Florida Rehabilitation Council

Andy Houghton, FRC Chair
Quarterly Meeting (TEAMS) Minutes-August 8, 2023

Members:
Andy Houghton, Tammy Davis, Brent McNeal, Delaina Parrish, Allison Klein, Jose Morales, Christopher Romero, Matthew Motko, Darlene Laibl-Crowe, Denis Roy, Matti Wieczorek

VR Staff:

Guests: Patricia Parrish, Tina Herzig, Tess Crowder, Emily Hough, Lucas Halverson, Kerrington Kiner, Jane Johnson, Jasmine, Sarah Merchant, Lori Fahey, Nikki D’Agostino, Donna Phillips, Michael Adamus, Valerie Kline, Howard Bell

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

Call to order-Quorum established

Andy introduced the new council members, Darlene Laibl-Crowe, Matt Motko, Matti Wieczorek, Christopher Romero and Denis Roy. New members introduced themselves and gave a brief bio. Andy spoke of Michael Adamus’ terms on the council and thanked him for his service and wisdom on both the FRC and Pennsylvania SRC. Tammy said he is really what the council and VR stands for and said how much she appreciates him. Michael said it was his pleasure to serve and was grateful for all members and their contributions and offered his continued support. Delaina said it has been a privilege to meet and work with him. Brent thanked Michael for his service and appreciated all he’s done for the council.

The council approved the agenda, budget report and customer correspondence.

Director’s Report-Brent McNeal, VR Director
Brent discussed that the salary increase for front-line staff was approved by the legislature, which will help with retention and recruitment. Plans are underway to evaluate compensation for staff who did not get the raise. Brent welcomed the new members and explained the Director’s Report.

- Annual Caseload Highlights: There’s been an increase in referrals, customers determined eligible and IPEs completed from last year. Average number of days to complete IPEs-53. The AWARE case management system will go live in 3 weeks, which will streamline processes.
- **WIOA Performance Measures**: January through March '23, credential attainment was at 22% (target-20%); measurable skills gains (MSGs)-25.7% (target-28.7%).
- **Employment**: Through Q3-2nd quarter after exit-26% (target-49%); 4th quarter after exit -28% (target-49%). Rates will increase as data is added. Top Standard Occupational Classifications (SOCs) are stockers, order fillers and customer service representatives.
- **Pre-ETS service delivery**: They are looking to raise the numbers in Instruction in Self-Advocacy. Work-based Learning Experiences (WBLE) are down from last year which may be due to changes in the invoicing process. Workplace Readiness Training has increased from last year.
- **Potentially eligible who later applied for VR services**: Trending up with a 9.2% increase from last year.
- **Expenditures by category**: Purchased client services-48%; salaries and benefits-25% of $187.5 million.
- **Caseload and staff turnover**: New vacancies have begun to decrease and VR believes that will continue as new salary plans are implemented. The average caseload has decreased.
- **Employment programs**: Through the Aspire initiative, 3 adopter sites will provide the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) service, assisting individuals with mental health disabilities in obtaining employment rapidly. ServiceSource will assist in providing services through the $13 million ArtCIE grant, which will move individuals in sub-minimum wage employment into competitive, integrated employment in the arts, recreation and entertainment industries. WBLEs will expand with the addition of Job Shadowing and Workplace Tour and Information Interviews when AWARE launches. Youth peer mentoring will also be available.
- **The Business Relations unit** has provided over 570 services to 443 employers and attended 389 outreach events in state fiscal year (SFY ‘22-’23). The partnership with Collins Aerospace has expanded to 2 new sites. The University of West Florida in Pensacola hosted a Careers in Aerospace event where VR participants learned about job opportunities. Several attendees received interviews.
- **Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind unit**: VR hosted the 51st Annual SE Regional Institute on Deafness Conference last October where over 300 attended from 14 states. Open calls have been held to support VR staff. A Community of Practice with the Division of Blind Services (DBS) and collaboration with Florida Educators for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (FEDHH) to support Pre-ETS teachers have occurred. The unit has developed nine YouTube training videos on employment for people with hearing loss. The team has also presented at several conferences around the state.
- **Ombudsman overview**: The majority of the contacts (70%) are requests for information; 30% are complaints. 88.2% were satisfied with the outcome (complaint contacts).
- **Additional updates**: Brent completed a radio PSA that was picked up by 118/150 radio stations in Florida. New VR flyers have been developed, Higher Education to Employment and one for people maintaining public assistance. Over 250 leads were generated by VR’s media campaign. AWARE go-live date is August 28th. Brent thanked VR and DOE staff for their diligence and support during the process.

