

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council Minutes
Workforce & Technology Center
May 6, 2009

Members – Present

Larry Abramson
Michael Bullis
Robert Burns
Joyce Callahan
Charles Crawford
Dan Frye
Beth Lash
Carol Lewis
Kali Mallik
Michael Shaw
Alfred Sonnenstrahl
Jennifer Whitcomb
Michael Whitehill

Members Unable to Attend

Tom Barkley
Andrea Buonincontro
Tim Daly
Ross Edwards
Mary Manzoni
Anne Rea
Eric Seleznow
Josie Thomas

Support Staff-Present

Polly Huston
Donna Lippa

DORS Liaison Staff Present

Jean Jackson
Donna Lettow
Toni March, representing Sue Schaffer
Kathi Santora

Guests

Jo Anne Materkowski, DORS Office of Field Services
Hank Passi, DORS Staff Specialist, Deaf and H/H
Diane Triplett, Brain Injury Association of MD
Ronald Winter, DORS Director, Office of Field Services

Introduction, Council Recognition and Approval of Minutes

In the absence of the Chair, Vice Chair Kali Mallik welcomed members to the meeting. Members were asked to introduce themselves. Minutes of the February 3, 2009 meeting were approved as written.

The Council congratulated Larry Abramson for receiving the Maryland Works Vocational Rehabilitation professional of the year award.

Robert Burns recognized Kali Mallik for receiving the R.C. Thompson award presented by the National Rehabilitation Association at the DORS/MRA Conference in November 2009. This award recognizes a life time achievement in the field of vocational rehabilitation services in the State of Maryland. Kali Mallik has a distinguished career that includes George Washington University, founding member of the Alliance of

Baltimore County, published approximately 70 articles in a variety of rehabilitation journals and continues to be active in Maryland and nationally.

Warm Welcome and Hello to Hank Passi, newly appointed DORS Staff Specialist Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

Mr. Burns introduced Hank Passi, DORS Staff Specialist for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services. Mr. Passi served in the State of Delaware for a number of years as both a rehabilitation counselor for the deaf and most recently the statewide coordinator for deaf services.

Hank Passi stated that he has had a chance to meet with various staff of DORS in the past couple months and stated that he was impressed with the knowledge, care and concern that these individuals displayed for persons with disabilities. Mr. Passi stated that one of his goals are to work closely with community rehabilitation programs. Mr. Passi stated that most DORS counselors who work with the deaf have received video phones. We are hearing more and more that employers are resisting hiring individuals who are deaf because of the cost of interpreters, so we are trying to develop ways to help them work with these individuals.

- Model State Plan for Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Mr. Burns stated that there is a model plan for deaf services developed in 2008 from Arkansas Research and Training Center of model services for deaf and hard of hearing. **Action: Mr. Burns stated that a task group has been set-up to look at the model state plan, contrast that against what Maryland has to offer and outline the steps that we can take to approximate what the model state plan is recommending. Ron Winter, Director, Office of Field Services will chair this group. The following members of the Council will be included in this task force: Al Sonnenstrahl, Jennifer Whitcomb, Beth Lash and Josie Thomas.**

Joyce Callahan inquired whether the deaf/blind issues would be addressed by this task force. Mr. Burns stated that Tandra Hunter-Payne, from the DORS Office for Blindness and Vision Services, is the statewide coordinator for deaf/blind services. The primary responsibility for each individual case is based on the consumer need. If a consumer comes dependent upon manual communication with a vision impairment that case would be served by deaf services. Someone whose primary functional disability would be blindness would be served by the Office for Blindness and Vision Services. The model plan does not include deaf/blind, but this issue will be discussed by the group if time allows, but we would need to bring a more inclusive membership recognizing blindness.

Presentation - Diane Triplett, Executive Director, Brain Injury Association of Maryland, and Jo Anne Materkowski, Program Manager, DORS Office of Field Services

- Review of Maryland Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board 2008 Annual Report Diane Triplett, Executive Director, Brain Injury Association of Maryland, stated that Maryland has a Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board established in 2005 and given the charge of advising the state legislature and the Governor on the impact of brain injury in

the state of Maryland and to write an annual report with recommendations. Based on assessment of the individual and community impact of brain injury, the Advisory board developed eight recommendations:

1. Establish the State of Maryland Brain injury Dedicated Trust Fund.
2. Expand the Home and Community-Based Services Waiver for Adults with Traumatic Brain Injury.
3. Coordinate and enhance brain injury data.
4. Expand and fully fund brain injury resource coordination services statewide.
5. Expand the Governor's Employment Initiative for persons with acquired brain injuries.
6. Identify students with brain injuries in local school systems and educate school personnel.
7. Perform a market conduct analysis of brain injury benefits and payments, and
8. Maintain Maryland's current motorcycle helmet law.

