

**Members Present:** Lu Ann Anderson, Corina Brunoe, Jackie Burr, Jan Campbell, Roxie Choroser, Ruthanne Cox-Carothers, John Dziennik (Chair), Barbara Fields, Donald Ford, Guy Goode, Bennett Johnson, Linda Keller, Sue Kuenzi, Cynthia Owens, Martha Simpson, Tina Treasure, Tony Zarate

**Members Absent:** Roz Slovic (Vice-Chair), Kirsten Thompson, Scott Whetham

**VR Staff:** John Anderson, Sheila Hitchen, Aaron Hughes, Rhoda Hunter, Bruce Melendy, Frank Miera, Peter Norman, Lynnae Ruttledge, Lauren Smith, Polly Studley, Robert Trachtenberg, Stephaine Parrish Taylor, Ted Swigart

**Guests:**

Dave Copeland, Sound Technician, Cascade Sound;  
Danny Choroser;  
Max Claunch II, CEA, Sutherlin;  
Rob Cook, Oregon Disabilities Commission;  
Betsy Cunningham, Glide;  
Gwinette Hamlet, Progressive Options, Newport;  
Michelle Kennedy, Consultant - Kennedy Solutions;  
Amberly Ruck, Student, Western Oregon University;  
Melissa Shivell Hernandez, Student, Western Oregon University;  
Jamie Sanchez, Winston;  
Naomi Shadwick, Progressive Options, Newport;  
Marjorie Waley, Progressive Options, Newport;  
Rhonda Walker, Progressive Options, Newport

**Welcome and Introductions**

John Dziennik, SRC Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and Council members and guests introduced themselves.

**Consent Agenda**

John Dziennik asked for committee reports.

Martha Simpson, Membership Committee Chair, reported on the three new members who the Committee is recommending for SRC membership:

Jackie Burr, Bob Craft, and Guy Goode. She asked Council members to vote on those three as well as the reappointment of Scott Whetham and turn their voting forms into Rhoda Hunter by noon today (Nov. 5 '04). Martha also reported that although the SRC has not received the official paperwork, the Governor's office has told Rhoda that the Governor is appointing Corina Brunoe to the Council to represent the 121 Programs.

Barbara Fields, Policy Committee Chair, reported the Policy Committee had been devising a systematic process of grading job developers, re: training and recruitment for client evaluation and selection. The committee is working on a review of Oregon Administrative Rules that OVRs is proposing re: Citizenship, Residency, and Repossession/Disposition of Non-Expendable Property when the VR counselor closes a client's case as "unsuccessful." Barbara didn't feel it was necessary to read any particular case notes for the Council.

LuAnn Anderson, Evaluation Committee Chair, gave a brief Evaluation Committee update about the OVRs Employee survey results. She noted the employee survey would be going out sometime this month to all OVRs staff. She noted the committee has also worked on the Comprehensive Needs Assessment and this will be discussed further during Michelle Kennedy's presentation.

John Dziennik, Executive Committee Chair, sought guidance from the Council on what **types of trainings they would like to have in the future**. Jan Campbell suggested that **SRC Roles & Responsibilities** would be useful to her, **including VR/SRC collaborative activities and building effective partnerships**. LuAnn Anderson requested **more information on the Client Assistance Program and how it partners with OVRs**. Barbara Fields saw no problem with the Council contacting Bob Joondeph concerning that information. Ruthanne Cox-Carothers suggested an **overview of the VR rehab process**. Stephaine Parrish Taylor stated she would cover some of that later in the day.

John Dziennik noted the Executive & Evaluation Committees had a recent joint-phone call re: the facilities questionnaire and hoped Stephaine would cover the facilities issue later. John commented that he felt various problems that he had noted last year, e.g., the intake process at VR offices that share space with other agencies, etc., have been acknowledged and steps are being taken to correct those issues. Stephaine Taylor added that

she has been making a statewide tour and the agency has made progress, e.g., Hermiston has been co-located; leadership has been changed & VR is returning to a building that was designed with private offices for OVRS.

John Dziennik called for a motion to approve the consent agenda minutes. Ruthanne Cox-Carothers made the motion to approve the August 6, 2004 quarterly meeting minutes and LuAnn Anderson seconded it. The Council approved unanimously.

John Dziennik asked whether the OVRS administration plans to respond to field staff regarding specific issues that were cited in the employee survey report. Stephaine Taylor agreed that OVRS will send a response soon, with Tina Treasure suggesting the report should be sent within next 10 days to support trust in the Council's intent – as field staff have been asking about the status of the report. LuAnn Anderson asked for confirmation that the SRC Survey Report and OVRS responses will go out together within a 10-day time period. John Dziennik agreed that the employee survey report should go out to the field within ten days and Stephaine Taylor said she would get the OVRS response to the SRC within that time frame. (Done)

Ruthanne Cox-Carothers gave the Business Committee report. The Business Leadership Network (“BLN”) was organized to promote hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities. The grant that funded the BLN ended last month. Ruthanne hopes the BLN will continue to function and keep developing relationships with employers, who become educated about the value of folks with disabilities as workers and then broadcast this message outward to other businesses. She said some recent grant funding they got will provide part of the financial support the BLN needs, but can't be 'front-loaded'. Ruthanne encouraged all to visit the Business Leadership Network website ([www.obln.org](http://www.obln.org)) and subscribe to its newsletter.

John Dziennik awarded a recognition plaque to Sue Kuenzi, a vocational rehabilitation counselor who has been on the Council for several years. This was Sue's last meeting as a member, since she has recently resigned from the SRC. Sue has also resigned from her job at OVRS due to the debilitating symptoms she is experiencing from multiple sclerosis. While interning at Salem Rehabilitation Hospital before becoming a VR Counselor, Sue noted the lack of resources to support clients facing various losses and changes. This eventually led her to write “The Land Across the River,” a workbook designed to help those who are dealing with

grief. Sue is gratified to see that all VR counselors now have a copy of the workbook. Sue thanked the Council for its work on behalf of OVRS and thanked them for the encouragement and support they have given her. Sue would like to continue doing some private counseling, and referred all interested parties to her website.

(<http://home.comcast.net/~hopebeyondwords/hope.html>)

Linda Keller was absent due to unexpected surgery and requested the opportunity to join in via conference call for part of the Consent Agenda discussion. Linda had some concerns she wished to share with the Council as she nears the end of her second term.

