



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations **STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL**

working with the Office of Rehabilitation Services to
maximize the potential of people with disabilities
through meaningful employment...

May 14, 2001

40 Fountain Street
Providence, RI 02903

(401) 421-7005
(401) 421-9259 FAX
(401) 421-7016 TDD
<http://www.ors.state.ri.us>

Chairperson:
Carol Krause-Ferraioli

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

William Anderson, J.D.
Janice A. Belasco
Barbara Belheumer
Annette Bourbonniere
Paul Choquette
Cheryl Collins
Robert Cooper
Thomas DiPaola, Ph.D.
Robin Dolan
Ann Marie Dubuque
Craig Enos
Carmen Ferguson
Isabelle Frost
Russell Gifford
Margaret Hoyer
Brian Hubbard
Melissa A. Jenkins, Ph.D.
Mary R. Moore
Jeanne Panarace
Virginia Perelson
Paul Pickens
Susan E. Roush, Ph.D.
Mercedes San Milan
J. David Sienko
Susan Silva

Administrator-ORS
Raymond A. Carroll

SRC Staff Person
Karen Shabshelowitz

The Honorable Lincoln Almond
Governor of Rhode Island
State House
Smith Street
Providence RI 02903

Dear Governor Almond:

The Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is pleased to present its 2000 Annual Report. We are a volunteer group that provides citizen oversight to the Rhode Island Vocational Rehabilitation Program that is administered through the Department of Human Services (DHS)/Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS). We are committed to and involved in facilitating a wide range of employment issues for Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

The SRC enjoys a productive and positive relationship with ORS. We are developing a meaningful partnership that truly works to improve the employment potential of Rhode Islanders with disabilities. Indeed, we commend ORS for a highly successful year in which they increased employment outcomes by 16%.

The SRC has focused on four major projects during 2000. We have 1) worked to build our relationship with the State Workforce Investment Board, 2) continued our ongoing efforts to evaluate ORS client satisfaction and assess the needs of Rhode Islanders with disabilities, 3) developed an initial Resource Plan for the Council, and 4) supported the development and initial implementation of the four successful disability-related grants collectively known as Rhodes to Independence. We are particularly excited about this last project which has the potential to significantly impact employment for Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

Helping Rhode Islanders with disabilities find and maintain meaningful employment is a complex and demanding endeavor. The rewards, however, are great, both for individuals receiving ORS services and for all of RI. The SRC continues to strive for improvements in the delivery of employment-related services for our citizens with disabilities. Please be assured, we take our responsibilities seriously and are dedicated to improving the lives of Rhode Islanders with disabilities through employment. We are sincerely grateful for your support of our efforts and look forward to continued service to you.

Sincerely,

Susan E. Roush, Ph.D.
Chair, State Rehabilitation Council - 2000



Rhode Island

State Rehabilitation Council

Annual Report

Federal Fiscal Year 2000

DHS/Office of Rehabilitation Services
... working with ORS to maximize the potential
of persons with disabilities through
meaningful employment.

**Rhode Island
State Rehabilitation Council
Annual Report
Federal Fiscal Year 2000**

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Alternate formats are available. Contact Sharon DiPinto at (401) 421-7005 ext. 318 to receive a copy.

I. Council Chair's Report

In 2000, the Federally-established Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) continued its vital mission of facilitating employment for Rhode Islanders with disabilities. The Council made great strides this year in becoming an active, fully participating partner in this endeavor with the Rhode Island Vocational Rehabilitation Program administered through the Department of Human Services (DHS)/Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS). Specifically, the Council continued to be actively engaged in facilitating the goals and objectives of ORS, and we acknowledge and congratulate them on a successful year.

The full Council conducted its 2000 business at quarterly meetings, and the Executive Committee also met quarterly, with eight sub-committees holding numerous meetings. A daylong planning retreat for the full SRC was held in October. The majority of the Council's work continues to occur at the committee level.

The most significant accomplishment of 2000 was the successful search and hiring of the Council's first support staff person. Ms. Karen Shabshelowitz (a former Council member) was employed (starting in the summer) for 15 hours/week to provide administrative support to the Council. She has been actively involved in many aspects of the Council's work, working by assignment of the Council Chair to individual sub-committees and providing general Council support as needed.

