



Puerto Rico State Rehabilitation Council

December 17, 2021

Mrs. Carol Dobak
Commissioner
Rehabilitation Services Administration
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC

Greetings.

The Puerto Rico State Rehabilitation Council (PRSRC) is pleased to share with you its Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2020-2021. It contains relevant data on the activities carried out during the reference period.

The PRSRC reiterates its commitment towards the achievement of the well-being of people with disabilities, in particular the consumers who receive services from the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration of Puerto Rico.

If you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Cordially,

Sharon Ortiz Cardona, PhD/CPL
Executive Director

/mlc

Attachment

C: Mr. Terry Martin
Technical Assistance Specialist
U.S. Department of Education
Rehabilitation Services Administration



Puerto Rico State Rehabilitation Council

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Message from the Executive Director | i |
| Active Council Members; Fiscal Year 2020-2021 | ii |
| Executive Committee and Administrative Staff | iii |
| Vision, Mission, Values | 1 |
| Duties of Council | 2 |
| Achievements of the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 | 4 |
| Photos | 12 |
| | |

Message from the Executive Director

This fiscal year 2020-2021 was one of great growth and, at the same time, great challenges for the Puerto Rico State Rehabilitation Council (PRSRC). As a team, we are focused on fulfilling our mission. I am proud to have worked with professionals so committed to the population with disabilities, as well as to have been part of this challenge and of a team that strived to fulfill the accepted commitment.

I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute my experience and academic background in this important task of identifying the needs of people with disabilities, and providing advice to the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration to ensure the effectiveness of the services offered to this population.

As Executive Director, my goal continues to be for the Council to meet all mandates required by law and to encourage continuity of teamwork.



Sharon Ortiz Cardona, PhD/CPL

COUNCIL MEMBERS 2020-2021

| Name of Council Member | Represented Sector | CFR Section | Date of Appointment | Expiration Date of Appointment | Person with Disabilities | |
|---|---|----------------------|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| | | | | | Yes | No |
| Arleen Valcárcel Delgado | Representative of the VR counselors | 361.17(b)(1)(iv) | July 15, 2021 | July 14, 2024 | X | |
| Celia M. Pagán Torres | Representative of disability groups, Intercessor for people with disabilities | 361.17(b)(1)(vii)(A) | July 15, 2021 | July 14, 2024 | X | |
| Jessica Díaz Vázquez ----- Janet López De Jesús | Representatives of the State educational agency, Department of Education, Secretariat of Special Education | 361.17(b)(1)(x) | February 24, 2021 ----- June 17, 2021 | -- | | X |
| Grissel Ortiz Arroyo | Representative of the Client Assistance Program (CAP), Advocacy of People with Disabilities | 361.17(b)(1)(iii) | January 26, 2017 | -- | X | |
| Bermari Berberena | Representative of business, industry, and labor sector | 361.17(b)(1)(vi) | July 15, 2021 | July 14, 2024 | | X |
| Iris Rivera López | Representative of a parent training and information center (APNI) | 361.17(b)(1)(ii) | June 27, 2011 | -- | | X |
| Jenny Mar Cañón | Representative of the State workforce development board, Puerto Rico Department of Economic Development and Trade | 361.17(b)(1)(xi) | November 5, 2021 | -- | | X |
| Jhomar Cintrón Horta | Representative of recipients of VR services, active consumer of the VRA | 361.17(b)(1)(viii) | December 11, 2018 | December 10, 2021 | X | |
| José A. Pargas Ojeda | Representative of business, industry, and labor sector | 361.17(b)(1)(vi) | July 15, 2021 | July 14, 2024 | X | |
| Marilyn Jiménez | Representative of a community rehabilitation program service provider | 361.17(b)(1)(v) | July 15, 2021 | July 14, 2024 | X | |
| David Figueroa Betancourt | Representative of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) | 361.17(b)(1)(i) | January 19, 2021 | --- | X | |

| Name of Council Member | Represented Sector | CFR Section | Date of Appointment | Expiration Date of Appointment | Person with Disabilities | |
|------------------------------|---|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| | | | | | Yes | No |
| Viviana Torres Dávila | Representative of the designated state unit, Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (VRA) | 361.17(b)(1)(xii) | April 21, 2016 | -- | | X |
| Yessica M. Guardiola Marrero | Representative of business, industry, and labor sector | 361.17(b)(1)(vi) | December 11, 2018 | December 10, 2021 | X | |