**One issue Linda cited is the CSPD (Comprehensive System of Personnel Development), which addresses the level of training and education that VR counselors must possess in order to be considered “qualified” under the provisions of the Approved State Plan. Due to what appear to be recommended policy changes by OVRS, Linda recommends the formation of a stakeholder task force that would include OVRS Administration, VR counselors, VR consumers, educators (representation from Region X training programs), SRC members, and Rehabilitation Services Administration (“RSA”) representatives to jointly address issues and identify solutions and CSPD standards, as outlined in the State Plan. Linda also proposed that such a task-force be charged to submit a further analysis of the importance of CSPD in Oregon that identifies creative solutions and recommendations for ways and means to support the CSPD goal of the State Plan.**

**Linda proposed that the SRC request this taskforce be formed, then prepare and submit a report summarizing their findings and recommendations at the next SRC quarterly meeting.**

Another concern of Linda’s is the effort to move OVRS branch offices into “One-Stop” settings. Linda believes the One-Stop issue has a definite impact on the matter/importance of the CSPD concerns of the SRC. The theory of ‘streamlining’ services appeals to the public as a cost saving method. However, based on consumer surveys and needs assessments data, “one-stop” settings are not the best setting to serve VR consumers. As a result of this movement into “one-stop” settings, what appears to be happening is that “rehabilitation counseling” is being taken out of the equation and being replaced with administrative case management

functions and activities. It appears that the One-Stop directive supports the DHS mission of centralizing services, but not the intent of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Linda asked “why not just send clients to an employment office for case management”? She wanted to be very clear on the issue and hopes that SRC will vigorously pursue these issues before we back-slide and lose the force behind the Rehab Act. Because Linda had difficulty hearing Cynthia Owens, Tina Treasure recapped Cynthia’s comments to Linda, asking where/how did Linda obtain the information concerning VR being a “bad fit” at One-Stops?

Linda replied that this discussion is taking place all across the country – not just here in Oregon. The current VR model that we use has a consumer driven focus, whereas the One-Stop, as a Department of Labor model, is agency-driven and restricts the rehabilitation services intent of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended. She is concerned that the Department of Labor One-Stops model will ‘water-down’ the importance of “rehabilitation” services.

Tina Treasure restated Linda’s position that advocates, consumers, RSA, counselors and other people in the field fear that moving to One-Stops is playing into the hands of a national agenda that would ‘flatten-out’ the employment service delivery model and make it less specialized. This constituency is concerned that by moving into One-Stops, CSPD standards being lowered, and anything else that differentiates vocational “counseling” and the special needs of people with disabilities to be employed, could result in a flat menu of services, instead of the individualized, consumer-directed services that are currently mandated under the law.

Linda Keller also noted that SRC surveys employees of OVRS in One-Stops have completed and sent in indicate a lack of confidential settings, i.e., that the physical structure and ways of doing business in One-Stops often doesn’t respect the confidentiality needs of VR clients or the federal statutes and regulations coming from the Rehabilitation Act. Tina and Linda stated that they have both heard that the intent of the Department of Labor is to have the provision of services at One-Stops replace public vocational rehabilitation program within the next 5years.

Ruthanne Cox-Carothers recounted a conversation she had with a federal representative, who stated that the DOL focus is to have One-Stops provide **all** of the employment services throughout the nation. Ruthanne

pointed out that because of One-Stop management's need to make decisions by numbers, vocational rehabilitation will be put back 30 years. People with disabilities will be the last to be served, because of their greater difficulty in finding and maintaining employment.

She gave the representative a hypothetical scenario: three individuals were in the waiting area at a One Stop. Two of the individuals did not have any disabilities. One had been laid off several months earlier from a skilled job in the computer field. He had high qualifications and a good work record, but he was having trouble finding a position comparable to his last one. The other individual did seasonal work, but usually had no trouble getting hired on. Due to the economy, things were much slower than she was used to. The third person had a developmental disability that affected his cognitive functioning. He had worked at several non-competitive jobs, usually doing janitorial work, but had never had a mainstream job. He was a pleasant individual, but did not seem to be completely engaged during his interactions with the One Stop employees. All three individuals were at the One-Stop to get help finding a suitable job. Ruthanne asked the federal representative which individual or individuals he would focus on first. His immediate answer was the computer programmer, because he would be relatively easy to place. Next would be the woman looking for seasonal work. Ruthanne said that was exactly her point.

Sue Kuenzi noted that OVRS counselors know how to and have been collaborating effectively with other agencies for a long time. The problem is the physical placement of VR within the One-Stop facilities. Linda replied that those in general DOL programs don't understand the intent and the force behind the Rehab Act goals. Congress passed The Act to provide respectful, effective, specialized services to persons with disabilities so that they could successfully obtain employment, which would afford them more independence and greater inclusion into society. Therefore, absorbing the state vocational rehabilitation agencies into the big, all-purpose Department of Labor system is going to cause problems.

Linda maintained that any reduction of the CSPD entry-level requirements would also be part of the problem. This is going on at the same time that the plans to transfer VR into the Department of Labor system are becoming evident. The effect will be to take out the employment service delivery model — that consumer driven, individualistic, holistic model we so value. She said, "It's really important for SRC to identify these as priority issues, to

take time to look through them as a group; perhaps spend an entire quarterly meeting addressing these issues, because these issues are very serious. SRC needs to be proactive; otherwise we're going to be in a situation where life is going to be very different and VR may be rolled back 30 years in the delivery of services."

Roxie Choroser commented that she has worked in One-Stops and in 'traditional' centers in two different states where there have been concerns for 15 years that people will become numbers at One-Stops. Roxie believes there are ways to place VR services in One-Stop centers, i.e., to carefully maintain program integrity and our level of services, although it's very easy to get 'slotted' into programs such as employment services, CAF, etc.

Barb Fields said she hadn't really thought of the issue of VR actually being eliminated and replaced with the general employment office/labor department programs before. We have VR because there is a need for VR. The reason Congress created the program in the first place was because the general programs were unable to meet the needs of disabled job seekers. There isn't anything stopping the DOL from helping people with disabilities now; they don't need to dismantle the state vocational rehabilitation system in order to have access to disabled customers. She said she firmly believes that when mixed in with the average public, persons with disabilities traditionally lose. Ruthanne stated that we need to **be vigilant and be very careful to maintain the integrity of VR services.** Tina Treasure thought it important to distinguish between the 'traditional', integrated one-stop sites, with child welfare, self-sufficiency, Voc Rehab, etc. in it and the *new* DOL "Workforce" One-Stops. Unfortunately, the Workforce One-Stop uses the same 'catchword' name, but it's really a separate/different thing; it's only about employment.

**Bennett Johnson believed the issue needs to be put on the agenda for a future SRC meeting.** Linda agreed and said that in the 7 years she has been on the Council, this and the CSPD issue are the most important issues she's seen and they *really* need to be dealt with. Because some of this is specific to Oregon, Linda suggested an entire, SRC strategic planning meeting re: these "red flag" issues, which she maintains has not happened in a few years.

Bennett asked if Linda would provide some of her research info to the SRC for a future meeting that would focus on developing recommendations on

the issues. **Linda Keller again recommended the formation of an SRC and stakeholder taskforce to jointly and collaboratively address the CSPD standards of the State Plan. In addition,** Linda recommended the Taskforce be charged with an analysis of the impact of CSPD in Oregon and brainstorm some solutions to be presented at the next SRC quarterly meeting.

