

Rhode Island

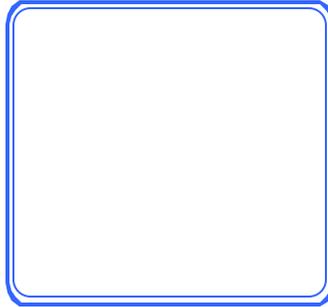


State  
Rehabilitation  
Council

2003 Annual Report

## Message from the Administrator,

The Department of Human Services/Office of Rehabilitation Services applauds the State Rehabilitation Council, a diverse citizen advisory body appointed by the Governor in its continuing effort to work with the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program (VR) on improving performance which leads to assuring that Rhode Islanders with disabilities are able to obtain and keep meaningful and satisfactory employment.



Raymond A. Carroll,  
Administrator

The Council has worked diligently with VR staff on developing the State Plan, reviewing and commenting on policies, designing and implementing a Customer Satisfaction Survey, and developing working relations and partnerships with other councils and organizations to maximize the efficient and effective delivery of vocational rehabilitation services.

The SRC has developed a vision that works in partnership with VR to:

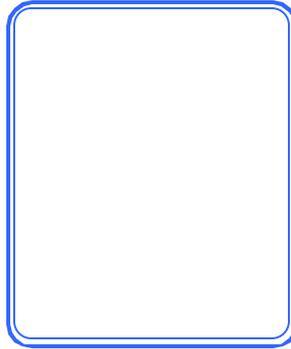
- \* insure continuous improvement in employment outcomes for VR customers;
- \* enhance communication among all people and groups committed to increasing opportunities for people with disabilities;
- \* increase employer awareness of people with disabilities as a productive human resource pool; and
- \* earn the respect of decision-makers in the allocation of resources.

We will continue to work together to “maximize the potential of people with disabilities through meaningful employment.”

Raymond A. Carroll, Administrator  
Office of Rehabilitation Services

## Message from the Chair

In the past year, both the State Rehabilitation Council and the Office of Rehabilitation Services have been in a process of transition and rebuilding. Budget issues have slowed the process of filling counselor positions in the Office of Rehabilitation Services. One Deputy Administrator retired and a supervisor was promoted to that position. That began a chain of openings that added to the sense of the year being in a constant state of transition.



Annette Bourbonniere,  
Chairperson

Last year, the terms of a number of Council members were completed and new members have not yet been appointed. I want to thank those remaining members who stepped up to the plate for their work in helping us get the job done this year. For some subcommittees this has meant marathon sessions to accomplish an enormous task.

In 2002, the State Rehabilitation Council set the goals for 2003 as:

- \* Continued work on defining the role of the SRC and its relationship to the Office of Rehabilitation Services;
- \* Hire a staff assistant;
- \* Do a follow-up of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey, including active cases;
- \* Encourage and support the Office of Rehabilitation Services in doing as good a job of employment placement with competitive employment as is currently done with supported employment; and
- \* Support Medicaid Buy-in legislation, as well as other legislation that removes barriers to employment of persons with disabilities.

This was also the first year that the Council participated in the decisions about our resource plan. In an effort to pay attention to the state's fiscal crisis as well as to make our meetings more accessible, we moved our meetings to TechAccess of Rhode Island. TechAccess graciously allowed us to use meeting space and provided us with refreshments at a very reasonable cost.

the potential of people with disabilities through meaningful employment.

The State Rehabilitation Council was able to hire a Staff Assistant who came on board in April 2003. After members had worked so long without an assistant, it was a pleasure to have this additional resource.

The follow-up Consumer Satisfaction Survey is underway as planned and does include active cases.

Our Mission—To work with ORS assuring that all Rhode Islanders with disabilities are able to obtain and keep meaningful and satisfying employment—was the driving force, and we have kept our focus narrowed to employment issues.

We actively supported, and continue to support, Medicaid Buy-In legislation. In cooperation with the Governor’s Commission on Disabilities and the Rhodes to Independence Steering Committee, our Legislation Subcommittee worked really hard on this issue. However, the legislation did not pass the General Assembly in 2003, so there is more work to be done.

The following pages report who we are and what we have done. The subcommittee compositions and reports will detail our accomplishments. This will be followed by information on our cooperating partners and how our relationships have helped to achieve our legislative mission.