Executive Committee 2020-2021
(From October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021)

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| <u>Yessica M. Guardiola Marrero</u> | President |
| <u>Celia M. Pagán Torres</u> | Vice President |
| <u>Grissel Ortiz Arroyo</u> | Treasurer |
| <u>Jhomar Cintrón Horta</u> | Secretary |

Administrative Staff

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <u>Sharon L. Ortiz Cardona</u> | Executive Director |
| <u>Luis Orlando Pietri</u> | Accountant |
| <u>María Laura Cabrera</u> | Administrative Assistant |



ANNUAL REPORT FY 2020-2021

VISION

Within the range and diversity of the sectors represented, the Council seeks to guarantee the excellence of the services offered by the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (VRA) in order to integrate its consumers into the workforce and into a more independent living.

MISSION

Review, analyze and advise the Designated State Unit (Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (VRA)) in the fulfillment and performance of its responsibilities.

VALUES

We, the members of the Council, believe that people with disabilities should and can:

- ✓ Fully develop their potential;
- ✓ Be participating members of the community, assuming a valuable role with the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens; and
- ✓ Integrate into the labor, social and economic endeavor.

FUNCTIONS

The Council will carry out the following functions in compliance with the provisions of Title I of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* (P.L. 93-112), as amended, and the mandate of the State Workforce Investment Board:

- ✓ Review, analyze and advise the VRA in the performance of its functions.
- ✓ Ensure the effectiveness of the services provided to eligible persons with disabilities.
- ✓ Collaborate with the VRA in the performance of the goals and priorities in accordance with Section 101(a)(15)(c) of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, as amended.
- ✓ Identify the needs of people with disabilities.
- ✓ Organize and carry out orientation activities for people with disabilities.
- ✓ Encourage collaboration with other State organizations and interested sectors.
- ✓ Analyze the satisfaction of the applicants/consumers of the VRA in terms of:
 - *The services provided by the VRA with the funds of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.*

- *The vocational rehabilitation services offered by public and private entities.*
- *The employability of eligible persons with disabilities who receive services, including the availability of health and other benefits in employment.*
- *The drafting of an annual report to be sent to the Governor, the Designated State Unit (VRA), and the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) on the status of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Have said report available in different alternate formats for the public at large, including accessible format, in accordance with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), as amended.*

ACHIEVEMENTS OF FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021

COMPOSITION OF COUNCIL –

- We started the fiscal year with nine (9) members on the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). At the end of the fiscal year, we had thirteen (13) appointed Council members.
- As part of the main functions of the Council during the fiscal year, six (6) ordinary meetings and two (2) extraordinary meetings were held. These meetings were held, for the most part, virtually through the Teams digital platform, except for one (1) meeting that was held in-person. The meetings were held on the following dates:

Ordinary Meetings:

- ✓ November 12, 2020 - Virtual
- ✓ January 12, 2021 - Virtual
- ✓ March 9, 2021 - Virtual
- ✓ May 11, 2021 - Virtual
- ✓ July 14, 2021 - Virtual
- ✓ September 15, 2021- In-Person

Extraordinary Meetings:

- ✓ September 10, 2021 - Virtual
- ✓ September 22, 2021 – Virtual

- In order to organize and be assertive in the Council's efforts, we have the following working committees:
 - Executive Committee;
 - Finance Committee;
 - Committee of Educational and Dissemination Activities; and
 - Legislation and Public Policy Committee.

The following are some efforts and achievements of the Committees:

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee held several meetings during the year with the purpose of discussing administrative matters and achieving the fulfillment of the established goals. The dates of the meetings and the matters discussed were the following:

- ✓ On October 28 of 2020, the Executive Committee met to discuss the change of owner of Santander Bank, the annual work plan, and the annual report, among other related matters.
- ✓ On December 18 of 2020, the Executive Committee met to discuss matters related to the vacancies on the SRC and the annual report.
- ✓ On April 30 of 2021, the Executive Committee met to discuss the participation of the committee members in the work of the SRC.