Ruthanne Cox-Carothers agreed and added that as we prepare for the reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act, this kind of strategic planning will give the SRC more clout in countering possible changes. **Sue Kuenzi asked whether Paul Dzedzic could help facilitate this issue, in light of training issues John Dziennik mentioned. John agreed, and asked if Linda Keller would be involved also because of her familiarity with the topics and she agreed.**

### **OVRs Update**

Stephaine Parrish Taylor, OVRs Administrator, addressed the Council, saying she would 'blend' her remarks, because they touched on issues she wanted to bring to the Council's attention. Stephaine believed that waiting until the Council's next quarterly meeting may be problematic, because the State Legislature session is coming up, the US Congress will be back in January, and the President will probably move quickly to forward his agenda concerning reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act. Stephaine believes that waiting three months to re-convene would probably put SRC 'outside the loop' in its ability to affect a number of important processes.

Stephaine hopes that any discussion the Council has will include aligning the work of the SRC and the Agency to be more effective. She doesn't feel that in her time in her new position she has had the opportunity to discuss the priorities the SRC holds, and feels something of a loss at not having things line-up very nicely. For example, if OVRs has to make tough choices, what is your (SRC) guidance on those issues? Stephaine said they have just completed a Needs Assessment, just after they needed to develop Policy Option packages and said "there's something wrong with this picture." Perhaps OVRs needs to look at a calendar to figure out when those activities happen, to align its work and bring order to the process. For Stephaine, that would be priority work.

Stephaine believes that as we look at shrinking resources, we will see a national tendency to allocate resources to do the greatest good for the greatest number, which she believes always jeopardizes people with disabilities. Stephaine indicated she thinks that a tension that has existed in this state between OVRs and State government results from the fact that State government very much operates under that principle. Conversely, the Rehabilitation Act charges OVRs to serve the most severe, i.e., allocating resources to those most in need. As resources become increasingly tight in Oregon, she thinks this will surface in a much stronger way. It's not so much about the public rehabilitation program or people with disabilities, but what are those underlying principles the Legislature will use to dole out increasingly scarce resources. We have a governor who is talking about essential services. We need to think about OVRs as being on that list, and we're competing against child welfare, crisis services, prisons, and medication to the indigent. SRC needs to consider the issues; otherwise these are tough arguments to make if not clearly thought through. While she said she knew what her argument would be, she indicated she thinks the best argument benefits from the best heads coming together, thinking it through, building a case and taking it with one voice to those audiences we need to be talking with, to ensure that we get the kinds of resources we need to run this program.

Reauthorization is coming up. Regional administrative partners don't believe the Rehabilitation Act can just be tweaked; there's major work that needs to be done on the Act. They believe it's fundamentally sound, but there are core values around consumer choice and individual services that are critical to maintain — things public VR professionals believe have made the program successful.

As people look at Welfare-to-Work, we realize the programs that include those kinds of values have been the most successful; the model works. Many perceive it as an expensive model, but if you look at the outcomes over the long-term, it is a very efficient model to be funded.

There have been comments from the Department of Labor about moving VR out of the Department of Education. There have also been some conversations indicating the Department of Ed doesn't support that move.

Joanne Wilson has said in some circles that VR is at a crossroads, e.g., of doing the things that Linda Keller talked about, the things that state VR

programs are currently doing in the field, versus becoming a much more employment focused program. Stephaine feels that when the program was last under serious threat, the belief was that if VR wasn't generating jobs, that it would go away permanently. Therefore, the focus became putting folks to work and many of the rehabilitation components "fell off the table," perhaps more so in Oregon than elsewhere.

Stephaine believes there are a number of other states that are more employment focused than Oregon. Conversely, there are a number of programs that want to do holistic work, but RSA hasn't clearly articulated where they see the program going, nor have they moved forward to support that approach. She thinks OVRs has been hurt by leadership at RSA during the past four years. While we in the state VR programs have been pretty much assured that the leadership will change, we don't know whether the change will be for the better. Stephaine suggested that vocational rehabilitation administrators may be the wrong group to lead this charge. While RSA should be directing this effort, bringing in state directors, consumers, and many others, she stated that there appears to be an RSA leadership vacuum at present, which folks from the state VR agencies have stepped up to try and fill.

Ted Swigart and John Dziennik will be going to the CSAVR (Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation) fall meeting in Nashville. Stephaine is confident there will be much discussion in this area and much speculation about the public program's direction during the next Bush Administration. She is concerned that this is an issue much broader than vocational rehabilitation — that all programs that affect people with disabilities will be under some level of considerable threat, because of the issue of resources.

Stephaine indicated that CSPD is a value that VR supports, but with the shortage of both counselors in the field and educators in vocational rehabilitation programs to do the training, we also need to be realistic. Because of the wage freeze, Oregon is at a disadvantage compared to Washington State in attracting highly trained vocational rehabilitation counselors. Due to continuing budget shortfalls, the budget news remains poor and we expect there will also be a coming crisis of personnel announced in the Governor's report in December.

Stephaine noted the partnership with ORAN, (Oregon RehabAction Network), as well as its support, has been important. The success of VR in the agency's branch offices is unrecognized, yet job developers need to have performance tracking, pricing, uniformity, etc. Additionally, VR will try to increase training activities with ORAN in topic areas that are of benefit to the VR program. **Performance data can be offered regularly to the SRC. Your guidance is necessary on the topical issues you're (SRC) interested in.**

Stephaine reported there are available excess federal dollars because VR has been conservative with its spending and managed its budget well. Due to budget adjustments there are VR dollars that need to be spent, which suggests that OVRs needs to be a better budget manager. Traditional practices need to be revised to minimize the surplus. It's hard to ask the Legislature for money when you have money in the bank, so the need must be more visible. To spend these excess dollars now, we shouldn't plan things that call for ongoing dollars, but could possibly make grants to local communities with their need to 'match' some amount.

We need to expand OVRs training, e.g., "borrowing" on an Alaska project to create CDs for statewide distribution to counselors, is one idea. There is a need to work with area universities to increase counselor program enrollment, build employer market surveys for the needs of job developers, especially those with skill in placing developmentally disabled and cognitively disadvantaged people.

A look at the pricing and performance of job developers needs to be done. Some ideas may be: 1) to conduct a labor market survey to establish the specific statewide need for job developers and coaches, as well as the specific areas of expertise needed., 2) to develop a performance-based pricing strategy, with incentives for retention, wage and benefits, and 3) to develop a Job Developer/Coach Academy to increase the number of developers/coaches with known skill sets and 4) standardize job development statewide.

Stephaine noted that the make-up of caseloads has changed dramatically over the last decade. Psychiatric disabilities, either as a primary or secondary disability, have emerged as the most frequent disabling condition that OVRs serves.

Expansion of transition services: how many of these services VR can provide depends on the funds we have available and the capacity of both the schools and VR to provide the services.

