

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council  
Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. Senate Building  
February 2, 2010

**Members – Present**

Thomas Barkley  
Michael Bullis  
Robert Burns  
Charles Crawford  
Timothy Daly  
Ross Edwards  
Laurie Elinoff  
Paulette Epps  
Daniel Frye  
Beth Lash  
Carol Lewis  
Mary Manzoni  
Michael Shaw  
Alfred Sonnenstrahl  
Michael Whitehill

**Members Unable to Attend**

Kali Mallik  
Anne Rea  
Eric Seleznow  
Josie Thomas  
Jennifer Whitcomb

**Support Staff Present**

Polly Huston  
Donna Lippa

**DORS Liaison Staff Present**

Donna Lettow  
Kathi Santora  
Sue Schaffer

**Guests**

Larry Abramson, Past SRC Member  
Stan Catherman, DORS/ELI  
Natalie Mitchell, DORS/ELI  
Melissa Pemberton, DORS/ELI  
Cassandra Shoffler, DORS/ELI  
Diane Stashik, DORS/ELI

**Recognitions and Approval of Minutes**

Dan Frye, Vice Chair, welcomed members and guests to the meeting. Mr. Frye commented on the excellent attendance at the MSRC annual legislative event today. The minutes of the November 18, 2009 meeting were approved as written.

Mr. Burns announced that several guests present today are participants in the DORS Executive Leadership Institute (ELI). The participants present today are Natalie Mitchell, Melissa Pemberton, Stan Catherman, Diana Stashick, Beth Lash and Cassandra Shoffler.

**Discussion on Visits with Legislators**

Dan Frye – Dan Frye, accompanied by Michael Bullis and Toni March, visited the offices of their delegates and, because of the State-of the-State address today, spoke to their staff who appeared receptive to their perspectives. Legislative staff felt confident that the issues discussed were not controversial and affirmed that legislative representatives would be supportive.

Laurie Elinoff – Ms. Elinoff commented that the materials prepared by DORS staff for legislators today were very well done and wanted to thank the DORS staff. Meetings with legislators went very well. Ms. Elinoff was able to meet with Senator Edward Reilly, Delegate Tony McConkey and the legislative aide to Delegate James King. All were very responsive and interested.

Charles Crawford - Mr. Crawford met with Delegates Alfred Carr and Jeffrey Waldstreicher and the legislative assistant to Delegate Ana Gutierrez and a representative from Senator Richard Madaleno's Office. All were supportive.

Michael Whitehill – Mr. Whitehill was able to meet with Delegates Mary Roe Walkup, Delegates Michael Smigiel and Richard Sossi and Senator E.J. Pipkin. A universal concern of all Mr. Whitehill's representatives seemed to be that issues involving the rural population appear to be more important than those of the urban areas where there are huge transportation problems and lots of distance between services.

Beth Lash – Ms. Lash was able to meet with Senator Astle and Delegate Ron George. Both meetings went extremely well and both expressed a lot of support. Both expressed support for SB 58.

Carol Lewis – Ms. Lewis met with Senator Zirkin, Delegate Frank and Delegate Lafferty. They were supportive but would not guarantee that the DORS budget would not be cut. They were all very concerned about the budget and stated that there are a lot of hard decisions to make.

Al Sonnenstrahl - It is very important to emphasize the return on investment of Maryland's part. For every dollar that you put in you get \$3.00 back. It is like putting money in the bank and getting 300% interest. All of the legislators that I met were very supportive.

Mary Manzoni – Ms. Manzoni met with Delegates Richard Impallaria, Delegate Patrick McDonough and Delegate Jennings. Ms. Manzoni was also able to meet with Senator Harris's assistant and he was questioning outcomes, numbers, placement, and waiting list. The delegates were supportive, but could not guarantee that there would be no budget cuts.

Larry Abramson – Mr. Abramson met with his legislators who were all very supportive and positive.

Paulette Epps – Ms. Epps met with Senator Kathleen Klausmeier and also Delegate Todd Schuler who were both extremely supportive of Senate Bill 58.

Sue Schaffer – Ms. Schaffer met with Senator Robey and her delegates who were all very positive.

Mr. Burns and Vice Chair Dan Frye thanked the members of the Council for coming to Annapolis for the day and their support of the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the public VR services.

#### **Chairperson/Vice Chairperson's Report (Dan Frye, Vice Chair)**

- CSAVR and NCSAB Conferences, Phoenix, Arizona, November 2009 - Dan Frye began his report by stating that he had attended the CSAVR and NCSAB Conferences in Phoenix, Arizona in November 2009. The meetings were productive and successful. Much discussion took place at the CSAVR meeting regarding innovative ways to use the ARRA money. Maryland is in the forefront of using those dollars in a positive way to promote job opportunities and to enhance the internal infrastructure.

