**Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council**

**Quarterly Meeting Minutes**

**Conference Call/In-Person**

**December 15, 2022**

**Attendees:**

**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Members Present:** Jonathan Taylor, Chair; Keshia Pilot, Co-Chair; Kimberly Clayborn; Dr. James Grover; Dr. Charlie Green; Kelly Sharp; Kobe Roy; Addie Edwards; Alex Scott; Tom Masseau; Wensday Kraemer; Joseph Baxter, ARS Commissioner.

**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Members Absent:** Carol McDearmon, Christopher Balos, Addie Edwards, Matt Sewell.

**Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) Division of Workforce Services (DWS) Staff:** Dr. Charisse Childers, DWS Director; Carl Daughtery; Chip McAfee; Robert Trevino, Rodney Chandler; Fred Harris, Gretchen Hunt, Charles Lyford; Nathan Winter; Lisa Kelley; Jim Moreland; Otis Dixon; April Cooper; Judy Smith; Kofi Adzokpa; Dale Turrentine; Bernice Gunter.

**Members of the Public:** Bonnie Boaz, Dept. of Education; Fannie Scott; Michael Hengan; Mollie Hernandez, Dr. Fransha Anderson; Christean Bell.

**Call to Order:** Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Chair, Jonathan Taylor, called the meeting conducted both in person and 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 15, 2022, meeting. A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made and seconded. The motion passed.

**Comments from SRC Chairman Jonathan Taylor:** Chair Taylor expressed his appreciation to everyone for being in attendance either in person or via teleconference. As part of his comments, he addressed some of the challenges ARS has in utilizing its funds, including payment for salaries. Chair Taylor informed the Council of that Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM) recent submission of its proposed pay plan for state employees to legislative committee for review. He encouraged all present to reach out to their legislators advocating for the increase in pay for all state employees.

**Comments from ARS Commissioner Joseph Baxter:** Commissioner Baxter also expressed his appreciation to everyone being in attendance, either in person or via teleconference. He informed the Council that Deputy Commissioner Christy Lamas had accepted a position with another agency and was no longer a part of ARS. He introduced Ms. Cynthia Gleghorn as the new Director of the Arkansas Career Development Center (ACDC) in Hot Springs. Commissioner Baxter provided a brief update to Council members on the implementation of the Field Program’s new case management system. He informed Council members that the agency’s proposed budget for the next biennium had been presented to legislature committee for review since last meeting and that the legislature would convene on January 9, 2023. Mr. Tom Masseau inquired about the funds ARS returned to RSA wanting to know what was behind the need to return the funds and any impact going forward. Commissioner Baxter expressed the opinion that this would most likely be a one-time occurrence. There was much discussion.

**SRC Annual Report**: The 2022 SRC Annual Report was sent to Council members prior to the meeting for review. A motion was made and seconded to approve the SRC 2022 Annual Report as submitted. The Council concurred.

**Client Satisfaction Survey**: Chair Taylor indicated that he had been informed the current Client Satisfaction Survey may need revising. He requested Council members volunteer to be part of a subcommittee to review the existing survey and make recommendations regarding any needed revisions. He indicated that technical assistance would be provided by ARS staff. Chair Taylor informed the committee they would have 60 days to complete the project with a goal of having recommendations ready to be presented to the full Council as part of the March 2023 meeting. After discussion, Council members, Kesha Pilot, Tom Masseau, Dr. James Grover, Kobe Roy, and Wensday Kraemer agreed to be part of the subcommittee. Tom Masseau was appointed as subcommittee chair with Chair Taylor serving in an ex-officio capacity.

**RSA Monitoring Update Joseph Baxter, Charles Lyford**: Commissioner Baxter stated ARS is in the process of responding to the findings from RSA’s most recent monitoring. He reported there being 5 findings primarily relating to policies/procedures and contracts. He indicated RSA has approved ARS’s Corrective Action Plan (CAP) and that the agency has begun the process of executing it. Mr. Lyford indicated the agency is in the process of monitoring items related to the findings, both those closed as well as findings that are not closed out. He informed the Council that the next update to the CAP is due to RSA by January 30th with the focus addressing rates of payment and fee schedules. Discussion followed.

**Agency Updates**

Business Engagement – Rodney Chandler: Ms. Gretchen Hunt updated the Council regarding Business Engagement activities during the month of October which is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). She indicated NSEAM celebrates the role of American workers with disabilities and showcases employers who hire them. She reported that Business Engagement had conducted a strategic planning meeting coming up with three primary objectives to accomplish in the month of October. Objectives included: 1) improve and enhance business relationships and understanding of ARS services as well as Arkansas Disability IN awareness; 2) educate businesses about WIOA partners; and 3) utilize effective methods to serve the underserved/unserved populations. She indicated a corporate initiative with Amazon was created and approved including a hiring event held at a church in an underserved community. She provided an overview of the Disability IN: Summit held at the Little Rock Marriot with over 60 business customers from across the state in attendance. She also provided information regarding local NDEAM events sponsored by ARS Field Offices and Business Engagement. Discussion followed.

Access & Accommodations (A&A) – Nathan Winter:Mr. Winter provided Council members an overview of the functions of the various programs within Access and Accommodations. As part of his presentation, he informed the Council of the number of clients served and some of the different services provided by the Access & Accommodations unit. Mr. Winter also informed the Council of the Governor’s Commission on People with Disabilities distributing posters to Arkansas Revenue Offices across the State regarding accessible parking legislation, regulations, and associated fines.

 Field Services – Carl Daughtery, Chief of Field Services: Mr. Daughtery provided the Council information regarding happenings within Field Services. He reported there being 246 individuals closed as successfully employed, 754 individuals currently employed awaiting closure, and 366 individuals ready for employment. He indicated Field Services currently providing services 10, 440 individuals with the average caseload being 112 cases. Mr. Daughtery informed Council members that Field Services’ top priorities included: 1) RSA Monitoring Response; 2) Informed Case Management System; 3) Performance Measures/Strategic Plan goals; and 4) VR-TAC Training. He also updated the Council on upcoming Field Services events and meetings. Discussion followed.

**Judy Smith-Arkansas Project Search:** Judy Smith provided the Council and update regarding Project SEARCH®. She distributed folders containing information related to Project SEARCH and the TEP program. As part of her presentation, she included two videos of 2022 Project SEARCH graduates. Riley, a graduate of the CHI St. Vincent Project SEARCH site in Hot Springs who is working at First Step in Malvern and Willie, a graduate of the UAPB Project SEARCH site in Pine Bluff who is working at Paradise Funeral Home in Pine Bluff.

**Announcements**

Chairman Jonathan Taylor informed the Council that the next scheduled SRC meeting would be Thursday, March 16, 2023.

**Adjournment**

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