Committee of Educational and Dissemination Activities

The Committee of Educational and Dissemination Activities held several meetings with the purpose of planning activities, including the annual educational activity. The dates of the meetings and the purposes were the following:

- ✓ On May 14 of 2021, the Committee met to know the budget allocated for educational activities and to establish the date and main theme for the annual educational activity.
- ✓ On June 17 of 2021, the Committee met to identify topics and resources for the annual educational activity workshops and the audience to impact.
- ✓ On July 1 of 2021, the Committee met to identify the moderator, platform and main theme for the annual educational activity.
- ✓ On August 5 of 2021, the Committee met with the coordinator of the educational activity to find out what is lacking in aspects related to coordination and to work on continuing education credits for VR counselors.
- ✓ On September 2 of 2021, the Committee met to carry out a practice of the platform to be used for the annual educational activity.
- ✓ On September 10 of 2021, the Committee met to organize the activity program.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee held several meetings for the purpose of planning the annual educational activity. The dates of the meetings and purposes were as follows:

- ✓ On April 13 of 2021, the Committee met to discuss the 2020-2021 Fiscal Year budget and the funds remaining from the previous fiscal year.
- ✓ On September 22 of 2021, the Committee met with the accountant of the SRC to discuss the budget request for fiscal year 2021-2022.

Legislation and Public Policy Committee

- ✓ This Committee reviewed several informative and normative communications from the VRA which were shared with the PRSRC. They are described below:

| Communication Number | Title |
|--|--|
| Informative Communication No. 2021-05 | <i>REFERRALS TO THE CENTERS OF SUPPORT AND EMPLOYMENT MODES</i> |
| Informative Communication No. 2021-06 | <i>AUTO BUSINESS PROGRAM OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARIAT OF TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT PROMOTION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR</i> |
| Normative Communication No. 2021-10 | <i>AMENDMENT TO NORMATIVE COMMUNICATION 2019-05: PROCEDURE TO PROVIDE THE SERVICE OF JOB CLUBS TO THE CONSUMERS OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION ADMINISTRATION READY FOR EMPLOYMENT (ATTACHMENTS)</i> |

| Communication Number | Title |
|--|---|
| Normative Communication No. 2021-13 | <i>AVAILABILITY OF INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES THROUGH INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS AND PROVIDERS AND REFERRAL FORM OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE FROM THE VRA</i> |
| *Normative Communication DRAFT | <i>DOCUMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION OF EMPLOYMENT AND SALARY (STATUS 22 AND 26)</i> |

*Members of this Committee provided recommendations to the shared draft communication. These recommendations were accepted by the representative of the VRA in the SRC, who wrote the communication. Subsequently, the communication was published with number 2022-02.

ORIENTATIONS TO THE PRSRC –

In order to make the Council members aware of different issues related to the population with disabilities and to keep them updated, three (3) educational orientations were carried out. These were the following:

- ✓ On May 11 of 2021 – Presentation of the Federal Report of the Client Assistance Program (CAP) for the 2019-2020 Fiscal Year by Mrs. Grissel Ortiz Arroyo, Intercessor for People with Disabilities II, Advocacy of People with Disabilities.
- ✓ On July 14 of 2021 – Presentation of the *Guidebook for State Rehabilitation Council Chairpersons, Members, and Administrators* (2019) by the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils

(NCSRC). This presentation was carried out by Mrs. Sharon Ortiz, Executive Director of the PRSRC.

- ✓ On September 22 of 2021 – Presentation of the findings of the Study of the Needs of Vocational Rehabilitation Services carried out by the Énfasis company.

PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES –

- ✓ On March 10 and 12 of 2021, the Executive Director of the SRC participated in APNI Annual Conference. APNI is the acronym for Apoyo a Padres de Niños con Impedimentos (Support for Parents of Children with Disabilities). The Conference was on the “Rights of Children and Young People with Disabilities and Distance Learning.”

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY –

On September 10 of 2021, our annual educational activity for community rehabilitation programs and VR counselors was carried out virtually, through the Teams platform, with the theme "Educate and Empower Yourself About Independent Living Services and Transition to Adult Life." Approximately two hundred and twenty-two (222) people participated in this activity.