In terms of the NCSAB, a big focus this year will be the Randolph Sheppard Program and the concerted alliance that is occurring between both consumers and professions in order to preserve that job placement program for people who are eligible for services. There is a cross consumer and professional alliance underway that as the Rehabilitation Act is reauthorized in the next year that the priority that Randolph Sheppard has is maintained. There was discussion during NCSAB that in different states across the country efforts are being made to minimize identifiable and distinct services for blind people. Maryland again is in a good position again, because it has created an office for the blind that allows this agency to develop a concentrated service delivery model for blind and visually impaired individuals. There was also discussion about what can be done in the various states where identifiable services are at risk because of budget constraints.

#### **Director's Report (Robert Burns)**

- DORS Budget/Waiting List – DORS has been able to drop the waiting list down to under 1,000 individuals. The “most significant disability” category remains open with no waiting list. There is still approximately a two month waiting list for consumer placed in Category II. DORS does not anticipate any problems going to the end of the state year as it pertains to the budget. Moving into 2011, if DORS gets past the legislative budget hearings with the budget mark at 14.7 million dollars, we will be in good shape in 2011. There is ARRA money that will carry over because of cancellations which will roll into 2011. DORS can also attempt to grab federal money that some states are not using.
- DORS 2010 Legislative Initiative - Senate Bill 58 – Workers’ Compensation – Division of Rehabilitation Services – Unpaid Working Experience – This bill provides that an individual in an unpaid work-based learning experience provided by DORS is a covered employee for the purpose of the State workers’ compensation laws; requiring a participating employer to secure workers’ compensation coverage for the individual; requiring DORS to reimburse a participating employer for specified costs. Council member Michael Whitehill testified in favor of this bill on behalf of SB 58 as a Council member and an employer.

- Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative/RFP Meeting – Talbot Co. Chamber of Commerce – DORS is moving into the third year of partnering with school systems to implement a model of evidence-based practice that has been tested to demonstrate long term employment outcomes for young people with disabilities. DORS in collaboration with Transcen, Inc., a nonprofit located in Montgomery County, has a national reputation for disability transitioning practices is a partner with DORS and serves as the state technical center for Maryland. There are currently 6 LEAs participating in this project. We are hoping that this leads to a decrease in the drop-out rate of individuals with disabilities.
- Partnering with MDOD on National Technical Assistance Research Project – DORS has a partnership with MDOD on the National Technical Assistance Research Project (NTAR) out of Rutgers University. They have worked with the group on the BRAC Plan in Maryland studying new growth areas and jobs coming to our state because of BRAC, particularly around Fort Meade, Aberdeen Proving Ground, and Andrews Air Force Base. MDOD is looking at opportunities add disability issues around the BRAC plan, i.e. affordable and accessible housing, transportation, networking with federal agencies for persons with disabilities.

Universal access to one-stops -. The Workforce Investment Act set up a partnership with public VR agencies and generic one-stop centers with the hope that people with less severe disabilities could receive services through one-stops and even individuals with most significant disabilities establishment of collaboration and synergy with the public VR in one-stops. Unfortunately, this has not worked quite as well as hoped. MDOD has set up a contract with NTAR to look at universal access. The Governor's Workforce Investment Board has defined this as a priority.

Dan Frye commented that if we engage in access to these one-stops to assure that disability access is considered, and particularly non-visual access is not overlooked. Experience has shown that tremendous reliance on these generic one-stops often leaves this disability behind.

Beth Lash stated that maybe there needs to be an advocacy program that helps represent persons with disabilities to access the one-stop program. We must assure that there is something meaningful to access to these services.

- Collaboration between DORS and the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH) - A number of years ago, the National Federation of the Blind took the lead in securing state legislation which created an accessible textbook program to insure that individuals blind and visually impaired, when attending college, would receive timely access to their textbooks in accessible format. About \$150,000 that was earmarked for this program was cut by the Board of Public Works. The Superintendent immediately put together a team to

discuss this issue and come up with a solution for this budget cut. DORS was asked to join the team and a solution was developed. After meetings were held between DORS and LBPH, they were able to free up about \$120,000 to support this program. The LBPH will be able to implement this program fully.

Dan Fry commented that Sue Schaffer has done a great job collaborating with LBPH and thanked DORS for undertaking this task.

Sue Schaffer stated that she will be meeting next week with the Maryland Higher Education Network (MDHENS) which are the disability support group, to share this issue.

Mike Bullis thanked DORS for what they have done to get funding for this most important program, but added that he has felt discouraged in the past when contacting representatives from MSDE requesting clarification regarding this funding issue.

Bob Burns replied that it is clear that all agencies need to do a better job in providing these services for our citizens in Maryland. The funding request for all state agencies goes before the Board of Public Works as a reduction in your budget. The issue is that the Board of Public Works makes massive cuts in state budgets and that budget items for \$150,000 was realigned out of the MSDE budget.