Andy and Tammy thanked Brent for linking the presentation to the recommendations. Allison said VR is doing a great job and that the Client Assistance Program (CAP) is getting a lot of referrals from the Ombudsman’s office. Delaina asked about the SOC codes and Brent said the Bureau of Labor Statistics may have developed them in 2018. He encouraged members to review the SOC website, [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov). Brent said Derrinita has done a great job getting the word out on AWARE and the ArtCIE grant and said the Public Awareness Committee’s network could also be of assistance. Andy introduced Denis Roy, new council member, who joined the call.

### Area 6 presentation-Brenda Lampon, Area Director

Brenda has been with VR for 22 years, first starting as a counselor.

- **Structure**: There are 14 units and 3 private units (Service Source) in Monroe and Miami-Dade counties; 2 area supervisors, 14 unit supervisors and 171 staff in the 2 counties. SFY ‘22-’23: Caseload size-9,357;
referrals-827; potentially eligible-1,346; MSGs-48.66% and successful closures-853, all increases from last SFY. Brenda credits outreach efforts for the rise in participants. Training sessions are conducted with the University of Miami Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) and informational sessions with the public to increase knowledge in all areas. Job fairs have been conducted with FIU, Albizu, FNU and Miami-Dade College North.

- **Outreach:** The team has 6 recurrent efforts and an additional 12 robust collaborations with public and private schools, state and local agencies, hospitals and private partners with more to come. Brenda thanked Cory’s team (Deaf/HH unit) for their help in connecting them with teachers of Deaf students to provide a training session on VR services. Training sessions are being developed with Career and Technical Education providers and students through the REACH Act initiative.

Andy and Tammy thanked Brenda for the presentation. Brenda said there are great collaborations in the area and they are reaching out to places they have not previously collaborated with. She shared that they have several individuals who are attending law school, which is really exciting. She hopes to bring them to a future meeting.

**Evaluation and Planning Committee: No quorum established**

Andy discussed the possibility of collapsing the committees and instead, rolling all items into the full council with all taking responsibility for all items and proposed halting committee meetings for the time being. After discussion, the team agreed to keep the committee structure in place at this time. Andy encouraged new members to observe committee meetings and join one when they are comfortable. The Evaluation Committee is in need of a Chair. Action items and minutes will be voted on at the next meeting.

- **State Plan overview:** Roy discussed the council’s responsibilities in providing input for the upcoming State Plan, the timeline and the various resources the council will use to develop their recommendations.

- **VR updates to FRC recommendations:** Members reviewed each 2022 State Plan recommendation and the agency’s responses in April 2022 and August 2023. Brent said the agency can assist the council if more information/data is needed in determining whether to keep, modify or delete a recommendation. Members were encouraged to thoroughly review materials prior to the October meeting. Libby discussed the recommendations and agency’s response table and said that additional information can be found in the most recent Director’s Report which provides some quantitative data. Pay increases have occurred (Recommendation 2); the council may look at deleting that recommendation. Brent discussed that VR Counselors, Techs and Senior Counselors, Consultants and Unit Supervisors received the increase and they are now looking to increase salaries for those who didn’t receive one this year. Andy discussed the improvements the agency has made which shows the value of the collaboration between the agency and council. Delaina updated that she will be serving on the taskforce for a new Disability Resource Center at UF who have said it’s been a challenge to partner with VR on the referral process. Her hope is to bring ideas and recommendations from the council to the taskforce to aid in the collaboration.

Christopher discussed Recommendation 5 and asked if procedures were in place that would not punish a customer for reaching out to CAP. He said that once a counselor is aware that CAP is involved, there appears to be pressure to approve an IPE. Allison said what they see on their end is a mixture with regards to how they work together. They have reached out to 5/7 areas/units to present to counselors so they know CAP is there to work with them, not against, which seems to be helpful. Monica Edwards said she will respond to the inquiry about policy via email. Andy reminded all that questions for VR should route through Roy/Kim.

