

**BOARD OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**  
**December 5-6, 2011**  
**Ramada Inn, Sioux Falls, SD**

**New Member Orientation**

New Member Orientation was held in the morning. In attendance were Barb Storbeck, Darla McGuire, Carol Kirchgessler, and Nikki Darland. Others present included: Elaine Roberts, Board Chairperson, Bernie Grimme (DRS Staff), Colette Wagoner (Board Staff), and Robert Kean (South Dakota Advocacy Staff and Board member). Interpreters were Jessie Rykus and Rachel Hatle.

Topics covered: On-line training modules - History of Rehabilitation, Overview of the Rehabilitation Act, Role of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), and Infrastructure of the State Rehabilitation Council. Other topics included an organizational outline from Rehabilitation Services Administration down to the Division's field offices, relationship of the Division with other state agencies and information about the Board i.e., staff support, meeting agendas, committees, and related activities. An overview of South Dakota Advocacy Services was provided including the history of the organization, component programs, agency mission, and services including the Client Assistance Program.

**Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Meeting**

Members present: Elaine Roberts, Kathy Hassebrook, Craig Eschenbaum, Joe Rehurek, Grady Kickul, Matt Cain, Brett Glirbas, Carol Kirchgessler, Robert Kean, Barb Storbeck, Darla McGuire, Lyle Cook, and Nikki Darland. Members absent: Melissa Flor and Leo Hallan. Others present: Dawn Oaks, Cindy Stewart, Bernie Grimme, Don Kirchgessler, Colette Wagoner, Dr. Janeen Outka, and Rich Eschenbaum. Interpreters were Jessie Rykus and Rachel Hatle.

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:** Elaine Roberts, Chairperson, called the meeting to order. She welcomed everyone to Sioux Falls and asked each person to introduce themselves. She invited Dawn Oaks and Cindy Stewart to share comments with the Board. Dawn Oaks, Disability Determination Services, talked about the purpose of their program of examining cases and determining eligibility/ineligibility for SSI and SSDI. DDS is short on staff

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having only seven full time employees of a regularly staffed office of 30 full-time employees. She stated their office has not seen the increase in applications that the rest of the nation is experiencing. She explained that Yankton has a high percentage of people on benefits and no explanation of why. She spoke to the number of accepted or allowed cases in our state being at 43% compared to the national level of 36%. A question was asked about cases being denied/ineligibles due to people failing to cooperate, not having appropriate paperwork or medical documentation. Grady spoke to the baby boomer generation and that retirement age is coming quickly which is making it a very difficult for DDS with the current federal hiring freeze. The program might experience public criticism in the near future because of this. Cindy Stewart, Sioux Falls District Supervisor, reported that she supervises 13 staff. Their office serves an average of 800 consumers who range in the age from 16 years of age to 70 years old. In response to a question, Cindy reported that she is a member of the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM). There is no diversity committee or designated diversity chairperson here, and Kathy Hassebrook wanted to be in touch with her in the future about possibilities. She spoke to Project SEARCH and looking for more potential employers. A comment was made that Project SEARCH might be expanding to the Watertown area next year.

**OPENING ACTIONS:** Elaine reminded members of the meeting protocol (attached to agenda). She asked if everyone had time to review the agenda and if there were any additions, hearing none, **MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED, MADE, SECONDED (MS) AND CARRIED (C)**. Elaine asked if there were any corrections to the September meeting minutes, hearing none, **MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER 28/29<sup>TH</sup> MEETING AS PRINTED, MSC**. Elaine asked for motion to approve the Executive Committee meeting minutes if there were no edits. **MOTION TO APPROVE THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 18<sup>TH</sup>, MSC**.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Grady reported that the State of South Dakota homepage has been revised and has a new look. He spoke to a federal grant awarded to SD Bureau of Information and Technology in regard to the development of a broadband initiative. A video can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IX95Kv6GQ1w>. Another PBS video, features Joe Rehurek, DRS Yankton staff, and Dave Scherer, DakotaLink.

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They talk about broadband and how it has impacted people with disabilities. It can be viewed at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q\\_d57MknoTk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_d57MknoTk). Grady reported that PBS staff asked to do some filming at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind for the 'Bernie the Bunny' children's program. The program is educational in nature the focus will be dispelling myths, once the airing dates/times are known, this will be shared.

Elaine announced that the Dare to Dream Conference issued a Call for Presenters and if anyone is interested the applications can be found on either the Coalition or SD Parent Connection's website. The conference will be held June 10-12 in Spearfish. Lyle announced that the Lakota Nation Invitational will be hosting events next week in Rapid City. He and staff of several of the Native American Vocational Rehabilitation Programs will host exhibits. The Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired will also be represented. Joe announced the Yankton Area Mental Wellness Conference will be held June 6/7<sup>th</sup>. Elaine reported the Autism Conference will be held June 7/8<sup>th</sup> at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, with a pre-conference day on June 6. Darla announced that Shelly Pfaff and Brooke Lusk will conduct training on employment and benefits (SSI and SSDI) in Mitchell on January 5 and 6<sup>th</sup>. It was suggested that Shelly and Brooke be invited to the next meeting and provide an overview of their training. Grady reminded members that if they are interested in attending these types of trainings to be in touch with staff about having their expenses covered. A comment was made about having a common link announcing different types of training activities, someone suggested that the Coalition's website would be a good place, and it could also lead folks to the Freedom to Work website. Board staff passed around a "Thank You" note received from Dr. Alan Davis in regard to the financial support of bringing Geri Jewell into the state as a speaker.

**SDMYLIFE PRESENTATION:** Dr. Janeen Outka, East Dakota Educational Cooperative was in attendance to provide an overview of the website SDMYLIFE. She explained this is a resource for students to complete their academic and career planning. All students in grades 8-12 must have a personal learning plan (PLP), which is to help them develop a four year high school plan that meets their career and educational goals. Students can prepare for the ACT, build a resume, research post-secondary education options, and find out about scholarship opportunities. The Department of

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Education provides SDMYLIFE free to all South Dakota students and parents. If anyone is interested she will be offering a course on career development, and she also offered that if anyone is working with an adult to whom this might be of interest, she can provide them with a password to access the system. The system has over 600 career fields for students to review, and then career clusters. Students, depending upon the results of their assessments, can research working conditions, educational/training needs, related college programs, and photo files depicting people in the actual job environment. A question and answer interview of men and women in specific jobs is available, and a breakdown of the entire workday. She highlighted the financial aid section, which is fairly new in which the student enters their personal data and it identifies available scholarships nationwide. A student can do a job search on this website, in which the Department of Education partnered with Jobs in Deed, which has no advertisements. There is also a partnership with SD businesses, industries, career coaches and other work based opportunities. Through this network, students can send questions through email and they receive responses through a third party. If a student wants to utilize this and the school isn't participating, they can contact Janeen for a password. She can be reached at [joutka@edec.org](mailto:joutka@edec.org), and the website can be found at: <http://www.sdmylife.com>.

**INDEPENDENT LIVING CHOICES (ILC).** Matt Cain reported that a request was made at the last meeting to show this new promotional video "Opening Doors for People with Disabilities". The video spoke to available services, featuring several staff members talking about a few of the programs. It also featured several consumers and the services they received to remain independent. The video was shared with the Legislative Sunset Study Committee.

**DIVISION DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Director's Comments: Grady explained that the Department of Social Services was in touch with him through the Medicaid Solutions Workgroup. He explained they are looking at re-using durable medical equipment (DME) purchased through Medicaid. He attended a meeting involving durable medical equipment providers, hospitals, state providers and others. This group is examining how to re-use the equipment as a cost savings mechanism and a way to ensure unused DME is not simply being stored when people have a need for it. The workgroup is examining several other states' plans of restoring, refurbishing, and re-issuing equipment.

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Medicaid dollars would be utilized to restore and to create a way to inventory it. Grady and Steve Stewart are serving on the workgroup, as well as DakotaLink staff, a SILC member, and Matt Cain.

