

**Maryland State Rehabilitation Council
Workforce & Technology Center
November 18, 2009**

Members – Present

Larry Abramson
Michael Bullis
Robert Burns
Charles Crawford
Timothy Daly
Daniel Frye, speakerphone
Beth Lash
Carol Lewis
Kali Mallik
Mary Manzoni
Michael Shaw
Alfred Sonnenstrahl

Jennifer Whitcomb
Michael Whitehill

Members Unable to Attend

Thomas Barkley
Ross Edwards
Anne Rea
Eric Seleznow
Josie Thomas

Support Staff-Present

Polly Huston
Donna Lippa

DORS Liaison Staff Present

Donna Lettow
Tandra Hunter Payne, representing Susan Schaffer
Kathi Santora

Guests

Jody Boone, DORS
Stan Catherman, ELI
Laurie Elinoff, Candidate for SRC membership
James Evans, ELI
Christine Franklin, DORS
Natalie Mitchell, ELI
Melissa Pemberton, ELI
Darlene Peregoy, DORS
Diana Stashik, ELI
Ronald Winter, DORS

Recognitions and Approval of Minutes

Chair Kali Mallik welcomed members and guests to the meeting. The minutes of the September 16, 2009 were approved as written.

Mr. Burns announced that the guests at today's meeting are participating in the DORS Executive Leadership Institute. The participants are Natalie Mitchell, Melissa Pemberton, Jim Evans, Stan Catherman, Diana Stashick, and Tandra Hunter-Payne.

Mr. Burns announced that Larry Abramson has completed two full three-year terms with the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council. Mr. Abramson has served as committee chair, Vice Chair and Chair of the Council, and has been very active as immediate past

chair. Larry has taken the lead in Maryland and nationally in the development and roll-out of evidence-based supported employment for individuals with significant and persistent mental illness. Maryland is a recognized leader in this area. We are pleased to announce that Larry has agreed to remain on the SRC Employment and Career Development Committee. The Council and the Division thank Larry for his commitment and dedication to the public VR Program and to the citizens of Maryland with disabilities.

Chairperson's Report

CSAVR Conference and National SRC Annual Meeting - Chair Kali Mallik announced that he and Bob Burns have just returned today from the CSAVR Conference in Phoenix, Arizona. Kali Mallik represented the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council at the National State Rehabilitation Council meeting in Phoenix, Arizona. The main topic of discussion at the conference this year was the national economy. There was much discussion also regarding the Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act and whether the VR program will remain under the Department of Education or be placed under the direction of the Department of Labor.

SRC Participation at MRA/DORS Training Conference, November 2009 - Kali Mallik mentioned that many SRC members attended the DORS/MRA Conference at the WISP Resort in Deep Creek Lake Maryland in November. The conference was great the trainings were exceptional!

Update – Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report/VR Funding Formula, September 2009 , Robert Burns

Mr. Burns shared the September 2009 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) that studied the funding formula used to distribute federal funds to states for the administration of the public Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services program. This issue was raised with the MD congressional delegation last year as we have seen year-after-year the very negative consequences of the formula on MSDE/DORS. This GAO report substantiates all the issues and inequities that we had identified and have discussed many times:

- The VR funding formula falls short of meeting equity standards because it uses imprecise measures of state needs and resources. The formula does not account for differences among states in the proportion of people with disability or the costs or providing services.
- Maryland is the third most poorly funded state VR program; only Connecticut and Massachusetts are more poorly funded. On a cost adjusted basis, MSDE receives \$97.00 per working-aged persons with a disability compared to other states in our region; Delaware – 4141, Pennsylvania - \$122; West Virginia - \$125; District of Columbia - \$240; Virginia - \$118.
- Notable outliers on the other end of the spectrum are: North Dakota - \$277; Wyoming - \$250; Vermont - \$202; Utah - \$191; South Dakota - \$174.

- The GAO identified three possible funding formulas that would meet equity standards to varying degrees. All three formulas would benefit Maryland and its residents greatly increasing our federal allotment of VR funds by 13.2% to 22.3%.

It remains to be seen whether this issue is moved forward by the Congress. Obviously there would be “winners and losers” if any of the three alternate Formulas would be enacted in legislation and therefore politics could be seen at its best (or worst).

