**MINUTES OF MEETING**

Georgia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

July 24, 2024, 1pm – 4pm

In Person and Virtual Meeting

**COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Guests**

Juliet Hardeman (Chair) Jennifer Howell (GVRA)

Karen Addams (Co-Chair) Jeff Allen (GVRA)

Matthew Barnes Mary Donahue (CTI)

Katie Hearn Earnest Baulkmon (GVRA)

Myndi Pryor Mamta Patel (GVRA)

Lisa Leiter Bethany Whetzel (GVRA)

Moses Little Ed Ashe (GVRA)

Michele Mason Desmond Williams (GVRA)

Joy Norman Brentson Wyatt (GVRA)

Peggy Venable Julie Kegley (GAO)

Jennifer Page Christopher Myers (GVRA)

Aarti Sahgal Hannah Hardeman (Guest)

Samuel VernieroDanielle Fluck (GVRA)

Andrea Waddy Willis (GVRA)

Shelly Simmons (SILC)

**Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

The roll call was done. Welcome to the group by SRC Chair. Chair referred to Shaun Owen, Deputy Superintendent, Office of Federal Programs at GADOE who will attend SRC meetings until a replacement is hired as the State Special Education Director; will introduce the Council should she join the meeting.

Will address any concerns that come out of today prior to the October meeting through a virtual discussion.

Minutes from April 2024 meeting were reviewed & minutes were approved unanimously.

Agenda for today was also approved.

**Chair Update – Juliet Hardeman**

CSNA recap and asked everyone to review the findings.

Disability Pride Month – Matthew Barnes provided a bit of background. ARC is involved in the messaging for this. ARC of the United States - Assisting the disability community in creating positive and lasting change.

**4 Challenges to Improve On:**

1) Challenging school districts to improve when it comes to special education requirements.

2) Advocating for stronger legal protections for individuals with disabilities.

3) Changing outdated and unfair governmental policies – like an individual with disabilities losing critical benefits when they get married.

4) Securing more funding to decrease time a person waits before receiving disability support services.

**SRC Committee Reports**

***Membership - Karen Addams***

Erica is currently updating the membership roster.

Wina Low has retired & is no longer a member. We do not have an official appointed person representing education at this time. Shaun Owen, Deputy Superintendent, Office of Federal Programs at GADOE will attend SRC meetings until a replacement is hired as the State Special Education Director.

Aarti Sahgal does not wish to be reappointed. Those who would like to be reappointed will be sent to the Governor; Erica and Carla are coordinating submission.

Chair stated SRC needs to push out to the rural areas of the state; as members roll off, be thinking about bringing members from parts of the state that don’t have representation to have a more “rounded” voice.

Katie Hearn represents two groups – Business and Blind/Visually Impaired. We need a Business representative in a different part of the state. Per Karen, in looking at national SRC, it stated that members can only fulfill one role and they cannot have Katie covering two. What areas are represented? How geographically diverse are we? Per Juliet, everyone should know what area they represent.

Karen is working on a membership form for an applicant to complete to send in for consideration.

Juliet asked Karen what the next steps were – Ms. Owen should provide the steps on the next Education representative to replace Wina; Karen will complete the membership form and send it out.

Juliet will provide the map/overlay and where everyone is now; be looking at who can replace her as the Chair when she rolls off in 36 months.

***Public Outreach - Katie Hearn***

**Data Collection Through Surveys**

* Outreach Committee has been exploring ways for obtaining feedback from applicants & clients in real time
* The SRC is not receiving a lot of public comment via our site, instead we are hearing via word of mouth, direct call, email, etc….
* We have reached out to other state’s SRCs to learn what is being using used in their states.

**Example - Market Decisions Research**

* Surveys clients about the in-take process and the providers of services during training & after job placement
* 75% of surveys are done via phone and 25% are done via email
* The raw data is sent to the Analytics team at the state’s Rehabilitation Commission
* Next steps for GA SRC- Meet as subcommittee to draft questions and create a recommendation for GVRA

**Example - Follow-up Surveys**

WHO: For Pre-ETS participants, parents, staff & providers of services to Pre-ETS

PURPOSE: To provide:

* perception of services,
* feedback on how to improve services &
* to identify areas where intensive support may be needed to improve access to services

WHEN: Designated time but at least annually

HOW: QR code, online, & through partners could be ways to connect with our targeted group

**Example - Follow-up Surveys – VR**

WHO: For VR applicants & clients & providers of services for VR

PURPOSE: To provide:

* perception of services,
* feedback on how to improve services &
* to identify areas where intensive support may be needed to improve access to services

WHEN: At completion / end of services

HOW: QR code, online, & through partners could be ways to connect with our targeted group

Bethany Whetzel is also working on this on the VR side.

Not getting a lot of public comment per Juliet; asked what can we do better? Getting feedback across the state but need real time trends and issues to address, need feedback and what could things look like if we get the information? No one wants to talk to us unless something is going poorly; we need dialogue and feedback.

Michele will help with statewide recommendations for CSNA. GVRA had surveys in the past but never heard much about what was done with the information. Follow up surveys – may need intensive supports to improve access for services. Could be paper and pen, new technology,…real time feedback.

Per Lisa, they may be able to work through educators – Indicator 14 data – contact each graduate and share a QR code to collect data.

Per Matthew, he feels that they have gone in the right direction with WIOA & 15% of funds being spent on pre-ETS.

Juliet would like real time feedback from the school districts, providers, counselors in the field.

Per Moses, we should also look at Pre-ETS, DHoH and Blind/Low Vision.