**John Dziennik inquired of the SRC how they wanted to handle providing input into OVRs's decision making on the use of these funds. By consensus, the Council decided that due to timeliness, it only made sense that the Executive Committee would perform this function.**

Ms. Taylor briefly discussed the upcoming federal 107 Review that is conducted by RSA. It has been rumored they had increased the complexity and depth of the review tool. The main issue for the Oregon Commission for the Blind ("OCB"), which recently had its review, was RSA's focus on homemaker closures and whether that was an appropriate employment outcome for each person whose file was closed with that occupation as the completed goal. This was a much bigger issue for OCB than it will be for OVRs, as OVRs only had 4 homemaker closures.

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**BREAK**

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### **Field Update**

Ted Swigart, OVRs Field Services Manager, gave a report on activities in the branch offices. ORCA is OVRs' case-management system developed by a company named Alliance. Alliance provided an update to staff from OVRs & DHS's Office of Information Systems ("OIS") on September 1, 2004, regarding how/where our system can go. Alliance is proposing to make changes that will enhance the speed of the application and improve its overall interface. Staff have voiced concerns about the current system because of compromises that were necessary to be ADA compliant. After the presentation by Alliance, OIS was 'sold' on Alliance's proposal for improvements to ORCA and will be working with Alliance to develop and test the next iteration of this system.

The RSA grant wound down in September and Lynnae Rutledge, OVRs Policy and Program Development Manager, may report on it later.

OVRs is in the process of hiring new managers. Janine DeLaunay has hit the ground running as the new branch manager at the Central Portland office. In an upgrade from her counselor position, Nancy Conover has taken over as manager of the North Portland office. Peter Norman has also accepted a promotion to be manager of the Benton/Lincoln County area. OVRs is still looking for a Salem/mid-valley area manager and hope to fill that position by year's end.

OVRs staff have been working with the Developmental Disability Brokerages to develop a common process/tools that can be used in a joint partnership for providing services mandated by the Staley Settlement. A workgroup was formed which had membership comprised of staff from OVRs and the brokerages, and client advocates. This group has developed staff tools including how to do assessments, select vendors, etc. that is part of a comprehensive guide to providing services. This workgroup also developed accessible/understandable information for family members re: VR processes and the concept of Supported Employment. A training for all of the OVRs Branch Managers and the Directors of the DD Brokerages was conducted on September 9, 2004. Planning is currently underway in the local areas to ensure that staff from both OVRs and the brokerages work together to provide services in a coordinated fashion. In addition, OVRs is seeking input from community rehabilitation providers on how they can be effective partners in the process.

In addition to the focus OVRs has relative to Supported Employment for the Developmentally Disabled population, the Agency is also working on strategies for serving persons with severe mental health issues. The Mental Health Program has a Legislative charge to use "evidenced based practices" in serving this population. There is considerable evidence that clients experiencing mental illness respond better when they participate in an employment-based treatment model rather than receive services within a traditional "day-treatment" mental health model. OVRs played a major role in presenting a training session to mental health leaders and other professionals on October 8, 2004. The purpose of the training was to provide information about the pilot programs that have used local partnerships between VR and Mental Health Centers to implement this employment based model in Oregon.

The Job Developer Network continues to be a viable resource. Recently, this activity was transferred to the administrative oversight of SE Works, a

One-Stop Career Center, as a resource for all who seek work. This placement better reflects the customer base for this resource which is broader than the OVRs mission.

### **Needs Assessment**

Michelle Kennedy & LuAnn Anderson presented. Lu Ann Anderson noted she has relied on Michelle Kennedy, who compiled the Needs Assessment, and Lynnae Rutledge. The Needs Assessment control group is broad based. Lynnae pointed out that not only is this process a legal requirement, OVRs wants to better understand the process and is interested in doing an assessment every 3 years.

Lu Ann Anderson introduced Michelle, who was unable to be present at the August meeting. Michelle Kennedy has a deep background in this area. Michelle started by saying that being involved and connected, as well as being able to dialog with leaders, has been very gratifying.

The assessment is based upon written surveys and personal interviews; Michelle said she didn't intend to go into detail on the findings at present. Instead, she gave SRC members copies of a draft executive summary to digest and then question her about. The recommendations that have been made are some that SRC & OVRs may do, which depend on resources, relationships, e.g., what, how, etc.; to be determined by SRC and OVRs. Until OVRs has seen the whole report and is satisfied with it, it won't be a finished document.

An immediate and resounding theme became apparent that unless OVRs has the most profound relationship with employers, "we won't be as successful as we want to be." Likewise, from having reviewed the agency's workforce development outcome reports that Ted alluded to, OVRs does a good job. Clearly, if there wasn't a strong OVRs presence in a One-Stop, those staff people wouldn't know what to do with customers who have disabilities.

There were actually more employers who responded to OVRs's survey and were interviewed than consumers. The #1 barrier is a lack of employer awareness, education, and understanding. Some of the employers had mixed results employing people with disabilities, most often because of a poor "match" between the job and the employee, not because of the quality

of the employee's skills or abilities, i.e., if the match was good and support was there, it usually worked out. Conversely, if the match was poor and the supportive services weren't there, it didn't work out. The largest number of recommendations were around employer education and awareness, because it was the most significant concern identified.

The #2 finding is that VR counselors and individuals with disabilities often lack an understanding of how the consumer could use his or her skills in a variety of employment settings. Therefore, one thing that must happen is to enable consumers to self-advocate, i.e., to discuss their skills as they relate to their employer's needs. Such ability will also improve discussions with their counselors, who at times pigeonhole a client.

What can be done to improve skills? One significant area of need is building that self-advocacy skill-set. Additionally, it's necessary to build an understanding among the base of VR counselors of the kinds of supports that are available, the types of accommodations, etc. While many counselors may have that understanding, there are some who do not; therefore, it is necessary to determine how to go about bringing everyone to the same level of understanding on those issues.

A third concern is that OVRs must do a better job supporting its clients after the 90 day successful "closure" date. If you've spent the effort and resources to get a person employed for 3 months, but they're gone after 6 months, how well have you served the client, the employer and utilized the resources? Good job retention depends on a mix of how well the employer has been served, e.g., the quality of the client/job match and how well the employer is able to depend upon the counselor and OVRs for assistance.

This finding might seem obvious; the resounding majority of those we interviewed believed that being a member of a racial or ethnic minority in addition to having a significant disability would increase the difficulty of finding work. However, a few people felt that it would not be more difficult. While we were unable to go in depth on that issue within the context of this needs assessment, she conferred with a number of individuals from those un-served and under-served groups. As a result, Michelle offers some suggestions on how to engage them in conversations that can deepen our understanding of methods to serve those communities.

Because the many available resources are complex, they can be difficult and discouraging for clients to navigate and that's not new – hopefully the new Navigator positions will help. One of the things that the Director of the Employment Department and the Director of Community Colleges told Michelle is they are aware they are not doing a good job at One Stops. They told her they need a better relationship with rehabilitation administrators at the leadership level. They also need education about how to better serve the disabled community, because they wouldn't know where to begin. While they acknowledge employment of individuals is part of a larger workforce strategy, they say they don't know how to integrate the resources into the context of their mission. OVRs need to reach out and help educate those other service providers.