Mr. Burns stated that the distribution formula is in Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act of the Rehabilitation Act. There is an allocation section that specifies how the money is distributed. Mr. Burns stated that the law would need to be changed in order to get anything done. Maryland cannot rely on RSA to get this additional funding.

The Rehabilitation Act is up for reauthorization. There are two committees responsible for the Rehabilitation Act in the Senate and the House. The committee in the Senate is the Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee. Senator Barbara Mikulski is the third ranking member on the Senate Health Committee. Mr. Burns suggested that he, Kali Mallik, Dan Frye and other members call on the Mikulski staff first and outline the issue and subsequently set up a meeting with Senator Mikulski personally. Suggestion was also made to invite Maryland State School Superintendent Nancy Grasmick to this meeting. The authorizing committee in the House is Education & Labor. This is a very large committee without a single member from Maryland.

Panel – 2009 Strategies for DORS Employment Specialists

Mr. Burns began by stating that at the CSAVR Conference this week during many of the employment sessions, Maryland was mentioned on multiple occasions regarding the work of the Maryland team of employment specialists (Darlene Peregoy, Christine Franklin and Jody Boone) and their work regarding federal employment, corporate outreach, and single point of contact.

Darlene Peregoy – Employment Specialist, Office for Blindness and Vision Services –

The groups set four major goals to accomplish:

- Regional Training – Listen to staff recommendations, comments and concerns about employment services and linkages with businesses. To provide business updates and informational workforce trends, customized trainings at the Workforce & Technology Center, and issues related to the ADA, etc.
- Continue to look for Resources for Employers and Staff and place these resources on the DORS public website and DORS intranet.
- More Home-based Employment options – Have not gone very far with this initiative, but newly hired Employment Specialist, Jody Boone, will take the lead on this.
- Focus on Federal Employment – Have developed partnerships with several federal agencies to receive job openings before they are advertised. Statistics have been pulled for 2009 and this year we have had 70 hires with the federal government compared to 28 in 2008 which represents a 150% increase.

The employment group has developed the following strategies for 2010:

- Continue to focus on federal employment, develop partnerships and distribute any job openings that result from this through our DORS network.
- Focus on new opportunities and industries in Maryland primarily the gaming industry.
- Green Jobs – Have attended a number of trainings about this.

Christine Franklin – Employment Specialist, Workforce & Technology Center – Would like to increase partnerships in customized training opportunities. Over the past year DORS has partnered with the Community College of Baltimore County to do day care and warehousing. Have also developed a geographical information system (GIS) training for our students in computer drafting.

Ms. Franklin stated that they would like to increase internship opportunities for students. Would like to develop a relationship with a recycling company in Baltimore City this year. Some trainings that we are currently pursuing are hospitality customized training, call center training, and collection agencies. Looking at expanding internship programs to give people experience and build their resumes. Some of the internships already done this year include the State of Maryland QUEST Internship Program. DORS was able to fund this program this year through ARRA funding.

An E-Newsletter has been developed with the help of Kathi Santora, DORS, Public Information Office, and is sent quarterly to Maryland businesses. Have also provided employment focused training this year on career success for individuals with criminal histories, ADA Train-the-Trainer program for business liaisons and key staff to better prepare them to speak to employers about ADA issues. Will continue to work with the DORS Staff Development Office in 2010 to develop training focused on resume development and certifying staff on resume writing. Will continue to work with business liaisons in the field to develop business network forums, or employer trainings statewide.

On behalf of the Council, Beth Lash thanked the Employment Specialists for all their hard work, especially the work that has been done in regards to federal employment for individuals with disabilities. Ms. Lash added a comment about obtaining information on home-based employment. She suggested that contact be made with individuals who have been successful in home-based employment to find out how they have gotten to this point.

Director's Report (Robert Burns)

- DORS Fiscal Year 2010 Budget – The Board of Public Works made a third round of FY 2010 budget cuts; DORS absorbed a \$295,000 reduction in general revenue; \$90,000 of the cut will be applied to the IL program; \$205,000 will be applied to the VR program; we are currently within a few thousand dollars of our “maintenance of effort” mark; any further reductions to the VR program will result in the loss of federal basic support funding.

- DORS Fiscal year 2009 Accomplishments – The MD Disability Determination Services cleared 63,103 disability claims; DORS assisted 2,309 persons with significant disabilities to achieve a successful employment outcome; the Workforce & Technology Center served 2,585 persons; VR program reduced its waiting list from 3,977 to 1,185; services to transitioning youth have also increased.
- Awarding of ARRA Grants –Seven community programs have been selected to receive ARRA grants based on response to DORS Request for Proposals Expanding Employment for Un-served and Underserved individuals with significant disabilities. Selected grantees are as follows:
 - 1) Program Development Group, Inc.
 - 2) MD School for the Deaf
 - 3) Humanim, Inc.
 - 4) ARC of Baltimore
 - 5) ARC of the Northern Chesapeake Region
 - 6) Deaf Independent Living Association
 - 7) Horizon Goodwill Industries

Update – Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council

Update on Making Choices for Independent Living (MCIL) - Beth Lash stated that RSA conducted an on-site review of MCIL in November 2009 and the Statewide Independent Living Council and DORS were notified that RSA would not be awarding their grant for MCIL. MCIL was in the process of creating a new CIL to support Anne Arundel and Howard Counties specifically with another separate CIL for Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Harford Counties. Ms. Lash just wanted to make this Council aware of this change.

WTC Graduation – Laurie Elinoff had the honor and privilege to speak at the WTC graduation in December 2009. Kudos to Laurie!

Committee Report

- Policy and Planning Committee, Beth Lash
 - 1) Statewide Needs Assessment – Beth Lash reported that she and Council member Dan Frye are on the DORS workgroup for the Statewide Needs Assessment. They are currently collecting data regarding the needs of individuals with disabilities. The specific areas of focus this year are: blindness and deaf/blind issues, autism, and one-stops. The Statewide Needs Assessment will be connected with the public meeting process this year.
 - 2) Public Meetings – There will be 3-4 public meetings this year. Currently looking at a Cecil County location, Humanim in Baltimore City, and a Prince George’s County One-Stop. Would like to see the possibility of having an all virtual meeting (web cast and teleconference). Possibility of offering refreshments at the public meetings to help draw individuals. Michael Whitehill suggested looking at the community colleges if you would like to

consider doing a web cast type meeting. It may be easier to network through an already existing center at a community college.

- Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee, Mary Manzoni

Mary Manzoni stated that the committee met on October 19, 2009 to review the committee goals and responsibilities. The primary focus now is getting the annual report published. Committee chairs have been asked for program highlights for 2009. The letter of introduction in the annual report from the Chair and Vice Chair will acknowledge the Governor for his support, mention the decrease in the waiting list, mention the ARRA grants that were awarded and the opportunities that will be provided, and discuss what the Maryland VR program is facing in terms of the federal formula funding.

- Membership and Resource Committee, Dan Frye

- 1) Polly Huston presented this information to the Council in the absence of Dan Frye. Information has been forwarded to the Governor's Appointments Office regarding the new appointment of Paulette Epps and Laurie Elinoff, and the reappointment of Carol Lewis, Kali Mallik and Anne Rea. The Governor's Office indicated that the appointments are in process.
- 2) We are continuing to identify potential members representing the autism community and business and industry.

- Employment/Career Development Committee, Robert Burns

Bob Burns stated that the Committee met on October 8, 2009. Present were David Collins, Dennis Phillips, Jean Jackson, Mike Whitehill, Niles Ellingson, Bob Burns, Tim Daly, Kathi Santora and Jim Evans. The agenda included an employment update from the employment specialists. This will be done on a regular basis at each committee meeting. Kathi Santora did her presentation on the E-Newsletter and received a lot of feedback from members. Jean Jackson and Jim Evans updated the committee on WTC activities and initiatives.

- Blindness and Vision Services Committee, Mike Bullis

Mike Bullis stated that the Blindness and Vision Services Committee met on October 14, 2009 to set up a schedule of meetings and topics for next year. Will be asking for a presentation from the RISE Program, tour of WTC, ask Jim McCarthy from the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped to come and talk about the new college textbook program for students with disabilities, and meet with individuals from BISM to talk about their capacity to deliver services and see how this interfaces with other services that DORS provides. Had discussion about Independent Living Older Blind Program.

New Council Business & Adjournment

The MSRC meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m. The next meeting of the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council will be Tuesday, February 2, 2010 in Annapolis, Maryland.

Respectfully submitted.

Donna M. Lippa, MSRC Staff Support