

## Meeting Minutes

**Rehabilitation Council of Texas**  
**September 10, 2014**  
**Embassy Suites Hotel**  
**San Marcos, Texas**

### Present

- Lori Henning, Chair, Austin
- Barbara Madrigal, Austin
- Cheryl Fuller, Austin
- Elizabeth Gentry, Schertz
- Joe Tims, Justin
- Joyce Taylor, Houston
- Karen Stanfill, Houston
- Mark Schroeder, Grand Prairie
- Martha Garber, Coppell
- Rames Gonzalez, Palmview
- Rene Gonzalez, McAllen

### Absent

- Brent Pitt, Austin
- John Cage, Helotes
- Manuel Lopez, Rosenberg
- Rana Anderson, Snyder
- Roger Cortez, Arlington
- Saul Herrera, Midland
- Thelma Scott, Houston
- Troy Myree, Houston

### DARS Reps

- David Norman, DRS Liaison
- Jeff Kaufmann, DBS Liaison
- Elizabeth Freaney, DARS RCT Council Staff

### DARS Staff

- Alma Cantu
- Christy Lerche
- Corey Turner
- Martha Bagley
- Michelle McCall

## Guests

- Raul Ortiz (TWIC)
- Sandra Bitter (SILC)
- Craig Davis (SILC)

## Welcome and Introductions

- Meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Lori Henning, Chair.
- Council members and audience members introduced themselves.

## Committee Meetings

The following committees met with their members: Policy, Procedures and Personnel Development, Membership and Education, and Consumer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment.

### Public Comment

There was no public comment.

### Planning and Review Committee

Chair Martha Garber – To insure adequate planning time for the 2016 state plan, it would be beneficial to begin reviewing the needs assessment at the October RCT meeting, since that drives the state plan. David Norman noted that University of Texas (UT) staff will be present at the October meeting to discuss the final results of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment. Ms. Garber requested time to review the information from UT, about two weeks in advance of the October 20-21 meeting. Mr. Norman said it is being made accessible and will be posted on DARS internet shortly.

There are other part of the state plan that can be reviewed very quickly, such as reviewing accomplishments as well as the relationship with education and workforce issues.

Ms. Garber will develop a planning schedule so that we can stay on target with reviews. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) will bring changes to the state plan, including the format, and we will be seeing information on that.

Ms. Garber spoke with both assistant commissioners about the state's progress towards the completion of goals, and how to improve that, especially with all the recent changes. We should be celebrating successes with DRS and DBS, as well as assisting with improvement.

### Consumer Satisfaction & Needs Assessment Committee

Chair Elizabeth Gentry – The committee continued to discuss the CSNA and the survey results. Also discussed having focus groups to identify underserved populations and other needs the agency may have. Continue to have Town Hall meetings and surveys to give DARS a variety of perspectives. Around the state there are a lot of events like job fairs, walk and rolls and other happenings for people in the disability population and where it would be a good opportunity for RCT to set up some information about DARS, educate people and get some feedback. Also, DARS was approached by home schooling co-ops because family members were not working out well in the schools, sometimes because of disability issues that the school could not address or accommodate in an effective way. The committee recommends building this relationship because students who are educated at home are underserved.

Most of the committee members are completing their terms of office on the RCT in October and new members and a new chair will be sought.

**RECOMMENDATION:** DARS continue to increase contact with home school co-ops as those students are considered underserved.

### **Membership & Education Committee**

Chair Joyce Taylor – Ms. Taylor stated that Gaby Fuentes of the governor's appointment office has been advised that 5 council member terms are expiring in October. New members should be appointed and be in attendance at the January 2015 meeting. Applications for membership have been sent to Ms. Fuentes, so there is no shortage of people wanting to be on the RCT. Also, Council members have stepped up and agreed to mentor the new, incoming members.

This committee also wants to have education issues brought to them from the Texas Education Agency representative. This will insure we stay current on happenings with education, with legislative issues, rules and bills so we can be sure to inform and educate RCT members.

### **Policy, Procedures & Personnel Development Committee**

Chair Karen Stanfill – Following up on a previous discussion regarding Social Security and participation in services, DBS is going to propose policy for review, possibly at the October meeting.

