

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council Minutes
Workforce & Technology Center
September 16, 2009

Members – Present

Michael Bullis
Robert Burns
Charles Crawford
Tim Daly
Dan Frye
Beth Lash
Carol Lewis
Kali Mallik
Mary Manzoni
Anne Rea
Michael Shaw
Alfred Sonnenstrahl
Josie Thomas

Members Unable to Attend

Larry Abramson
Joyce Callahan
Ross Edwards
Eric Seleznow
Jennifer Whitcomb
Michael Whitehill

Support Staff-Present

Polly Huston
Donna Lippa

DORS Liaison Staff Present

Jean Jackson
Kathi Santora
Sue Schaffer

Guests

Laurie Elinoff, candidate for membership
Ronald Winter, DORS Director, Office of Field Services

Introduction, Council Recognition and Approval of Minutes

Chair Kali Mallik welcomed members to the meeting. Members were asked to introduce themselves. Minutes of the May 6, 2009 meeting were approved as written.

Robert Burns wanted to recognize Council members, Larry Abramson and Joyce Callahan, who were unable to attend the meeting today. Both Joyce and Larry have served on the Council for two-full terms. Joyce Callahan was instrumental when the Office for Blindness and Vision Services was created and willingly took over as chairperson of the SRC OBVS Committee. Ms. Callahan will continue as an ad hoc member of that Committee. Larry Abramson has served as Chair for two terms and Vice Chair of the Council and was especially effective in addressing legislative issues and in promoting DORS partnerships with providers with evidence based practices in supported employment. Both Ms. Callahan and Mr. Abramson will be greatly missed.

Chair Kali Mallik announced that the SRC orientation and training was presented today before the full Council meeting. The training was presented by the Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center of the George Washington University. The presenters were Tom Jennings and Pat Tomlinson of TACE. The presentation was well

received by the members who were able to attend. The presentation included: discussion about the federal structure, overview of the Rehabilitation Act, State VR Structure, Section 105 of Title I, partnership between the SRC and the DORS Director and a brief overview of the RSA SRC Online Training Series. Thanks to Tom Jennings and Pat Tomlinson of TACE for their presentation to the Maryland SRC.

Summary Report of Summer Youth Employment Program (Ron Winter)

Ron Winter, Director, DORS Office of Field Services, stated that there were 225 DORS consumers who participated in the summer statewide internship program. Of the 225, 197 were in employment programs, 32 were involved in Maryland Seamless Transition Program, and 10 participated in a program through the Maryland School for the Blind. Of the youth that participated in the programs, 11 have continued employment beyond the summer and 13 others have the possibility of returning as volunteers or being interviewed for future employment. Some of the internship areas included auto mechanic aide, animal farm helper, camp aide, child care, electrical assistant, environmental assistant, IT assistant, laboratory aide, library assistant, physical therapy aide, recreation aide, etc. Mr. Winter further commented that transportation for these students to their internships did not seem to be a problem even in rural areas of Maryland.

Al Sonnenstrahl asked about the range of disabilities. Ron Winter responded that there was a broad range of disabilities. Most of the students involved in this program were special education students. The individuals who were selected had applied for services with DORS.

Mr. Burns stated that research has shown that two of the strongest evidence based practices for youth with significant disabilities to achieve long term employment are student empowerment and early paid employment. Mr. Burns stated that DORS will need to build on these offerings next summer. DORS staff were directly involved with finding these internships for the students. Mr. Burns stated many of these internships are done in partnership with the one-stops. DORS funds the stipend and administrative fee to the one-stop which provides job coaching or assistive technology. The one-stop will take the lead in the job placement service. There have been occasions where the one-stop did not provide the necessary support in securing job placements.

ACTION: Mike Bullis requested a report at a future SRC meeting on the relationship between the one-stops and where we are with the whole process. What has been tried, what has worked and what hasn't worked.

Update on Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (Beth Lash)

Beth Lash stated that this Council is required to have representation from the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). The SILC is a Governor appointed Council whose primary roles are to, in conjunction with DORS, develop the Statewide Plan for Independent Living (SPIL), and monitor, review and evaluate the progress towards the goals and objectives on the SPIL. There is language in the Rehabilitation Act which states that the Councils (SRC and SILC) are suppose to collaborate on common concerns and activities. Over the past year the SILC has gone from receiving

administrative support from a non-profit entity to where it is now provided support through DORS. There has also been turnover in membership and also the leadership of the Council has recently changed. The Chair of the SILC is David Sharp and Laurie Elinoff is the Vice Chair of the SILC and is also the recommended appointee to the State Rehabilitation Council. Denise Thomas is the Treasurer and Shirazeh Tabibi is the Secretary. Tonya Gilchrist is the Administrative Office for the SILC and is employed by DORS. The Council is currently discussing recommendations on the use of the stimulus money among the Centers for Independent Living in Maryland (CILS).