Michelle said what they have after that list of findings is a series of areas of need. First - the employer education piece; Second - lack of ability to self-advocate; Third - retention through ongoing support; Fourth - navigability of the system; and Fifth – how to support those persons in a position to start their own small business.

At this point Ms. Kennedy paused in her presentation to ask if the needs and recommendations that have been identified fit with the SRC's perspective and made sense. She asked, "have we missed things, are there issues not reflected, or are there topics about which you'd like to know more regarding a specific recommendation?" Sue Kuenzi requested more in-depth information concerning how people would access and maintain health care. As a person with a disability who just left her job, Sue said it's extremely challenging to navigate the benefits issues – in order to keep working, it is vital, especially where care-giving needs come up.

Stephaine recounted feedback from some workforce members who admit they don't know what they're doing, but it has the feeling that they're not taking responsibility. She feels, as a member of a minority group, that there comes a point where people in the 'majority' need to take responsibility for their own education about the barriers faced by members of minority groups, which includes people with disabilities. As long as it's someone else's problem to fix, you don't change the institution, you don't really change people's ways of doing business. Stephaine cautioned we need to hear the workforce members who say they are lost and need help, but we also need to take it with a grain of salt, because it is their responsibility to actively seek out and gain their own competence. They've accepted

taxpayer money to do the work and with that comes the obligation to figure out how to get it done; not to off-load it onto someone else and then criticize them.

Ms Kennedy replied that she didn't hear that spirit at all in the comments that were made. Rather she heard them say, "Teach us, because we don't know" and welcomed us to come back. Stephaine said while they say that, where is their responsibility to take the initiative? There are many resources out there, so she has some concern we continue to hear that, e.g., we continue to see ADA issues decades after the laws were changed, but often what you get is, "I didn't know, can you show me what to do?" Stephaine said she is getting to the point, philosophically, where that is unacceptable.

Tina Treasure pointed out that concerning the access to health care issues raised by Sue Kuenzi, benefits planning is a crucial service that, among other things, assists clients to make informed choices in deciding whether to participate in a vocational program or not, which in the long run saves those programs money. If a client decides to participate, they should have a clear idea of how much they need to earn in order to afford the services and benefits they are now receiving from Social Security, public housing authorities, etc. Centers for Independent Living, where most of the trained benefits planners now exist, have banded together with a lot of support from Stephaine at OVRS and some other DHS partners to determine how the sustainability of benefits planning can continue. Those deliberations are in the initial stages, as in development of fee for service brochures and program development ideas, etc. It will take a group effort to support continuation of that service.

Michelle mentioned that benefits planning came up frequently. Because of the determinations and efforts that Tina mentioned, the report is being 'held' in draft form pending a recommendation that 'fits', rather than undermine it; therefore, there's a "place-holder" here regarding the subject. Tina strongly encouraged the inclusion of benefits planning services in the Needs Assessments Report. She also acknowledged the great strides that some of the One-Stops have made to serve people with disabilities. She reiterated Stephaine's observation that she also hears, "I don't know how, teach me, I don't know how, I wouldn't know where to start..." etc. Tina said it is sad that we continue to hear that in light of the many initiatives and educational efforts, plus a lot of money given to them to come up to speed

on this issue. What is it going to take? Michelle responded by asking if there is a step, or recommendation, to include in the report that would facilitate that movement forward and improve accountability?

Barbara suggested those concerns would have come across much differently if, instead of saying “you need to teach us,” they had stated, “we need to figure out where our problem areas are and where we can get the information and training.” “It’s a difference of shifting responsibility 180°.” Michelle stated she believed the two program leaders she’d mentioned were willing to have the conversation and do the work; therefore, something must happen to help them see the issue from this perspective.

Tina agreed the dialogue does need to happen, and speculated that the issue may be much larger than can be ‘tackled’ here, and may need to be addressed nationally. She suggested that the way in which those entities get their money provides a disincentive to serve people with disabilities. Tina referred to Ruthanne’s comments earlier that day about her conversation with a federal representative, who acknowledged the DOL propensity to focus on “numbers,” which results in concentrating on placing non-disabled job seekers first, and putting off or ignoring disabled folks, who may have multiple barriers to employment. As a result, until the inherent conflict is addressed between, on the one hand, having your success as a One-Stop measured only in terms of numbers of individuals placed at *some* job and, on the other hand, having an obligation to provide comprehensive, individualized assistance to clients with disabilities who need it, the strong disincentive will remain.

Stephaine commented that “what gets counted usually gets done”; therefore, anything originating from, or associated with, the Governor’s office should always have something included that addresses disability and accessibility. She also knows there have been training initiatives, but suspects there has been little consideration given to building an awareness of accessibility issues from the ground up. For example, that would become a critical piece of any contracting they do, if there are performance expectations that have incentives around disability issues.

Another area of concern, Stephaine said, is the strong focus on training incumbent workers. To the extent the incumbent workforce does not include meaningful numbers of disabled workers, it really doesn’t help get disabled folks in. It’s especially frustrating that many of the dollars that are

being targeted for workforce training are for incumbent workers. Tina added that One-Stops need to be encouraged to say it like it is and analyze their capacity to provide services to people with disabilities. She indicated that they need to recognize “if they can’t do, admit it; otherwise start doing it, or admit that it isn’t their bailiwick.” While that may be too harsh a language, she said she thinks that’s what we come down to. We try and try and then we need to say, “OK, one last-ditch effort — what can we do to make this work?” Next, we need to have people fess-up, i.e., admit that the integrated system may not work. Michelle asked whether a recommendation shared around a forum of those high-level policy makers, including the Governor’s office, about this very issue would help determine the level of commitment. Tina concluded, ultimately, it needs to be decided what we are going to do to make it work; otherwise admit it and give back the money.

Ruthanne Cox-Carothers asked, given that One-Stop personnel don’t have the education or background of a VR counselor, do we expect the ‘system’ to train them, and is that where we need to go? While she said she believes One-Stops need to be available for people with disabilities who want to use them, as required by the ADA ( e.g., accessibility, via any website, etc.), should One-Stops be expected to duplicate the services of an expert system that does such a good job at what they do? She doesn’t believe that is a viable goal.

Sue Kuenzi said there needs to be a cultural shift to value people with disabilities more. She shared about the DAS Employment Initiative. They are partnering with VR to provide benefits counseling, etc. on a one-on-one basis, oftentimes in the office. Sue was invited to attend an Employment Initiative workers focus group. She was dismayed to hear the number of them who said they weren’t confident of their abilities with the benefits issue. As one who has accessed the Employed Persons with Disabilities Program she has seen much inconsistency in information. A major revision of that system is required to maintain high standards and make accurate information available to the consumers. There also need to be case managers, VR counselors, and Employment Initiative people who are ‘versed’ well enough to give accurate information. There needs to be better communication, because that information is critical for individuals with more severe or progressive illnesses. In her opinion, if you can’t get accurate information from those who are supposed to providing it, it doesn’t work.

