Florida Rehabilitation Council

Andy Houghton, FRC Chair
Quarterly Business Meeting Minutes, January 17, 2023

Members present (virtually):
Michael Adamus, Denny Clark, Tammy Davis, Andy Houghton, Brent McNeal, Delaina Parrish, Victoria Gaitanis, Allison Klein

VR Staff:
Kim Thomas, Roy Cosgrove, Libby Moody, Derrinita Walker, Lauren Veit, Cindy Gaber, Tawana Gilbert, Kathy Davis, Antionette Williams, Brenda Lampon

Guests: Abelina Zuniga, Nicole Dumay

The following represents a summary of deliberations, advice, comments and motions that comprise this meeting of the FRC quarterly meeting.

Call to order-Andy Houghton
Andy thanked everyone for being on the call.
The council approved the agenda, minutes, budget report, customer correspondence and action items.

Evaluation and Planning Committee-Michael Adamus
The committee approved the outstanding minutes.

- Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS): Libby reported that the pilot is complete. They surveyed customers in 8 unit offices with a total of 2,400 email invitations; received 548 back, a 22.54% rate. 306 emails were returned as undeliverable which will be followed up on. The pilot had a few minor issues. e.g., duplicates in the data set that are being worked on. More options were added to the orientation question-don’t know, did not participate and to complete over the phone. The plan is to go live statewide on Feb. 1st and results from the pilot will be shared at the February meeting. The survey will be conducted quarterly. Marketing in the VR offices and ways to get feedback to staff and providers are being discussed.

- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA): Libby discussed that they are working out glitches with the PO but are scheduling activities for the assessment and are looking forward to holding the focus group with the council in February.

- VR 722 report: The report is sent to RSA annually and outlines the numbers of mediations, hearings and the reasons, e.g., nature of IPE, case closure, etc. In the past year, there were 9 requests for mediations, 8 disputes not resolved during mediation process, 13 requests for impartial hearings, 6 resolved, 2 not resolved and 5 pending. Brent said a new dispute resolution process is being used. Delaina said some other states have hearing officers attend SRC meetings and VR trains the officers.
Brent said VR doesn’t have any active role in training administrative law judges as they are familiar with VR’s statutory framework.

Legislative and Public Awareness Committee-Tammy Davis

The committee approved the previous minutes.

• **Business outreach**: Tammy reported that no meetings have been set yet due to the holidays but she will be making calls to businesses next week. Kathy said they will be ready when they get the referrals. They have been coordinating with Blind Services with Brent and Derrinita’s help and she is hopeful and excited about the initiatives.

• **Outreach materials**: Derrinita discussed that Moore Communications is working on creative materials to target the business community. They will have a digital plan for on-line strategies as well.

• **2022 Annual Report**: Derrinita thanked the council for meeting on short notice about the Annual Report which has now been sent to the required parties.

• **2023 Annual Report**: The plan is provide early additional explanation about the Annual Report and reasoning in an effort to maintain language submitted by the council for future reports.

• **Legislative packets**: Communications is waiting on an answer from leadership on whether sending out the packets is a possibility.

• **Constant Contact**: The template is being routed through DOE Communications; additional content will be added later and submitted for approval. The timeframe to send it out will be the same as the current schedule prior to meetings.

Andy thanked Brent, Derrinita and DOE leadership who were willing to work with the council to retain the voice of the council in the Annual Report. Brent echoed the appreciation and said he would make every effort to identify any possible issues earlier in the year.

• **Additional Item**: Derrinita discussed that the agency is doing a rate study on service providers with PCG. She introduced Abelina Zuniga from PCG who is working on encouraging vendors to participate and she asked for any ideas to get more vendors involved in the study. Abelina discussed that they are focusing the study on employment services, interpreter services and WIPA services. Derrinita said they need to lean on their internal resources more so they are formulating a plan to reach out through the areas. The Family Café and the Able Trust may be good resources as well. The council can help by educating vendors on the process and encouraging them to participate. Derrinita will look into a letter from the council which may be helpful. Abelina provided a link to the cost collection tool to guide interested parties to: [Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Rate Study - Home (weebly.com)](http://weebly.com). Survey links are sent through DVR and are disbursed through the website.

Andy discussed that the council received several correspondence communications and asked if any member had any comments. No additional comment or discussion was offered. Andy reminded everyone that Libby had requested feedback on the CSS and had gotten responses from 2 council members and 2 staff. She has been working with San Diego State on the edits.

Executive Committee-Andy Houghton

The Membership Workgroup discussed that Brent is identifying the most appropriate process to communicate the council’s needs. Brent said they recently received 2 new applicants, who will be communicated to leadership. One applicant is Vicki’s successor in DOE’s Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services; the other is from DOE Adult Education. He is hopeful that they will see some movement soon as appointments have recently been made to other councils. Denny suggested
that the membership workgroup work on onboarding and orientation materials while waiting for appointments.

- **NCSRC-Delaina and Denny**
  Delaina and Denny reported on their trip to San Antonio for the NCSRC conference and thanked the council for approving them to attend. A membership committee was discussed; model of success is Alabama. They suggested prioritizing strategies and using social media to attract new members. Also consider having individuals such as university students or faculty members join the council as ex-officio members. Community and industry leaders and key vendors could be invited to meetings to share trends as well. Many states provide mentorships to new members to improve retention and provide ongoing training. Denny and Delaina recommended an annual retreat to create strategic initiatives and prioritize deficiencies and needs to focus on for the next year, possibly by extending a quarterly meeting. They also said the council may want to reevaluate the quarterly meetings, shift more autonomy to the committees, create a Diversity, Equality, Inclusion (DEI) committee and have cross-collaboration between committees. Since committee work is so important, the council needs more members. Additional recommendation is to more consistently benchmark with other SRCs, particularly Texas and Alabama and to represent Florida on the NCSRC board. Andy thanked the team for putting the presentation together and for their recommendations. He asked where the gaps are between what's currently being done versus the recommendations and said these were good starting points for topics of discussion. Bringing in ex-officio folks to provide input would be beneficial. Denny volunteered to work on a “gap” document. Andy suggested further discussion at the February meeting.

**Area 1 presentation-Tawana Gilbert**
Tawana shared that Area 1 more than tripled their Pre-ETS expenditures so they are planning their 3rd annual school recognition ceremony in April as a way of thanking the school districts for the partnership. They are planning their 1st ceremony for 3 other counties in the panhandle to applaud their efforts as well. Team building has expanded. Disability Rights Florida (DRF) has met with unit supervisors to share what they do to expand the partnership and bridge any gaps. Toolkits were shared on the transition process. The area launched an additional Project SEARCH site last fall and they hope to further expand the sites. CareerSource is hosting a career fair which VR is participating in for customers and VR staff. The area exceeded their goal of successful closures (588) with a total of 651 for last year and they are on track for meeting their goal for this year. They are also strengthening partnerships with Okaloosa County DJJ and the Center for Independent Living (CIL). A provider meet and greet event was successful and they are hoping to do the same this year as well as an aerospace career event. They have also been working with some of the school districts in the rural areas. She said they are working for more collaboration, which she is dedicated to providing. Delaina asked if the career fairs are accessible for individuals with disabilities who attend and Tawana said she will reach out to the Career Source team to ensure it’s accessible. Andy was appreciative of Tawana’s time and leadership.

**Public Comment:** No public comments.
Denny said he consistently hears concerns about recruitment and retention. Andy reminded that the salary increase is pending and would help with the issue.

**Adjourned**