**Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council**

**Quarterly Meeting Minutes**

**Conference (Zoom) Call**

**December 16, 2021**

**Attendees:**

**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Members:** Jonathan Taylor, Chairman; Kimberly Clayborn; Carol McDearmon; Kesha Pilot; Ted Scallion; Tom Masseau; Christopher Balos; Alex Scott.

**Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS)/Division of Workforce Services (DWS) Staff**: Deputy Commissioner Christy Lamas; Dr. Charisse Childers, Director DWS; Carl Daughtery; Chip McAfee; Rodney Chandler; Robert Trevino; Charles Lyford; Nathan Winter; Lisa Kelley; Judy Smith; Lily Kersh; Mike McCowan; Theresa Cracium; Jennifer Goodwin; Cynthia Bullard; Gay Washington-Jones; Cynthia Gleghorn; Chatuea Walker; Bernice Gunter.

**Members of the Public:** Bobbie Boaz, Dr. Cassondra Stokes, Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) Director and select DSB staff, V. Robertson, Derek Slagle.

**Call to Order:** Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Chair, Jonathan Taylor, called the meeting conducted via teleconference to order at 9:30 a.m. Following rollcall, a quorum was declared.

**Approval of Minutes:** At the request of Chairman Taylor, Council members reviewed the minutes of the September 16, 2021, meeting. A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made and seconded. The motion passed.

**Comments from SRC Chair; Jon Taylor:** Mr. Taylor expressed his appreciation to everyone for being in attendance indicating that being a member of the SRC is a commitment. He stated that prior to the meeting a copy of proposed changes to the SRC Bylaws was sent to members for review indicating the biggest changes were the addition of standing SRC committees. He stated that the purpose of the committees was to allow the SRC to do a better job in achieving its primary goals and improve its partnership with ARS. Mr. Taylor informed the Council that each committee chair, in partnership with the SRC Chair, would be responsible for holding meetings related to the work they do with the number of meetings and amount of work dependent on a variety of factors. He indicated that committee chairs would be responsible for providing a report to the full Council on committee activities during quarterly SRC meetings. He asked that Council members inform him of first and second choices of committees they would like to serve on by December 31, 2021. Ms. Kesha Pilot, Co-Chair, indicated that she was excited about the SRC developing committees and expressed the hope that with the development of the committees everyone would become more involved.

**Comments from ARS Deputy Commissioner – Christy Lamas:** Ms. Lamas thanked the SRC for allowing her to present on behalf of Commissioner Baxter and ARS. Her comments focused on 3 primary areas including ARS’s new client case management system, the comprehensive statewide needs assessment being conducted by UALR, and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) monitoring visit. She also provided information regarding the Provider-Led Arkansas Shared Saving Entity (PASSE) with her and Chair Taylor informing the Council that the PASSEs are contracted by DHS to provide services to Medicaid waiver recipients. Discussion followed.

**SRC Bylaws and SRC Committees- Jon Taylor:** The new draft SRC bylaws including the addition of committees was sent to SRC members prior to the meeting for review. The Chair asked for a motion to approve the proposed bylaws as submitted. A motion was made and seconded. The Council concurred.

**SRC Annual Report-Jon Taylor:** The SRC Annual Report was sent to SRC members prior to the meeting for review. A motion was made and seconded to approve the SRC Annual Report as submitted. The Council concurred.

**WIOA 2-Year Sate Plan Update-Lisa Kelley:** Ms. Kelley provided the Council information regarding the WIOA 2-Year State Plan Update. She informed the Council of where changes were being made to the state plan and that it would be ready for the Council’s final review by mid-January. She related that a 30-day public comment period must occur prior to update’s submission and that the State Plan Update must be submitted by March 15, 2022. Following discussion, a motion and second was made signifying that the SRC has reviewed this report. The Council concurred.

**Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment- Robert Trevino, Dr. Derek Slagle:** Mr. Trevino informed the Council that the triennial comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) was currently being completed by the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR). He indicated the CSNA is designed to serve as part of the foundation in the development of ARS’s portion of the WIOA State Plan. Dr. Slagle provided the Council an update as to the process and progress of the CSNA. He indicated a series of focus groups, interviews and surveys would be utilized to gather information to determine the vocational rehabilitation needs of Arkansans with disabilities. Much discussion followed.

**WIOA Performance Measures Update-Deputy Commissioner Christy Lamas**: Prior to the meeting Ms. Lamas sent a PowerPoint presentation “Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Performance Statistics” for the Council members to review. She informed Council that the information provided included performance statistics from last year and this year as a comparison. Ms. Lamas reviewed the statistical information with the Council providing explanations as to reasons for an increase or decrease in numbers. Discussion followed.