Grady reported that the Center for Disabilities is bringing in "Think College" next April. It will explore a curriculum/post-secondary education opportunity for students with intellectual disabilities. This might be of interest to several members. The Board of Regents will be in attendance. It could be a possible grant of \$500,000 for 5 years and has the potential to serve up to 100 students with disabilities. He is waiting for further information from Judy Struck. Outcome of Legislative Sunset Study (DHS review): Grady explained that the 2011 Session appointed a committee to do a summer study of the Department of Human Services (DHS) and Sales Tax. DHS was one of the few departments left in state government remaining to be reviewed. August 31<sup>st</sup> was the first meeting held in Pierre. Presentations were made by DHS staff: Divisions of Rehabilitation Services, Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Developmental Disabilities and the Developmental Center in Redfield. The presentation is available on line for those interested. The second meeting was held September 29<sup>th</sup> in Redfield at the Developmental Center. Committee members met with staff of the center and a public meeting was held to gather comment. A third meeting was held in Pierre on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Four providers were invited to make presentations (SD Achieve, Black Hills Workshop, Children's Care Hospital and School and ILC). Several individuals attended and provided testimony representing a cross disability picture of people with disabilities in South Dakota. Individuals spoke about receiving vocational rehabilitation services (general and blind agency) as well as independent living services. A meeting was held on October 24<sup>th</sup> in which the committee heard responses to raised questions. A final report is available through SD's Homepage, Legislative Research Council, 2011 Interim information, 2011 Interim Final Report, located at <http://legis.state.sd.us/interim/2011/2011AnnualReport.pdf>. Staff was asked to forward a copy of the report with the draft minutes to members. A comment was made that more might be done with the Developmental Center in Redfield i.e., best use of buildings, and how to best utilize the expertise found at the Center. Robert made a comment about the major omnibus bill and that there could be action taking out significant statutory language, and they need to be watchful. Grady noted that the Division is looking at antiquated language and possible removal if there is no need for it. DRS

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Budget Update: Grady reported that the Division is into four months of the state fiscal year. Last year the case services budget was reduced by \$1 million. He believes that the Division will most likely spend \$5 million this fiscal year. He stated that programs are spending in line with the timeframe, and he doesn't feel there is a need for an Order of Selection. He also shared that by July 2012 the Division will have programs in place to continue some of the Freedom to Work infrastructure. Technology Update: Grady stated that Division staff are looking at a remote access policy, and talked about the ability of staff to communicate while traveling (i.e., accessing calendars remotely). He and Bernie are bringing forth the idea of utilizing Facebook pages to Department staff. A question was asked about the activities of the Freedom to Work and Grady responded that a no cost extension was submitted and if approved it will be enough for some of the FTW programs to carry on for a year. He will be meeting with Brooke and Shelly to discuss the budget for 2012. Other comments were made in regard to the Governor's budget address i.e., possible state worker pay raise, reducing some of the previous cuts and anticipation of more revenue.

#### **CONVERSATION WITH BUSINESS RESOURCE NETWORK (BRN)**

**MEMBERS:** Elaine initiated the conversation by sharing that a seating arrangement had been worked out to help mix BVR and BRN members to ensure dialogue between the two groups. Notetakers were identified for each table. Discussion centered on engaging BRN members and learning more about how vocational rehabilitation fits into the picture: What's working well, what can be improved upon, what is the employment picture for them as employers; how can the Board and Division better partner with them. Grady spoke to the history of the Business Leadership Network, and the new contract between the Division and the Business Resource Network. There will be placards for each person at each table, along with a copy of the questions. This will be an informal meeting, a first gathering, with the expectation of future meetings to continue dialogue.

