**MINUTES OF MEETING**

Georgia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

July 26th, 2023

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Location: Virtual

**COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Juliet Hardeman (Chair)

Karen Addams

Shawn Adkins (special guest)

Jerry Haywood

Katie Hearns

Deborah Hibben

Myndi Kuhlmann

Cherise Mlott

Joy Norman

Jennifer Page

Peggy Venable

Sam Verniero

**Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

Juliet Hardeman**,** SRC Chair, completed the roll call. She asked the council for a motion to approve minutes from the April 26, 2023 meeting and agenda for today’s meeting. The minutes from the April meeting and agenda for July 26th were approved unanimously.

**Chair Update – Juliet Hardeman**

The chair welcomed new members Michele Mason, Lisa Leiter, Matthew Barnes, and Myndi Kuhlmann and asked that each new member introduce himself or herself. The chair advised that the annual report will be due in December of 2023. The chair introduced Christopher Myers, the new SRC liaison.

**SRC Committee Reports**

*Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) 2023*

Because of a technical difficulty related to the live stream, Dr. Jinnah was unable to provide an update regarding the needs assessment survey. The SRC chair discussed the importance of the survey, and what kind of information is being requested from stakeholders.

*Membership*

Karen Addams, membership chair, inquired about the status at the Governor’s Office for two prospective members: Kathryn Fox and Shawn Adkins.

**GVRA Program Updates**

Strategic Initiatives Manager Rebecca Williamson provided the following updates:

*Required Pre-ETS Activities*

1. Job Exploration Counseling
2. Work-Based Learning Experiences
3. Counseling on Postsecondary Education Opportunities
4. Workplace Readiness Training
5. Instruction in Self*-*advocacy

*Four Pre-ETS Coordination Activities*

1. Attending Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings
2. Working with the local workforce development boards, one-stop centers, and employers to develop work opportunities for students with disabilities
3. Working with schools, including those carrying out activities under section 614(d) of the IDEA, to coordinate and ensure the provision of pre-employment transition services
4. Attending person-centered planning meetings for individuals receiving services under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.)

*Nine Authorized Activities*

1. Implement effective strategies that increase independent living and inclusion in communities and competitive integrated workplaces
2. Develop and improve strategies for individuals with intellectual and significant disabilities to live independently, participate in postsecondary education experiences, and obtain and retain competitive integrated employment
3. Provide training to VR counselors, school transition staff, and others supporting students with disabilities
4. Disseminate information on innovative, effective, and efficient approaches to implement pre-employment transition services
5. Coordinate activities with transition services provided by local educational agencies under IDEA
6. Apply evidence-based findings to improve policy, procedure, practice, and the preparation of personnel
7. Develop model transition demonstration projects
8. Establish or support multistate or regional partnerships that involve States, local educational agencies, designated State units, developmental disability agencies, private businesses, or others; and
9. Disseminate information and strategies to improve the transition to postsecondary activities of those who are traditionally unserved

*Challenges to Increasing Costs Charged to Pre-ETS Reserve*

* The 15% reserve doesn’t factor in cost-saving measures
* Some of the Pre-ETS costs require manual data entry by field staff and have been underreported
* Administrative functions related to Pre-ETS are not allocable and can be time-consuming
* Participation in some Pre-ETS activities require additional tasks on local educators at a time when they are also facing staff shortages
* Reporting Requirements
  1. Case Management System
  2. Federal Requirements

*Opportunities to Increasing Costs Charged to Pre-ETS Reserve, continued*

* Addition of a 2nd Transition Coordinator Position
* Technical Assistance agreement with VRTAC-QM and technical assistance support by NTACT:C
* Utilization of the “Authorized” services to help build capacity and help stimulate growth in amount of “Required” and “Coordination” services
* Training in all VR offices to minimize underreporting of Pre-ETS activities
* Addition of staff at RWS to provide increased Pre-ETS to residential program students and students in surrounding counties

**Policy Exceptions in Effect**

* Financial Need criteria have been removed from consideration until 12/31/2023 or until policy manual is revised
* Policy requiring postsecondary students attend school within 35 miles of their residence has been removed from consideration until 12/31/2023 or until policy manual is revised
* The Policy Team is also finalizing updates to the policy manual to remove any prohibitive policies
* Will work with SRC to hold Public Comment/Hearings on revisions

**Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act**

* Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act requires RSA to conduct periodic monitoring of State VR agencies
* PRE-ETS 15% allocation will be reviewed annually beginning FFY 2021
* For FFY 2021, 39 of 78 VR Combined, General, and Blind Agencies did not meet their 15% requirement under Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act
* Reporting Period covers the pandemic
* General VR funding can be impacted which impacts all 150 providers
* GVRA is on track to meet its 15% allocation for FFY 2022 which ends September 30, 2023 (due to two-year grant cycle)

**GVRA Agency Update – Chris Wells, Executive Director**

The chair recognized Executive Director Chris Wells and acknowledged his new executive assistant, Arlene Fowler. Before providing his agency updates, Executive Director Wells stated it was an honor to attend the SRC swearing-in ceremony in the Governor’s Office on June 28, 2023.

**Agency Updates**

* Agency Mission: Empowering Georgians with disabilities to live independent lives
* Agency Vision: To build a client-focused agency that partners with the community to expand opportunities for Georgians with disabilities.
* Agency Core Values: Collaborative, Compassion, Integrity, Innovation, and Service

**Strategic Planning**

1. Improve recruitment and retention
2. Continual process improvement
3. Improve Service Delivery
   * Increase the number of individuals served
   * Improve efficiency and effectiveness of services
   * Increase focus on customer satisfaction
4. Enhance partnerships
   * Increase collaborative partnerships with providers
   * Increase collaborative partnerships with state agencies
   * Increase collaborative partnerships with other stakeholders

**Key Initiatives**

1. Disability Innovation Fund - Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE)
   1. Federal Grant to Move 14C holders into competitive integrated employment
2. Revamped Residential Services
   1. Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission (GNPEC)
   2. Six certification programs
3. Restrictive Policy Initiative
   1. Removing restrictive policies to include financial needs
4. Shepherd Center
   1. Partnering to transition clients from Shepherd into VR
5. Georgia Academy for the Blind
   1. GVRA is in the second year of a dedicated counselor at GAB
6. Georgia Pathways or Expansion

During the 2019-2020 Regular Session, the Georgia General Assembly passed Senate Bill 106, the Patients First Act, which authorized the Department of Community Health (DCH) to submit a Section 1115 Demonstration waiver to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) which may include an increase in the income threshold up to a maximum of 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

Georgia Pathways creates an opportunity for Georgians between the ages of 19 and 64 up to 100% of the FPL, who are not otherwise eligible for Medicaid, to gain access to affordable, quality healthcare

1. Bobby Dodd Bridge Academy

Cisco Certified Support Technician (CCST) Cybersecurity certification includes entry-level cybersecurity concepts and topics

1. Tommy Nobis Center

Academy is an accelerated Vocational Training Program that will provide the education, training, and life skills young adults with disabilities need for successful employment

**Agency Updates—Prospective Initiatives**

Disability Innovation Fund - Pathways

* + GVRA applied for a second grant as a collaboration with the Centers for Independent Living, Georgia Department of Education, and Local School Systems to offer pre-vocational rehabilitation services to middle and high school students.

Project Search in Cave Spring Center

* + Fully funded by GVRA
  + Potential to allow for first residential project search in year two

IPSE Grant

* + Potential opportunity to increase funding through a federal match with adjustments that align with vocational services requirements

**Agency Challenges**

Education and Training

* + Vocational Rehabilitation Services
  + Employment Goals

Balancing pre-vocational rehabilitation services

* + Life skills
  + Equipment
  + Assistive Work Technology

Balancing Local Education Agency Needs

**SRC Budget Update – Director of Planning and Budget Danielle Fluck**

Danielle Fluck, Director of Planning and Budget discussed the FY 2024 SRC budget.

**NCSRC Update – SRC Liaison, Christopher Myers**

Christopher Myers, SRC Liaison, shared information about the upcoming NCSRC Conference on October 28, 2023.

**New Business –** The chair stated the next meeting will be held on October 25, 2023, and it will be virtual. SRC member Myndi Kuhlmann requested a list of upcoming SRC meetings.

**Old Business** – None

**Public Comments** – None

**Adjournment** – The chair motioned to adjourn, and the motion was seconded. The meeting adjourned at 3:41 p.m.