Ms. Triplett stated that there are currently vacancies on the Maryland Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board for those interested in sitting on that Board. Ms. Triplett stated that the work that has come from DORS on the brain injury initiative, the collaboration, the training, and outreach has been significant and is by far on of the best and most profound impact on the brain injury community on looking at outcomes.

- Governor's Employment Initiative for Persons with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) - Jo Anne Materkowski stated that starting in State FY 2007, DORS implemented this project to provide intensive vocational rehabilitation services with acquired brain injuries who require long-term, ongoing support services to assure success in employment. In order to address the very significant employment implications of an acquired brain injury, DORS in partnership with the Brain Injury Association of Maryland established a project consortium of non-profit agency providers, private practitioners, and other public agencies to design implement and support the project. The Division has earmarked \$850,000 of funding annually for the project.

DORS is the lead agency for the initiative. DORS is working with community rehabilitation programs and other community organizations to provide the necessary services, including job coaching, to eligible individuals in order that they can obtain and be successful in employment. The project began on July 1, 2006.

The overall success rate of the study to date is 81.2%; of the 32 cases closed, 26 achieved successful outcome. The Governor's Employment Initiative for Individuals with Acquired Brain Injuries has demonstrated very encouraging results over its first two years of operation. The Maryland rate of success as of June 30, 2009 was in excess of 81% contrasted to the national success rates of 54% and 64.5% for non-supported employment and supported employment cases respectively. DORS intends to continue this initiative.

Jennifer Whitcomb stated that it is unfortunate that there is always funding available for the medical field to advance to helping and saving those with significant disabilities, but

there isn't enough funding to follow them through to integrating them back in their communities. It would be nice to figure a way to balance that out as medical technology advances and individuals with significant disabilities are entered back into the community so they do not fall through the cracks. Diane Triplett responded that the BIAM has been asked many times to go to Annapolis to fight for trauma care.

Ms. Whitcomb asked if these programs are available on the Eastern Shore. Mr. Burns stated that the Brain Injury Association of Maryland is a statewide program, but DORS does not currently have a specialized counselor on the eastern shore for the Governor's Employment Initiative for Persons with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI).

Beth Lash asked if there are any other potential funding streams in Maryland for supported employment associated with the traumatic brain injured population. Are there other funding streams that the state could develop to address the employment needs of people with disabilities? Ms. Triplett stated that with the data that we have now, we will be able to go to our policymakers.

Dan Frye stated that the average age of someone in this population has the potential for a long and productive life ahead, so resources need to be made available to make them functional. There are many innovative resources being developed in Colorado with the brain injury community who are blind. Mr. Frye stated that he would be happy to share this information with BIAM. Diane Triplett stated that Colorado has a model system, so anything Mr. Frye can share would be appreciated.

Kali asked how the hourly employment wage for the individuals in this program compare to other populations. There was no data available at this time. JoAnne Materkowski stated that they would update the Council at a future meeting.

Joyce Callahan asked if DORS is keeping a waiting list for individuals with acquired brain injury who DORS is unable to serve, due to funding, at this time. JoAnne Materkowski stated that her office is keeping a waiting list. Ron Winter stated that DORS does not stop services to those individuals; DORS cannot make a commitment for the long term funding for job coaching. DORS is still working with those individuals with cognitive training or other rehabilitation services to prepare them for employment.

On behalf of the Council, Kali Mallik thanked Diane Triplett for the wonderful work of the Brain Injury Association of Maryland and for attending this meeting to update the Council.

Summary of MSRC/DORS Public Meetings/Public Comment and Recommendations (State Plan Attachment) for DORS (Beth Lash, Chair, Policy and Planning Committee)

DORS in conjunction with the SRC and the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council held three public meetings in the month of April 2009. The meetings were held at the Easter Seals Intergenerational Center in Silver Spring, MD, Workforce & Technology Center and Cumberland One-Stop. Meetings were advertised to the website,

email, through Executive Directors of Centers for Independent Living. The areas of comments were on:

- Transitioning services
- Transportation
- Workforce & Technology Center
- Stimulus funding

Based on public feedback from the public meetings, the following recommendations were made by the SRC Policy and Planning Committee:

- Recommends a large part of the ARRA funding focus on reducing, or eliminating, the waiting list.
- Recommends that additional Recovery Act funding be directed to the Governor's QUEST Internship Program, summer job experiences for youth, and enhancing services for individuals who are unserved or underserved.
- Recommends that DORS provide staff training about personal care services, particularly as they relate to college students with disabilities.
- Recommends that DORS assure that students exploring options for post-secondary education have information to compare available programs and a check-list of fact sheet for students of questions to ask at institutions of post-secondary education.
- Concerned that school administrators are not identifying non-special education students with disabilities for DORS referral. Explore training or other outreach to schools to serve these students.
- Recommends DORS explore creative ways to solve transportation barriers that prevent otherwise job-ready individuals for becoming employed.
- Recommend to develop more training opportunities for non-college bound students.
- Public meetings, consumer satisfaction surveys and CAP referral have all identified job development and placement as an area of concern.
- Council appreciates the opportunity to be involved in the selection of the Staff Specialist for Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
- Recommends that DORS review methodology of satisfaction surveys to ensure reliability of results. Explore Web-based surveys.

Dan Frye commented that he felt we would get more consumer participation if we can try to schedule the public hearing either during non-work hours or day lights hours on weekends. Joyce suggested also that we look again at the marketing strategy. Mr. Callahan feels that the contact list has been expanded, but felt that if we look at different marketing strategies, we will capture more people.

ACTION: Mr. Burns asked for a motion to adopt the SRC Policy and Planning Committee Report presented by Beth Lash (Attachment 4.2(c)) which will become a part of the VR State Plan. All members were in favor.

Update on Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (Beth Lash)

Update the Council at the next meeting in September. Mr. Burns stated that part of the

role of the Council is to coordinate with the Statewide Independent Living Council.

Vice Chairperson Reports (Kali Mallik)

- Letters were forwarded by Chair Elect, Kali Mallik, on behalf of the Council, to the members of US Congressional Delegation from Maryland regarding the impact of the federal economic stimulus package funding on employment of people with disabilities in our state and the funding of the VR Program.
- Letters of support from the SRC for SB 604 (Tax Credit for Qualifying Employees with Disabilities-Sunset Repeal) and HB 579/SB341 (Prosthetic Parity Act)
- CSAVR Conference (National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils meeting), April 19, 2009 – Chair Elect Kali Mallik attended the meeting and brought back the following information to share with the Council:

Stimulus Fund or “The American Reinvestment & Recovery Act” (ARRA)

Philosophy:

1. Money should be given quickly to create jobs i.e. one-time fund but it’s expected a long time return or reform
2. Ensure transparency and accountability
3. Must be tracked separately (complete, accurate and reliable).
4. Define goals and quantify the outcomes (17% increased from the base grant as such the suggested outcome is 20% increase of status 26)
5. To receive the second installment (50%) of the ARRA fund, the requirement for the states will come later from RSA
6. 10% construction funds without state match
7. Legislatures don’t talk about specifics, but Congress expects outcomes

Suggested Outcomes Which are Easy to Define or Quantify:

1. Reduce waiting list (some states are having problems because they don’t have a waiting list) Increase summer jobs for youth.
2. OJT funds (paid internship). Example: Brian Sigman, President CSAVR, Connecticut Blind, circulated 25,000 one page flyer to employers/business community stating “if you have jobs we have people and stimulus fund to share with you. Walgreen expected to hire 100 people through OJT/internship/other community college training. Governor recognized through Governor Citation to the employer.
3. Place more people in competitive jobs (maybe 20% increase)
4. Partnership with PWI to develop training/OJT/internship in green jobs.
5. Partnerships with CRPs.
6. Transitioning students from school to work place.
7. Increased population who are underserved: Examples: Veterans, TBI
8. JD/placement first then Ticket to Work and OJT for retention.

General Comments:

1. Some states are not accepting this ARRA funding, but those funds will be redirected to other states (example: Alaska, South Carolina, Texas, Idaho)
 2. If outcomes are good, Congress will be asked to increase the base fund, Carl Suter, CEO of CSAVR, stated.
 3. Some states have hiring freeze. They will go for staff with temporary appointment.
 4. Brian Sigman, Connecticut, suggested that states should submit short term/long term goals. Long term may be used for 2nd part of ARRA funding (remaining 50%).
 5. Someone asked “Does GAO/OMB have a different agenda to audit this system?” RSA replied: Follows RSA guidelines/problem arises when there is fraud and abuse of funds.
- The SRC Executive Committee will meet on August 27, 2009 at the Sheraton Columbia Hotel to begin the planning activities for the upcoming year.