**UPDATES:** Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC): Grady reported that the SILC met on November 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> in Pierre. There were reports provided e.g., DRS, DRS IL Specialist, SBVI, SBVI Older Blind, and SILC Executive Secretary. Matt reported on a cost effectiveness study being conducted by USD looking at the costs associated with people living in nursing homes vs. their own home. The Center for Independent Living directors each

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provided updates. A Disability Advocacy Network (DAN) report was provided and it was explained that this group meets periodically regarding legislative activities. DAN is comprised of different organizations and it provides a collective voice on specific matters. DAN has linkages with the Governor's office and staff. Terry Dosch, Robert Kean and Shelly Pfaff are present during the legislative session and thus legislative alerts are put out on a daily basis to keep people informed. The SILC's next meeting is February 2<sup>nd</sup> in Pierre to coincide with the Medicaid Re-Use meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Freedom to Work Project Sustainability Update: Grady reported that the very last meeting was held in September after 11 years of the project. The Division is currently loading the 2012 budget which will have monies directed to continuing some the FTW programs (Medicaid for Workers with Disabilities, Personal Attendant Services, Tips Newsletter, Mike Walling Training, Shelly Pfaff and Brooke Lusk training efforts, Benefit Specialists, Career Development Team, Employer Resource Network, Work Incentives trainings, Project SEARCH, and NDEAM involvement). Statewide Workforce Development Council Update: Grady reported that the Council met on October 6<sup>th</sup> and he was unable to attend. He had not received the minutes from the meeting yet. The next meeting is scheduled for January 5<sup>th</sup>. Grady reported on a SD Disability Employment Initiative, a grant received by the Department of Labor. This grant will focus on transition age students ages 18-24. A case manager will work with students over a three year period and it will involve the Division and disability resource coordinators at post-secondary education institutes. It will have a west river focus and Bernie and Margie Helgeson (DRS Supervisor Rapid City) will be involved

The meeting was recessed for the evening.

Meeting was reconvened at 9:30 AM.

**DEBRIEF ON MEETING WITH BUSINESS RESOURCE NETWORK (BRN):** Board members shared comments about what they heard this morning from the BRN members. Members were asked to forward copies of their notes to staff. All comments gathered are attached as a separate document (see attached).

**FISCAL YEAR END REPORT:** Bernie provided two handouts. The first document was the FFY 2011 Year End Data PowerPoint. Bernie walked

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members through each slide and provided background information on: summary of all cases, successful closures, supported employment, Project Skills, Employment Skills Program, Social Security Reimbursement, Fiscal Analysis, and the Evaluation Standards. The second handout, which was in draft format included a number of graphs, pie charts and tables breaking out the data in different details. One example included the number of applicants by age range. The largest applicant age group was in the age range of those younger than 20. The primary impairment for eligible individuals was people with cognitive disabilities. Under the category of primary disability cause, a question was asked about the need to use the term mental retardation. It was explained that this still falls under the reporting requirement of the Rehabilitation Services Administration and the disability classification of the DSM (Diagnostic & Statistical Manual). A comment was made about this being a future agenda item and the possibility of the Board drafting a letter to the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Bernie spoke to the Ticket to Work Program and amount of payments to the Division as they have increased over the years. In FFY08 the Division received \$1,711 compared to \$346,347 in FFY 11. Grady utilized this time to publically thank Bernie and Steve Stewart for their time and effort in accomplishing this goal. These funds will allow the Division to build upon future sustainability efforts. Some of the funds are also paid out to providers assigned as Employer Networks. Bernie referenced another slide depicting the staffing patterns, which reflects the highest percentage in the counseling staff. The Division is under the national average for administrative staff by almost 4%. The last item noted was what to expect in the future. Bernie indicated that the number of applicants is leveling off; caseloads are leveling off with an average around 80 open cases and 152 total in a year. He talked about consumers applying that have more challenging behaviors (criminal backgrounds, drug/alcohol issues). The case service budget will increase and the Division continues to meet all of RSA's standards. Bernie encouraged members to be in touch with him if there is specific information they would like. Bernie will forward the PowerPoint to staff electronically for those interested in receiving it.

**EMPLOYER RESOURCE NETWORK (ERN):** Kathy shared that she doesn't have much to update members on. She stated there is a group of individuals who have volunteered to work with her on initiatives. The group wants to develop something to take to the SRHM Chapters identifying different levels of options, and then it's each Chapter's decision on what and how much to do.

