

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council
Workforce & Technology Center
Minutes – September 17, 2008

Members – Present

Robert Burns
Charles Crawford
Timothy Daly
Ross Edwards
Niles Ellingson
Beth Lash
Carol Lewis
Kali Mallik
Mary Manzoni
Jerry Pantaleo
Anne Rea
Michael Shaw
Alfred Sonnenstrahl
Josie Thomas
Teresa Uttermohlen
Jennifer Whitcomb

Members Unable to Attend

Larry Abramson
Thomas Barkley
Andrea Buonincontro
Joyce Callahan
Eric Seleznow

Support Staff-Present

Polly Huston
Donna Lippa

DORS Liaison Staff-Present

Jean Jackson
Donna Lettow
Kathi Santora
Sue Schaffer

Guests-Present

Susan Howarth, WTC
Brenda Isennock, WTC
Therese Parr, WTC

Introduction, Council Recognition and Approval of Minutes

Kali Mallik, Vice Chair, welcomed guests and members to the Council meeting. The minutes of the 21 May 2008 meeting were approved as written.

Mr. Mallik announced that the Council will recognize at today's meeting two (2) members, Niles Ellingson and Jerry Pantaleo, for completing two full terms on the Council. Both Mr. Ellingson and Mr. Pantaleo are unable to be reappointed and will be leaving the membership of the Council, but have agreed to membership on the SRC Employment Committee as ad hoc members. The Council thanked both Niles and Jerry for their work on the Council and for their sustained commitment to persons in Maryland with disabilities.

Presentation of DORS Pathways Program (Educational Support Services for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders) Brenda Isennock, WTC Program Manager, Pre-Vocational Services, Therese Parr, Supervisor of Academic Services, Susan Howarth, Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Specialist

The Pathways Program is an educational support program for post-secondary students who have an Autism Spectrum disorder and an approved Individual Plan for Employment

(IPE) with the Division of Rehabilitation Services. Students participating in this program are enrolled in classes offered at one of the three campuses of The Community College of Baltimore County (Essex, Dundalk and Catonsville). Intensive support services and individual interventions are provided on campus through one-on-one and small group sessions. An interdisciplinary approach facilitates communication with students, families, DORS counselors, Disability Support Services staff, and faculty at CCBC. The Pathways Program includes:

- Career guidance and counseling including career exploration activities to assist students in achieving their identified vocational goal
- Job Search Skills including Applications, Resume Writing, and Interview Skills
- Assessment Services (Career Assessment, Assistive Technology (AT) Assessment and College Assessment)

Students participating in the Pathways Program will demonstrate enhanced:

- Awareness of their disability and development of specific coping strategies
- Self advocacy
- Organizational skills to identify and meet course requirements
- Interpersonal skills
- Independent living skills

To participate in the Pathways Program individuals must:

- Be eligible for DORS Services
- Have a diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder
- Meet DORS criteria for assistance with post-secondary education
- Register with a Disability Support Services office at CCBC

Charlie Crawford commented on two issues of concern; (1) What are the average challenges for the consumers and staff with respect to the person who is going to college and then leaves college, and (2) What are the typical post employment services necessary for somebody in this program.

Sue Howarth stated that she focuses on confidence building and recommends internships before entering the workforce. We try to get our consumers to (1) build self confidence to understand their disability and (2) become comfortable talking about their limitations and asking for what they need.

DORS 2009 Budget – Impact and Implications (Robert Burns)

- Case Service Funds – Mr. Burns reported that the Division received a little over 2 million of additional funding this year in the Governor’s budget. All of this funding went into the case service budget which is used to support Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) of our consumers and enables purchase of services at community colleges and colleges, community rehabilitation programs and other vendors and providers of services. In requesting this funding, the Division has committed to reducing the waiting list by one half in terms of the number of individuals on the waiting list and the duration of the wait. At the close of the state fiscal year on June 30, 2008, DORS had just fewer than 5,300 persons on the

waiting list. Individuals in the most significant category (Category I) were waiting between 8-9 months for services, and those in Category II with significant disabilities were waiting 14 months. Since then we have reduced the waiting list to around 3,700 which is a good gain in the first few months of the state year. We will bring additional consumers, approximately 1,000, off the waiting list again at the beginning of October. While this sounds good, during the course of each month, another 400 newly eligible individuals go onto the waiting list. So far this state fiscal year (July and August) we have encumbered approximately 3.9 million out of our 18.7 million dollar budget. Spending for the first two months is just under 2 million per month. Historically, we do tend to over encumber for the first quarter.