The topics developed were:

- ✓ "Vocational Rehabilitation Services and their Eligibility Requirements," presented by Mrs. Damaris Rivera of the VRA.
- ✓ "Independent Living Services Available to Individuals Who Qualify for Vocational Rehabilitation Services," presented by Mrs. Nellyber Correa of the Movimiento para el Alcance de Vida Independiente (MAVI).

MEETINGS WITH THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION ADMINISTRATION (VRA) –

The PRSRC recognizes that to fulfill its role as the voice of consumers, it is necessary to work hand in hand with the VRA. Therefore, a meeting was requested with the agency administrator and her support staff so that we were allowed a space of their time to listen to our contributions for the benefit of the population with disabilities.

- ✓ On May 19 of 2021 – A meeting was held with the following officials: Sonia Hernández, CRC, Administrator of the VRA; Wandeliz Otero, CRC, Assistant Administrator (VRA); Viviana Torres, CRC, Representative of the VRA in the SRC; Yessica Guardiola, Esq., President of the PRSRC; Mrs. Celia Pagán, Vice President of the PRSRC; Mrs. Grissel Ortiz, Treasurer of the PRSRC; Mr. Jhomar Cintrón, Secretary of the PRSRC; and Mrs. Sharon Ortiz, Executive Director of the PRSRC. The purpose of

the meeting was to introduce ourselves to the incoming government administration at the VRA in 2021, explain the role of the SRC, and discuss matters related to the communication between the agency (VRA) and the PRSRC.

PARTICIPATION IN TELECONFERENCES –

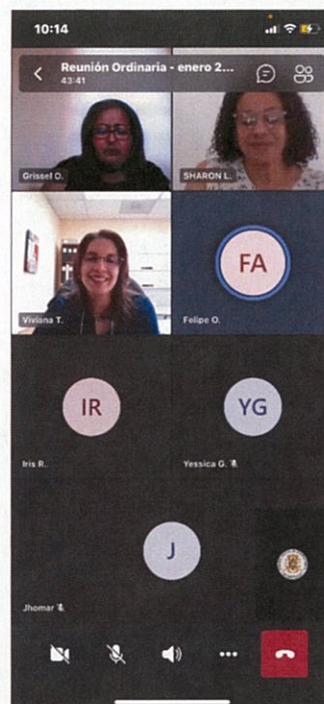
As part of our duties, we try to keep up to date with everything related to the services offered to the population we represent. That is why we have participated in several teleconferences to which we were summoned as a Council. Among these, the following:

- ✓ December 9 of 2020 –Training teleconference of the NCSRC on "Duties of the Chairperson."
- ✓ February 10 of 2021 –Teleconference on "Structuring our Meeting and What Information Should We Have for Conducting a Successful SRC Meeting."
- ✓ May 19 of 2021 – Training teleconference of the NCSRC on "Best Practices: What Are the 8 Mandates and Review of the Law."
- ✓ June 9 of 2021 –Training teleconference on bylaws of Council.

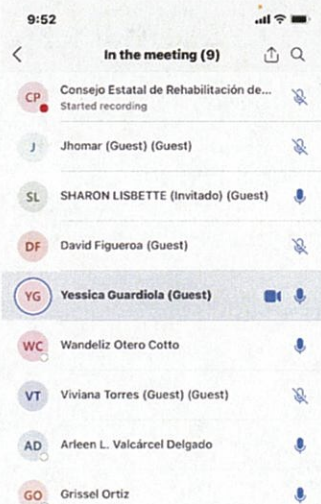
PHOTOS

ORDINARY MEETINGS

Ordinary Meeting – January 12, 2021 (via Microsoft Teams)



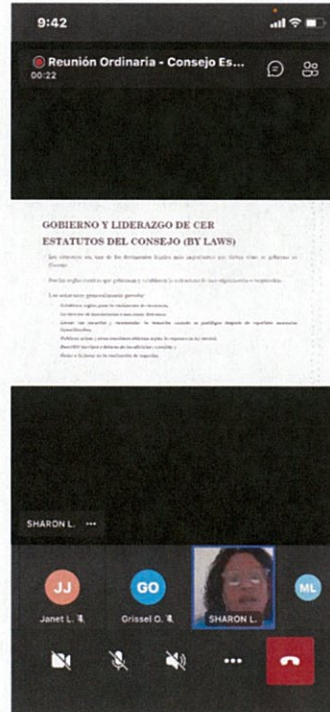
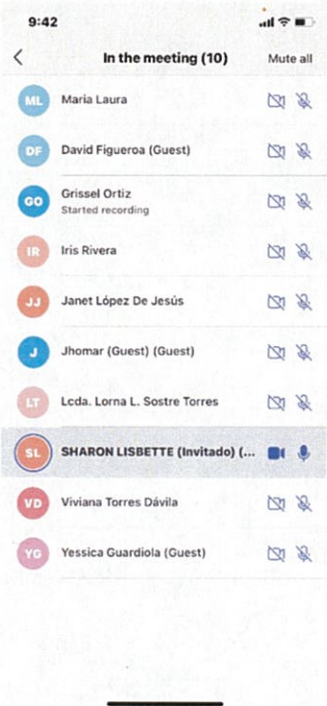
Ordinary Meeting – March 9, 2021 (via Microsoft Teams)



Ordinary Meeting – May 11, 2021 (via Microsoft Teams)



Ordinary Meeting – July 14, 2021 (via Microsoft Teams)

