**Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council**

**Quarterly Meeting Minutes**

**Conference (Zoom) Call**

**March 14, 2022**

**Attendees:**

**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Members:** Jonathan Taylor, Chair; Kesha Pilot. Co-Chair; Kimberly Clayborn; Carol McDearmon; Dr. James Grover, Dr. Charles Green; Kelly Sharp; Wesley Eddington; Leigh Garvin; Addie Edwards; Alex Scott; Joseph Baxter, ARS Commissioner.

**Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) Division of Workforce Services (DWS) Staff**: Christy Lamas, ARS Deputy Commissioner; Dr. Charisse Childers, Director DWS; Carl Daughtery; Chip McAfee; Gretchen Hunt; Fred Harris; Robert Trevino; Charles Lyford; Nathan Winter; Lisa Kelley; Judy Smith; Jim Moreland; James McCune; Otis Dixon; Jonathan Bibb; Chatuea Walker; Kim Baker; Tynesha Ivory; Jodie Keeling; Bernice Gunter.

**Members of the Public:** Bonnie Boaz; Thomas Nichols; select Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) staff; Andon Tolleson; Deanda Holloway; Dr. Derek Slagle.

**Call to Order:** Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Chair, Jonathan Taylor, called the meeting conducted via teleconference to order at 10:00 a.m. Following rollcall, a quorum was declared.

**Approval of Minutes:** At the request of Chairman Taylor, Council members reviewed the minutes of the December 16, 2021and January 26, 2022, meetings. A motion to approve the minutes of both meetings as presented was made and seconded. The motion passed.

**Comments from SRC Chair; Jonathan Taylor:** Chairman Taylor expressed his appreciation to everyone for being in attendance. He stressed the importance of the meeting as a critical agenda item was the review of ARS’s portion of the Arkansas WIOA 2-year State Plan Update. He expressed his appreciation to ARS staff for their commitment to provide services to clients and individuals with disabilities. He informed the Council that the Arkansas Alliance for Disability Advocacy was celebrating Pi Day at the State Capitol and invited all that could to attend.

**Comments from ARS Commissioner – Joseph Baxter:** Commissioner Baxter updated the Council reporting that the Legislature’s Fiscal Session was scheduled to end this week. He stated that the ARS budget had been approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor authorizing the agency’s spending for the next state fiscal year. He informed the Council of upcoming events including March 22nd being National Rehabilitation Counselor Appreciation Day and the CSAVR Spring Conference to be held April 12-14. He also reported that ARS, DSB, and other components of the Division of Workforce Services (DWS) would be moving to a new website with additional information to be forthcoming. Mr. Baxter concluded his comments by expressing his appreciation to Council members who participated in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and provided input as it relates to the RSA monitoring visit providing information regarding how the VR program is being offered in Arkansas.

**WIOA 2-Year Sate Plan Update – Joseph Baxter, Christy Lamas, Charles Lyford:** Ms. Lamas informed Council members that consistent with information provided prior to the meeting the goals, priorities, and strategies would remain unchanged within the 2-Year State Plan Update. She indicated the Update did include the requirement to address progress made on ARS strategies. Mr. Lyford presented an overview of comments received during the public participation period regarding the WIOA 2-Year State Plan Update. As part of discussion, Dr. Grover shared information and concerns of the deaf and hard of hearing community as a result of a focus group initiated by Chairman Taylor. He reported the focus group expressing programmatic as well as individual needs and the group’s recommendation for a Coordinator for Deaf and Hard of Hearing services. He also communicated the need for expediency when responding to the focus group’s requests. Following additional discussion, a motion was made to acknowledge comments made and accept the 2-Year State Plan Update as presented. The motion seconded and the Council concurred.

**Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) - Robert Trevino, Dr. Derek Slagle:** Mr. Trevino expressed his gratitude to Dr. Slagle and his associates at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR). He commented on the work performed indicating it being a comprehensive effort to assess the vocational rehabilitation needs of Arkansans with disabilities throughout the State. He expressed his appreciation to Council members, involved ARS staff, and stakeholders. Dr. Slagle provided a summary of contents of the final CSNA including a review of the 13 research questions used to develop the needs assessment and the environmental scan which consists of background demographic population characteristics for the State of Arkansas as well as specific disability related characteristics. Much discussion followed.

**Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Monitoring Update-Joseph Baxter, Christy Lamas, Charles Lyford**: Commissioner Baxter reminded the Council of select RSA staff conducting a monitoring of ARS last year. He indicated that prior to that, the most recent comprehensive RSA review was conducted in 2010 or 2011. He expressed his appreciation to SRC members for their participation in the monitoring. Commissioner Baxter indicated the final monitoring report has identified four findings which he discussed briefly. He informed the Council that because of the findings ARS would have to make changes to its policies and procedures and that such changes, once approved by RSA, would have to go through the full public participation process as required by both state and federal requirements. Ms. Lamas stated that ARS would have 45 days to develop a draft corrective action plan that must meet RSA approval. She indicated ARS senior management had already started working on a detailed plan to achieve the goal of addressing RSA requirements. Mr. Lyford indicated that April 18th was the deadline for completion of the proposed corrective action plan in response to each of the RSA findings. After discussion, Commissioner Baxter stated that ARS would share the corrective action plan with the SRC once it achieves RSA approval.

**Agency Updates:**

Field Services – Carl Daughtery, Chief of Field Services: Mr. Daughtery provided the Council an update regarding various activities within the Field Program. He shared information regarding the six ARS Field Services offices co-located with Division of Workforce Services (DWS) offices. He also informed the Council of collaboration efforts across the state with DWS, Adult Education, and the Division of Services for the Blind. He reported that work continues the Field’s new case management system with an anticipated go-live date sometime in October. He provided information regarding an opportunity to tour Amazon’s Little Rock facility and a hope for opportunities to work with other partners in helping our clients secured employment with Amazon. He expressed his appreciation of the work performed by the agency’s vocational rehabilitation counselors and the importance of recognizing them on National Rehabilitation Counselor Appreciation Day. Ms. Tynesha Ivory concluded the Field’s presentation by providing information regarding the Lake Hamilton High School Pre-Employment Transition Program, introducing Andon Tolleson, and sharing a video of Andon. Mr. Tolleson, a senior at Lake Hamilton High School, shared his experiences in Pre-ETS and of his plans to attend National Park College to receive vocational training in auto mechanics. Much discussion followed.

Access & Accommodations (A&A) – Nathan Winter:Mr. Winter presented an overview of the functions of the various programs within Access and Accommodations. He reported there being a small decrease in the number of evaluations conducted by AT @ Work with 63 evaluations completed this past quarter with that being down 15 when compared to the previous quarter. He indicated the Stay at Work/Return-to-Work program had experienced an increase in referrals. He reported RIDAC (Rehabilitation Initial Diagnosis and Assessment) had provided services to 726 individuals this quarter including 225 psychological evaluations and 28 psychological-educational consultations with there being 172 mental health, 147 neuro-developmental, and 7 neurocognitive diagnoses. He reported that RIDAC medical services completed 374 consults and 14 face-to-face evaluations. Within Community Services Programs he related that ICAN (Increasing Capabilities Awareness Network) served 6 ARS clients this quarter and that through its reutilization program helping save Arkansans across the State $486,881.76. He also indicated TAP (Telecommunications Access Program) had served 14 ARS clients and an additional 72 Arkansans with disabilities this reporting period. He reported the AFP (Alternative Financing Program) program had experienced a drop in individuals served only providing 2 loans totaling $15,500. He concluded his report by stating the Governor’s Commission on People with Disabilities scholarship program deadline for application submission was extended to April 7th due to inclement weather.

Arkansas Career Development Center (ACDC) – Jonathan Bibb:Mr. Bibb provided the Council an update regarding the ACDC. He informed the Council of new programing center staff was working on that is incorporated into pre-employment transition services. He indicated that ACDC’s focus was employment transition, job exploration, and work-based learning within the areas of hospitality, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, welding, and construction. He presented a PowerPoint of the CTE Exploration Day for the Arkansas School of the Deaf where students spent the day at ACDC receiving hands-on experience within the different occupational areas. In closing Mr. Bibb introduced Ms. Deanda Holloway who provided an overview of her work experiences and the training she received in the Center’s CNA training program. Much discussion followed.

Business Engagement – Rodney Chandler: In the absence of Mr. Chandler, Gretchen Hunt presented a brief overview of the Business Engagement program including its efforts to inform the public about the services provided by ARS. She provided information regarding a Chamber of Commerce event attended by Tiera Lindholm, and Business Engagement staff attending quarterly meetings of the National Printed Organization and Industry Liaison Group of Arkansas (ILG). Discussion followed.

**Announcements**

Chairman Jonathan Taylor informed the Council that the next scheduled SRC meeting would be June 16, 2022

**Adjournment**

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