- FY 2010 over-the target budget request (\$2.7 million) – The Division had costed out eliminating the waiting list to be 4 million dollars. Since last year we received only half of the requested 4 million, we went back this year and the State Board of Education presented a second budget enhancement at 2.7 million to completely eliminate the waiting list and provide additional focus on transitioning services. While the request was positively received by the State Board, the Department of Budget and Management is only accepting three priorities from each executive agency this year for consideration, and the DORS request was not among the top three.
- Basic Support Reallotment submitted to USDOE – The long-term solution to the Division’s funding shortfall is to get more federal funding in Maryland. Over the last ten years Maryland has been the most poorly funded state VR agency in the nation. Maryland VR has had a 7.5 increase over the past ten years as opposed to a national average of 20% over the same period which is about a 4 million dollar differential. Certain states cannot match their federal money which is turned back to the federal government and this money is given to states that can overmatch. The Department of Education gives priority to those states that haven’t gotten at least a cost of living increase so Maryland will be one of those states in line to receive a portion of the federal government reallotment money. Maryland VR hoping to receive about 1.4 million dollars in reallotment money
- Government Accounting Office (GAO) - Mr. Burns announced that he has been informed that the GAO is beginning a study to look at the distribution of the basic support grants for states.

Chairperson/Vice Chairperson Reports (Kali Mallik)

- Comprehensive Rehabilitation Centers (WTC) – Vice Chair Kali Mallik met with individuals who conducted an on-site review of the Workforce & Technology Center. The WTC review was part of an RSA funded review of comprehensive rehabilitation centers nationwide, which is focused on cost effectiveness and outcomes related to centers. There will be a national report of findings and recommendations. The Council will be kept apprised.

- DORS FY 2010 Over-the-Target Request (\$2,707,728) for funding did not receive a high priority for funding this year. **ACTION: Council will write a letter to the Governor in support of the additional 2.7 million dollars and copy Secretary Raggio and Nancy Grasmick. Staff will develop a letter to be signed by the SRC Chair and Vice Chair and develop a template for the members to send their individuals letters.**

Director's Report (Robert Burns)

- Deaf Services Update

(1) Statewide Coordinator for Deaf and H/H Services - DORS has been without a statewide coordinator for deaf and H/H services for quite some time now because of the unfortunate death of Howard Leonard. At that time the state was in the middle of a job freeze and budget cuts and the position was abolished. More recently the Division has been able to obtain a hiring exception and begin the recruitment process. The position was advertised with an application deadline of September 12, 2008. Fourteen applications were submitted to DORS personnel and will be screened for minimum qualifications. Depending on the results of the initial screening, five to seven individuals will be interviewed. Al Sonnenstrahl has graciously agreed to serve on the interview panel for this position.

Council member Jennifer Whitcomb, Executive Director, Deaf Independent Living Association, expressed her concern that she did not receive information regarding this vacancy and wondered what could be done to improve the communication of information to the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

Al Sonnenstrahl responded that the announcement was forwarded to him from the Division of Rehabilitation Services and he subsequently forwarded it to all the deaf communities in his network. It was also forwarded to the networks of the Office for Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Maryland Association of the Deaf and CSD in Frederick County. Mr. Burns stated that the advertisement was posted in the Baltimore Sun, the MSDE website, the national network of statewide coordinators for the deaf, and also forwarded to the Governor's Office for the Deaf and H/H.

(2) Development of task force workgroup/Arkansas Research and Training Center Model State Plan - Mr. Burns stated that the Division will be developing a task force to look at the Arkansas Research and Training Center's model state plan on services for the deaf and hard of hearing and late deafened. The task force will review the model plan and develop an implementation plan to enhance services in Maryland for the deaf and hard of hearing. Mr. Burns asked that both Jennifer Whitcomb and Al Sonnenstrahl consider participation on this workgroup. Jennifer Whitcomb suggested that we wait for the hiring of the new statewide coordinator before convening this workgroup. Mr. Burns suggested that the report be completed by next spring because of possible resource issues when the Board of Education begins to talk about the budget for the next year. Beth Lash, CAP Director, requested to be on this workgroup.