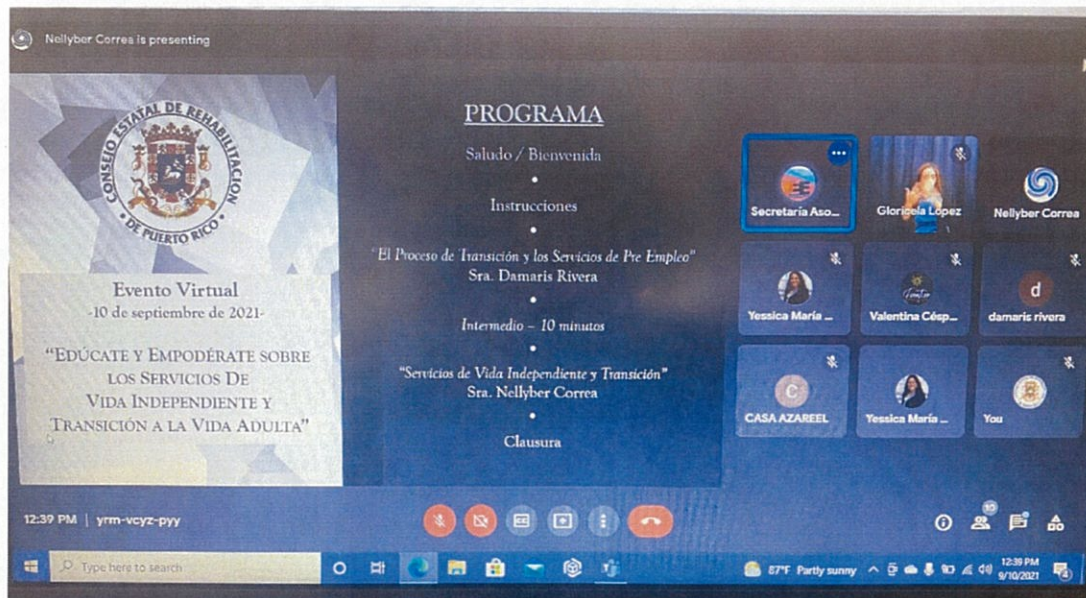


Ordinary Meeting – September 15, 2021 – *In-Person*

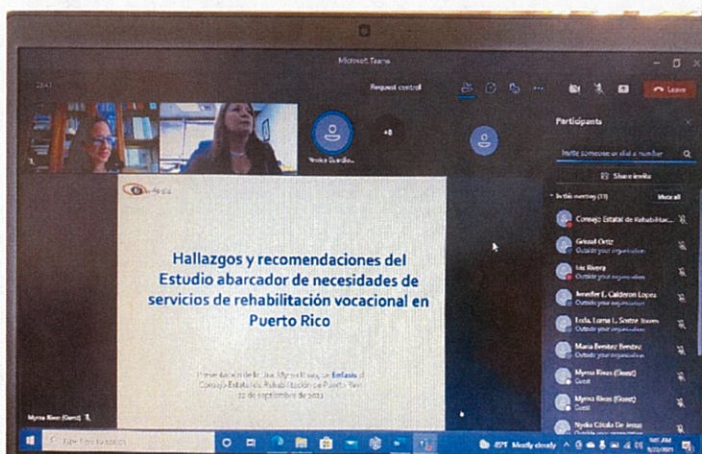


EXTRAORDINARY MEETINGS

**Extraordinary Meeting – September 10, 2021 (via Microsoft Teams Live)
(Platform of the Secretariat of Special Education)**



Extraordinary Meeting – September 22, 2021 (via Microsoft Teams)



ORIENTATIONS TO THE PRSRC

Presentation: Client Assistance Program (CAP); Federal Report for 2020 Fiscal Year

Date: May 11, 2021

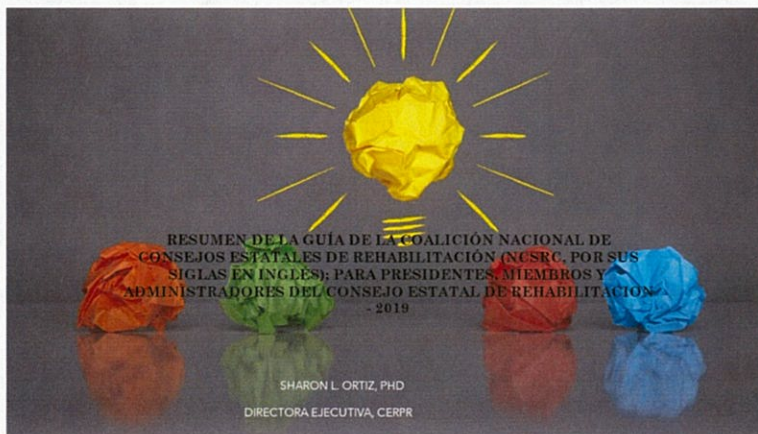
Resource: Mrs. Grissel Ortiz Arroyo
Intercessor for People with Disabilities II
Advocacy of People with Disabilities



Presentation: *Guidebook for State Rehabilitation Chairpersons, Members, and Administrators (2019)* by the NCSRC

Date: July 14, 2021

Resource: Mrs. Sharon L. Ortiz Cardona
Executive Director, PRSRC



WORKING COMMITTEES

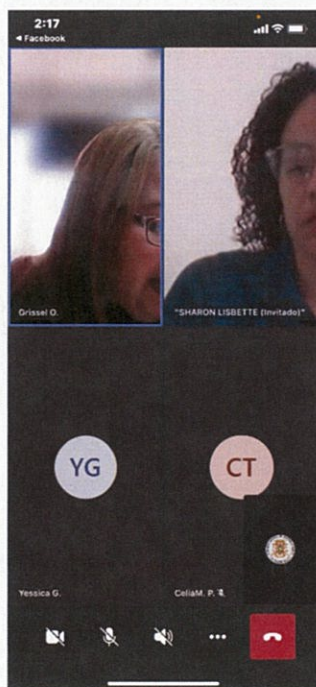
Committee Meetings -



Meeting of the Committee of
Educational and Dissemination
Activities - May 2021



Meeting of the Committee of
Educational and Dissemination
Activities - June 2021



Meeting of the Finance
Committee –
April 2021



Meeting of the Finance Committee –
September 2021


ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING OF THE VRA

Meeting of the administrative staff of the Puerto Rico State Rehabilitation Council (PRSRC) and administrative staff of the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (VRA). The following officials of the VRA were present at this meeting: Sonia Hernández, CRC, Administrator; and Wandeliz Otero Cotto, CRC, Assistant Administrator of Operational Policy. The following officials of the PRSRC were also present at this meeting: Mrs. Sharon Ortiz, Executive Director; Yessica M. Guardiola, CRC, President; Mrs. Celia M. Pagán Torres, Vice President; Mrs. Grissel Ortiz Arroyo, Treasurer; Mr. Jhomar Cintrón Horta, Secretary; and Viviana Torres Dávila, CRC, Representative of the VRA in the Council.