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She continues to work with Freedom to Work staff on these activities. Elaine extended the Board's appreciation for all her work on this initiative.

**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND RSA COMMISSIONER:**

Board staff provided a draft copy of the FY2011 Annual Report. Staff talked about the timeline of the report, the quarterly meetings involved and reviewing of minutes to obtain the needed information. The second half of the report involves the year end data from the Division. Board members were asked to review the report and submit any edits to staff by December 23<sup>rd</sup>. The annual report will be submitted by the end of December.

**NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH (NDEAM):**

Staff provided a handout which provided an overview of what each community did in support of NDEAM. The other part of the handout included the evaluations submitted by each community. The evaluations reflected that over 1,460 individuals attended events across the state. The process and timing of disseminating the Request for Funding was explained. The RFF is disseminated by the end of January; RFF due mid to late February; committee reviews the RFFs and provides funding recommendations to full Board at March meeting; funding awards announced to local NDEAM committees by early April. Barb, Carol and Lyle agreed to serve on the NDEAM committee. Craig had already offered to remain on the committee. Kathy asked several questions about the timing of the process and who serves on the committees. Staff was asked to contact the local community representative and obtain a name for future reference; staff will provide these to Kathy once they are received.

**GOVERNOR'S AWARDS CEREMONY:** Staff reviewed the process and timing for this activity. Call for nominations are disseminated in early January; nominations are due early February; committee reviews nominations and provides recommendations which are forwarded to the Department and Governor's office; notice to recipients by end of March or early April; host awards ceremony once a date is confirmed with the Governor's Office (spring or summer). Melissa Flor already agreed to serve as a reviewer as well as Craig. Lyle also agreed to continue.

**CLOSING ACTIONS:** Future Agenda Items: In the earlier discussion with the meeting with BRN, Robert was asked to "investigate" something that was

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mentioned about Sanford offering an on-line application that was time-limited. It was shared that once an individual tried to complete the application and was unsuccessful in completion, they were blocked from trying again for a couple of months. Something mentioned earlier today about writing a letter to the Rehabilitation Services Administration about language changes. Brett offered to initiate a draft letter. Shelly Pfaff and Brooke Lusk will be invited to share a modified version of their employment training initiative. Schedule Next Meeting: members voiced the following for the next rotation of meetings:

- March 22/23<sup>rd</sup> / Pierre
- June/coincide with Youth Leadership Forum / Aberdeen
- Fall meeting / Rapid City

**MOTION TO ADJOURN AT 11:55 AM, MSC.**

## **Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Rehabilitation Services & Business Resource Network (BRN) Meeting**

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation members present: Robert Kean, Grady Kickul, Kathy Hassebrook, Barb Storbeck, Lyle Cook, Elaine Roberts, Darla McGuire, Craig Eschenbaum, Carol Kirchgesler, Brett Glirbas and Nikki Darland.

Business Resource Network members present: Terry Rist (Home Federal Bank/Sioux Falls), Colleen Moran (City of Sioux Falls, Office of City Attorney), Vicki Nelson (Sioux Falls VR Office, Director of Project Search), Cindy Stewart (SF VR Office District Supervisor), Dan Simon (Human Resources Manager for CCC Information Services), Dawn Backer (Manager of the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind), Julie Benz (Assistant Vice President of Ortho/Neuro/Rehabilitation for Avera McKennan Hospital), Scott Nelson (Co-Owner and CEO of EtchGlobal, LLC) and Julie Briggs (Executive Director of Business Resource Network).

Others present: Bernie Grimme, Colette Wagoner and Rich Eschenbaum. Interpreters were Jessie Rykhus and Rachel Hatle.

The joint meeting convened at 8:10 AM. Introductions of participants and welcoming comments were given by Elaine Roberts, Chairperson of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and Grady Kickul, Director of Rehabilitation Services. Information on the purpose and scope of the joint meeting was reviewed and clarifying questions were answered. Julie Briggs, Executive Director of BRN, spoke to the mission and purpose of BRN. The tables were then invited to continue the discussion.

