

MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES
HELD
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2012
AT
GEORGIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
CAVE SPRING, GEORGIA

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sandy Adams
Marsha Farrow
Robert Green
Louise Hill
Greg Kirk
Amy O'Dell
Don Parks

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jimmy DeFoor
Fay Loggins

Ms. Louise Hill, Vice Chairperson, called the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services (GVRS) Board meeting to order at approximately 1:00 pm. She stated that the Board was very pleased to be in Cave Spring and had the opportunity to tour the facility this morning. Ms. Hill acknowledged her appreciation to the GA School for the Deaf for hosting the Board meeting. Ms. Hill stated that the meeting in Cave Spring is a part of the process of moving the Board meetings around the state to learn more about the facilities and programs that are a part of the new agency.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Don Parks and seconded by Bob Green that the minutes of the October 10, 2012 meeting be approved. There being no questions or discussion, the motion passed unanimously by the Board.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Greg Schmiege, Executive Director of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA), introduced Cave Spring Rehabilitation Center Director Russell Fleming and asked him to give an overview about the history of Cave Spring.

Mr. Fleming welcomed everyone and invited the audience to tour Cave Spring following the meeting. He then shared information about the history of the Center as well as the services it provides. Mr. Fleming then introduced the Principal for the Georgia School of the Deaf, Ms. Jackson.

Ms. Jackson stated that the school was established 1846 by a teacher who wanted to communicate with a deaf child. She gave historical information about the school, its accreditations and the services it provides.

After Ms. Jackson's presentation, Mr. Schmiege resumed with the Executive Director's Report. He made the following announcements.

- ◆ Jimmy Wilson was hired as the GVRA Budget Officer
- ◆ Bill Bulloch was appointed as the Executive Director of Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute of Rehabilitation (RWSIR). Mr. Bulloch hired Lee Brinkley Bryan as the Director of Vocational Services at RWSIR.
- ◆ Ava Scarce was named the permanent VR Director of Support Services

Mr. Schmiege asked VR Director of Field Services Twyla Crump to introduce the staff from the Region 1 VR office. She introduced Regional Director Ed James and Program Associate Janine Sisk.

Mr. Schmiege continued his presentation with the budget update. He announced GVRA is scheduled to present its budget to the Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) on Thursday, November 15. He further stated that Keith Horton, Jimmy Wilson, Lynn Vellinga, CFO for DHS, and himself will be making a 30-minute presentation. The following are some of the highlights.

All state agencies were asked to implement a 3% budget reduction for FY13. Our agency decreased its budget by \$605,000 with a reduction in force. Mr. Schmieg stated he anticipated that by leaving those positions vacant may be sufficient to satisfy the 3% budget reduction for FY14. There are three major challenges facing GVRA that need to be addressed with OPB.

- 1) Federal VR 110 Grant – Mr. Schmieg stated the VR 110 grant is the most pressing and, he will address this challenge at later time in the report.
- 2) RWSIR Hospitals – The two hospitals at RWSIR, an Intermediate Rehabilitation Facility (IRF) and a Long-Term Acute Care Hospital (LTACH) have been struggling for years. In the hospital business, everything is driven by the number of patients. At RWSIR, it is extremely difficult to attract new patients because of its location as well as not having the specialists that one needs. Whenever there is not enough revenue to cover the costs of operating the hospitals, RWSIR is forced to use state funds to support the hospitals.

Mr. Schmieg continued by stating that if the partnership with Georgia Regents University of Augusta is not an option or cannot occur quickly, we will look for other partnerships within the state or out of state. Another option is moving beds from Warm Springs to Newnan where Piedmont has opened a new regional medical center. The facility does not have an IRF or LTACH on its campus. By leasing those beds and moving them to Newman, this would bring revenue to Warm Springs. Mr. Schmieg noted that Medicare and Medicaid continue to reduce their benefits while getting reimbursed is becoming harder and harder. There are LTACHs and IRFs within the state; however, those hospitals do not accept indigent patients. The indigent patients are referred to Warm Springs where they receive great services with positive outcomes; however, the hospitals may not be paid.

- 3) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) – Mr. Schmieg reported there are 18 co-located VR offices with GDOL Career Centers, and the cost for subleasing the spaces is \$2.2 million dollars per year. The MOU provides that GVRA can terminate subleases with a 60-day notice. GVRA is working with the State Properties Commission to find alternate locations. Our agency believes comparable and cheaper space than \$2.2 million can be found and those dollars redirected to VR services.

The second part of this MOU is IT Support – The transition to the new agency happened so quickly that there was not enough time to build an IT infrastructure to support the new agency. In order to get the new agency up and running, DHS executed a MOU with GDOL to provide IT support. GDOL provides all the support for the PCs (except Disability Adjudication Services) within the programs, check writing as well as hosting of GROW. GDOL has invoiced GVRA for the months of July, August and September for approximately one million dollars a month. Those costs are being researched to determine if they are reasonable. GVRA needs a detailed listing of services GDOL provides. Mr. Schmieg then stated that considering the three challenges before this agency, he believes the easiest to fix is the MOU.