Cynthia Owens agreed - noting that these shortcomings affect all of the fields that we're working in, e.g., the DD brokerages. As much as the agents are trained in benefits issues, they're not very well versed. It's not something in which transition teachers in school can be trained and be proficient; it's not their area. This all affects eligibility, as well as the benefits available to our clients. Cynthia believes curriculum must be developed that "benefits-people," with the knowledge of all the work incentives, tax credits, etc., be made available around the state. Lu Ann Anderson said it would help if those individuals were in the employee cadre that already exists, because many of the persons who do that now are independent contractors; therefore, their fees are probably prohibitive to those who need that service the most. **Michelle agreed to craft some recommendations from these issues.**

Stephaine suggested to Michelle that the message should also include the need to expand the pool of available benefits planners. The issue isn't only about maintaining who we have, because there just aren't enough of them statewide.

Following up on Lu Ann's observation, someone pointed out that in the suggested revisions to the Home and Community based waiver the brokerages are using, is payment for the services of people who can perform benefit analysis, recommendations, tax plans, etc., because brokerages can't do that at present. Additionally, having trained planners to pay would be very welcome.

Barbara Fields suggested beefing-up Area of Need #2 in the report. She felt that while Michelle's comments to the SRC emphasized the need for clients to be able to develop self-advocacy skills, which she said would be generally useful in the work world and also specifically beneficial for the clients to use in their relationship with their VR counselor, that goal was not apparent in reading the Needs Assessment recommendations. Barbara believes those skills are at the heart of the Rehabilitation Act's requirement for informed decision-making. **Michelle agreed that the full report's recommendation focuses on the counselor, rather than the clients, and that component will be revised.**

### Local Office Update

Peter Norman, Manager of the Newport OVRs Office, reported that he is pleased to be selected to manage the coast area. There are challenges due to complete staff changes during the past three years, new hire training, long-term leaves, and anticipated counselor retirements that require him to manage a caseload in addition to his normal duties. There is one current job opening in the Corvallis office. Peter is pleased that Progressive Options has established itself as an Independent Living Center in the area and looks forward to a close relationship with them. He is also glad to see renewed attention on Supported Employment, and he has been training new staff in its benefits and details.

Frank Miera introduced himself as a 'transplant' from Utah, with a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling, as well as the CRC. With 18 years of experience in Utah and three in Oregon, he was happy to report his belief that we do a 'much better job' in Oregon. As an example, Frank related the successful placement of a client, referred to him via the Employment Office, who found Occupational Job Training after a 7 yr. hiatus, following a farming accident that left him in a wheelchair.

Lauren Smith, one of the new counselors Peter Norman hired this past year, has her Master's in Marriage & Family Therapy and spent 2 years as a disability services case manager in the Albany area. Lauren works a lot with the Youth Transition Program. She is also working with a job developer to establish job clubs for YTP and other transition kids, soon after the first of 2005. Lauren is building a relationship with the Resource Connections of Oregon Brokerage. She is also working with another counselor to develop client accommodations, until the new rehabilitation plan becomes effective.

John Anderson, a VR counselor in Corvallis & Newport, pointed out that Oregon is known for the amount of small-business and self-employment activity it has. John maintains that disabled people in Oregon, especially in non-urban areas, are more likely to be self-employed. Given economic conditions on the coast, John believes self-employment is a viable option. He noted that one year ago, 70% of 35 self-employed clients were still in business.

John recently had the opportunity to work with the self-employment workgroup within OVRs. His assignment was to develop a central information resource for counselors. His primary solution is a web-based

training resource for counselors, although he notes there are important viable alternatives, e.g., mentoring, incentives for outside training, as well as additional in-house self-employment training.

The model John used was taken from the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment in a paper on Self-Employment in the United States Vocational Rehabilitation Programs, including the suggested building blocks. Those building blocks included: an internal policy on self-employment, an emphasis of counselor training, an understanding of client and market potential, tech assistance, financial services, and tracking/monitoring.

His website is built on that model and includes appropriate resources in each category. If and when policy changes allow use of the website for counselor training, John would like to integrate more resources that would reinforce and clarify some of the policies relating to each area of a self-employment goal, such as feasibility. He noted there are significant information resources available for small businesses and disabled business owners. As an example of one of the good resources for VR counselors who are assisting individuals seeking self-employment, he spoke of the University of Montana Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities, which published a manual titled "Self-Employment Steps for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors: Helping a Consumer Start a Business." The manual is available free online.

<http://selfemploymenttraining.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/>

John reported the use of already available forms, checklists, spreadsheets, calculators and how-to-guides really help in the process, plus they increase your confidence, as well as the consumer's confidence in you. As a result, they facilitate the dialog, improve understanding, and hasten the decision-making process. Consequently, it's a lot of fun, which helps, because you're not intimidated anymore and you're able to hand-off something that takes the process to the next step. John hopes his office becomes known for excelling in small business development for disabled persons, and offers his assistance.

### **Public Input**

Max Claunch of Sutherlin said he was reporting back to the SRC to follow up on his 2004 February appearance before the Council. He reapplied for

services in Roseburg. He informed the SRC members that his perception was that OVRs office staff continues to be unsupportive of his self-employment plan, has not provided him with any rehabilitation services, and are not doing their job. He also believes that statements by Ted Swigart, Field Services Manager, and Amy Kincaid, Roseburg branch office manager, were not helpful. His dissatisfaction over what he believes are "systemic violations" of his rights led him to file a lawsuit against the Department of Human Services and OVRs, with the help of the Client Assistance Program (CAP). Acknowledging the Council's inability to intercede in individual client disputes, Mr. Claunch maintained that many of the abuses he spoke of were systemic and would be reiterated by other consumers present in the room who also planned to address the Council.

Jamie Sanchez spoke on behalf of her husband, Joseph, another Roseburg OVRs client. Mrs. Sanchez stated that she and Joseph, who has been 'in plan' for about a year, have done nothing but fight with the Roseburg office staff the entire time. Citing what she believes is another systemic issue, she asserts that OVRs staff deny client service requests on the grounds they are "inappropriate" or "illegal." She states that neither of those bases are supported by the Code of Federal Regulations that controls OVRs' actions.

Jamie stated that VR underwrote the costs to enable Joseph to meet with a mental health counselor. When disputes arose concerning that treatment and Mr. Sanchez' requests, Jamie states OVRs staff failed to respond to questions and e-mails, but required formal hearings, etc.; a number of actions that further distressed Joseph's mental health. Furthermore, after those formal hearings, Ms. Sanchez contends OVRs requested inappropriate reviews, intending to overturn the hearing officers' decisions in favor of the client, as well as negate their right to a fair hearing. She alleges this happens repeatedly in a number of unrelated cases with others as well.

Following a bout of severe attention-deficit disorder that Joseph experienced in the spring of 2004, he requested the use of a Palm Pilot personal digital assistant. The Sanchez's are upset that OVRs first spent \$500.00 on an ATI assessment, and then finally agreed to provide the Palm Pilot, which had been his mental health counselor's recommendation, but only after their hearing date was set.

