

## **Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit; and Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations**

The State Rehabilitation Council is known in South Dakota as the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR or Board). The Board provides advice to and works in partnership with the general vocational rehabilitation agency in South Dakota - Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS or Division).

The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation plays a significant role in ensuring that the vocational rehabilitation program operates effectively and remains responsive to the needs of those served. The Board works in partnership with the Division in developing policies, planning activities, evaluating program effectiveness and carrying out other functions related to South Dakota's vocational rehabilitation program.

The working relationship between the Board and the Division is a partnership focused on ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive appropriate, timely, and effective vocational rehabilitation services resulting in successful employment outcomes for those served.

The full Board met on four occasions during this reporting period: January 6, March 26/27, June 29/30, and September 21/22 of 2015. These meetings were open to the public and held in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act and the State's open meeting law, SDCL, 1-25-1. In addition, the Board's Executive Committee met on five separate occasions during this same period.

### **Summary of Input and Recommendations:**

#### **Annual Report to the Governor and RSA Commissioner**

The Board directed staff, both BVR and Division, to draft and complete the annual report. The report was finalized by Board consensus and submitted to the Governor and RSA Commissioner prior to the end of December.

#### **Organizational Membership Renewal**

The Board approved renewing its organizational membership with the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities. The Board supports the Coalition, as the only statewide, cross disability, consumer driven advocacy group made up of individuals and organizations, and its mission of advocating for the full inclusion of individuals of all ages with disabilities in all aspects of society.

### **Administrative Hearing**

Information was disseminated to the Board about an applicant's appeal of an eligibility decision. The Fair Hearing Officer ruled in support of the Division's decision that the individual was not eligible for vocational rehabilitation services (disability was not a substantial impediment to employment).

### **Employment Works Initiative & "Ability for Hire" Campaign**

The Division has been working on activities prompted by Governor Daugaard's initiative to have the State of South Dakota become a model employer of people with disabilities. The Board fully supports these activities. An example is the Division contracted with a Sioux Falls marketing firm to conduct an employer outreach program. The Board's Public Awareness Committee participated in presentations at various stages of the development process. Input and recommendations from members concentrated on accessibility features, video captioning and website ease of access.

### **Governor's Awards Ceremony**

The Board annually collaborates with the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Statewide Independent Living Council on the Governor's Awards Ceremony. During this reporting period, the Board moved forward with the solicitation process and approved funds to support this event.

### **South Dakota Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Program**

Black Hills Special Services Cooperative asked the Board for a letter of support for the WIPA program grant proposal. Grant approval would continue to support staff working with individuals to maximize earning potential and self-sufficiency e.g., knowledge of SSA work incentives, Medicaid, Medicare, and other public programs. Board staff drafted a letter of support for the Board's review and it was approved and sent following the March meeting.

### **Lighting the Way/Solutions for Success – Diagnosis through Adulthood Conference**

The Board reviewed and approved a funding request to assist with speaker fees/travel expenses associated with this conference, which provides training to parents, caregivers, professionals and advocates to help them improve the lives of individuals on the autism spectrum.

### **Name Badges**

The Board purchased name badges for members to wear, identifying them as board members, falling under the State of South Dakota, Department of Human Services.

### **National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)**

The Board approved financial support for the 2015 events with the expectation that proposed activities would emphasize employment issues, greater need for employer involvement, increase efforts to obtain the involvement of smaller employers, and improve marketing efforts to reach employers, businesses and HR managers.

### **Employer Paid Work Experience Program Guide**

The Division consulted the Board on a draft program guide to support VR services provided to a person to obtain/maintain an employer paid work experience. Employment related services would be allowable for a job on the individual's employment plan that is not the employment goal that would allow a person to develop work skills and earn wages. The Board approved a motion in support of the Division moving forward with the program guide and policy implementation.

### **Disability Services Summit/Public Gathering in Mission**

The Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired invited the Board, Statewide Independent Living Council and Division to join them in hosting a gathering in Mission. The Board approved funds to support this gathering and participated in the event. This event supported the Board's and Division's efforts to share information and obtain input from individuals with disabilities, family members and others on the need for employment and independent living services.

### **Person Centered Thinking Training**

The Board fully supported the Division providing Person Centered Thinking training for staff statewide. Training also targeted Community Support Provider staff to further develop their capacity to expand supported employment services. This training went hand in hand with the Division's initiative to encourage providers to become certified, allowing them to earn a higher reimbursement rate for provided services. The Board requested an introduction to the Person Centered Thinking tools and concepts utilized to support an individual in different environments, and it was provided during their March meeting.

### **South Dakota Advocates for Change – Advocacy Jam**

South Dakota Advocates for Change, a statewide group of self-advocates with intellectual disabilities/developmental disabilities (ID/DD) submitted a funding application for financial support of the "Advocacy Jam". This is a biannual conference which offers training for people with ID/DD, family members and professionals on topics such as self-employment, how to work with employers, how to work together to stop bullying, and changes in the Division of

Developmental Disabilities system. The Board approved funding to support a speaker for the 2015 conference.

