**Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council**

**Quarterly Meeting Minutes**

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

**March 16, 2023**

**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; Wensday Kraemer; Ted Scallion; Joseph Baxter, ARS Commissioner.

**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Members Absent:** Carol McDearmon, Christopher Balos, Matt Sewell. Leigh Garvin, Tom Masseau.

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

**Members of the Public:** Bonnie Boaz, Dept. of Education; Molly Hernandez; Dr. Fransha Anderson; Amanda Sanders; Airie Skrocki; Jen Goodwin; Loletia Moore, Amazon.

**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 Chair Taylor, Council members reviewed the minutes of the December 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 remined the Council that an SRC subcommittee was formed at the December meeting to examine the ARS client satisfaction survey with it being asked to make recommendations, not only regarding improvement, but also exploring ways to increase client participation including filling out the form completely and returning it. Mr. Taylor expressed his appreciation to subcommittee members who worked diligently on the project. He indicated that Council member Wensday Kraemer would be presenting a report regarding the work of the subcommittee with their recommendations later in the meeting.

**Comments from DWS Director, Dr. Charisse Childers**: Dr. Childers expressed her excitement to report an increased focus on employing individuals with disabilities, not just in the State of Arkansas, but across the country. She reported having been recently approached by several entities that are interested in working with the State to broaden those opportunities and to assist ARS in reaching both employers and clients they serve. She related that these opportunities are consistent with what ARS does, making sure that clients have the opportunity to be employed and contribute to their family and to their community.

**Comments/RSA Monitoring from ARS Commissioner Joseph Baxter:** Commissioner Baxter also expressed his appreciation to everyone being in attendance. He reported that the SRC’s Annual Report, approved in December, had been submitted to RSA and Governor’s Office. He provided information regarding bills ARS was tracking as part of the current legislative session including HB1081 which is ARS’s appropriation bill, HB1295 that makes technical changes to Arkansas Code regarding ARS, and HB1296 which makes technical changes to Arkansas Code concerning the use of respectful language when referring to individuals with disabilities. Mr. Baxter informed the Council that both the Pine Bluff and West Memphis offices had to be relocated due to winter storm damage with repairs currently in progress. He expressed appreciation to the staff of both offices as there was not an interruption in service delivery. He informed the Council that Charles Lyford, General Counsel, was no longer employed by ARS with him returning to the Arkansas Attorney General’s Office. He indicated that the agency was in the process of trying to fill the position along with 17 vacant counselor positions. Mr. Baxter next provided an update regarding the agency’s Corrective Action Plan (CAP) as a response to the most recent Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) monitoring. He indicated the last CAP response had been submitted to RSA in January with the next report due at the end of April. He informed the Council that he had assigned Nathan Winter and Lisa Kelley to head ARS’s efforts in responding to the CAP. Mr. Baxter concluded his presentation by informing the SRC that RSA will be doing a follow-up monitoring this year that is focused on providing ARS technical assistance regarding the development of a strategic plan as it relates to service delivery and grant expenditures. He indicated initial requested documents had been submitted to RSA in February and that he would be providing routine updates to the Council.

**Client Satisfaction Survey – SRC Council Member Wensday Kraemer**: Ms. Kraemer indicated that as part of the December 2022 SRC meeting a Client Satisfaction Survey subcommittee was formed. The purpose of the subcommittee was to review the existing survey and make recommendations regarding any needed revisions. She provided information regarding how many times the subcommittee had met and who participated. She indicated that prior to this meeting Council members had been provided the subcommittee’s recommendation to implement multiple new surveys. Ms. Kraemer provided an overview of the new surveys and questions contained within the surveys to Council members and staff. After discussion that included a review for the need of multiple surveys and how the surveys would be implemented, a motion was made to accept the surveys as amended and that ARS begin the process of implementation. The Council members concurred.

**Agency Updates**

Business Engagement – Rodney Chandler, Gretchen Hunt: Ms. Gretchen Hunt updated the Council regarding various Business Engagement activities. She then introduced Loletia Moore, Warehouse Associate Recruiter at Amazon. Ms. Moore indicated that she is tasked with recruiting and onboarding warehouse associates and collaborating with community partners with a focus on hiring individuals with disabilities and those with military backgrounds. She indicated that when she went to work for Amazon, she learned the company’s vision and goals aligned with her personal vision and goals. As part of discussion Ms. Moore indicated that Amazon is a company that wants to continue to thrive and evolve in recruiting and hiring individuals with all abilities. Mr. Chandler concluded the Business Engagement presentation by informing the Council that he would be retiring with this being his last meeting. He expressed his thanks to the Council for the opportunity to work with them.

Field Services – Carl Daughtery, Chief of Field Services: Mr. Daughtery provided the Council information regarding happenings within Field Services. He reported on the Field initiatives of rapid engagement, business collaboration, and shinning the light on Field Program successes. Since the last meeting he indicated there being 539 individuals closed as successfully employed, 689 individuals currently employed awaiting closure, and 415 individuals ready for employment. He stated that Field Services is currently providing services to 10,471 individuals with the average Counselor caseload being 120 cases. He updated the Council on top priority items for Field Services as wells as upcoming events and meetings. In closing, Mr. Daughtery shared the success story of Mr. Jaylen Smith. He indicated Mr. Smith had made history by being elected the youngest African American mayor in America with him taking office in January of this year. Mr. Smith graduated from Earle High School in May 2022. Prior to graduation he participated in Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) during his senior year in high school. Mr. Smith’s Pre-ETS Counselor was Ms. Kimberly Clark in Region 3.

Access & Accommodations (A&A) – Nathan Winter:Mr. Winter provided Council members an update regarding 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 Rehabilitation Initial Diagnosis and Assessment (RIDAC), Learning and Evaluation Center (LEC), Assistive Technology at Work (AT@Work), and Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) units. He informed the Council that select Increasing Capabilities Awareness Network (ICAN) staff had recently attended the Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA) conference with them bringing back information regarding new developments within the field. He reported that ICAN’s Federal Award was reauthorized with there being an increase in its allotment. He indicated that ICAN’s reutilization program had saved Arkansans $235,121.35 since last meeting. Mr. Winter provided information regarding the Governor’s Commission on People with Disabilities including its scholarship program that will again provide a limited number of $1,000 scholarships. He indicated that the Alternative Financing Program (AFP) year-to-date had provided $29, 697 in loans to individuals with there being zero defaults. He reported that the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) has requested an increase in its appropriation to be included in its budget. Plans are to use some of the monies to market the program through local TV advertisements.

AR Career Development Center (ACDC) – Cynthia Gleghorn: Ms. Gleghorn provided the Council with an overview of the various programs within ACDC. She reported the Center’s current focus was on distance programming, train-in-place, staff training, program structure, resume building and remote employment trainings. She updated the Council on the various partnerships ACDC is involved and of hybrid trainings the Center is planning for this year. Discussion followed.

**Announcements**

Chairman Jonathan Taylor informed the Council that the next scheduled SRC meeting would be Thursday, June 15, 2023.

**Adjournment**

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