Under IDEA, they offer an annual survey to all parents raising a child with a disability – 10 questions – tie questions to post-secondary, secondary, and GVRA.

Will have a recommendation by October SRC meeting for a plan going forward.

GVRA Day with the Braves – Students from all over the state came to the game and engaged with pre-ETS providers and received pre-ETS services; very positive experience on Katie’s side. She discussed who was on the panel and the work stories they shared.

Per Katie, the HAWKs want to connect with GVRA as well going forward.

Katie asked is there an opportunity to partner with DOT to have educational courses regarding public transportation in the local communities? Per Jeff, transportation is always a hot topic across the board, workplace readiness – DOT could come and present as a Pre-ETS.

Public Outreach – Katie has spoken to Matthew and Juliet and will have a meeting to present survey recommendations for October meeting; open discussion with other SRCs across the nation. NCSRC in October is in Seattle.

***CTI – Mary Donahue and Kathryn Shirey***

CTI Mission & Purpose is very closely aligned with GVRA - To prepare students to join the workforce & maintain employment after high school so they can be productive, successful members of society.

Georgia CTI self-reported 90% graduation & post-secondary rate for students with disabilities; includes approximately 100 schools, not statewide.

Annual Events –

* Fall Leadership Conference
* State Leadership Conference
* Emerging Leaders Day
* Fall Rally & Competition
* Legislative Day at the Capital State Leadership
* Virtual Prep Days
* Day with the HAWKS (Atlanta) – discussing with GVRA as a partnership (?) – State Farm Arena; they do not discuss disabilities, they discuss careers available - sports and marketing
* GVRA Braves Day
* GVRA Day at the Fair

Able to buy supplies due to GVRA funding for job specific training.

It was asked if there are more opportunities available for GAA students. Per Kathryn, it is a local level issue & if they have someone advocating for them. She worked hard with CTAE & GAA department heads to determine standards needed to pass the class.

Hosted first GROW session in 2021; served 596 students this past summer.

Discussed electronic referral & PPF form and accessibility to those seeking Pre-ETS/VR services.

Shared words from students & success story.

Pre-ETS to Client – Willing to host a transition night where counselors can come in and do an in-take blitz onsite to complete applications.

***Policy - Michele Mason***

Committee plans on meeting in August and September – highlight is the review of the CSNA report – highlighting section with services provided by GVRA and partners –

**A total of 1032 surveys, interviews, and focus groups were conducted with:**

* Georgians with disabilities,
* parents and family members
* employment service providers, community professionals, and
* employers

**Top 3 barriers to Employment:**

* access to transportation,
* Professionals’ misconceptions and low expectations of individuals with disabilities
* Individual’s fear of losing benefits due to employment,

Consistent answer to two of the three is education & disability etiquette.

**The Needs of Businesses:**

* Concerns about liability, worker’s compensation
* Ability to provide disability-related accommodations
* Lack of skills or credentials to do the job
* Overall understanding of disabilities in the workplace

Recommendations, as a result of, the CSNA will be done in October. Policy committee will meet offline and pull in other council members.

Jerry asked if the meeting will be a deep dive to present a plan of action to the group in October? Per Michelle, Yes. The August and September meetings will discuss these areas.

GVRA is the lead on this. There has been movement towards some of these areas of concerns – roll out is moving forward so there will be improvement.

Outreach will be done by providers and others; looking for areas of the state where we aren’t getting any feedback or concerns.

Going to increase the number of hours for the October meeting to address these concerns.

***CAP – Jennifer Page***

Discussed history of the agency and her time with the agency. She has been Director for 6 years.

Clients call CAP due to questions, issues communicating, notification of change or closure received. CAP is listed on all documents for Due Process.

CAP coordinates with counselor and client to reconnect and establish the relationship. Often the client reports that they want to be communicated in one way vs another.

CAP must have signed release in order to work with client. Client can revoke if they no longer wish to engage with CAP.

CAP coordinates with the Policy Unit Advisor assigned to the district.

Cases are opened to address an issue and then they are closed, however individual can seek CAP services again if needed.

Outlined process for CAP and VR engagement.

RSA requires three reports from CAP. Autism and BLV are primary areas of focus.

She will present again at the January meeting.

**Program Updates - Jeff Allen, Provider and Strategic Relations Administrator**

Employees of the Month for March, April & May 2024 & Client Success Stories were highlighted.

Reviewed Provider & Strategic Relations unit & explained the difference between a provider and a vendor.

**FY 24 Provider Agreements**

* Total 108 Contracted Providers
* 21 Vendors with no contract (Annex B)
* Numerous Vendors covering services such as medical appointments, uniforms, etc.

We have providers in every corner of the state that we work with; there are a few of the smaller rural counties we are working to identify providers/vendors.

GROW numbers & updates were provided.

**New Business**

Annual report information is needed regarding any time the SRC was represented throughout this year. End of the year information should be submitted by the end of October.

Professional Learning –

Books ordered for How to be an Effective Member of the SRC.

Conference information is being shared. Members can attend Fall NCSRC conference in October, CTI program and other events. Katie has expressed an interest in attending the GA Workforce Pipeline Conference in November in Athens – a lot of businesses attend – they want to do a panel – only Juliet is attending. Jennifer will follow up with Chris to see if he is still interested in attending. Maybe Leon can attend as well. Erica and Juliet will send something out.

**Old Business** – None

**Public Comments** – None

**Adjournment** – The meeting adjourned at 3:41 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 23, 2024 & will be held in-person at Roosevelt Warm Springs, as well as virtually. Logistics to be developed and sent out.