Table A: Kean, Storbeck, Moran, Rist, Nelson and Kickul.

People shared brief comments on their personal involvement with disability issues and their interest in seeing more opportunity for persons with disabilities in the workplace. Participants were thanked for their attendance and input and asked, what was driving the employment picture in the Sioux Falls area? Responses came in a free style discussion throughout the meeting with the following items noted:

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Nelson: Opportunity for employment is directly driven by the economy. The current situation in Sioux Falls seems to be getting better. The history of Project SEARCH successes reflects the economy. Some participants are more challenging to prepare for the work market due to background and history.

Rist: Some consumers of services who present themselves for the interview do not seem to be confident, that they can contribute and successfully do the work being sought. BRN staff person doing a great job of getting to the employer, sharing the resources that BRN can provide to get persons employed and she presents the new version of BRN very well. Communication with the prospective employer very important since, unfortunately, discrimination still exists. If the benefits of employing a person with a disability and supports that are available are clearly described, the chances that the employer will listen are greatly increased.

Moran: Briggs is doing a good job of raising awareness. Getting into the company to see and talk with the key personnel/HR person.

Nelson: Need to make more personal contacts with potential employers. Personal contact can be built upon and developed and are the best way to get the word out regarding employing persons with disabilities.

Rist: Need to focus upon and address the fears that some businesses have about the work ability of persons with disabilities with a number of strategies including face to face meetings, demonstrations and supports.

Nelson: Direct contact with the employer is the best approach. You create a personal relationship that can be built over time and adjusted as the situation warrants.

Rist: the tax benefit information for hiring a person with a disability is not readily available. A lot of employers know nothing about it.

Nelson: The Work Opportunity Tax Credit is not well known. Private providers involved with employment networks do not know about tax incentives.

Kickul: VR can arrange to have an event to explore/explain tax incentives and benefits.

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Rist: Often, a person with a disability needs the first opportunity to work. Then once a work history is generated, it gets easier.

Nelson: The Employment Skills Program is tailored for adults to roughly age 25 who do not have an established work history. It is modeled after the Project Skills program for transitional aged students. It is offering an opportunity and the key to success is the large amount of resources that are available.

Kickul: A tremendous amount of training is available from a wide variety of sources. But the training is often fragmented or very narrow in application. We need to design a body/package of training that addresses the needs and questions raised by the employers.

Nelson: Another aspect is the challenging backgrounds of those seeking employment. It may include no positive work experience, limited skills, prison, alcohol, and/or drug abuse. Sioux Falls VR has a program in conjunction with Goodwill Industries that will offer work experience to those without them to begin to build their resumes. A variety of reasons are reported by employers for letting a person go including, downturn in business, work related issues such as attendance and person being in over their head and not able to do the work.

Kickul: To keep up the effort in dealing with employers, the Business Resource Network has a vision of expanding its activities. This should lead to more skilled employees being placed into a range of salary ranges. He wants VR to be able to fill more positions throughout the state.

Moran: The Sioux Falls Park and Recreation Department is always looking for persons to assist with after school recreation programs. Various city offices provide volunteer work experience in a number of areas. For example, one person is assigned to several offices where he collects and shreds records and documents. While menial, this provides experience.

Kickul: While volunteer work is valuable, it is not a paying position which is the purpose of the VR program. In a recent conversation with DHS Secretary Gill (also Mayor of Pierre), the Project Skills model was discussed and the possibility of starting a program will be explored.

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Rist: Employers are choosy and have high expectations that persons presenting for employment will have certain skill sets or demonstrate the ability to learn the functions of the position being sought. People assisting persons seeking employment should be visible and educate employers about what the employee can give back for the employment opportunity.

Storbeck: Providers need to know more to better engage with the employer on a number of topics such as work supports and tax benefits.