- **Customer Feedback Survey:** Libby discussed that she manages the surveys and coordinates the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), and works with data collection, reporting and presentations, e.g., Brent’s Director’s Report. The Customer Feedback Survey (CFS) was administered to
11,420 former and current customers. 2,592 responded, a 22.7% response rate, an increase from last quarter. There were a lot of increases for satisfaction in orientation and IPE development questions. Feedback about providers (551) was mostly positive (23% experienced a problem) and there were incremental increases in all the questions on customer rights. Overall satisfaction with the help they received from VR increased by 1.5% for a total of 76.5%. The annual results should be available at the October meeting, which will be helpful in drafting new recommendations for the State Plan.

- **CSNA:** All area level work is done. The surveys will be open for another week then San Diego State University (SDSU) will compile results. Their analysis will begin after that and Libby will bring whatever information is available for the October meeting which will be helpful in drafting new recommendations for the State Plan.
- **WIOA Common Performance Measures:** Libby provided an overview of the measures which include:
  - Employment 2nd quarter after exit (in unsubsidized employment)
  - Employment 4th quarter (in unsubsidized employment)
  - Median earnings 2nd quarter after exit (in unsubsidized employment)
  - Median earnings 4th quarter after exit (in unsubsidized employment)
  - Credential attainment
  - Measurable skills gains (MSG) rate
  - Effectiveness in servicing employers
    - Employee retention rate
    - Employer penetration rate
    - Repeat business customer rate
Delaina asked whether Florida benchmarks their measures with other states and Libby said all VR agencies are not the same; economic factors also play a role.

**Stephen R. Wise Award presentation:** Andy read an overview of the award and recognized the 2023 recipients, Lori Fahey, who founded the Family Café and Jessica Dollard, VR Counselor/Unit Supervisor. Lori thanked the council for the recognition; Jessica said she is humbled and grateful for the award. Andy said the council is proud and honored to award them for their hard work.

**LUNCH BREAK**

Andy reported that Denny Clark, council member, passed away yesterday.

**Legislative and Public Awareness Committee-Tammy Davis**  
**Quorum established**

- **Minutes/Action items:** The council approved the 6/20 minutes and action items.
- **Business outreach:** Tammy has started communications with TMH, FAMU, Baycare in Tampa, Jayble and Piper Aircraft. She encouraged new members to locate businesses to send to Kathy Davis for follow-up. Kathy thanked Tammy for all her efforts. Tina Herzig (Service Source) said she would be happy to contact Piper in Vero Beach.
- **State Plan Language for Annual Report:** The committee, then council, approved the modified language to be included in the VR/FRC Annual Report.
- **Cover for Annual Report:** Derrinita presented 7 options for the report cover. The council voted on #4, #1 and #7, in that order. Delaina suggested printing some Annual Reports with Braille on the cover. Derrinita said they design a completely different accessible web version and large print versions in English, Spanish and Creole. They use QR codes for targeted purposes, like flyers or banners for outreach purposes. She said it would have to be voted on in October and she will provide additional documentation to assist in making the decision. Darlene said when the reports are distributed, it would be helpful if the cover was described on the website. Andy asked if it's possible to design the raised
cover and a QR code that sends them to a description of the image. Allison said the Braille and Talking Book Library will translate to Braille free of charge, upon request. Darlene suggested providing the report in Braille upon request. It will be discussed at the September 6th meeting.

- **Updated Membership flyer:** The committee, then council, approved the updated flyer.
- **VR newsletter article:** The committee, then council, approved having Andy’s “why” statement included in the email blast for the October 24th meeting. Darlene asked that any pictures be described for folks with visual impairments. Tammy encouraged new members to send in a statement explaining why the FRC is important to them, to be included in future newsletters.