The Council was involved in four main issues during 2000:

- 1) Building our relationship with the State Workforce Investment Board
- 2) Evaluation of ORS client satisfaction and a needs assessment of Rhode Islanders with disabilities
- 3) Developing a Resource Plan for the Council

4) Supporting the development and initial implementation of the four successful disability-related grants collectively known as Rhodes to Independence. A more detailed description of the Council's efforts on each of these issues follows.

a. State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB)

The SRC values the placement of Mr. Raymond Carroll, DHS/ORs Administrator, on the SWIB as the SRC/ORs representative. We are committed to ensuring that disability issues are an ongoing concern of the SWIB and welcome Mr. Bob Cooper, Executive Secretary, Governors' Commission on Disabilities, to the SRC as the SWIB representative. He is a valuable colleague and will contribute greatly to the SRC's work. Additionally, the SRC is actively seeking to expand representation on the Council by employers.

As an example of the SRC's developing relationship with the SWIB, we participated in the March 24, 2000 Public Meeting for the Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan and the Workforce Investment Act State Plan. The SRC Chair and the SRC Policy Committee Chair both provided comments on the plans.

b. Client Satisfaction and Needs Assessment

As was stated in the 1999 Annual Report, these issues are complex and ongoing, and undoubtedly will be the focus of the Council for years to come. In 2000, the Council took major steps toward engaging a consultant to implement not only an initial client satisfaction/needs assessment project, but also to ensure that it has ongoing features. It is anticipated the consultant will be hired in 2001 and at least the first phases of the project will be brought to fruition.

c. Developing a SRC Resource Plan

The Council took its first steps toward developing an independent Resource Plan. This activity supports the ongoing efforts to facilitate independence and a partnership relationship with ORS. This Resource Plan will allow the Council to assume more responsibility for its funding, setting priorities and budgeting for its activities. Please see Section III for a summary of this Resource Plan.

d. Federal Grants - Rhodes to Independence

The Council's Administrative Assistant participated in several of the planning sessions for these grants, offering the perspective of the SRC. With successful funding of all four grants, collectively known as *Rhodes to Independence*, the Council used our October Retreat to become educated as to their specific content, scope and expected outcomes. The grants bring over \$5.3 million dollars to Rhode Island for new initiatives for citizens with disabilities. The projects range in length from 2.5 to 6 years. The goal of all four grants is to "get and keep people with disabilities competitively employed by making it "worth it"!" The Department of Human Services, the Office of Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Labor, and the Social Security Administration are the participating agencies. We anticipate an ongoing interest in the implementation of these grants, and look forward to advocating for their maximal implementation for the benefit of Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

II. Committee Activities in 2000

A. By-Laws Sub-Committee: Ad hoc (no action in 2000)

B. Consumer Committee: Brian Hubbard, Chair

This new committee is focusing its efforts on maximizing the involvement of persons with disabilities in the Council and ensuring that the Council attends to the spirit, and not just the letter, of the Rehabilitation Program.

C. Employment Sub-Committee: Isabelle Frost, Chair

During 2000, this committee took time to re-examine the employment goals that had been established for the Office of Rehabilitation Services. The purpose of this reflection was to support the placement efforts of ORS by building partnerships with private sector business members.

There were several significant accomplishments in the employment efforts of ORS in 2000, namely, 1) placements were increased by 16% and 2) a job development network was established that brought focused job development and job search efforts to approximately 40 clients. This network created a valuable mentoring environment between counselors and clients. Additionally, business representatives from the Employment Committee presented Honor Roll Awards to community employers who have hired individuals with disabilities and employees who have been successful in making the transition to the workplace. This RI Supported Employment Employer Honor Roll Awards Ceremony was held October 3, 2000 and was held in conjunction with the 3rd RI Partnerships to Employment Conference.

D. Legislative and Advocacy Sub-Committee: Mary Moore, Chair

During 2000, this Committee reevaluated the goals and objectives originally set forth, reviewing legislation, and making recommendations for the full Council to address.

Following is a summary of the Committee's activities and accomplishments during the past year.

1. Examination of state statutes, regulations, policies and procedures, including:
 - Reviewing and advocating for adequate funding for ORS to serve the employment needs of persons with disabilities was presented to the Committee. Of particular interest to the SRC was the Federal allocation system related to COLA adjustments to the budget. This situation will be followed with ORS and advocacy opportunities will be sought to impact this system.
 - Utilizing the new Council Administrative Assistant to track legislative issues.

2. Examination of SSI & SSDI eligibility criteria and dis/incentives to employment, including:
 - Committee member attendance at a forum in MA sponsored by the Social Security Administration entitled *Federal Policy – State Opportunities: Models and Strategies for an Inclusive Workforce*. Information from this forum was disseminated to the Council at the October retreat.
 - Education on the One-Stop Centers, which led to the Committee requesting current statistics on how people with disabilities are served in through this

mechanism, e.g. number and type of disabilities, level of services, outcomes, etc.