Mrs. Sanchez provided additional instances of slow, or no response from OVRs to their requests. Citing information from Kathy West-Evans that systemic issues are the responsibility of the Council to resolve, Mrs. Sanchez criticized the Council for failing to act after originally being notified in February 2004 of these problems.

Betsy Cunningham spoke on behalf of her husband, Glenn Sheppard, a client of the Roseburg OVRs field office. In February 2004, they presented several concerns to the SRC with the belief they would be corrected, but that hasn't happened. She said that at the time, they hoped the problems were only symptomatic of a local office with a manager who was ill-suited for the position. Unfortunately, she said they have discovered a history of mismanagement that is so pervasive that even the current Administrator cannot entertain the notion that the system there is not broken, which she said they believe with certainty.

Betsy said that earlier we heard reports that there may be a population for whom the system is not broken, but the population who is here today from Douglas County represents people with attention deficit hyperactive disorder, specific learning disabilities, and cognitive and/or mental health issues. Ms. Cunningham outlined several systemic issues that she feels extend throughout the organization, up to the Director of Human Services, Gary Weeks. She also alluded to the lawsuit filed by Mr. Claunch on Oct. 27, 2004, that seeks to overturn a decision by Mr. Weeks.

The group of which Ms. Cunningham is a member will present their representative experiences as they attempted to access services from VR here in Oregon. The following are some of the issues she raised during the meeting:

- We question the level of OVRs training and knowledge of borderline personality disorders, ADD, ADHD, learning disabilities, borderline cognitive disabilities, mental health issues, etc.
- She asked rhetorically, "Isn't my Plan OVRs's Plan?" She said that what they have seen is "a very paternalistic attitude, summed up in the Administrator's statement, 'you people don't respect our authority,' when we met with her in June." Ms. Cunningham countered that "OVRs's concern is that we don't respect their expertise. Actually, we expect their expertise, but what we have

found is that it [the expectation] has not been met.” At that point, she said the client has the absolute right to question what is being done for him or her, and whether the counselor, or the services being provided, are addressing their needs.

- She said when a client comes in with a defined plan, knowing what they can do more than any OVRs staff they’ve encountered, they find that money is more important than the clients’ needs. Every client they have encountered has been made to believe by his or her VR counselor that there’s a financial limit on the amount of services that can be provided. For example, during a recent conversation Ms. Cunningham had with Ken Thorland, Eugene OVRs branch manager, (who currently manages her husband’s file), Mr. Thorland said, “We only have a limited amount of money we can spend on each client.” She replied, “No, Ken . . . it is very clear in federal law that an Individualized Plan for Employment must accommodate and serve individual client needs.” This is a policy issue.
- Betsy said there has also been a failure to provide appropriate transportation, particularly in rural areas. OVRs wants to limit transportation, or force clients to take an inappropriate bus system.
- Communication is also one-sided: they tell you what to do, expect you to do it and respond to questions with inaccurate answers, or not at all.
- Other concerns: demeaning, condescending behavior; inappropriate behind-the-back gossip about clients and their representatives (about which we do have independent verification); do not provide appropriate or adequate rehabilitation; do not provide appropriate accommodations for disabilities; they retaliate against clients and client advocates. She said that as the SRC must be aware, OVRs administration has come to the Council seeking passage of an Administrative Rule to limit the rights to the representative of their choice. Ms. Cunningham stated that is in direct conflict with federal law, which specifically enumerates that right for a client.

- They “guilt-trip” clients when they ask for services, e.g., Glenn Sheppard was speaking with his counselor recently about the purchase of a vehicle, which is allowable under federal law. The counselor responded that if they bought a car for him, they would need to do so for other clients they serve.
- Failed to provide others of services required by law.

“These are systemic problems that happen sufficiently often enough in Douglas County to warrant a full investigation,” Betsy said, “and we ask that you address our concerns. We believe the Council has the power and the legal obligation to do so. We request the Council to do a full and open investigation of all of our complaints, enumerate every specific fact, and then make those findings available to the public.” She said they have contacted every federal and state agency that oversees OVRS and those things are in the works. They have contacted their Congressman and state agencies, but ultimately, as Ms. Cunningham reads the regulations regarding what the Council is supposed to do, that seems to be an appropriate request to them.

Rhonda Walker of Progressive Options said she received her training to work with developmentally disabled people from Western Washington Center for Continuing Education, Ellensburg, WA. She worked with a large agency there for 12 years before relocating to Oregon. Her attempts to work as a DD support contractor in Yachats were unsuccessful because her philosophy did not match that of OVRS. For about 8 years after that, Ms. Walker worked as an advocate for individuals on the Oregon Health Plan. Presently she is Operations Manager for Progressive Options and represents a population that needs training in Lincoln County. Ms. Walker asserts there is no training available, yet \$1000s are misspent sending clients out of the county. With the state budget shortfalls, she said we need OVRS to instruct their counselors and staff to save those dollars and train people locally.

Marge Waley stated that her daughter is a VR client. She is concerned that the 20 hours of employment per week her daughter receives via OVRS is insufficient. If possible, Ms. Waley believes OVRS should provide “back-up” employment, because the job her daughter had for one year ended when the employer’s tax credit ended. She is currently employed while attending

college, but will need OVRs support after school, preferably full time work to enable self-support.

Gwinette Hamlet, Progressive Options, Advisory Board Chair, said she is a hearing impaired OVRs client. Ms. Hamlet stated that OVRs needs to be more aware and sensitive of hearing impaired issues, re: communication skills, equipment, and self-employment. She feels OVRs should work "with" the client; not require the client to do all of the work. Pointing out that hearing-impaired and the disabled are generally the ones who seek assistance from VR; therefore, OVRs should not undermine the confidence of hearing-impaired clients by setting up limits and obstacles.

Ms. Hamlet is attempting to gain self-employment doing air-brush painting on motor vehicles and her supplies have cost more than \$4,000. OVRs has limited the amount of support they will provide to \$1500.00. After a year of frustration with the lack of progress she was making in trying to work with OVRs, Progressive Options put her in contact with the Client Assistance Program (CAP). CAP interceded and in further meetings with OVRs, the agency agreed that the level of support should be unlimited.

After submitting a proposal to locate and obtain workshop space, Ms. Hamlet says VR told her "we have a long way to go before we can even help you," at which time the counselor began putting papers before her to ensure there are sprinklers, etc. The counselor also required that Gwynette obtain additional training in Corvallis one day a week. Ms. Hamlet pointed out that she has attended college to learn air-brushing, that she also worked with her step-father and brother in auto painting, and as a result already has the knowledge. It appears to her that the counselor's requests are arbitrary and unnecessary. She also requested appropriate communications equipment, e.g., a vibrating phone & pager, but VR responded that they would loan her a computer that she doesn't want.

Naomi Shadwick manages Progressive Options, the local center for independent living. She said she was here for a moral and administration issue. Many are aware of the Navigator program to create more bureaucracy between the disabled and resources. She is frustrated that the position has been filled without an open and competitive announcement and hiring process.