Al Sonnenstrahl asked how the LBPH assists deaf/blind individuals who couldn't benefit from audio. Dan Frye stated that the deaf/blind are getting a great deal of attention and will benefit from the textbook initiative in making these textbooks available in braille. There is a lot of emphasis in making the books available in whatever format is desired.

Charlie Crawford stated that this subject should be discussed at an upcoming SRC Blindness and Vision Services Committee meeting. Suggestion was made to invite Jim McCarthy to a future committee meeting.

- Update – Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report.VR Funding Formula – Bob Burns stated that he has shared the GAP Report with the Council. A study was conducted on the VR formula and the GAO came out with some recommendations as to how to improve this. It is politically sensitive because to change the formula there will be winners, such as Maryland and Massachusetts, but there will also be losers. The Council's position was that we wanted to pursue our Maryland delegation. The plan was to brief the State Board of Education and the Governor on this issue in order to get a clear plan to proceed in contacting the Maryland congressional delegation.

The State Board develops a list of federal priorities which is put together each year and the DORS federal funding issue is the number federal appropriations priority. This has been communicated to the Governor's Office. Mr. Burns' has contacted an aide in Senator Mikulski's office, Mario Cardona, and was impressed with Mr. Cardona's knowledge of this information. Mario Cardona has

received the GAO report and DORS analysis of the GAO Report and a follow-up meeting will be set-up with Bob Burns, Kali Mallik and Dan Frye.

### **MSRC/DORS 2010 Public Meetings (Kathi Santora)**

The 2010 MSRC/DORS public meetings will be held this year at: Bowie Library in Prince George's County, Maryland One-Stop Career Center in Hagerstown, Humanim in Baltimore City, and Chesapeake Center in Easton. Bob Burns will be attending all the public meetings. The primary focus of the meetings this year is to get feed-back on the preliminary findings for the needs assessment. A statewide teleconference has also been scheduled.

### **Update – Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (Laurie Elinoff)**

- Continuing to collaborate with their independent living partners; DORS and Centers for Independent Living.
- Public hearings have been scheduled across Maryland to discuss the State Plan for Independent Living.
- Finalized the SILC Bylaws.
- Planning a retreat in April for the Council and SILC Conference in the fall.
- Interested in collaborating activities with the SRC.

### **Committee Report**

#### **Policy and Planning Committee, Beth Lash**

- Beth Lash stated that a teleconference was held with the committee to discuss the upcoming public meetings.
- Melissa Pemberton joined the committee meeting to discuss the comprehensive system of personnel development (CSPD) process which is a component of the DORS state plan under the Act pertaining to staff training. Melissa Pemberton is preparing a five-year needs assessment. The committee discussed ways in which they can provide feedback for this five-year needs assessment.
- The committee also discussed policy updates relating to personal assistance services. There will be some minor changes to this policy where DORS will be able to help fund PAS through the maintenance of transportation system.
- The committee reviewed the Governor's Transition Youth Initiative (GTYI) fact sheet which is a collaborative process between DORS and the Developmental Disabilities Administration.

- **Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee, Mary Manzoni**

Mary Manzoni stated that the SRC Annual Report has been completed and made a special thank you to Donna Lettow for her outstanding work on this report.

- **Membership and Resource Committee, Dan Frye**

Dan Frye announced that the names for appointment and reappointment that were forwarded to the Governor's Appointments office have been finalized.

- Employment/Career Development Committee, Robert Burns  
Bob Burns announced that the employment committee will be meeting in March and will be discussing program development at the Workforce & Technology Center. Mr. Burns stated that Jim Evans has done a great job in make the WTC more deaf friendly. WTC has hired a deaf services coordinator.

On the employment side, the DORS employment specialists have been focusing on jobs with federal agencies. With the new administration and new chair of EEOC there has been a big push to increase the hiring of individuals with disabilities in the federal service. There is a major job fair in April where DORS will screen resumes and job qualifications before the actual job fair so that interviews will be set up before the fair. Many of these agencies will have the authority to hire at the job fair. The DORS employment specialists are on the planning committee for this initiative. Bob Burns reported that DORS individuals attending the job fair will have their schedule A certificates available.

- Blindness and Vision Services Committee, Mike Bullis  
Michael Bullis stated that the committee met and discussed the OBVS client satisfaction survey which shows a high level of satisfaction from the consumers and services received.

The committee is looking for another member who is blind or visually impaired to fill a position on the committee.

The next meeting will be in April and discussion will take place about the blind industries and services of Maryland (BISM).

### **New Council Business & Adjournment**

Laurie Elinoff stated that the Governor signed the proclamation last July that October would be National Disability month. Ms. Elinoff suggested that the SRC consider some type of activity during the month of October. Dan Frye suggested that a workgroup of SRC members be established with interested Council members to discuss this.

The MSRC meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m. The next meeting of the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council will be Wednesday, May 5, 2010 at the Workforce & Technology Center in Baltimore, Maryland.

Respectfully submitted.  
Donna M. Lippa, MSRC Staff Support