3. Examination and advocacy regarding development/refinement of interagency cooperative agreements, including:

- Initially reviewing RI organizations that provide services for persons with disabilities
- Formally offering the State Independent Living Council assistance (as needed) to upgrade the status of their PCA Night Attendant positions.

4. Assessment of the impact of Order of Selection on employment outcomes featuring:

- Learning more about this topic
- Committing to a continuing assessment of its structure, definition, and impact on how ORS can best serve all persons with disabilities.

5. Other advocacy issues:

- Educating ourselves and advocating for improvements to the State's transportation system for persons with disabilities
- Examining ORS counselor development, education and training needs, which resulted in important dialogue between the full Council and ORS, highlighted by a panel presentation at the October Retreat.

E. Nominating and Membership Sub-Committee: Paul Pickens, Chair

Several officers completed terms at the end of 2000 and the following Council members were elected: Chair - Carole Krause-Ferraioli, Vice Chair - Carmen Ferguson, and

Secretary - Mary Moore. New members of the Council are: Janice Belasco, Paul Choquette, Cheryl Collins, Bob Cooper, Robin Dolan, Craig Enos, Margaret Hoye, Mercedes San Milan, and Susan Silva. A brief biography of each of the new members follows:

- **Janice Belasco** is a volunteer Intake Coordinator in Patient Assessment Services at Butler Hospital and has been a consumer of services from the Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services.
- **Paul Choquette** is a Program Director at the PARI Independent Living Center. He is currently enrolled in the Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling program at Assumption College. Mr.Choquette has a disability and uses a wheelchair.
- **Cheryl Collins** is Program Director (Disabilities Program and Project Director, Parent Training and Information Center on Disabilities), Rhode Island Parent Information Network. Ms. Collins is the parent of three children with special needs.
- **Bob Cooper** is Executive Secretary of the Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities and is the appointee from the State Workforce Investment Council.
- **Craig Enos** is on the staff of the Disability Law Center and is filling the position mandated by the enabling policies of the Council. He is currently Chair of the Council's Policy Committee.
- **Robin Dolan** is Director of Rehabilitation Services at APM Incorporated. She is a licensed Physical Therapist with broad experience in her professional associations

and with issues related to licensure. Ms. Dolan identifies herself as having a disability as a result of infantile Poliomyelitis.

- **Margaret Hoyer** returns to the Council after a one-year leave. She is a former Vice Chair of the Council and has been extremely active as a consumer and advocate in the Independent Living Movement.
- **Mercedes San Milan** is the Director of Employment at Self –Help, the East Providence Community Action Program. She has worked with the Office of Rehabilitation Services to provide services to women transitioning from welfare to work whom also have disabilities.
- **Susan Silva** is the representative to the Council from Office of Rehabilitation Services. She has been active in the disability community as a professional and a volunteer for many years especially in the area of assisting youth with disabilities to transition from school to work.

F. Quality Assurance Sub-Committee: Jeanne Panarace, Chair

The Quality Assurance Committee has had a very active year, pursuing charges under the Rehabilitation Act Re-Authorization related to:

- Reviewing and analyzing the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with, ORS functions, services provided by ORS and other entities, and employment outcomes achieved by consumers;
- Conducting a statewide needs assessment of individuals with disabilities in RI.

A Work Plan evolved during the year, and included: identification of important elements of consumer satisfaction and needs assessment surveys; identification of

existing and potential data sources; development of draft specifications for a QA consultant to assist the Committee in accomplishment of its tasks.

The Committee has agreed on the need for a consultant to develop and conduct replicable consumer satisfaction activities, and analyze their results. We are working closely with ORS to engage an experienced vendor. The Committee would also like the consultant to conduct needs assessment activities, but recognizes this may not be immediately possible. Accordingly, the Committee will conduct a limited needs assessment of Rhode Islanders with disabilities during 2001, and propose that this activity be assumed by the consultant in subsequent years.

G. State Plan & Policy Sub-Committee: Craig Enos, Chair

During 2000, the committee worked tirelessly reviewing 18 ORS policies, which included the topics of Appeals/Due Process/Mediation, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Order of Selection, and Employment. We provided written comments on 11 of those policies. While some of these policies are at various stages in the State system, they are all moving forward with significant input from the committee. The committee continues to be encouraged by the response of ORS to their input and look forward to strengthening a working partnership.

The Committee also made significant contributions to the revision of the form used by ORS clients and counselors, which guides the development of an Individual Plan for Employment.

III. Developing Resource Plan

The council has developed a draft resource plan that ranges between \$35,000 and \$36,000* per year.

*Annual budget to include meeting expenses; attending state, regional and national conferences; development of informational materials; and engaging a consultant to conduct client satisfaction studies.

IV. Council Membership

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