- Discussed how many consumers are in extended evaluations and DBS provided numbers on that, and how management is looking at various ways to follow up so that consumers won't be in that status as long as some activity is taking place.
- Committee talked about WIOA and that gives guidance that an IPE should be written within 90 days, or document reasons why not. DRS will change in their manual.
- For the next few meetings the committee is working together to come up with some written policy that DRS and DBS will consider regarding the IPE and vocational goal. There are mixed messages for counselors to follow regarding consumer employment process, and the goal is to have policy align closer to the regulations.
- DRS is editing and updating their policy manual and we have received 53 pages of policy for review. The manual will be in a new format.
- DRS was going to submit a list of counselor trainings for the next year. It was noted that copies are now in the meeting notebook. This committee will review at the October meeting.
- DRS, Jeff Kaufmann, provided the policy committee with a handout titled SFY 2013 and SFY 2014 DRS and DBS Vocational Rehabilitation Consumers Receiving SSI and/or SSDI (attached). The handout shows the number and percent of DARS consumers who had Social Security Disability Insurance and/or Supplemental Security Income, when they applied for services, and when their case was closed as employed. This is very interesting data and the committee will be taking a look at it.
- CSPD standards allows a person who has a bachelor's in business and possibly public administration to apply for counselor jobs. Both DRS and DBS accept applications for counselor positions from people who have degrees in different areas, but they are still going to be required to complete the master's program to continue working as a counselor.

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**RECOMMENDATION:** Our committee encourages that the state of Texas continue with this high standard that counselors must get their masters in rehabilitation counseling.

## **Election of Officers**

Joyce Taylor, chair of Membership and Education Committee, said this is the annual election for chair and vice-chair positions. Nominations were solicited from council members and nominations can be made from the floor. Lori Henning mentioned that proxy voting is not allowed, per the bylaws. Nominees were Mark Schroeder and Martha Garber for chair, and Joyce Taylor for vice-chair.

Ms. Henning asked the nominees to speak a little about themselves. Mark Schroeder withdrew his name from the ballot for chair because he wanted to vote for Martha Garber. His withdrawal was accepted by Ms. Henning.

Ms. Garber said she sees a lot of things happening now with WIOA, Sunset and RSA audit as well as other issues, and she does have time available and flexibility in her current position.

Ms. Taylor said there is a population in American, specifically in Texas, that needs to be represented and needs a voice and needs someone who understands. She has learned so much in the time she has been on the RCT and she wants to be able to give back and will do whatever is required. Most importantly, word needs to get out so that other individuals can respect and understand exactly who we serve, why we serve them, and how we can continue to serve them.

**VOTE:** Since there were no opposing nominees, Lori Henning asked for a verbal vote for Martha Garber for the chair of the RCT. The vote was unanimous, and Martha Garber was elected.

**VOTE:** Since there were no opposing nominees, Lori Henning asked for a verbal vote for Joyce Taylor for vice-chair of the RCT. The vote was unanimous, and Joyce Taylor was elected.

## **DRS Assistant Commissioner Report**

DRS Assistant Commissioner Cheryl Fuller provided these updates:

- DRS is getting started on their Sunset management recommendations and how to best use resources for this
- Planning how to read that 800 pages of the new federal WIOA. There will be much more information when the regulations come out. DRS will review again with the RCT at the October meeting.
- DRS is wrapping up the state and federal fiscal years on a strong note. DRS met their goal for 1.1 yesterday.
- Focus continues to be on increasing the number of consumers to reach our target set by the LBB and having successful closures
- Also focusing on customer service including returning phone calls by the next business day.

- Reviewing performance goals and looking at strategies and objectives and action plans around the strategic plan just completed and how that aligns with and complements the state VR plan.
- Developing course of action to plan the state plan process better and evaluating how we are doing against that plan.

### **DBS Assistant Commissioner Report**

RCT presented DBS Assistant Commissioner Barbara Madrigal retirement gifts in appreciation of her 35-plus years of dedicated service to Texas with disabilities. RCT also presented Mel Fajkus, DBS WIA Specialist, with a retirement gift for his work with the council.

Ms. Madrigal provided an update on DARS Sunset results. The Sunset Commission met August 13 and approved all the commission staff recommendations from the May 2014 report. These recommendations included consolidating DRS and DBS, and outsourcing independent living services. Also mentioned was the necessity of DARS and its functions. There were four modifications to staff recommendations:

- Management action requiring DARS to create clear guidelines for caseworkers to better insure decision-making for successful, cost-effective outcomes.
- Develop a memorandum of understanding with the Texas Workforce Commission that provides a model for coordination between DARS' field offices and local workforce boards.
- Determine whether services currently provided by the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services could be better provided through the centers for independent living.
- Report on progress implementing Recommendation 5.1 (Direct DARS to develop mechanisms to more effectively plan for, track, and evaluate the performance of its programs and staff) every six months. DARS should suggest any statutory changes it believes are necessary to assist the agency in implementing this recommendation.