**Project 10-Donna Phillips**

- Donna introduced herself as the Director of Project 10, a statewide discretionary project through the Dept. of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS). Their mission is to assist school districts in providing secondary transition services throughout the state. The federal transition indicators guide their work—graduation rates, dropout rates, secondary transition IEP compliance and post-school outcomes. Initiatives are to build capacity in others to provide transition services, interagency collaboration, transition legislation and policy, and student development and outcomes. Training is critical to support school personnel and other transition stakeholders. Technical assistance is provided to individuals or groups, to explore transition requirements and to provide suggestions and resources for transition programs. Self-paced online courses on graduation requirements, transition courses and using data to increase graduation success are available, as well. Additional information and multiple resources are provided on the Project 10 website, [http://project10.info/](http://project10.info/). Donna discussed that the team trains school district personnel about VR services and referred folks to Project 10’s “Post-Secondary Options at a Glance” as a resource and checklist for students preparing for post-secondary education. Brent said there’s an opportunity for increased collaboration between Project 10 and VR.

**Executive Committee-Andy Houghton, Chair**

- **Minutes/Action items:** The committee approved the minutes and action items.
- **Membership update:** Andy discussed that the council is excited to have its new members and that leadership is working with the Governor’s Appointments Office to facilitate remaining appointments.
- **FRC officer elections:** Andy is currently serving as Chair, Tammy as Vice Chair and Delaina as 2nd Vice Chair. All expressed an interest in serving another term. The council unanimously approved for each of them to serve additional terms. Andy thanked all and said he is looking forward to serving the council for another year.
- **PCA reimbursement:** Andy discussed the Developmental Disabilities Council’s method for reimbursing for PCAs, which includes 3 levels of care and the need for overnight care. The council approved the new method of reimbursement.
- **2024 meeting calendar:** Brent proposed coordinating with Libby on the dates to make sure they coincide with reporting period timelines. Darlene suggested combining a Miami and Ft. Lauderdale meeting. There was agreement that the February meeting should be in Tallahassee and the August meeting in Gainesville (Area 2) instead of Area 7. The council will vote on the calendar at the September meeting.
- **Partner reports:**
  - Cory Parker, Program Manager for VR’s Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind unit, reported on the Florida Coordinating Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (FCCDHH), as he is the Vice Chair. The council is overseen by the Florida Dept. of Health (DOH) and is made up of 17 members who represent a variety of agencies. The purpose of the council is to provide resources to individuals with hearing loss, including hearing devices, barriers, healthcare, legal services, communication
technologies and access, and receiving accommodations. The council has quarterly meetings throughout the state and is looking at how to maximize outreach efforts. They participate in community partnerships, looking at pertinent issues to the community and exhibit at statewide events to promote awareness of the council. Their goal is to maximize support for individuals who are Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing, Late-Deafened and Deafblind. Their next meeting is August 10th (Zoom), from 8:00am-noon. The biennial report is available at CommunityHealthPromotion@FloridaHealth.gov. Darlene served on the council for 8 years and she thanked Cory for sharing the information.

- Allison Klein from the (CAP) reported that they had 116 cases in Q3. 18 cases involved Title 1; 20-VR conflict of services; 35-communication issues. CAP completed 39 referrals to VR. Outreach to VR, DBS and the Centers for Independent Living (CILs) is ongoing.

Public Forum
- Michael Adamus requested being represented on a card sent to Denny Clark’s family and Andy suggested members send in thoughts to be included on the card.
- Holly Nickerson from the Ombudsman’s office introduced herself and invited members to call the office if they have any questions.
- Darlene asked what qualifies as a developmental disability. Andy and Tammy said they would like to have more information on developmental disabilities from the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC). Staff will work on coordinating a presentation.
- Delaina discussed that she has been selected for the CSAVR Workforce podcast, which will partly focus on how VR has positively impacted her journey and how advocacy from millennials can help shape VR policy. The podcast will air in September.
- Jose wanted to welcome everyone to Jacksonville in October. He is a part of the Mayor’s Disability Council and said they have a youth mentoring week in which they pair youth up with employers to job shadow. They also recognize employees each quarter who are ambassadors of employment and awareness and who hire individuals with disabilities. Jose also said the FRCB is looking to increase awareness and how the councils can work together.
- Tammy encouraged new members to take a look at the committees to see which one they would like to join.

No public comments.

Adjourn