

A Brief History of the SRV Development, Training, and Safeguarding Council

Susan Thomas

The SRV Development, Training, and Safeguarding Council is a North American body constituted primarily of qualified SRV trainers that meets regularly (so far, approximately twice a year for about two days each time) to discuss issues related to SRV theory and SRV training. Its Statement of Definition, Identity, and Functioning appeared in the Spring 1994 issue of the SRV/VRS Journal (pp. 53-55); interested parties can request a more up-to-date statement, since it continues to undergo revision and expansion. (See address at end of this article.)

The origins of the SRV Council are somewhat murky, insofar as it had a very informal and gradual evolution. Starting in the late 1980s, there had been a series of informal meetings, usually about one day each, of a few of the people who were designing or conducting a lot of SRV training in North America. These meetings were usually convened at the request of one of the participants in order to try to clarify one or more issues that arose during SRV training that trainers had difficulty dealing with, or some other issue on which the person wanted to achieve greater clarity. For instance, in December 1987, Darcy (Miller) Elks, Michael Kendrick, Wolf Wolfensberger, and Susan Thomas met at Dr. Wolfensberger's Training Institute in Syracuse to discuss some issues of leadership, training people to become SRV trainers, the conduct of SRV training, and the limits of applicability of SRV in the contemporary organized human service system. Then at another one-day meeting at the same site in March 1988, the same four people discussed the functions and goals of SRV-related training, some assumptions underlying the standard SRV training format, and some issues of how SRV and the Christian faith relate to each other. (Guy Caruso also sat in for a short time at this meeting.) Of course, there were also always many informal discussions taking place among trainers, in addition to these specially-convened meetings.

In the summer of 1989, Wolfensberger, Thomas, Kendrick, Darcy Elks and Martin Elks also met for approximately one afternoon to discuss SRV issues specific to Australia, in preparation for a then upcoming trip there by Wolfensberger, Thomas, and Darcy Elks.

In March 1989, a group of people that included SRV trainers but was not limited to them met in Syracuse, at the instigation of Kendrick, to discuss issues of moral leadership. As a result of that meeting, Kendrick proposed an international meeting of SRV people to address quality and safeguards issues in regard to both SRV content and the format/process of SRV training.

While the kind of meeting envisioned by Kendrick did not come about, Kendrick did convene a similar one-day meeting that can be identified as the initiation of the Council. It was held in Montreal on April 3, 1991, attended by 9 people (most of them SRV trainers), to discuss issues of SRV priorities, the coordination of training events, SRV leadership development, and possibly even issues of SRV training strategy. Present from Canada were Beth French, Raymond Lemay, Jacques Pelletier, and Bruce Uditsky; and from the US, Darcy and Martin Elks, Michael Kendrick, Jo Massarelli and Debi Reidy. This group decided that another meeting should be held to continue this kind of discussion.

This subsequent meeting took place on October 25, 1991, when 9 people--some of those who had been

present at the April 1991 meeting were in Montreal, and some others who had been invited to that meeting but had been unable to attend--met in Rensselaer, NY (near Albany). These were all SRV senior or junior trainers. Present from the US were Guy Caruso, Tom Doody, Michael Kendrick, Jo Massarelli, Debi Reidy, Susan Thomas, and Wolf Wolfensberger; and from Canada, Beth French and Bruce Uditsky. This was the first event at which those present decided that (a) such meetings should be scheduled well enough in advance so that all those who should attend would be able to attend, and (b) to allow two days for discussion. It was at this meeting that the group agreed to try to schedule its next meeting at a time and place when all qualified SRV senior trainers could likely attend.

The group's next meeting was June 5-6, 1992 in Niagara Falls, Ontario, following a six-day workshop conducted there by the Training Institute on "How to Function With Personal Moral Coherency in a Disfunctional (Human Service) World." Present from the US were Guy Caruso, Tom Doody, A.J. Hildebrand, Michael Kendrick, Jo Massarelli, Joe Osburn, Debi Reidy, Susan Thomas, and Wolf Wolfensberger. From Canada, there were Beth French, Raymond Lemay, Judith Sandys, and Bruce Uditsky; and from Norway, Kristjana Kristiansen. At this meeting there were also three "observers": Phil Edwards from Wales, Bob Flynn from Canada, and Mike Rungie from Australia. One of the observers and 10 of the others had been at the just-completed workshop. It was at this meeting that the group first began to discuss its identity, membership, and how it should function.

The group next met on December 11-12, 1992 in Cazenovia, NY (near Syracuse). Present from the US were Guy Caruso, Darcy Elks, Michael Kendrick, Jo Massarelli, Joe Osburn, Debi Reidy, Susan Thomas and Wolf Wolfensberger. From Canada, there came Beth French, Raymond Lemay, Jacques Pelletier, and Bruce Uditsky; and from Norway, Kristjana Kristiansen. Also present as observers were Bob Flynn, and Martin Elks for the first day of the meeting. It was at this meeting that the group approved its first draft of the aforementioned Statements of Definition, Identity, and Functioning, and began to discuss a name for itself.