I see our goals for the coming year as:

- \* Continue the focus on employment. The SRC and ORS have developed a strong partnership in that regard. With Ticket to Work rollout and the marketing effort by the Rhodes to Independence Steering Committee our work is cut out for us.
- \* Add to our membership to include the diversity that will enable us to observe all the viewpoints of those we represent.
- \* Continue the work of defining the SRC and its relationship to ORS.
- \* Get Medicaid Buy-In legislation passed and support efforts that remove barriers to employment.

Sincerely,



Annette Bourbonniere, Chairperson  
State Rehabilitation Council

The SRC is an independent body of

### **Our Members**

William Anderson	Bill is a parent of a child with special needs, a retired Special Education Director, an educational advocate, and is currently Principal of a private special education school in Providence. He is serving his second term on the Council. He chairs the By-Laws subcommittee and works with the State Plan and Policy subcommittee.
Jeanne Behie	Jeanne is a parent of a son with special needs and is our representative from the Rhode Island Parent Information Network. She is completing her first term on the Council and served on the Nominations and Leadership Committee.
Janice Belasco	Janice is a consumer representative and is also completing her first term on the Council. She is looking forward to working on a subcommittee.
Annette Bourbonniere	Annette is in her second term on the Council and is just finishing her term as Chairperson. She is a consumer and a business representative.
Raymond Carroll	Ex-Officio member of SRC. Ray is the Administrator of the Office of Rehabilitation Services.
Paul Choquette	Paul is a consumer and a representative of a service provider. He is completing his first term on the Council. He chairs the Legislation subcommittee.
Bob Cooper	Bob is a consumer and our representative from the Human Resource Investment Council. He is in his first term on the Council and is a member of the Nominations and Leadership subcommittee.
Robin Dolan	Robin is a consumer as well as a service provider and a business owner. This past year, Robin has served as chairperson of the Quality Assurance subcommittee. She is completing her first term on the Council.

diverse members that works together

Craig Enos	Craig works for a local school department and is just completing his first term on the Council. He has worked on the State Plan and Policy subcommittee.
Joseph Ferreira	Joe is a consumer and is in his first term on the Council. He has served as chairperson of the State Plan and Policy subcommittee this past year.
Elizabeth Graves	Liz is our liaison to the Statewide Independent Living Council and to the Governor's Advisory Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired. She was previously a special education teacher. She is in her first term on the Council.
Roberta Greene	Roberta is our representative from the Disability Law Center, Client Advocacy Program. She is in her first term on the Council and served on the State Plan and Policy subcommittee.
Margaret Hoye	Margaret is a consumer of services and is in her first consecutive term. However, Margaret has been a member and a guest of the Council for years, serving two terms, coming as a guest, and serving again. She has been active on a number of subcommittees, this year serving on the Nominations and Leadership subcommittee.
Beatrice Lanzi	Bea is a representative from business and is in her first term on the Council.
Virginia Perelson	Ginny is a representative from a service provider and is in her second term on the Council. She is our Secretary and also served on the Employment subcommittee.
J. David Sienko	David is a representative from special education and just completed his first term on the Council. He is our Vice-Chairperson and has worked on the Employment subcommittee and the Nominations and Leadership subcommittee.
Michaela Stannard	Michaela is our representative from the Office of Rehabilitation Services and is in her first term on the Council.

- to insure continuous improvement in ORS employment outcomes;

## Committee Reports

All members are required to serve on at least one subcommittee. Most of the work of the Council takes place in these subcommittees.

What follows are the reports from these subcommittees.



Roberta Greene, Bill Anderson, Joe Ferreira, Michaela Stannard

## State Plan and Policy

Chairperson: Joseph Ferreira

The SRC State Plan and Policy Committee met several times to review, research and draft comments on the Annual State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Supported Employment and the ORS proposed policies.

Several committee members were new to the Council and to

the process, so some time was spent in understanding our role in paying close attention to the important task at hand. Many hours were spent in carrying out our mandate and the committee participated in reviewing VR policy and procedures and proposed recommendations for the FFY 2004 update of the State Plan.



Joseph Ferreira

- enhances communication among all people and groups committed to increase opportunity for people with disabilities;

## Legislation/Advocacy

Chairperson: Paul Choquette

The activities of the Legislative Committee during the past year were concentrated in two areas, legislative advocacy and information gathering.

The legislative committee chair worked closely with the RI Governor's Commission on Disabilities to advocate on a state legislative level for the passage of a bill that would establish a Medicaid Buy-In program for individuals with disabilities who wished to return to work but needed to maintain their Medicaid coverage. In light of the difficult economic times on a State level the legislation only targeted those individuals who were dually eligible (receiving both Medicare and Medicaid) in order to keep the state costs as low as possible.

