken under advisement, if the council wishes. Patrick discussed replacing the word “Ombudsman” to something that would be a more common communication term. LaRae said that on the website, the word is adjacent to customer service. Ann thanked the Ombudsman’s office for doing a terrific job and recommended they look at a different way of describing the unit. Donte also thanked them for the clarification and said it’s a very valuable service that’s provided but said we should be as clear as possible so customers know exactly what’s being represented.

- **VR bariatric surgery** (Heather)-Ann asked if bariatric procedure was followed correctly. Heather said that the agency has worked with the customer to resolve all issues and the case is moving forward. Patrick asked what the normal wait time is for the procedure. Heather said it’s a long process to make sure customers understand the process and what they need to do to be successful. The customer and VRC work together on their plan, including nutritional counseling, for 12 months. Then, they undergo a psychological evaluation to ensure they’re capable of making medical decisions and they are prepared for the follow up. The VRC and the customer put together a case; prior approval is required. The customer must agree to work with a nutritionist for 6 months after the surgery to adapt to the new lifestyle. Psych. services can be added with the nutritional program. Patrick asked how many surgeries are performed each year. Heather will get back with him on it.
She said the policy manual was revised in 2015. Mikey asked if they are confident that the timeline is comparable to the industry standards today. Heather said that most insurance companies are 6 months; some are 12. If it’s a medical necessity, all the steps are not required. Heather said the surgeons vary in their approaches and VR relies on their recommendations. Mikey asked if the agency has taken a proactive approach to looking at the program to identify if there’s a systemic issue in adhering to the policy in delivering service. Heather said the Area Leadership team is discussing if this is a systemic issue and to make sure VRCs fully understand and are complying with the policy.

- Ann thanked everyone on the committee and VR staff and said it’s been extremely helpful to all.

**Legislative/PA: Quorum established**

- **Legislative**- Allison said they are watching the budget to see if the case management system budget will be approved. She said Able Trust has filed a bill to repeal the sunset law that was passed last year, which came out of committee favorably.

- **Annual Report**- Send options for themes to Kim/Roy asap to vote on at the April quarterly. Mikey suggested “Getting to Work, Getting to Live”. Roy or Kim will send timeline to all.

- **FRC Facebook update**- Patrick has screenshot everything on the wall of the page and will get to Roy for recording purposes.

**Executive: Quorum established**

- **FRC member attendance**: Mikey discussed the attendance conference call and felt there needed to be more clarification and how to eliminate the variables that could come up. Roy read the draft policy then the clarification. Ann asked Roy and Kim if it’s doable (to record attendance during conference calls) and Roy responded that it was, except in the case of an acclamation vote. Members were in agreement with the language. Patrick motioned to move the language forward to the full council; Michael Adamus seconded. Full council approved. The proposed language will be circulated for 14 days and then the council will vote on it at the quarterly.

- **October meeting**- Mikey discussed the possibility of council participation at the NCSRC meeting in Jacksonville. The October meeting would have to move from Gainesville to Jacksonville. He said there are no guarantees but it would position the council to make the ask by minimizing the costs. Patrick motioned to move the meeting to Jacksonville. Roll call-motioned approved. Allison said it’s not often that NCSRC comes to Florida and she supports the opportunity for the council to attend.

- **Correspondence**- Roy read the questions that came in after the last meeting. Allison recommended sending her response out to the council. Rebecca said individuals need longer than 90 days (150 for supported employment) before their case is closed. Allison responded that the minimum is 90 days and that each closure is individualized based on the customer’s progress and stability on the job.

- **January Action Items**- (Donte took over the meeting as Mikey fell off the call.) Roy reviewed the Action Items. Libby will provide info on reduced referrals at the April meeting. Vocational Evaluations at a future meeting is pending. # of referrals to transitional youth will be presented by Melinda at the April meeting. (Mikey returned to the call) Don presented the info on Financial Participation. Springboard issues are on this conference call. Closure letter-pending.

- **January springboard items**- Mikey asked if there are any items that need further explanation or clarification on. Send to Roy or Kim if you have a request to place them on the agenda.

- Mikey asked for members of the public to be recognized. No response.

- Mikey asked for recommendations on the Wise Award.

Adjourned
**Action Items**
Staff will send out the current Financial Participation form to members.
Heather will report on how many bariatric surgeries are performed each year.
Staff will send Annual Report timeline to all.
Patrick will send screenshots of Facebook page to Roy.
Staff will circulate draft attendance by-law for 14 days.
Staff will send Allison’s correspondence out to the council.
Staff will put out another request for nominations for the Wise Award.
Libby will provide info on reduced referrals at the April meeting.