Director’s Report (Robert Burns)

- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act – Federal Stimulus Bill – Members were given the draft copy of the DORS American Recovery and Reinvestment Act dated March 2010, for discussion purposes only.

Estimated ARRA funding for Maryland DORS: VR State Grants \$6,879,192; Services for Older Individuals who are Blind \$629,924; IL State Grants \$249,474; total ARRA Funding \$7,758,590.

Mr. Burns stated DORS would use the money to address the waiting list for services in Maryland. As of May 15, 2009, we will eliminate any wait for individuals in Category I. We have about 1,500 in Category II still on the waiting list, and the ARRA money will be used to go after this group. We will expand the summer youth employment, support QUEST Internship Programs, replaced educational equipment at WTC, upgrade the DORS IT infrastructure, target specific unserved or underserved populations.

Members had concerns about the existing waiting list of persons in category II, i.e. how many people actually fall off the waiting list while waiting for services, and concerns of how much money will be channeled to the Eastern Shore.

Mr. Burns responded the DORS will be taking 4.5 million of the 6.8 million to be used for community case services which include all six regions across the state.

Mr. Burns will update the Council in September on the status of the Category II waiting list and how many people actually fall off the waiting list before receiving services.

- DORS Budget Update – The budget was just passed by the Governor and General Assembly. There is a slight reduction in our funding level from 2009 to 2010. We began 2009 with 15.3 million in general revenue and the budget just passed

for 2010 is just over 14 million.

- DORS 2010 Workgroup Update – Deferred to next meeting.
- MDOD State Employment Team – The interdepartmental State Employment Team is co-chaired by Secretary Perez, Labor, Licensing and Regulations and Secretary Raggio, MDOD. This employment team is particularly focused on BRAC and how to incorporate disability opportunities into the State BRAC Plan. One of the topics of particular concern that this group shared at its last meeting was transportation to the new jobs that BRAC will be bringing to Maryland for persons with disabilities.
- GAO Update – The GAO has begun a study. Mr. Burns stated that he has been interviewed as part of their planning of the activity and subsequently among other activities they have surveyed every state agency in the nation about issues around VR funding, waiting list, use of the money, barriers relative to capturing money and expenditures. Mr. Burns will share the report with the Council when it becomes available.

Committee Reports - DISCUSSION ITEM

- Policy and Planning Committee, Beth Lash – See report above on MSRC/DORS Public Meetings/Public Comment and Recommendations
- Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee, Larry Abramson – No report at this time.
- Membership Committee, Kali Mallik
Joyce Callahan and Larry Abramson are completing two full terms on the Council as of September. We are grateful for their dedicated service to the Council and people with disabilities in Maryland.

The following members have terms that expire this year, and can be reappointed: Carol Lewis, Andrea Buonincontro, Kali Mallik and Anne Rea.

- Blindness and Vision Services Committee, Joyce Callahan
 - 1) Summer Program for College Bound Students – This is a summer program for high school juniors interested in attending college. This is the twelfth year for this program in a variety of formats. This year, the two week program will run July 13 thru July 24. The program includes visits to three colleges where the students will visit dorms, dining facilities, and meet with staff and students. They will participate in adjustment to blindness activities. Dan Frye suggested having college graduates who are successful speak to students.
 - 2) Blind Enterprise Program (BEP) Update – Subcommittee has been formed and is looking at budget. BEP is closing satellite locations that are not producing revenue. Locations are only closed after two rounds of bidding

fail to produce interest. We do not voluntarily close locations that are actively managed by a blind vendor; the property manager may cease the agreement in certain situations.

3) Senior Possibilities Fair has been postponed until October.

- Employment/Career Development Committee, Robert Burns
The Employment/Career Development Committee met on April 16, 2009 at the State Highway Administration. The agenda for this meeting included: (1) Strategies to increase federal employment for individuals with disabilities under the new Obama Administration, (2) Workforce & Technology Center Update, (3) ARRA Funding-creating financial incentives for employers to partner with DORS.

Elections of Officers

At the May 5, 2009 meeting, the Council members elected Kali Mallik and Dan Frye as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, for the upcoming 2009-2010 year. All members were in favor.

Adjournment

The MSRC meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m. The next meeting of the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council will be Wednesday, September 16, 2009, orientation and training 11:30 – 4:00, full Council meeting 4:30 – 7:00 p.m., Workforce & Technology Center, Baltimore, Maryland.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna M. Lippa, MSRC Staff Support