Dan Frye asked how much state support the SILC will require from DORS and what precipitated this change in structure. Mr. Burns responded that DORS discontinued the grant from the non-profit for failure to perform. Beth Lash responded that the Resource Plan for the SILC is about \$90,000 and the SILC has a part time Administrative Officer. Charlie Crawford asked if there are any legislative priorities for the SILC. Beth Lash responded that the SILC is very interested in becoming more active in legislative issues.

DORS 2010-2011 Budget- Impact and Implications (Robert Burns)

- Federal Funding for FY 2010 – DORS is scheduled to receive a 3% increase in basic support.
- State general revenue funding FY 2010 – DORS has not been terribly affected by the State of Maryland budget reductions at this point. There were many tough decisions made a few years ago when people were laid off, and vacancies were abolished. At that time, DORS workforce was reduced by 55 positions, 49 in the VR program which equals 11% of our total workforce.
- ARRA Funding for Maryland DORS – DORS is preparing to provide 6-7 grants to community providers using ARRA funding. Thirty proposals were submitted by our community providers for innovation and expansion projects for unserved and underserved populations.
- FY 2011 Budget Initiatives – Two above-the-mark budget requests have been submitted: Eighteen (18) positions at the Disability Determination Services Administration that work on Social Security Disability claims. Because this is a federally funded program, these 18 positions have already been approved. The other budget enhancement would create partnerships and foster careers for youth with disabilities through partnerships with businesses.

Chairperson Reports and Summary of MSRC Executive Retreat(Kali Mallik)

- The SRC Executive Committee met at the Columbia Sheraton Hotel, August 27, 2009 and developed the following

MSRC priority goals and areas of focus for 2010:

Employment

- 1) Summary report on DORS Summer Employment Program will be shared at the September SRC meeting;
- 2) Dan Frye will send contact information about career opportunities at NISH;

- 3) Mike Bullis suggested that there are more modern ways of doing job searches. The Council could look at career search and other approaches.
- 4) Federal Employment Opportunities – Social Security is in the process of hiring 5,000 new employees; need to work on securing opportunities for employment for persons with disabilities related to BRAC; Census Bureau will be hiring thousands of temporary employees; difficulty obtaining from Federal government who their placement person is and Obama Administration has stressed that the hiring of persons with disabilities is a priority.

WIA/Rehabilitation Act

Monitor reauthorization and participate as appropriate.

More Council Visibility

Suggestion was made that DORS develop a newsletter to include a section of information about the SRC. Kathi Santora stated that DORS will be sending an electronic newsletter to business persons and can entertain expanding outreach. DORS is also updating their website to allow persons to sign-up to receive the newsletter to provide feedback.

SRC Committees

Since most of the work of the Council is done by the Council committees, a goal this year would be to increase the committee membership by adding ad hoc members.

- Vice Chair Dan Frye stated that this is important that the SRC, as a body, work together collaboratively to assure that the Council bylaws accurately reflect the activities of the Council. The bylaws should be carefully reviewed by the Council and decisions to change/amend be made by the body as a whole. Whenever there are key appointments to be made on the Council, assure that members are involved in this process.
- Council requested that DORS legal representative review item #IX – Conflict of Interest – “No members of the Council shall vote or participate in deliberations on any matter that would provide direct financial benefit to the member of otherwise give the appearance of a conflict of interest under State law.”
- Concerned about transportation issues for persons with disabilities under the State BRAC Plan.
- Kali Mallik suggested that a “best practices” for transitioning services be developed.
- Vice Chair Dan Frye suggested that we invite ELI participants to attend an upcoming SRC meeting.

- Chair Kali Mallik announced that that MRA/DORS Conference will take place on November 5-6, 2009, at the WISP Hotel, Deep Creek, Maryland. If you are interested in attending please see Donna Lippa.

Director's Report (Robert Burns)