Once the program was established the plan was to gradually expand eligibility to include others.

The legislation was introduced and was heard by the Senate Finance Committee which

looked favorably upon it. The Chair of the Legislative Committee, as well as several consumers of State Office of Rehabilitation Services, testified before this Committee in support of the legislation. Unfortunately the bill was never scheduled for Hearing on the House and the legislation was not passed during this legislative session.

The legislation will be re-introduced during the 2004 session, and the SRC will be working with the RI Governor's Commission as well as other groups to win passage.

The other major activity of the Legislative Committee was to urge the SRC to sponsor public hearings throughout the state during the last week of July 2003. The SRC was one of many agencies and groups, both public and private to sponsor these hearings. Five hearings were held in different geographic locations throughout the State in order to allow people with disabilities, their families and others to present issues of interest regarding their needs. The hearings were a great success with



Paul Choquette

over 75 individuals providing testimony that is contained in a transcript of over 90 pages. The SRC will utilize this information to further justify to decision makers the importance of fully funding the State Office of Rehabilitation Services as well as approving the legislation needed to implement the Medicaid Buy-In.

The Legislation Committee plans on being active in the next year in the areas noted above as well as in educating government and local business leaders on the importance of Vocational Rehabilitation and the positive impact it has on individuals with disabilities and society as a whole.

- increases employer awareness of people with

## Employment

Chairperson: Annette Bourbonniere

The employment committee met on several occasions during the year.

At our first meeting, we discussed ways we could assist the effort to improve ORS employment outcomes for non-supported employment. We developed a plan to create a videotape of a selection of ORS clients who are ready to work and use it to show to groups of business persons who may be prospective employers. Our hope was to solicit three ORS clients who may be willing to make such a videotape. We planned to develop a format that would emphasize the clients' skills and abilities that they would be bringing to the workplace. We had difficulty selecting three clients who were truly work ready and did not have the same disability, so the project is currently suspended.

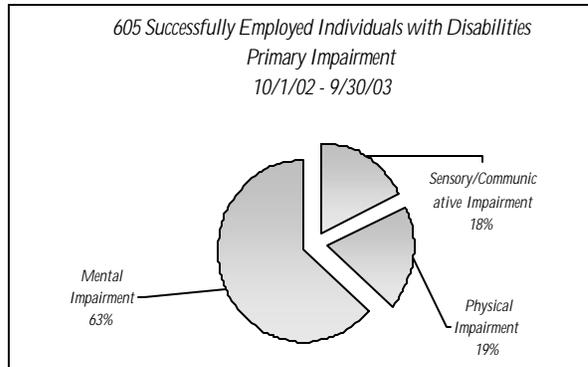
We also met with ORS and formed the SRC/ORS Employment Focus Team

to work on Employment Unit Strategy. Some of the goals of this unit are:

- \* To take advantage of the transition in the Employment Unit to evaluate its direction and operation.
- \* Develop a strategic plan for employment and job development related activities.
- \* Setting ORS up to be a resource for businesses who would consider hiring an employee with a disability.
- \* Providing additional training for staff in job development and employment related activities.
- \* Develop a database of employer contacts.
- \* Develop a data collection system to evaluate effectiveness of efforts.

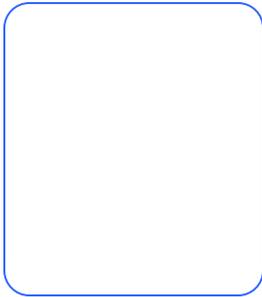


Ginny Perelson, Dave Sienko,  
Annette Bourbonniere



## Quality Assurance

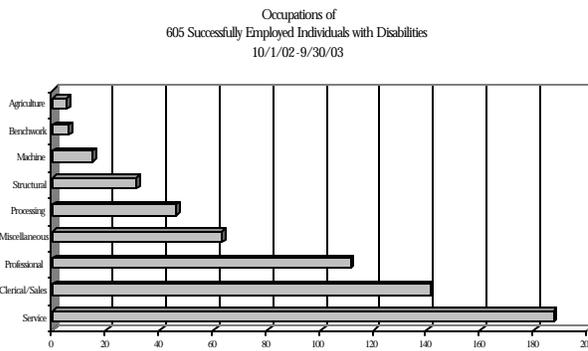
Chairperson: Robin Dolan



Robin Dolan

Our recommendations were forwarded to ORS administrators for review and then sent to the Center for Research and Public Policy for the survey to be conducted. We then reviewed the questions, adding, deleting and rearranging order of the questions to reflect the inclusion of active clients.