Kickul: Providers and employers need to be educated together to hear the same thing at the same time. Doing so will allow questions, answers and solutions to be discussed collaboratively.

Rist: Another issue is that some employers don't seem to have patience; want the prospective employee to be job ready. They may not have the training capacity or budget to do so or just want someone else to get the employee ready for work.

Nelson: Small employees seem to have limited training resources and are more likely to seek out the benefits associated with employing a person with a disability.

Kickul: VR will pay for training.

Rist: Training must be effective and tailored to the specific needs of the employer. This requires contacts and knowing what the needs are.

Nelson: Employment Skills Program (ESP) provides real work experience that is portable to the workplace.

Rist: Julie Briggs is doing a good job of getting the word out to the employers, but must keep the business contacts going and coordinated with BRN in order for the effort to be as successful as it can be.

Kickul: A paycheck is important to the employee for many reasons. Training is emerging as a key and there is a need for more of it.

Rist: People involved in this area, including employers, providers, BRN, etc. must know where to go to get the answers to questions and needed information. For example, who has all the tax information? Who has the information on on-the-job training? Who has the information on support services? Knowing that the information exists and is available will help with convincing the employer regarding hiring.

Moran: BRN needs to know more of this kind of information in order to fully engage in the necessary conversations.

Nelson: Training is periodically available and a lot of information is readily available on the internet.

Rist: BRN is evolving from a “discussion” phase and becoming more structured in its operational model. As an organization and employer, the BRN has strict agenda of expectations, timeframes for work product and deadlines for outcomes related to the mission of the agency.

Table B: Hassebrook, Cook, Eschenbaum, Stewart, and Briggs.

Gathered responses to the following questions:

What are you hearing from the Sioux Falls business community about the recruiting, hiring and/or working with people with disabilities?

- There are certain businesses that get it and some who don't;
- Briggs needs to tap into employers one-on-one. One business at a time – she needs to go to the business and not ask the business to come to her;

What are the needs in the employee pool base in the community?

- Call centers, TJMAX, Lowes, restaurants, banks,
- 600 openings – 4,000 applications at Sanford (timed applications on line);

What's working well?

- Giving talks or available resources/information, raising awareness;
- One Board of Directors – responded that there is a great response to hiring people with disabilities;

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- BRN Executive Director should get on boards of other entities to open more doors;

Are there some areas that could be improved?

- BRN is new, they are looking for resources (it's all about "utilizing resources");

What have we tried?

- BLN – more events (larger events);
- BRN is spreading the news to more businesses;
- Radio interviews, will do an interview for "She Magazine" in February;

What are we pleased with?

- The BRN's Board of Directors and their commitment;
- Pleased with the business meetings;
- Vocational rehabilitation's partnership;
- BRN office is housed at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind;

What are we concerned with?

- That we do it right;
- That we give businesses what they need;
- Building a good relationship;
- What can the Board and VR do to help?

What are our next steps in moving forward?

- Continue with the monthly board meetings;
- Fall Conference;
- BRN hosts NDEAM;
- BRN wants to be statewide;
- Chief concerns of businesses – too much time to train; scared of being sued;

Table C: Darland, Grimme, Backer, Nelson, and Glirbas.

There are not a lot of jobs available in Sioux Falls and this makes it difficult for individuals with disabilities to obtain employment; Employers want to hire people with disabilities but they lack knowledge; Employers don't know where to get information and resources;

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Employers need continued education on hiring individuals with disabilities;  
Employers are concerned about the cost of accommodations;  
BRN is just getting started;  
Continue BRN web site to share resources for employers;  
Need to get information out to employers about the SFBRN;  
SRBRN has been presenting to a number of organizations, agencies and employers;  
Need to continue in contacting and educating small employers;  
We need to reach out to new potential employers instead of just the same ones all the time;  
Job Developers need knowledge on accommodations;  
Job Developers need continued training to provide a quality service;  
Keep getting providers together to promote a coordinated effort of job placement;  
Not everyone needs a job developer;  
Individuals with disabilities need to show the employer that they can work and they need to sell themselves;

Table D: Roberts, McGuire, Simon, Benz, and Wagoner.

