

Rehabilitation Council of Texas (RCT)

October 28, 2022

**Hybrid Meeting 4241 Woodcock Dr., San Antonio, TX 78228
and via Zoom**

Council Members Present:

Gennadiy Goldenshteyn, Chair, Dallas
Mark Baird, San Angelo
Glenda Born, Austin Virtual
Jennifer Clouse, Temple Virtual
Michele Dobbins, LaPorte
Cheryl A Fuller, Austin
Lindsey Geeslin, Lorena
Bobbie Hodges, Fort Worth Virtual
Joe Powell, Irving
April Pollreisz, Amarillo
Emily Robinson, Pflugerville Virtual
Rodrick Robinson, McKinney
Karen Stanfill, Houston
Dr. James Williams, Leander

Council Members Absent:

Amanda Bowdoin, Forney
Abdi Warsame, Wylie
Lisa Cowart, Sour Lake

TWC Employees Attendance:

Chairman Bryan Daniel, Commissioner Aaron Demerson, Juanita Barker, Angela Bazaldua, Jessica Belanger, Kimberly Berry, Shelly Caillouet, Heather Cooke, Kandace Decker, Norma Garza, April Garcia, Lisa Godwin, Cindy Geisman, Lauren Hargrove, Jamie Haywood, Darla Jordan, Dennis Kutach, Laura LaCour, Tony Lawrence, Christy Lerche, Anna Lee, Susan Lindsey, Tammy Martin, Bonnie Martin-Hudson, Scott McCune, Clell McCurdy Jr., Cassandra Medrano, Geoffrey Miller, Rebecca Monnette, Asha Mookala, Brian Owens, Melinda Paninski, Claudia

Peden, Elsa Y. Perez, Randall Pearson, Daniel Prado, Andrew Ramirez, Summer Robinson, Audra Ressel, Belinda Salazar, Aissa Salazar, W Scott, Chris Speckhard, Melissa Stirling, Sara Weems, Rikka Weintraub, Sue-Ellen Woodlief, Kelly Yarbrough,

Public Attendance: 61

Welcome

- The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Gennadiy Goldenshteyn, Chair.
- Welcome and opening comments.

Chairman Bryan Daniel, TWC Chair and Commissioner Representing Public

- Addressed the council

Aaron Demerson, Commissioner Representing Employers

- Addressed the council

Region 6 South Texas, Welcome to San Antonio, VRD Regional Director Larry Elliott, Deputy Regional Director, Dawn Natalino-White

- Addressed the council and gave updates of region 6.

VR Division Report and Performance Update Cheryl A. Fuller, Director, TWC VR Division (VRD) and Geoffrey Miller, Director of Analytics and Evaluation (A&E), Information, Innovation, and Insight (I3) Division

- Combined State Plan Goals:
 - Strategy & Measures Overview
 - 6 Goals
 - 24 Strategies
 - 72 Activities/Projects
 - 38 Complete or Ongoing

- 21 In Process
 - 3 Pending
 - 11 Success Measures
- Goal 1 Improve provider recruitment, retention, and support.
 - 21 Projects/Activities: 16 Complete/Ongoing, 5 In Process
- Goal 2 Streamline VR policy, process, and procedure and improve workflow processes and tools to facilitate timely services delivery.
 - 12 Projects/Activities: 6 Complete/Ongoing, 5 In Process, 1 Pending
- Goal 3 Recruit and retain VR staff.
 - 12 Projects/Activities: 8 Complete/Ongoing, 3 In Process, 1 Pending
- Goal 4 Improve and develop additional user-friendly resources to maximize customer choice.
 - 5 Projects/Activities: 2 Complete/Ongoing, 3 In Process
- Goal 5 Improve VR staff knowledge and system capacity to enhance service delivery to customers.
 - 21 Projects/Activities: 5 Complete/Ongoing, 15 In Process, 1 Pending.
- Goal 6 Increase and enhance partnerships with employers to 1) understand employer needs, and 2) build awareness about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.
 - 6 Projects/Activities: 3 Complete/Ongoing, 3 In Process
- Quarterly Strategy Spotlights
 - Comprehensive Rate Review
 - Our goal is to complete a comprehensive review of the rates we pay providers and to establish a regular schedule by which all rates are reviewed and updated, as appropriate.
 - VR has contracted with Public Consulting Group (PCG) for this project and work is getting underway.
 - PCG will not only study and advise on what we pay providers, but also how we pay them (e.g., benchmarks, hourly rates, daily

- rates). They will also review the geographic distribution of our services providers across the State and recommend an approach for increasing provider density in underserved areas.
- Comprehensive analysis of fee structures and associated payment rates. The analysis will include a data review of:
 - VR rates and fee structures
 - A review of VR rates in six other states
 - A review of rates from other Texas agencies
 - Services and cost collection instrument development
 - Distribution of cost collection instrument to providers, data collection, and validation
 - Analysis and fee structure recommendations
 - VR Services Manual Redesign
 - Our goal is to redesign the VR Services Manual (VRSM) to make it clearer, more internally consistent, and easier for VR staff to navigate.
 - Forms will be considered, as will the connection between the VRSM and Standards for Providers.
 - Phase Two Deliverable: Redesign of VRSM. Timeline TBD, dependent upon Phase One.
 - Policy changes are out of scope and will be addressed through the regular policy process.
 - Learning from other VR agencies
 - Contractor has identified 15 VR agencies from with VRD has selected six for further analysis
 - Soliciting feedback from VR staff and RCT
 - All VRD staff survey
 - VRD staff group feedback sessions
 - Six individual interviews with key state office staff
 - RCT Policy Committee group feedback session
 - New Counselor Training Redesign
 - Our goal: Redesign new counselor training so that it:
 - Begins sooner after hire

- Is more convenient for counselors to access while also building collaborative learning cohorts
 - Can be retaken or review as needed, by all VR staff
 - TWC Training and Development has completed the project and is ready to roll out the revisions.
 - All new counselors starting on or after November 1, 2022, will take the new courses.
 - Courses are a combination of computer-based training and classroom training led by an instructor.
 - All VR staff will have access to the CBT classes, which can be taken on demand. Classroom training will target new VR Counselors.
 - The new training consists of four separate classes.
 - VR Historical Foundations (CBT)
 - VR Process Fundamentals (CBT)*
 - VR Quality Documentation (Classroom)*
 - VR Introduction to Services (Classroom)*
 - *Counselors earn CRC CEUs
- Ongoing Training for Counselors and Other VR Staff
 - VR is contracting with YesLMS to provide VR focused computer-based training
 - Course content is developed by the VR Development Group, who contracts with national VR subject matter experts to develop training in a variety of areas relevant to vocational rehabilitation.
 - All VR Staff will have on-demand access to over 70 CBT courses that are pre-approved for CRC CEUs.
 - Communication will go out to staff in late October 2022, with details on available courses and instructions on how to access the online training.
- VRD Staff Recognition Program
 - In September, VRD launched a division-wide staff recognition program.

- Preliminary work began in March, leading to development and launch of a multi-strategy effort
- Our goal is to develop a division-wide mindset of appreciation and gratitude for the partnership and contributions of our colleagues and teams, that encourages engagement and creates a positive, supportive work environment.
- Continue, Encourage and Highlight Regional Recognition Strategies
 - Annual Customer FIRST Awards
 - Monthly Employee Recognition Minutes for VR Managers
 - Quarterly Customer FIRST Terrific Team Recognition
 - Establishment of a VRD Staff Recognition Committee
 - Internal SharePoint site with a Wall of Fame, tips, resources, and tools for managers
- Update on Operating Budget and Expenditures
 - FY 2022 VRD Budget Summary
 - Salaries & Wages (includes Employee Benefits) \$114,415,699
 - Travel \$2,418,993
 - Operating Expenses \$9,874,646
 - Client Services \$148,034,891
 - Total \$274,745,229
 - FY 2023 VRD Budget Summary
 - Salaries & Wages (includes Employee Benefits) \$115,011,442
 - Travel \$2,574,431
 - Operating Expenses \$10,586,614
 - Client Services \$166,336,712
 - Total \$294,509,199
- State FY Q4 2022 VR Performance Update
 - Full Report is included in the binder.
 - Highlighted Trends

- Degree of normalcy prior to the pandemic.
- Compared to the same R4Q last year (Sep 2020-Aug 2021), the number of participants served declined slightly (by 2%); however, the success rate grew from 47.5% to 51.3%
- Growth in the success rate has been driven by Regions 2 (DFW Metro), 4 (East Texas) and Region 6 (Valley)
- After several year of decline, the success rate for legally blind participants is showing signs of recovery

Public Comment

- No Public Comment was given

RCT Committee Reports

- Membership and Education, Lindsey Geeslin
 - Committee will meet at least once between each quarterly meeting.
 - Follow 88th Legislative Session
 - VRD Staff is monitoring and will provide any bills related to VR to the committee to share with the RCT
 - November 14th prefiling date
 - January 10th first day of session
 - March 10th bill filing deadline
 - May 29th last day of regular session
 - Membership
 - Two vacancies applications have been submitted just waiting for appointment.
 - Three members will term out. One of these will not be filing for reappointment. The others will apply for reappointment. Lindsey will keep in touch with the appointment's office to insure membership is in good standing.
 - Speakers, the committee will create a pool of speakers to choose from for each quarterly meeting.

- Mentorship program, led by Joe Powell on going as we get new members. Gennadiy mentioned the importance of all committees having equal balanced membership, experience, and varied term dates.
 - Asked that each committee identify a mentor.
- Customer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment, Gennadiy Goldenshteyn, Chair
 - Committee meeting is set for the next week. November 3.
 - Lisa Cowart will take over as new Chairman for this committee.
 - CSNA Planning process outline and CSNA timeline will be discussed.
 - Discuss Customer Satisfaction Survey vendor RFP
- Policy, Procedure & Personnel Development, Karen Stanfill, Chair
 - Focused on goals identified during strategic planning session.
 - Improve (Decrease) the purchasing and approval processes. Specifically looking at approval time for surgery, self-employment, and vehicle modifications.
 - Vehicle modification, Prior to new process average length for approval for low tech 12-13 months, and hi tech 16-18 months. Now, it is 6 months for low tech and 9 months for hi tech. Additionally, the number of modifications has increased 50%. Changes made; reduced number of approvals needed to move forward, delegated more responsibility to SME. Tracking the process begins when the VRS approval is provided.
 - Discuss with TWS improvements in purchasing and how to broaden purchasing options. The CFR section was sent to the committee and will be reviewed. VR also will provide a list of state and federal laws/citations that affect purchasing.

- Increase employment retention. The agency will provide an analysis from two years back and compare that to one year back when some changes were made requiring obtaining a master's degree.
 - Evaluate the criteria for VR counselors to advance from VR 1 to VR 2. The concern is that VRC's are not staying because they are not being promoted. Suggest that the employee cannot move to a VRC 3 until they have started the CSPD process. This information was not available at this meeting but is being obtained and once provided will be reviewed.
- Improve provider engagement. Dr. James Williams will be the lead.
 - The types of contracts were reviewed with the committee. There are seven kinds, and the list will be provided to the committee. Discussion centered around the provider being cited in audits for forms the VRC is required to generate/complete. *Ask audit if the blanks on forms can be addressed in a different way?
 - Review the current payment system and discuss methods of improvement.
- No IHO to review.

Liaison Reports The full reports are included in the binders.
Each representative gave an update.

- Client Assistance Program (CAP), Karen Stanfill
 - A discussion took place regarding computer based tickets for referrals for service, tracking, timeframe for services, process, and hurdles, misdirected calls etc.
- Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP), Bobbie Hodges
 - Providers Concerns
 - Payment issues to provider

- Provider not being given contact info for new counselor in case of turn over
 - Client/staff ratio
 - Cost of credentialing
- Partners Resource Network (PRN), Lisa Cowart
- State Independent Living Council (SILC), April Poillreisz
 - Eva Storey, Interim Executive Director
 - Projects: PAL, HEART, Covering All of Texas, Inclusive Services for Survivors in Texas, Good Measure Project, State Plan for Independent Living
 - Next Meeting February 2023
 - Possible combined RCT SILC meeting in May or RCT Chair suggested August 2023
- Texas Education Agency (TEA), Emily Robinson
 - Potential On-the-Job Funding for Transition Services for Students with Disability
 - TSD/TSBVI Dissemination Requirements
 - SPED Tex – Special Education Information Center
- Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC), Lindsey Geeslin

Council Business

- New Council Business
 - RCT Annual Report Update by Lisa Godwin
 - First round of editing complete
 - All reports have been received
 - Should be ready for design team next week
 - On target to be submitted on time
 - Review RCT mission statement edits for further consideration and By-laws
 - Approve August minutes, RCT Chairman Gennadiy Goldenshteyn asked for Motion to approve August RCT Minutes. April Pollreisz motioned to approved August RCT Minutes. Motion was seconded James Williams, voted on and approved.

- FY22 Budget \$58,350. The current balance \$40,489.05, Additional items paid for by VR \$20,235.50. FY23 beginning budget \$58,350.
- Clarification that the \$58,350 budget amount is just the rider that is for RCT Member travel reimbursement.
- VR Project Updates
 - Apprenticeship and Internship Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities, Jamie Haywood, VRD Deputy Division Director for Program Policy and Support
 - Apprenticeship and Internship Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities Report was provided to the RCT Members, and a discussion was held.
 - Texas Beacons of Excellence Project, Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) Grant, Cindy Geisman, VRD Program Specialist for Performance and Compliance, and Lucy Gafford, Director, UNT WISE
 - Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE)
 - Awarding Agency US Department of Education, Rehabilitative Services Administration (RSA)
 - Grant Type discretionary/competitive
 - Total Funding Available \$167M
 - TWC VR applied with the University of North Texas as our primary partner
 - Five year grant
 - Texas received \$13,341,599
 - Texas Beacons of Excellence
 - Focused on current 14C facilities to help adjust business model to become providers with a focus on customized and supported employment
 - Partner with in-demand business in various communities to increase employment opportunities
 - Identify transition age students contemplating non-CIE options and connect to resources and employment
 - Target 8 areas across the state
 - Activities

- Develop training for 14c's, transition programs focused on best practices for CIE
 - Convene stakeholder advisory committee
 - Identify In-Demand Employers, assist with training and implementing inclusive practices
- Adjourn