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### **Performance Data Update**

Aaron Hughes said his narrative report is essentially a description of the charts included in their meeting packets. Every year OVRs submits federal information. While the overall caseload numbers are down, it's a positive change for our program. Average wages are up, but average hours of work are down and the success rate is down, although we are above the national benchmark. This is a snapshot of our program during the federal fiscal year. Our number of employed are up.

Bennett Johnson commented that the total increase of eight in the number of rehabilitated people wasn't a very significant number of people, given that there are considerable dollars invested and a growing number of interested employers. She said it seems like there needs to be better outreach and promotion of educating employers. Aaron said that for the past five years the numbers have gone down, and this is the first year of improvement. Stephaine Taylor said the federal benchmarks aren't our goal. Tina Treasure asked why people who are employed for 90 days are closed out as employed. Stephaine Taylor said the reasons for some of that in Portland was an increase in corrections populations, i.e., some people 'shopping', who decide there are insufficient benefits. Ted Swigart said moving applicants from eligible to an IEP is a problem due to new staff. Ruthanne Cox-Carothers commented there are quite a few referrals from TANF, but many don't really want to work. Barbara Fields asked if we can see where referrals come from; a longitudinal study? David Ritacco reported that their problem is in the processing — moving from eligibility to an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Stephaine Taylor said they have used some temps, but the ramp-up time for counselors is inefficient. Tina Treasure asked if there is any chance of using retirees to clear-up the backlog and Stephaine said some retirees have been returning to help out.

### **Case Flow Training**

Stephaine Taylor provided a handout titled "The Steps on the Path to Employment." She gave a PowerPoint presentation on the subject. The handout is available upon request. There was discussion regarding the OVRs intake process.

Guy Goode commented that if the client has little understanding of the impact of their disability on their life and you've asked them to dream up a

vocational goal, this can create conflict with the client, especially if the goal they come up with is something the counselor can't support. Conflict is a part of the rehab process. Tina Treasure said that many people don't understand the "rehabilitation" component, or how long it takes. VR began with the rehabilitation of disabled veterans. Stephaine Taylor commented that VR is changing behaviors that affect all aspects of their environment, and it's a huge piece of work.

Sue Kuenzi commented that counselors sometimes put up barriers so the counselor can get their own feet under them. Tina Treasure asked if there is a comprehensive training program in place, or in planning to bring all the new people up to speed. Lynnae Ruttledge answered that Cheryl Furrer, the new VR Training Specialist, has been collecting training needs assessment from all stakeholders to implement during the next year. VR is also partnering with ORAN to identify training to find ways to do that. Lynnae also explained the Flexibility Toolkit that was developed under the RSA grant, and said it is available to any SRC member who would like one.

Barbara Fields shared that eligibility is a huge subject and she would like to acknowledge how the conflict issue isn't always addressed well. Both Rosemary & Barbara use their mediation skills to try and repair the relationship between the client and VR. The Client Assistance Program (CAP) may not always be the answer, but CAP at least tries to hold up the client long enough until their 'wings' start working. We believe that the more information and decision making power the client has, the better things work in the long run. Ted Swigart said he is unaware of any counselors who think of CAP as a 'bulldog'. He feels the relationship has improved over the last few years and VR and CAP have been able to collaborate. Roxie Choroser said VR works and she shared how in her junior year of high school, a new counselor got her involved with VR and enabled her to go thru school and earn her Masters degree.

John Dziennik said he wanted to follow-up on the training issue and wondered if we can set up an intensive, one-day training? Barbara Fields commented that the SRC had talked about a retreat and Lu Ann Anderson asked about the joint meeting with the SILC and the SRC. Tina reminded the Council that the joint SRC/SILC meeting had been canceled due to schedule conflicts of many on both Councils as well as the fact that Rhoda and Shelly had been unable to find a facility that would meet the accommodation needs of both Councils. **The SRC Exec Committee**

**decided that logistically it would be easier for the SRC and SILC Executive Committees to meet and report back to their Councils.** It was thought that the two committees could meet approximately 6 weeks after the legislative session has begun as by then they would know more about what issues are being looked at and planning would be much more direct and productive.

John Dziennik asked if those people interested in working on the CSPD issue would let Rhoda know. Stephaine Taylor said if she was to prioritize, CSPD would not be at the top as it needs to play out at the national level.

Tina Treasure stated that because of the access issues, maybe the **SRC Exec Committee should communicate directly with the SILC Executive Committee in reviewing issues for the Rehab Act Reauthorization.** Stephaine Taylor said that after John and Ted return from the CSAVR Conference they will know better as to what issues are being discussed at the national level. Tina Treasure said that many people in the field are confused about the CSPD issue and agrees with Linda's comment that **the CSPD issue *is* urgent in this reauthorization; it could put us one step closer to the DOL model. Tina feels it is critical that the SRC keep an eye on this issue.**

Lu Ann Anderson asked if the Council needs to wait until January to plan for the Legislature. John Dziennik said that he and Ted would report back after the CSAVR conference regarding what could be legislative issues. John feels that because the State Legislature doesn't get to their 'serious' work until March-April we have some time. He said the SILC and the SRC Executive Committees plan to meet approximately 6 weeks after the legislative session has begun to discuss issues that have come to the forefront.

Tina Treasure stated that it does seem most important that **the 'bubble' of money issue be dealt with soon.** Barbara Fields asked Stephaine if she is the one who will make the decision as to how the "bubble" money is spent. Stephaine Taylor said if we have discretion, it's our call. She thinks there are pluses and minuses to it and hopefully it will get us some leverage in the department. John asked who on the Council wished to be a part of the discussion regarding the "bubble" money and it was the consensus that due to the timeliness of the issue, the SRC Executive

Committee would need to take the lead and represent the SRC on this issue.

A discussion began about how the SRC could best assist OVRS in the upcoming legislative session. Barbara Fields said a meeting or **some way to stay briefed on the OVRS' budget is needed so we can all speak to the Legislature with the same voice.** John Dziennik agreed that speaking with a common voice is good and asked who was willing to participate on that issue. Stephaine Taylor said regarding the legislature, we need to be "on-message."

John Dziennik asked the full SRC again who was interested in being **involved in the issues of the bubble money and the legislative issues. Lu Ann Anderson and Cynthia Owens expressed an interest.** The Executive Committee will take the lead and notify the others when the issue(s) are scheduled to be addressed. John Dziennik said that he will be unavailable for the next Executive Committee mtg. so that committee may need to reschedule. It was agreed that while CSPD needed to be addressed as soon as possible, NO change in the state plan is being proposed at this time.

Rhoda Hunter reported on the vote for the new members (Jackie Burr, Bob Craft, Guy Goode) – all were voted on unanimously and Scott Whetham was approved unanimously for his second term with one abstention. Rhoda will let the Council know when the Governor's office takes action on the above recommendations. (Done)

The next quarterly meeting will be held on February 4, 2005 at the Best Western Mill Creek Inn, Salem.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Bruce Melendy.