Federal VR 110 Grant – As previously mentioned, Mr. Schmieg returned to this challenge. Georgia is eligible for \$100,000,000 for federal FY 2013, which started October 1. GDOL owes Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) four reports for 2011 and four reports for 2012. Until those reports are accepted and approved, all of our federal FY13 funds are frozen. As a result of this action by the federal government, Mr. Schmieg closed all priority categories. He reported receiving calls/complaints from consumers and family members because services are not being provided to new applicants.

Two weeks ago, there was a conference call with representatives from RSA, GDOL, DHS, OPB as well as the Governor's Office. The RSA representatives expressed strong concerns with GDOL regarding accounting practices as well as repeated inaccuracies in the reports submitted by GDOL. After that conference call, Mr. Schmieg submitted a letter to RSA requesting whether the special condition could be removed to allow the agency to receive a portion of the award. Mr. Schmieg received a response from RSA and read a portion of the letter. The letter states that RSA would not remove the special condition to allow the agency to draw from the FY 2013 award based on the information provided. The first step is that RSA has to receive an accurate report from GDOL for FY11 in order to know what funds are available for FY12 then get a correct report for FY12 to know what funds are available for FY13. Mr. Schmieg continued by stating that there is one positive thing. It appears that GDOL has some excess state funds for FY12. GVRA has not used any federal funds only state funds and program income.

Since the conference call, GDOL Assistant Commissioner of Financial Services informed Mr. Schmieg by email that all reports have been submitted to RSA. Mr. Schmieg reported that until RSA accepts the reports, GVRA is still in limbo and cannot access any federal funds; therefore, we have to keep the "Priority Categories" closed.

Marsha Farrow asked Mr. Schmieg if this problem was related to the transition. Mr. Schmieg stated he does not believe this problem is connected with the transition as the transition happened after FY11.

Mr. Schmieg then addressed the Board to ascertain if they would like him to go to the Governor's Office with this issue.

A motion was made by Sandy Adams, seconded by Marsha Farrow and unanimously approved for Ms. Schmieg to ask the Governor's Office what the Board could do to speed up this process.

Mr. Schmieg continued his report by reading a letter from John Weatherford regarding the Georgia Radio Reading Service (GRRS). GRRS has a contract with VR. Mr. Schmieg received an email asking the Board if GRRS could address the Board to request additional funding.

Because this agency does not know what its budget is at this time, we may not be able to respond. Mr. Schmieg stated that how the Board responds to this request will set a precedent. A suggestion was made by Mr. Schmieg for the Board to evaluate how they would respond to vendors requesting additional funding. Louise Hill suggested it would be beneficial to invite providers/vendors to be involved in the Public Input Process.

Mr. Schmieg asked if the Board had any questions or concerns. No further questions were posed. Louise Hill thanked Mr. Schmieg for his leadership and commitment, and Mr. Schmieg echoed that back to those serving on the GVRS Board.

OLD BUSINESS

Louise Hill asked Amy O'Dell to introduce Mr. Ross Mason. Mr. Mason serves as Chairman of the Board of Jacob's Ladder and provides leadership of the Healthcare Institute for Neuro-Recovery and Innovation (HINRI). Mr. Mason thanked the Board for its service to people with disabilities. HINRI focuses on innovation and access while handling events, retreats, and websites for counseling and vocational programs. Mr. Mason asked the Board if this agency would consider partnering with HINRI to train caregivers of disabled military service members at Warm Springs. HINRI is looking at potential partnership with the VA, Stanford University and Silicon Valley. HINRI is also talking with the Board of Regents to consider creating a Paralympics training center at Warm Springs (regional training center for wounded warriors).

Greg Kirk thanked Mr. Mason for his ideas and information. Mr. Mason asked if the Board would be open to partnering with Stanford University.

A motion was made by Greg Kirk, seconded by Marsha Farrow and unanimously approved to invite Mr. Mason to present a proposal for partnering with Warm Springs and HINRI.

NEW BUSINESS

The last piece of business was to extend an invitation to Pat Puckett, Executive Director, Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and Linda Shepard, Chair, State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to present at a future Board meeting.

A motion was made by Greg Kirk, seconded by Sandy Adams and unanimously approved to invite Pat Puckett and Linda Shepard to present at the December Board meeting.

Louise Hill then asked if there was any other business for discussion. No other business was presented.

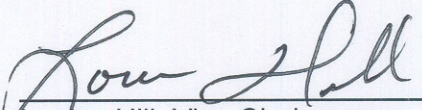
Louise Hill thanked the host, guests and Region 1 representatives. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:01pm.

THE NEXT MEETING

The next Board meeting will be on Wednesday, December 12, 2012 in Atlanta.


Marsha Farrow, Secretary

APPROVED:


Louise Hill, Vice Chairperson