**Agency Updates:**

Business Engagement – Rodney Chandler: Mr. Chandler presented a brief overview of the Business Engagement program. He informed the Council that the last quarter has been extremely busy particular the month of October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month. He provided information regarding different events Business Engagement staff was involved. He highlighted a virtual webinar on diversity featuring Miss Haley Moss. Chair Taylor informed Council members that Miss Moss is the first person to openly identify with autism spectrum disorder to pass the Bar in the state of Florida.

Field Services – Carl Daughtery, Chief of Field Services: In the absence of Chief of Field Services, Carl Daughtery, Ms. Gaye Jones-Washington updated the Council on the happens in Field Services. A PowerPoint presentation was sent to the Council prior to the meeting for review. She informed the Council of the fall WIOA Partners Meeting held in September indicating one of the highlights being excellent customer service and collaboration among the partners including Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Services for the Blind, Workforce Services, and Adult Education. She next indicated that Field Services is continuing to increase colocation of offices with Workforce Services with the most recent being West Memphis and Fayetteville. She related this making a total of six colocations including Jonesboro, Searcy, Harrison, and Hot Springs. She provided information regarding a Job Fair held in October at the Arkansas School for the Deaf. She reported that ARS received acknowledgment during the CSAVR Fall Conference by the RSA as a top 5 state in the country as it relates to the performance measure, employment rate. She also provided information regarding training provided to the Field’s Regional Area Managers, Counselors, and administrative staff. Ms. Jones-Washington concluded the Field Service presentation with a success story, Miss Shauna Conley of Little Rock. Miss Conley was struggling with issues from constant pain because of degenerative disc disease. With assistance from ARS, she was able to attain her bachelor’s degree and is now employed at the University of Arkansas-Pulaski Technical College as Program Director of Surgical Technicians.

Access & Accommodations (A&A) – Nathan Winter:Mr. Winter presented an overview of the functions of the various programs within Access and Accommodations and the Community Service Programs. Prior to the meeting he submitted a report to the Council for review. Mr. Winter indicated that Stay-Work/Return-to-Work continues to see its clients in person and expressed excitement regarding the number of individuals being referred to the program. He informed the Council that the pandemic had affected the Alternative Financing Program (AFP) more than the other Community Service Programs with number of loans applied for and number of loans made drastically down. He indicated that to date only $150,000 in loans were approved by the AFP. Mr. Winter concluded his presentation with a success story, Mr. Ed McMillan, who reached out to ARS when mobility issues interfered with his ability to climb on and off his tractor. ARS Occupational Therapist, Melinda Davis, visited Mr. McMillan and researched solutions to help him continue working. She coordinated the installation of a lift to assist him in getting on and off his tractor and trained him on lift safety including the use of the remote control. Because of his ARS provided accommodations, Mr. McMillan is maintaining his independence and his current employment.

Arkansas Career Development Center (ACDC) – Jonathan Bibb: **(**Prior to the meeting a PowerPoint was sent to Council members for review.) Mr. Bibb provided the Council an update regarding the ACDC. He indicated that programs at ACDC were broken down into the primary areas of Career and Technical Education and Training, Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship, Pre-Employment Transition Services, and Transition Services. He indicated that ACDC staff have been focusing on actual hands-on skills training that leads to competitive integrated employment and credentialing with a focus on high demand skills that can translate both into competitive integrate employment and pre-apprenticeship training. He informed the Council that ACDC has implemented new programming working directly with students in the Juvenile Justice System at the Dermott and Alexander Units to make sure they receive pre-employment core services when they’re ready to move into competitive integrating employment. He indicated that under the direction of Lily Kersh, ACDC staff has developed the Student Access and Support Services (SASS) program which focuses on students enrolled in two- and four-year colleges looking at those who are struggling to meet grade requirements, those that may not be attending class as they should or have life situations that are preventing them from being successful. He indicated staff is working closely with students monitoring them by providing guidance, peer groups, and workshops in order for students to be better prepared on how to study and maintain their work life balance. He expressed pride in the work that’s being done through SASS. Mr. Mike McCowan concluded the update with a presentation regarding the ACDC Driver’s Education program. Much discussion followed.

**Announcements**

Chairman Jonathan Taylor informed the Council that the next scheduled SRC meeting would be March 17, 2022. He indicated that because of the WIOA 2-Year State Plan Update there would be the need for a called meeting to be announced at a later date.

**Adjournment**

With no additional business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned.