**Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council**

**Quarterly Meeting Minutes**

**Conference (Zoom) Call/In-Person**

**June 16, 2022**

**Attendees:**

**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Members:** Jonathan Taylor, Chairman; Kimberly Clayborn; Dr. James Grover, Dr. Charlie Green; Kelly Sharp; Wesley Eddington; Leigh Garvin; Addie Edwards; Alex Scott; Ted Scallion; Tom Masseau; Robert Fagan; Joseph Baxter, ARS Commissioner.

**Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) Division of Workforce Services (DWS) Staff:** Christy Lamas, ARS Deputy Commissioner; Dr. Charisse Childers, DWS Director; Carl Daughtery; Chip McAfee; Robert Trevino; Rodney Chandler; Charles Lyford; Nathan Winter; Lisa Kelley; Jim Moreland; Otis Dixon; Chatuea Walker; Maryanne Caldwell; Jen Goodwin; Mollie Hernandez; Kofi Adzokpa; Bernice Gunter.

**Members of the Public:** Select Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) staff; Sha Anderson, ASILC Director.

**Call to Order:** Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Chairman, Jonathan Taylor, called the meeting conducted via teleconference and in person 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 March 14, 2022, meeting. A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made and seconded. The motion passed.

**Comments from SRC Chairman Jonathan Taylor:** Chairman Taylor expressed his appreciation to everyone for being in attendance either via Zoom or in person. He indicated that the Council would be moving into hybrid Zoom/in-person meetings and that attendance would be tracked. He also reminded Council members of the meeting attendance requirement in order to remain on the Council. Members were encouraged to reach out to Mr. Taylor with any questions.

**Comments from ARS Commissioner Joseph Baxter:** Commissioner Baxter informed the Council that the US House had passed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2022 (WIOA) and that the bill had moved on to the US Senate. He indicated that final changes had been made to the ARS portion of the WIOA State Plan Update and that the Plan was now at the federal level awaiting final approval. He informed the Council of changes to the ARS Senior Management Team indicating CFO James McCune had accepted a position with another state agency and that the new CFO was scheduled to start Monday, June 27th. He also indicated ACDC Administrator Jonathan Bibb has moved to another state agency with Deputy Commissioner Christy Lamas serving as the Interim Director. Commissioner Baxter updated the Council on events throughout the agency including the CSAVR Spring Conference and the Spring Workforce Partners Meeting. He also informed the Council that ARS would be moving to the new DWS website effective Tuesday, July 5th. He reported that the agency was in the process of closing out the current state fiscal year and preparing for startup of the new year effective July 1st. The Commissioner concluded his comments indicating he would be working with the new CFO to create the next biennium budget for the upcoming legislative session in January.

**SRC Bylaws – Jonathan Taylor, SRC Chairman:** Chairman Taylor indicated that it had been brought to his attention that the current SRC bylaws were not amended to address election of officers and terms of office. He reported that proposed amended bylaws were sent to Council members prior to the meeting for review and consideration for approval. After discussion, a motion was made and seconded to accept the amended by laws as presented. The Council concurred.

**Review of Potential Impartial Hearing Officers – Deputy Commissioner Christy Lamas, Charles Lyford:** Deputy Commissioner Lamas presented three potential applicants as Impartial Hearing Officers to the Council for review. Mr. Lyford indicated that the Rehabilitation Act indicates that candidates must be knowledgeable in the field of vocational rehabilitation to be considered as an Impartial Hearing Officer and expressed the opinion that the candidates presented were well qualified. He stated that ARS would need Council approval to move forward with the applicants and that at the September meeting ARS would ask for a vote confirming the candidates as Fair Hearing Officers. Following discussion including addressing any Council member concerns, a motion and a second was made to proceed with the selection process. The motion passed.

**Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) – Deputy Commissioner Christy Lamas, Robert Trevino:** Commissioner Baxter informed the Council that Dr. Slagle would not be available to go over the completed CSNA. He reminded the Council that at the last SRC meeting Dr. Slagle had provided a summary of the process in completing the CSNA and an overview of its contents. In Dr. Slagle’s absence Mr. Trevino indicated that the reason for the CSNA to be brought before the Council was to vote to accept the CSNA as completed and move forward providing it to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). Deputy Commissioner Lamas informed the Council that comments had been received related to the CSNA regarding special populations, particularly as it relates to the deaf and hard of hearing community and how ARS might better serve them. She indicated that a meeting with Dr. Grover and others within that community would be scheduled to determine how ARS might best address concerns. Chairman Taylor expressed his appreciation to Dr. Grover for putting the focus group together. After much discussion, a motion and second was made to accept the CSNA as presented. The Council concurred.

**Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Monitoring Update – Commissioner Joseph Baxter, Deputy Commissioner Christy Lamas, Charles Lyford**: Commissioner Baxter reminded the Council of the RSA monitoring visit that had taken place last year and that ARS had received the monitoring report outlining corrective actions that needed to occur. He reported that RSA had approved ARS’s corrective action plan and that the agency had submitted one of the quarterly updates with the next update due in October. Deputy Commissioner Lamas informed the Council that the corrective action plan was a work in progress with agency staff learning a lot as far as what RSA would or would not accept.

**Agency Updates**

Access & Accommodations (A&A) – Nathan Winter:Mr. Winter provided Council members an overview of the functions of the various programs within Access and Accommodations. He shared information regarding the numbers of clients seen by the AT@Work, SAW/RTW, RIDAC and LEC programs. He provided information regarding a presentation made by Stay at Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) Coordinator, Yvonne Roland to the Industry Liaison Group of Arkansas with lots of positive feedback provided including the EEOC director here in Little Rock. He reported that as a result of the presentation the program had received several referrals from the companies and businesses indicating that the number of referrals this quarter has been the highest number since program inception. Mr. Winter also provided the Council an update regarding the Community Service Programs. He provided information regarding the number of clients served by the ICAN and TAP programs and the amount of savings provided to Arkansans as a result of services provided by ICAN. He updated the Council regarding the AFP and the work being performed by its committee. He concluded his report by stating the Governor’s Commission on People with Disabilities is prepared to provide between 10 to 12 scholarship awards this year with monies used to generate the scholarships coming from fines from illegal parking in accessible parking places and the distribution of 14,000 Van Accessible Parking fliers to Arkansas Revenue Offices across the state.

Arkansas Career Development Center (ACDC) – Deputy Commissioner Christy Lamas:Ms. Lamas stated that ACDC is about innovation, education, and occupation. She provided information regarding ACDC’s CNA program in northwest Arkansas and the partnership ARS has with Fayetteville High School, Washington Regional Medical Center, and the National Apprenticeship Training Foundation. She mentioned that when visiting the Fayetteville Regional Office, Carl Daughtery and his team having a group of students participating in the CNA program and being trained by ACDC teachers along with two CNA instructors. She expressed an interest in expanding the program to the Little Rock area because of its large population and opportunities to train CNAs for the local job market. Ms. Lamas also informed the Council about ACDC’s Student Access and Support Services (SASS) program that provides support in developmental education and tutoring with a goal of assisting students to help keep them from dropping out of college. She also reported that ACDC was considering a possible partnership to provide CDL training as well as considering bringing back the CVS training and offering it online.

Business Engagement – Rodney Chandler: Mr. Chandler updated the Council on Business Engagement activities. He indicated that the team has several initiatives in the works including educational training, disability etiquette, sensitivity training, as well as customer service training. He also reported that staff was engaged in job readiness training to better position clients in employment opportunities. Mr. Chandler informed the Council about the Partners in Progress initiative. He indicated he and his staff wanted to hear the challenges that customers face and determine and how best ARS might support them. He related the importance that approaches utilized must in line with WIOA including engaging employers across the workforce system to align training and skills necessary to match employer needs through qualified workers. In closing Mr. Chandler informed the Council of their ongoing relationship with the Bank OZK. He stated that Cathy Bonner, Bank OZK HR manager, was committed to having a diverse and inclusive work environment as evidenced by her recently reaching out to him providing a job listing for 40 full-time and part-time positions across the state of Arkansas. Discussion followed.

Field Services – Carl Daughtery, Chief of Field Services: Mr. Daughtery provided the Council an update regarding happenings within Field Services. He reported that program year to date the Field has had 1,095 successful closures with 779 clients currently employed and 359 clients ready for employment. He indicated the Field is serving 9,873 clients with the average Counselor caseload size being 106. Mr. Daughtery reported Field staff is working diligently assisting with the new case management system checking all forms and monitoring data migration trying to stay on track with a goal to go live in October. He informed the Council of the recent co-locations of the Helena and Batesville Field offices. He also provided information regarding the Spring into Services events and other upcoming meetings. Ms. Marianne Caldwell, Pre-Employment Transition Services manager, concluded the Field Services presentation by providing a brief overview of what has happened over the past year and a providing a list of programs that are currently in preemployment transition services. Discussion followed.

**Comments from DWS Director, Dr. Charisse Childers:** Dr. Childers addressed the Council communicating her appreciation of the work and support Council members provide. She also expressed her appreciation of the hard work of ARS staff on its various initiatives including policy revisions and the State Plan. She indicated she was currently traveling, visiting the Mountain Home Workforce Services and Harrison Workforce Services/ARS offices.

**Announcements**

Chairman Jonathan Taylor informed the Council that the next scheduled SRC meeting would be September 15, 2022.

**Adjournment**

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