Sunset also adopted three new issues for the DARS report:

- Establish the Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services program in statute
- Establish the Children's Autism Program in statute
- Require HHSC and DARS to report on the inability to establish programs for the reuse of durable medical equipment

As of the report adoption on August 13th, DARS must now start implementing 11 management actions. These include:

### **For Issue 1 – Consolidate the divisions:**

- Develop a transition plan for the integration of the administration, management, and oversight of divisions of blind services and rehabilitation, no later than March 1, 2016.
- Take immediate steps to ensure access to services for people with multiple disabilities, no matter which division offers the services.

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### **For Issue 2 – Improve quality:**

- Start the process of creating guidelines for case workers in anticipation of the passage of the statutory change in Recommendation 2.1.

### **For Issue 3 – Outsource Independent Living Services:**

- Evaluate IL services available in communities throughout the state.

### **For Issue 4 – Coordinate Services with other agencies, business, etc.:**

- Consolidate employer relations staff and give them responsibility over workforce system coordination and employer initiatives.
- Develop a strategy for assisting federal contractors to hire individuals with disabilities, and to task its employer relations staff with researching and anticipating similar federal or state initiatives in the future.
- Develop a memorandum of understanding with the Texas Workforce Commission that provides a model for coordination needed between DARS' field offices and local workforce boards. DARS should create the memorandum of understanding in anticipation of passage of the statutory change in Recommendation 4.1 and to satisfy the formal referral process as required under existing law.

### **For Issue 5 – Oversight:**

- Develop mechanisms to more effectively plan for, track, and evaluate the performance of programs and staff.
- Determine whether the services currently provided through the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services could be better provided through the centers for independent living.
- Report on the progress in implementing Recommendation 5.1 every six months, with the first report due in June 2015 and the last report due in December 2016. As part of these reports, DARS should suggest any statutory changes it believes are necessary to assist the agency in implementing Recommendation 5.1.
- Require HHSC and DARS to report on their inability to establish programs for the reuse of durable medical equipment.

DARS has begun to work on the management action items. The staff recommendations for the HHSC Sunset Report are expected to be released September 17, 2014. These recommendations will be adopted, modified or deleted by the elected Sunset Commissioner in mid-November.

Ms. Henning asked about outsourcing IL services. Assistant Commissioner Cheryl Fuller replied that Sunset did give DARS an opportunity to evaluate and look at this recommendation. There is opportunity for input from consumer groups as well as DARS. The State Independent Living Council (SILC) and Texas Association of Centers for Independent Living (TACIL) are at the table with us on this. First and foremost is ensuring our consumers get the right services and that they continue to count on us to do everything we can with our partners to make that happen. Ms. Madrigal emphasized there are differences in IL services between DRS and DBS, and the assessment that Sunset will be doing, and comparing to the existing system, that the right conclusion will be reached.

Ms. Madrigal thanked the RCT for the input they provide into the vocational rehabilitation process for consumers in Texas.

## **LIAISON REPORTS**

Due to the shortened meeting time, the following liaison reports in the meeting notebook can be read at the council member's own time: Client Assistance Program, DARS Council, Partners Resource Network, State Independent Living Council, Texas Workforce Investment Council and the Texas Education Agency.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

- April 2014 RCT Minutes - Joyce Taylor made a motion to approve minutes as written, Martha Garber seconded, approved unanimously.
- DARS-RCT Resource Management Agreement - The draft resource agreement has been reviewed and approved by the Commissioner and DARS Legal with a couple of minor word changes. The RCT would like to have this agreement extended from a one-year term to a five-year term. Cassie Fisher, Communications Manager, said she could make that change and get it reviewed and approved by the Commissioner.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- Budget Update – the RCT Coordinator said we closed out fiscal year 2014 with a balance remaining of \$328 in operating expenses and \$6,387 in travel. There was a balance due to cancelling the July RCT meeting. The balance remaining gets rolled into VR programs. We start fiscal year 2014 with a balance of \$58,350. The state fiscal year runs September 1, 2014-August 31, 2015.
- Karen Stanfill requested financial assistance for registration expenses only to attend the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) conference in Miami in November. This request was tabled for further budget review.
  - Martha Garber will be attending NCSRC as well as the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) conference in November.
- Meeting dates for 2015 – Dates were discussed. January 26-27 are the dates for the joint meeting with SILC. Ms. Taylor mentioned we had talked about having a meeting in Houston and it appears the majority are agreeable to meet in October in Houston. Ms. Taylor will check the facility availability and get with the RCT Coordinator to finalize.

## **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m., September 10, 2014.