- DORS Waiting List/Delayed Status Cases – Have made good progress in working down the waiting list. Category I is open with no wait. Category II is a 3-4 month wait. There are about 1,100 individuals on that waiting list.
- WIA/Rehabilitation Act – Title I of the Rehabilitation Act has not been reauthorized since 1998 and is suppose to be done every 5 years. The Senate and the House wanted to move forward on the reauthorization of WIA, and Mr. Burns was asked to serve as a co-chair with counterpart Paul Leather, New Hampshire, on the CSAVR Legislative Committee leading the national effort around reauthorization of the Rehab Act. Position papers were developed by members of the national council and calls were made on Capital Hill to senior staff members of Health, Education and Labor on the Senate side, and Education and Labor on the House side. There are no issues that need to be addressed under reauthorization. Because of the ongoing debate around health care, the loss of Senator Kennedy, and other issues that need to move forward, the reauthorization will most likely not move ahead this year.
- School to Career Transition Institute, fall 2009 – DORS will be holding a Transition Institute this year with a focus on DORS staff from the field, OBVS and community partners and hold a 1 ½ day transition conference. We anticipate about 150 participants with the focus on evidence based practices around transitioning. Information will be sent to the Council when available.
- Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative (2 new grants) – Five (5) year project funded by the US Department of Education to provide intensive technical assistance to at least 8 LEAs on evidence based transition practices. Currently we have onboard seven of those LEAs. DORS is working with Transcen as the statewide technical center to accomplish this. We have funded this technical assistance center and provided SEED funding to LEAs to imbed these evidence based practices in their transitioning programs. Currently working with Calvert, Charles, Anne Arundel, Baltimore City and Carroll Counties and adding St. Mary's and Washington Counties. DORS had enough to fund one more project, but because there was so much interest, Dr. Grasmick was asked to visit and see Larry Abramson's career transition project in collaboration with Montgomery County Schools and DORS. After Dr. Grasmick's visit to Montgomery County, she agreed to use MSDE special education money to fund two more LEAs bringing the total currently to 10.
- DORS Executive Leadership (ELI) Institute – DORS has identified eight (8) middle management staff to participate in the DORS Executive Leadership

Institute. DORS is working the George Washington University and conducting a 10 month executive leadership institute program for these individuals.

- Collaborative Programming with the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped – The Library for the Blind is a Division under the Maryland Department of Education. DORS has been approached by MSDE to assist them in looking for ways to collaborate with the Library which translates into creating opportunities to enhance their funding. DORS is looking over the facility issues and seeing where we can help them create efficiencies to save money and shoulder some responsibilities to enhance their funding.

Dan Frye stated that there have been some concerns that the library building, which was specifically designed for that library, may be asked to move. The building was calculated and designed to accommodate the library and is accessible to the community. Mr. Burns stated that DORS absolutely does not support this option, nor is DORS working with the library to do this.

Al Sonnenstrahl asked for clarification as to if the library is for blind people who are handicapped also, or is it for the blind and people who are physically handicapped. Sue Schaffer stated that the Library was established under the Library of Congress to serve people with print disabilities, so if a deaf person had other disabilities that make it difficult for them to use printed material, they would be served through that entity. Mr. Sonnenstrahl asked if this included braille. Mr. Sonnenstrahl stated that the use of braille is beginning to diminish because people are using voice as a recognition system. Those that are suffering the most are individuals who are deaf and blind. We need to make sure that we preserve the braille for the deaf/blind people. Ms. Schaffer stated that there is a national movement to enhance braille literacy and braille education. Dan Frye stated that there is a substantial campaign as we speak to address the braille literacy crisis in America. Only 10% of blind and deaf/blind children are able to read braille.

Committee Reports - DISCUSSION ITEM

- Policy and Planning Committee, Beth Lash – Primary priorities will be the Needs Assessment, input into public meetings process, planning activities of the Division, and participation in policy review.
- Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee, Mary Manzoni – The committee will meet prior to the November council meeting to begin discussion on the 2009 SRC Annual Report
- Membership Committee, Dan Frye – Joyce Callahan and Larry Abramson are completing two full terms on the Council as of today's meeting. Joyce served as chair of the Blindness and Vision Services committee and Larry Abramson was Chair of the Council for two terms. We are grateful for their dedicated service to the Council and people with disabilities in Maryland.

Paulette Epps, Vocational Director at Alliance, Inc., has been recommended for SRC membership. Information about her candidacy will be forwarded to the Governor's office soon.

Andrea Buonincontro is completing her term as of this meeting. She had been Chair of the Council for two terms and was the representative of the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council. The Statewide Independent Living Council is in the process of making a recommendation for her replacement as their representative.

The following members have been recommended for reappointment:

- 1) Carol Lewis
- 2) Kali Mallik
- 3) Anne Rea

- Blindness and Vision Services Committee, Sue Schaffer - The committee will meet on October 14, 2009. The committee will be reviewing the OBVS Consumer Satisfaction Survey, reviewing the report on services at WTC for the blind, and continuing to discuss and brainstorm on service delivery for the blind in the State of Maryland.
- Employment/Career Development Committee, Robert Burns – The committee will be meeting during the second week of October at the State Highway Administration in Linthicum. Have been discussing the issue of the DORS Employer Services Implementation Council which implements a dual customer approach to rehabilitation services by continuing to emphasize the relationship with the individual with a disability, but also recognize that the business community is a very important customer. As an organization, we have to align our resources and the skill sets of staff so that we can be responsive to the business needs and perspective.

This committee also serves as an advisory group to the Workforce & Technology Center. Mike Bullis will become a new member of this committee.

Adjournment

The MSRC meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m. The next meeting of the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council will be Wednesday, November 18, 2009, 4:30 – 7:00 p.m., Workforce & Technology Center, Baltimore, Maryland.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna M. Lippa, MSRC Staff Support