Simon: Stated he would like to see more of what is going on in Aberdeen in Sioux Falls. Employers are skeptical regarding hiring individuals with disabilities.

Benz: Accommodations are made for everyone at her organization.

Simon: Finding qualified individuals for positions is really hard. (His business is getting applicants who are not qualified.) Stated he is working with VR to identify qualified applicants.

Benz: There is a need to match skill sets. Look at what employer's needs are along with listing of employees with their qualifications.

Simon: Stated he is working with an acquaintance, also a person with a disability, to find employment.

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The question was raised of how to move teachers in the direction of assisting students with disabilities with developing work skills.

Benz: How do we broaden work sites beyond cleaning/janitorial duties; she suggested looking at areas with high turnover rates, see if there are job opportunities within these areas; like what happened with Project SEARCH in the food line, tray line, and management is very happy with the workers. She also stated the need for sharing "success stories" of employers and employees.

A discussion item included the "non-motivator" on not making more (earning more money = then impacts benefits). A need for education of family members and the individual that is seeking employment or higher earnings. There needs to be a push with some families to have higher expectations of their kids. A comment was made in regard to having employees work for you and then after a month or two they leave the job and go back onto benefits.

Benz: made a comment that people are starting to notice/recognize students with disabilities working at Avera. Different departments are more open to different possibilities. There are hospital staff who are making comments about "next steps"; the value/interest in matching students' abilities with positions. 'Next steps' = "the can't do it" positions are now being done." There are over 25 different departments where interns have been brought in.

A comment was made about individuals who are over the age of 21; they are beyond the funding stream for Project SEARCH. Avera is receiving phone calls from family/friends of individuals with disabilities that they know who could work at Avera.

Comment made about teachers making/setting realistic expectations, so students don't leave high school with too high of expectations.

The need exists to work more closely with job developers, to prepare future workers; and explore training opportunities i.e., college/tech schools.

A question was asked if there were statistics for a given community looking at how long a person stays on the job vs. how long a person with a disability stays on the job.

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Community choice is a factor and includes other aspects i.e., accessible housing, transportation. A student from Flandreau came to Sioux Falls and participated in Project SEARCH and was very successful. The student wanted to move home, which means success is less likely because the community supports are not what is needed. Hospitals are not the only answer or opportunity.

How can we work together, be supportive, expand efforts, and continue these conversations? We need to partner on common goals. How do our goals fit together, how do we support each other's objectives – "mesh goals". The best way is to get information out by word of mouth – need to market yourself. More of these types of activities, the better.

Benz: suggested that the BVR share their goals and objectives with BRN and BRN share with the BVR, so that we are supporting one another.

Benz: too much information, very scary – it's overwhelming. How do we break it down? We don't do a good enough job in schools; need to hit at a younger age.

There are some people with disabilities out there that haven't done anything yet. They need to utilize a benefits specialist, use of the Career Development Team; folks have stories to be told.

Fear of accommodations. Accommodations need to be equitable and fair. There is the fear that if one employee gets something, all the rest will want it i.e., keyboard. Realize that making a change could lead to a better outcome for all (Julie Benz' example of very tiny print barcode on hospital supply tubs, and then it was changed to a larger font for the individual to better able to read it – it helped everyone.

Benz: We (BRN) appreciate your work, we will do whatever we can to spread the word, we are very passionate, and we can work on common goals. BRN is very busy i.e., monthly meetings, committee meetings. She suggested hosting a World Café – individuals having lunch together, problem is brought forward, and then brainstorming from a business perspective, a lot can be solved during these very informal get togethers.

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The meeting continued for the allotted time and concluded with a sense that the conversation was purposeful and productive. Members of the BRN indicated that they would be interested in similar follow-up discussions. They further stated they would appreciate a copy of the work product once it was in final form.

Elaine Roberts, Chairperson, thanked everyone for coming and sharing their thoughts. She stated the conversation was great, and she hopes this first meeting is a starting point to future meetings.