



State of Rhode Island
Department of Human Services, Office of Rehabilitation Services
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

To work with the ORS assuring that all Rhode Islanders with disabilities are able to obtain and keep meaningful and satisfying employment.



SRC Meeting February 7, 2022
Zoom Conference
4 PM – 6 PM

Present Members:

Chairperson: Melissa Brusso, Educational Advocate for the [Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities](#)

Jane Slade, State Transition Coordinator at the [Department of Education](#)

Vice-Chair SRC

Cathy Andreozzi, Founder of Tori Lynn Andreozzi Foundation

Tracey Cunningham, Chief of Employment Services at [Division of Developmental Disabilities \(DDD\)](#)

Jennifer Doucette, Director of Regional Transition for [West Bay Collaborative](#)

Anne Fartura, Peer Support Coordinator/Special Education at [RI Parent Information Network \(RIPIN\)](#)

Nina Fiasconaro, a Parent Advocate for a Child with Disabilities

Kate McCarthy-Barnett, FEMA Rhode Island

Nicole Rico Serrano, Project Director, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the [Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Services](#)

Christine Yankee, Vice President of Program Services at [Goodwill Industries of Southern New England](#)

[Office of Rehabilitation Services](#): Ronald Racine (Senior Associate Director DHS), Natalia Montoya (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II), Joseph Murphy (Administrator, Vocational Rehabilitation), John Valentine (Strategic Planning Supervisor) and Linda Deschenes, (Assistant Administrator of Operations)

Guests: Elizabeth Hubbard, Staff Attorney at [Disability Rights Rhode Island](#)

Moussa Camara, Client of ORS

1. Establish Quorum/Introductions Guests, ORS, and SRC – Quorum met.

2. Agenda Review/Additions or Deletions – There were none.

3. Approval of Minutes from May 4, 2021

Motion

Christine Yankee made a motion seconded by Jennifer Doucette, and unanimously approved to accept the May 4, 2021, minutes. (Voting Members, Cathy Andreozzi, Melissa Brusso, Tracey Cunningham, Jennifer Doucette, Anne Fartura, Nina Fiasconaro, Nicole Rico Serrano, Jane Slade, and Christine Yankee)

Melissa Brusso, representing the Council wanted to thank Catherine Sansonetti for her years of dedication to the State Rehabilitation Council's mission. After 17 years on the SRC Catherine is moving on due to work obligations. As a member of the SRC, over the years, she held the positions of Chair of the State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee, Vice chair of the Council, Secretary of the Council, Co-chair of the By-Laws Committee. She also sat on the Transportation Committee and Membership Development and Training Committees. She has been a solid influence in the work ethic of the Council, and asset to new members understanding of the partnership role of ORS and the SRC. Irreplaceable, determined, dedicated, and an unwavering advocate for consumers served by ORS, she will be dearly missed.

4. Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) Director's Report – Ronald Racine

- Ron has accepted a new position at the Department of Human Services (DHS). He will have supervision over the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS), Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), and Child Services. His last day at ORS will be the 25th of February. Ron has been with ORS for 27 years and on the SRC for most of that time. He spoke about the good working partnership he has had with the SRC, and how beneficial it has been for the consumers ORS serves.
- DSA, which is the oversight agency of DHS, has had some turnover as well. The Acting Director of DHS has resigned. She was doing double duty as Acting Director and Deputy Director. In the interim, the Deputy Secretary of OHAS is stepping in as Acting Director of DHS.
- The corrective action plan from 2018 is finally done and ORS is off of it. The MOU with RIDE was the last item and it is all set.

5. Co-Chairs' Report - Melissa Brusso and Jane Slade

- Rebooting the Council - We want to take the time to remind members why we exist and that every voice is important. The members come from different backgrounds, and this is what makes the Council so helpful to ORS and the consumers they serve. Often, we are not able to share or make sure the voices we all represent are heard. This is a reminder that you can be engaged as much as you want on the Council. It is important to attend and be focus on subcommittee work. If you have ideas and want to bring them to the Council, please do. We are empowered to make sure employment needs of people with disabilities are served.
- Subcommittees - If anyone wants to suggest initiating a new subcommittee, then this is something to bring to the membership. If there is something we need to keep a pulse on, bring it up. We don't want to dismiss standing committees but want to make the best use of everyone's time and to focus on areas of need.
- Introduction of an Open Mike agenda item - It can take different forms; this is just to present this idea for your consideration. If someone wants to bring an item up at a meeting, they could present it to us so we can put it on the agenda and then we can have the time set aside for this topic. A topic is discussed strategically, with the experience or difficulty and then ideas for solutions.
- Vice-chairperson Vacancy – The Council is seeking someone to volunteer to be the Vice-chair for the upcoming year. Please consider this and if you are interested let us know. You can contact Nancy if you want more details about the position.
- Meeting Locations – Looking at Warwick Library, Sherlock Center, and any other location anyone may have. Keeping in mind it needs to be publicly accessible.

6. New Business – Final remarks on the State Plan – Elizabeth Hubbard

Membership was presented with the Council's comments to the updates of the State Plan as well as the letter from ORS responding to those comments. Elizabeth Hubbard went over the key points that the Council identified within the state plan for consideration and the key ORS response. The Council wanted to thank ORS for addressing its concern and is confident that all items are being addressed.

7. Correspondents – The Council received comments from the Office of Rehabilitation Services to its remarks regarding the State Plan.

8. Public Comments – There were none.

9. Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 5:40 PM.

Motion

Jennifer Doucette made a motion seconded by Christine Yankee and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting. (Voting Members, Cathy Andreozi, Melissa Brusso, Tracey Cunningham, Jennifer Doucette, Anne Fartura, Nina Fiasconaro, Nicole Rico Serrano, Jane Slade, and Christine Yankee)

Respectfully Submitted,
Nancy Baker
 Nancy Baker, Staff, RISRC