

Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council (ORC) Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

The Executive Committee Meeting took place on Thursday, June 17, 2021, at 9 am, via Zoom.

Attendees: Lori Chesnut, Tim Yeahquo, Shelley Gladden, Melinda Fruendt, Tracy Brigham, Mark Kinnison, Linda Jaco, and Carolina Colclasure.

Strategic Plan Review

Council Vacancies for FFY2021

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) position continues to be vacant. William Ginn presented the ORC report during SILC's April meeting, and it included a detailed description of the position and the time commitment for it. The ORC Program Manager (PM) also reached out to Chris Bruehl at the Governor's office and informed him that we have not heard from SILC regarding the replacement.

Two more positions will expire on September 1, 2021:

1. Steve Shepelwich – Workforce Board Member. Steve reapplied for a second term.
2. Jen Randle – Advocacy Group. Shelley Gladden is a member of the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) and has asked the Board if they have someone interested in joining the ORC. They will discuss this during their upcoming meeting in July.

DRS Executive Team Update

Mark Kinnison – Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has seen a significant increase in applications compared to this same time last year.

The waiting list releases have been done every two weeks instead of monthly; DRS has released more clients from Priority Group 2 utilizing this timeframe.

VR is still planning a move of their two biggest offices, the Tulsa office and the offices at Shepherd Center. The tentative date for the move has been pushed to July.

DRS is now in phase three of the re-opening plan. This means the Division Administrators (DA) have asked staff to resume their prior COVID-19 schedules and are working to make sure everyone feels comfortable and safe going back to the office and in-person meetings.

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) reimbursements for this year are at \$1.8 million; the hope is for it to be well over \$2 million by the end of the year.

Tracy Brigham – Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI)

The waiting list as of Monday, June 14 had 666 clients, or the lowest that's been seen in a while, which is very positive because there is an influx of applications.

SBVI is working with an architect to make the final decisions about the remodel at the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped to move the Shepherd Center offices there. The DA hopes it will be completed by the end of the year.

Melinda Fruendt – Executive Director

Director Fruendt shared that the VR office in Enid took on a special project where they found free dental care for their clients called Dental Smiles. The group was recognized during the June DRS Commission Meeting with Director certificates.

DRS was flat-funded this year, as the majority of the money went to education and the Oklahoma Health Care Authority to fund Medicaid.

In terms of legislation, DRS was watching three bills this last year. One of them was on allowing the state Board of Education to grant an exception to all certification examinations for teacher candidates who are deaf. It will enable the board to have rules and other requirements as necessary to grant exceptions. It got signed by the Governor on April 21.

The second one relates to the Social Security Disability Determination Services Division. It is a requirement that State Agencies obtain an exemption from the secure information security risk assessment. SSI has its own system, and DRS has to get exceptions every year from the Governor, so they don't oversee their information security system.

The third one pertains to the Jerri Cooper Act that was passed – but not funded – a few years back. It provided support to broaden the availability of support

service providers in the deaf-blind community, and DRS was selected to administer it. The Act was funded this year at \$250,000, and they moved the administration of it from DRS to the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS).

Oklahoma Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (OKTVR) Update

The OKTVR met via Zoom on April 28; they are planning to start meeting in person soon.

Several Tribes are waiting to hear if they will continue to receive Section 121 funding for FFY 22. The current grants end September 30 with the Federal Fiscal Year, and they expect the FFY 22 funding results announcement that same day.

Time and location for the next meeting

ORC Quarterly Meeting – Thursday, August 19 – 9:30 am at the DRS State Office and via Zoom.

Strategic Planning Meeting – Thursday, September 9 – 9:30 am via Zoom.