(3) Roll-out of Video Phones - Sorenson video phones have been installed in the DORS Towson, Wheaton, Oxon Hill Offices and the WTC lobby. Installation has been scheduled for two additional staff to have video phones at the WTC and Lanham. The dilemma now is getting video phones for rehab counselors for the deaf that are hearing. Sorenson will not provide this service and negotiations are still taking place. If Sorenson will not provide this service than DORS will need to look for another provider.

- National Conferences on Maryland's Transitioning Practices

Maryland has been asked to present at two (2) upcoming national transition conferences. The Secretary, US Department of Education is presenting an "International Inclusion" Conference taking place in Washington, DC. Most of the conference is dealing with pre-k through high school issues around special education. There will be a section on transitioning, post-secondary education and employment. The Maryland VR was contacted to participate in this workshop. This conference will involve international participation.

Maryland has also been asked to participate in the "5th Organizational Change Conference" in Kansas City, Missouri which focuses on employment and disability issues. Maryland has been asked to come and speak about its approach to transitioning and discuss our federally funded demonstration project through the US Department of Education.

- Governor's Interagency Transition Council

Bob Burns stated that he continues to serve as co-chair with Secretary Raggio on the Governor's Interagency Transition Council. This Council is focused on two areas: (1) providing an oversight advisory function to the Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative, and (2) development of a strategic plan for interagency collaboration for serving youth with disabilities. A report will be submitted to the Governor. **ACTION: The report of this Council will be shared with the members of the SRC.**

- Governor's QUEST Internship Celebration

The Governor's QUEST Internship celebration took place at WTC today. There were 24 DORS consumers in attendance who had completed paid QUEST internships in state offices. Present at the celebration today were David Romans, Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of Budget and Management and George Faillo, Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of Disabilities.

- Order of Selection – Proposed version which included subcategories was not approved by RSA

DORS proposed revising the order of selection which would set additional priorities within two of the three priority categories (most significant disability and significant disability). The goal was to give further emphasis to transitioning youth, individuals receiving federal disability benefits, and disabled veterans and have a sub-category of Category I, most significant, remain open at all times. This proposal was submitted as part of the State Plan for VR Services to the US Department of Education and was

subsequently rejected by the Rehabilitation Services Administration as inconsistent with federal regulations.

Committee Reports

Policy and Planning Committee, Beth Lash

Beth Lash presented the following activities of the Policy and Planning Committee:

- A committee meeting will be held in the very near future with agenda items to include, (1) work with the DORS Policy Review Committee, and (2) begin to work on planning for the SRC/DORS Public Meetings.

Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee, Jerry Pantaleo

Jerry Pantaleo reported on the activities of the Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee.

- Jerry Pantaleo thanked Donna Lettow for all her work on the committee.
- The committee shared the new logo and letterhead with the Council for their approval.

Membership and Resource Committee, Kali Mallik

Kali Mallik updated the Council on the activities of the Membership and Resource Committee:

- Several SRC members complete 3 year terms this year and are eligible for reappointment:
 - Robert Burns
 - Tim Daly
 - Therese Uttermohlen
 - Charles Crawford
 - Niles Ellingson
 - Jerry Pantaleo
 - Alfred Sonnenstrahl
- Michael Whitehill of McCrone, Inc. has expressed interest in membership on the Council. As a representative of business and industry Mr. Whitehill would bring a valuable perspective to the Council.

Employment/Career Development Committee, Robert Burns

Robert Burns reported that the Employment/Career Development Committee will meet on Friday, October 31st at the State Highway Administration in Hanover, Maryland. Mr. Burns reported that the new WTC Employment Specialist, Christine Franklin, will present on the partnerships with the customized training programs, report on the BRAC initiative, GWIB Untapped Populations Marketing Plan, and a report on DDA's Employment First Initiative.

Blindness and Vision Services Committee, Joyce Callahan

Susan Schaffer reported on the activities of the Blindness and Vision Services Committee.

- Sue Schaffer announced that the SRC Blindness and Vision Services Committee was invited to attend the Blind Enterprise Program graduation luncheon at the Workforce & Technology Center.
- A meeting has been scheduled in November where the committee will review the OBVS Consumer Satisfaction Survey.

Adjournment

The MSRC meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m. The next meeting of the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council will be Wednesday, November 5, 2008, 4:30 – 7:00 p.m., Workforce & Technology Center, Baltimore, Maryland.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna M. Lippa, MSRC Staff Support