Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council
Quarterly Meeting Minutes
September 21, 2017

Attendees

Council Members: Christopher Paslay, Chair; Keith Vire; Addie Edwards; Craig Reinhardt; David Maples; Lisa Haley; Tom Masseau; Alan McClain, Commissioner.

ARS Staff: Deputy Commissioner Joe Baxter; Carl Daughtery; Ashley Cross; Chip McAfee; Jonathan Bibb; Judy Smith; Rodney Chandler; Nathan Winter; James McCune; Jim Moreland; Freddie Harshaw; Bernice Gunter.

Guest(s): Morgan Aldridge, Governor’s Office; Dr. Charisse Childers, Director, Arkansas Department of Career Education; Juli Nelson, District Manager, TJ MAXX

Call to Order:
State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Chair, Christopher Paslay, declared a quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Mr. Paslay welcomed all present.

Approval of Minutes
At the request of Mr. Paslay, council members reviewed the minutes of the most recent meeting. A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made and seconded. The motion passed.

Comments from Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) Commissioner – Alan McClain:
Commissioner McClain welcomed all council members and thanked them for their support of ARS. He informed the Council that the meeting would be conducted differently than its usual format with agency update presentations being included as part of a panel of ARS senior managers.

Ms. Juli Nelson-District Manager, TJ MAXX: Ms. Ashley Cross, ARS Corporate Accounts Representative within the Business Engagement section introduced Ms. Juli Nelson. She indicated that Ms. Nelson was a District Manager with TJ MAXX covering Arkansas and North Louisiana and a founding member and current board member of the Arkansas Business Leadership Network. Ms. Nelson discussed the partnership between TJ MAXX and ARS. She stated she was excited about the fact that the Business Leadership Network (BLN) has been officially approved in Arkansas. She related that the BLN was a national, non-profit organization
that helps businesses drive performance by leveraging disability inclusion in the workplace, supply chain, and marketplace. She informed the Council of the four BLN pillars: (1) Certification, in which businesses can receive assistance in becoming certified; (2) Trusted Advisor; where businesses are given advice and tools to effectively leverage disability inclusion in the workplace; (3) a Bridge, where connection is made between business and people with disabilities and (4) Recognition, that highlights businesses for their proven commitment and good corporate citizenship. Ms. Nelson indicated that the Business Leadership Network (BLN) is an affiliate local educational organization. Affiliates engage in networking discussions to increase their knowledge of community outreach, recruiting and interviewing, the accommodation process and barriers to employment. By participating in a business to business dialog, employers learn how to leverage their organizations for success. She related that being a part of the BLN sends a message to the community that the business is committed to including people with disabilities in the workforce. She thanked the ARS for their support of the BLN. Ms. Nelson also informed the Council that she was able to attend the USBLN Conference in Orlando, Florida on August 21st – 24th along with Rodney Chandler, Business Engagement Director and Ms. Cross.

**Program Update-Panel Discussion:**
Deputy Commissioner Joe Baxter informed the Council that ARS serve clients with disabilities and helps prepare them to work and lead productive and independent lives. He indicated that in the presentation to follow each section leader would provide information regarding how each section supports ARS’s mission and what is done specifically to assist Arkansans with disabilities in their effort to remain at work or preparation to go to work. He then introduced panel members to include Judy Smith, Program Manager for Project Search and the PROMISE Grant; Jonathan Bibb, Administrator of the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI); Carl Daughtery, Chief of Field Services; Rodney Chandler, Director of the Business Engagement section; and Nathan Winter, Associate Commissioner for Access & Accommodations.

To start the panel discussion Carl Daughtery, Chief of Field Services provided an overview of how clients gain access to ARS services. He informed Council members of the referral process and how eligibility is determined including income requirements. The conversation then transitioned to employment with panel members providing information as to how their section contributes to clients obtaining competitive integrated employment. The discussion included information about the collaboration between Field Services and Business Engagement as it relates to how businesses are engaged and how job placement occurs. Rodney Chandler provided an overview of Business Engagement and spoke of the dual-client approach to include ARS clients and business and industry. Nathan Winter provided an overview of Access and Accommodations. Judy Smith then reported on Project Search, the Promise Grant, and the Transitional Employment Program (TEP). The conversation then transitioned to Jonathan Bibb, Administrator of ACTI, who provided additional information on the TEP program, and the facility’s Vocational Training and Talent Development programs. In closing panel member discussed how their section supported the agency’s strategic goals and shared some of their major initiatives to meet those goals. Council members had several questions for panel members and communicated an appreciation of the format of the presentation.
Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Visit - Deputy Commissioner Joe Baxter:
Deputy Commissioner Baxter informed the Council of the recent RSA visit which occurred August 28th – 30th. He related that in his opinion things went about as well as could be expected and that no official communication had been received from RSA since the visit.

Election of SRC Chairman and Co-Chairman: Chairman Christopher Paslay informed the Council of its need to elect a Chair and Co-Chair. After much consideration Christopher Paslay was elected to serve another term as Chairman and Mr. David Maples was elected as Co-Chairman.

Announcements
Due to the Christmas holidays, the Council voted to hold its next meeting on Thursday, December 7, 2017 instead of December 21, 2017.

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