### **Dialogue with the South Dakota Council on Developmental Disabilities**

The Council's Executive Director and Vice Chairperson attended the Board's June meeting to talk about the Council, its' mission, funding, ideas for collaboration and development of its five-year state plan. Board members were invited to attend a July Council meeting; an invitation was also extended to other boards/councils, agencies, organizations, family members and individuals with disabilities. At the Board's September meeting, members who attended the Council meeting reported they felt this was a great opportunity to hear and learn from others. Attendee consensus was there is merit in collaborating on such efforts to obtain feedback and to share or disseminate gathered input between various entities rather than duplicate efforts.

### **Division's Program Initiatives**

The Board fully supports the Division's efforts to increase provider expertise and capacity, as well as increase provider earnings, and employment retention (e.g., establishment grants to advance supported employment efforts, increasing the number of certified providers, providing specialized training sessions). The Board encouraged the Division to continue activities to increase the number of certified providers, which increases consumer choice for individuals with disabilities seeking employment supports.

### **State and Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Collaborations**

The Board recommended hosting its' December meeting to coincide with the Division/Tribal VR staff meeting, and to adjust its' meeting agenda to allow time for them to come together and continue dialogue on shared areas of interest, e.g., independent living services, case services, assistive technology, promoting disability awareness and youth and transition services.

### **Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP)**

The Board fully endorses activities which interface with the educational and workforce systems, as well as post-secondary education, independent living, and other necessary supports to assist students with disabilities and their families in making meaningful choices. The Board frequently requested updates on various projects or activities and during the June meeting, TSLP staff addressed the projects' purpose, provision of technical assistance and training, and updates on the Youth Leadership Forum, Catch the Wave, transition forums, interagency councils, Project Skills, and Project SEARCH.

## **Consumer Satisfaction Survey**

The Consumer Satisfaction Survey instrument was developed years ago with the assistance of the Board's Consumer Services Committee. The survey is conducted by sending out postcards to consumers at different stages of the VR process asking different questions, depending upon where the individual is within the process (e.g., six months after starting their IPE, case closed as successfully rehabilitated). The Board felt there was no need to change or revisit the instrument during this reporting period. It will revisit it as implementation of WIOA moves forward.

## **Board Nominations and Appointments**

Annually, the Board consults with the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Statewide Independent Living Council about the need to solicit statewide nominations for their respective board/council membership. Nominations were sought during March/April, forwarded to the Governor for his consideration and action in April, and the Governor made appointments and/or reappointments to each board/council in July.

## **Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR)**

At the request of members, DLR staff attended and spoke at the September meeting to available programs and services. Members learned of services available to individuals, as well as services available to businesses and employers. The Board supports activities to improve working partnerships which will lead to improved outreach to individuals with disabilities, employers and businesses.

## **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**

The Board was provided updates at meetings throughout this reporting period related to the implementation of WIOA. Work has been conducted in the areas of pre-employment, transition from school to adult life, meetings with school personnel, providers and other agency staff. Work also continues in finalizing cooperative agreements, changing performance measures, and working to improve relationships within the workforce systems and employers.

## **State Plan Goals and Strategies**

The work outlined above under WIOA parallels the planning and development involved with the Division's State Plan and related attachments. These documents outline the goals, strategies and actions of the agency. A consultant was brought in to work with the Board and Division to better analyze stakeholder input, data analysis and labor market trends of the state. This information, as well as feedback gathered throughout the year, was utilized by the Board and Division when modifying and recreating the State Plan to best

align the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to meet consumer needs. The consultant assisted the Board and Division as they modified the goals and strategies of the agency to ensure that the VR portion of the Unified State Plan continues to deliver and represent the disability community's aspirations and goals.

### **Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) Development Policy**

A draft policy was shared with the Board at their June meeting, due to changes being called for as a result of WIOA. The Board's Consumer Services Committee met prior to the September meeting to review the draft policy and provided recommendations. This draft policy was also posted on the Division's website seeking additional feedback. The committee's recommendations were incorporated into the draft policy and presented to the full Board for final review and approval. The Board approved the policy as presented.

### **Training Initiatives and Fall Conference**

Board members participated in a number of activities this reporting period: SSA work incentives, employment specialist training, motivational interviewing, and Person Centered Thinking. The Fall Conference was a collaborative effort, involving a variety of agencies, and it provided presentations on vocational rehabilitation topics, e.g., community employment, independent living, self-employment, marketing to employers, youth services, housing and labor programs. Members attended these events to learn about what was happening statewide to better educate themselves as they provide input and recommendations to the VR agency.

### **Board Staff Support**

The Division of Rehabilitation Services, through an agreement with the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, provided staff support to the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Statewide Independent Living Council. This is a vendor agreement for the procurement of goods and services. Staff activities were directed by the Chairs of the Board and SILC, and staff provided reports of their activities at their respective meetings as requested.

*Division's Response: The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Services provided valuable input into the Division's activities and policies. Input was specifically noted and accepted in the "Ability to Hire" campaign, employer paid work experience policy, consumer satisfaction survey, Individualized Plan for Employment policy, and State Plan goals/strategies. All recommendations by the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Services were accepted.*