VIRTUAL ACTIVITY (VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS LIVE) – **“Educate and Empower Yourself About Independent Living Services and Transition to Adult Life”**

Friday, September 10, 2021



El Consejo Estatal de Rehabilitación de PR
te invita a su Evento Virtual:

**“EDÚCATE Y EMPODÉRATE SOBRE
LOS SERVICIOS DE
VIDA INDEPENDIENTE Y
TRANSICIÓN A LA VIDA ADULTA”**

Fecha: viernes, 10 de septiembre de 2021

Hora: 1:00pm - 4:00pm

Lugar: Plataforma Digital Teams Live

Recursos:
Sra. Damaris Rivera
 Coordinadora Central de Servicios de Transición y Pre Empleo
 Administración de Rehabilitación Vocacional

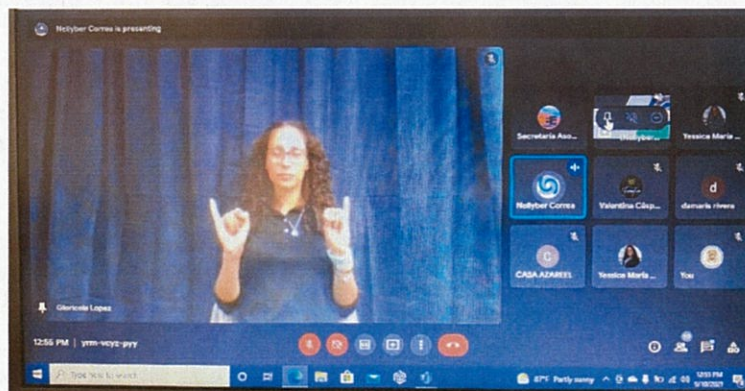
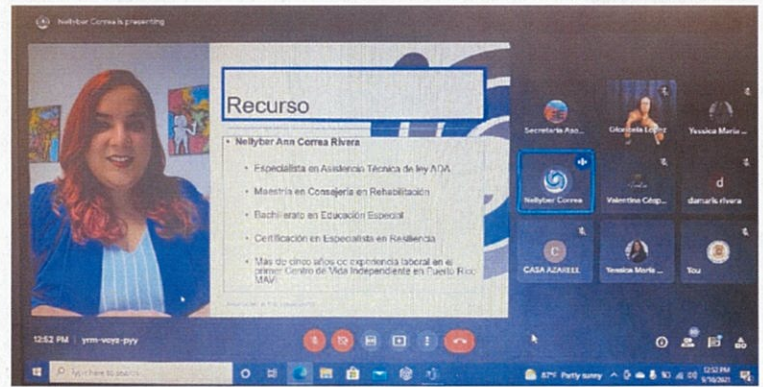
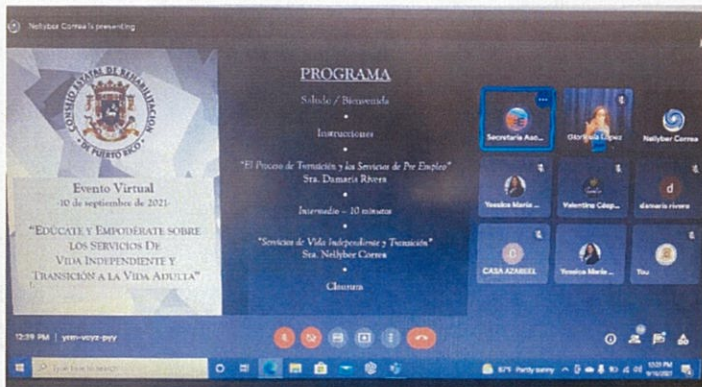
Sra. Nellyber Correa
 Representante del Centro de Vida Independiente
 Movimiento para el Alcance de Vida Independiente

PARA CONSULTARSE AL EVENTO,
ENTRAR AL SIGUIENTE ESPACE:
<https://bit.ly/CERe-transicion>

PARA INFORMACIÓN Y/O SOLICITAR
ACOMODO RAZONABLE:
 Sra. Valentina Cepeda, Coordinadora
 Teléfono: 787-360-8694
eventivtvalentina@gmail.com

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