We met with representative from Center for Research and Public Policy to review previous questions and to learn what kind of questions could be added or deleted to the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. We also discussed the inclusion of active clients in the survey sample.



## By-Laws

Chairperson: William Anderson



Bill Anderson

The By-Laws sub-committee is the only body that reacts to the requests of the Council. As we are not a pro-active group, we draft proposals for amendments to our By-Laws in response

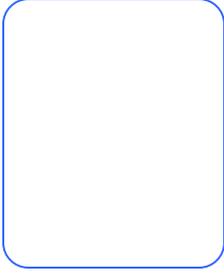
to issues raised by members of the Council.

Four proposals were presented to the Council late in 2003 reflecting significant alterations of the By-Laws.

- has the respect of decision-makers in the allocation of resources.

## Membership/Leadership

Chairperson: Bob Cooper



Bob Cooper

The committee met to present a slate of officers for the coming year.

The committee also interviewed and recommended for membership four applicants. The committee also recommended reappointment of members whose first term was being completed.

The subcommittee members discussed staggering the terms so only one-third of the members' terms will expire each year in the future. If the "new" appointments are for a 1-year as a trial period, then there will be seven persons whose terms expire each of the next three years.

The subcommittee discussed options for building the capacity of the SRC/leadership development:

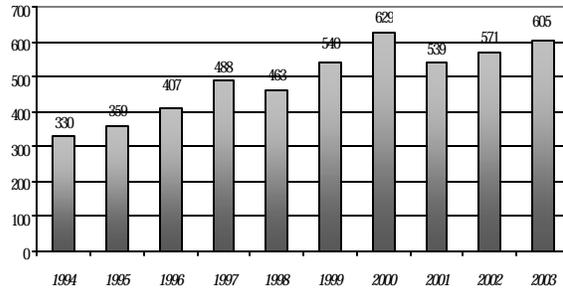
\* Recruiting business people to serve on the council by asking the two local Workforce Investment Boards to nominate a member for the Governor to appoint to the SRC. The subcommittee recommends any additional members added should also have their initial terms staggered so all the business representation doesn't leave at the same time.

\* Rotating the SRC's "presentation" meetings to One-Stop Centers, community rehabilitation facilities, college disability services offices, and other job preparation sites, so people with disabilities and their families can interact with the SRC, the

SRC members can learn more about the current state of rehabilitation/job preparation services, and we can recruit new members.\* Consider moving the SRC's "business" meetings to the Department of Labor and Training's main office for more interaction with the main workforce development agency. This would raise the profile of the SRC.

\* Consider amending the by-laws so officers served a 2-year term with the Vice Chair expected to move up to Chair at the end of that term.\* Consider appointing non-SRC members to serve on subcommittees, as authorized by the by-laws.

*Successful Employment Outcomes  
A Ten Year Trend*



## Partnerships

Much of what has been accomplished this past year, as well as in previous years, has been through cooperation with other groups, agencies and organizations. There has also been a fair amount of cross-representation that truly gives a voice to persons with disabilities.

The Governor's Commission on Disabilities has two representatives on the Council and the Council has worked with the Commission both on the Medicaid Buy-In Legislation and by helping to sponsor the annual public forum.

The Council is also pleased to have in the SRC representatives from the Human Resource Investment Council, the State Department of Special Education, the Rhode Island Statewide Independent

Living Council (SILC), the Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN) and the Client Assistance Program (CAP) of the Rhode Island Disability Law Center (RIDLC).

In addition, the chairperson of the Council is a member of the Rhodes to Independence Steering Committee, again with the focus of supporting the Medicaid

Buy-In Legislation and removing barriers to employment that are faced by persons with disabilities.

The Council assisted the Sherlock Center with the 7th Annual Employer Honor Roll Awards Breakfast again this year. We hope that some of the employers awarded this year will join us on the Council in the future to assist us with keeping our focus on employment.

Council members also participated in the Section 107 review by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The focus of this year's review was transition and the standards and indicators of the Office of Rehabilitation Services. The reviewers suggested we each become familiar with one indicator for one standard and follow its progress.

RSA officials recommended that we test out the One-Stops for friendliness and accessibility and give them feedback and advice as needed. There is a national initiative to educate regarding the true cost of accommodation.

The reviewers also recommended that we get involved in the Business Leadership Network and they expressed concern that we do not yet have a Medicaid Buy-In in place in Rhode Island.



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