The group met next on June 11-12, 1993 in Plantagenet, Ontario (near Ottawa). Present from Canada were Bob Flynn, Beth French, Raymond Lemay, and Judith Sandys. From the US, there were Guy Caruso, Michael Kendrick, Jo Massarelli, Joe Osburn, Debi Reidy, Susan Thomas, and Wolf Wolfensberger. The group agreed on its name, and approved the first version of its Statements of Definition, Identity, and Functioning, which appeared in the Spring 1994 issue of the SRV/VRS Journal.

The Council has since met in Holyoke, Massachusetts in December 1993, in Ottawa, Ontario, in May 1994 (following the International Conference on Normalization and SRV, held there May 10-13), and in October 1994 (for three days) in Syracuse, NY. The Council will probably continue to meet twice a year, at about six months apart, for no less than two days each time.

At present, the Council continues to discuss such SRV issues as the "model coherency" of SRV training, the development of SRV training leaders, various theories and schemes which may be encountered or advanced as competitors or superior alternatives to SRV, and the limits of SRV. There are many issues that the Council hopes to address in the future, such as certain SRV content issues, and the applicability of SRV to certain societally devalued classes. Also, one agenda item at each Council meeting that has proven to be of great interest to members is an update of SRV-related activities by each member who is present.

Now that the Council has clarified its identity and membership, and persons whom the Council deemed eligible for membership have decided on their status, the Council currently has the following members: from Canada, Bob Flynn, Beth French, Raymond Lemay, Zana Lutfiyya, Jacques Pelletier, and Judith Sandys; from the US, Guy Caruso, Tom Doody, Michael Kendrick, Jo Massarelli, Joe Osburn, Debi Reidy, Susan Thomas, Wolf

Wolfensberger, and Jack Yates; and presently from Norway, Kristjana Kristiansen. The Council also has a number of correspondents, i.e., people with considerable SRV involvement who receive copies of its reports and position papers, and who are invited to submit issues or news to the Council, even though they are not members. At present they are: from Australia, John Armstrong, Anne Cross, Peter Millier, and Mike Rungie; from Canada, Bruce Uditsky; from England, Paul Williams; and from the US, Darcy Elks and A.J. Hildebrand. Several of these persons had been members, or had been invited to be members, but preferred correspondent status.

All the Council members work full-time in human services, except for those that may be in-between such positions at any given time. Six have doctorates, and several others have a master's degree. Almost all the members have known each other for a long time; are, for the most part, on close friendly terms; and interact a great deal with each other in between Council meetings. Five have a first or family tongue other than English (two are native Francophones from Canada), but this has not been a problem. Several other members also have at least a smattering of French.

The Council's proceedings, reports, and position papers are distributed on a confidential basis to members and correspondents only, except for documents that it decides to release (on its own initiative, or in response to request) for wider or universal distribution.

At present, the Council has several subgroups working on specific topics. One such subgroup (composed of Lemay, Reidy, and Thomas) is developing further the Council's work on the "competitors" or alternatives to SRV, and is analyzing each of these identified schemes for their assumptions, and their concordances with and discrepancies from SRV.

Another group of three Council Members--Kendrick, Kristiansen, and Lemay--constitutes the editors-in-chief of the SRV/VRS Journal. In fact, the idea of such a journal was first suggested at the April 1991 meeting.

Another fledgling subgroup consists of people who are interested in discussing how to form and safeguard international involvements, such as SRV presentations in foreign lands, and introducing SRV to other cultures. Currently, the people in this subgroup are Kendrick, Kristiansen, Lemay, Pelletier, and Wolfensberger.

Another group of Council members--currently Caruso, Doody, French, Massarelli, Osburn, Sandys, and Yates--meets prior to each Council meeting to discuss coordination of SRV and PASSING training events. However, these last three groups are not (at least, not yet) official subgroups of the Council, but rather, groups composed of Council members.

So far, the Council has only one informal "officer," namely, a secretary (Susan Thomas) who produces the reports of its meetings.

The agenda for each meeting is currently proposed by French and Massarelli, after they have consulted with other members and reviewed the reports of preceding meetings to determine which issues seem to be the most urgent.

The function of chairing the meetings has been rotating among the members. Actually, this function is more one of facilitating discussion, and two members have this responsibility at each meeting.

The Council has no financial support of any kind. Members either pay their own expenses, or receive some assistance with expenses from their employing agency. Council members also contribute voluntarily to a bursary fund to enable those members without any (or enough) financial support to attend meetings.

Despite the fact that the Council has addressed some issues that have been controversial with some

members, and that have aroused passions, the proceedings have been marked by good fellowship, and especially at the conclusion. In order to further this good spirit, members eat most of their meals together and have parties together. Several share each others' homes when meetings are held in locales where one or more members reside.

It is important to note that the Council is still in a formative stage and still working out how it functions. With up to 16 members attending meetings (not counting possible observers), managing the discussions can be challenging. And since it only meets twice a year, the Council is limited in how much it can accomplish. Nonetheless, in its short life, the Council has been enormously fruitful in clarifying some of the most important challenges in SRV training, in generating much writing by Council members on SRV (some of it as yet unpublished), in establishing a forum and a mechanism for addressing these and other issues, and for staving off "perversions," and in "begetting" a journal.

Currently, the Council's mailing address is:
c/o Dr. Judith Sandys, Dean, Faculty of Community Services
Ryerson Polytechnic University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K3 CANADA

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