

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council
Legislative Event
Annapolis, Maryland
February 3, 2011

Members – Present

Thomas Barkley
Charles Crawford
Laurie Elinoff
Daniel Frye
Beth Lash
Carol Lewis
Sue Page
Barry Shaw
Josie Thomas
Jennifer Whitcomb
Michael Whitehill

Members Unable to Attend

Michael Bullis
Tim Daly
Paulette Epps
Kali Mallik
Mary Manzoni
Anne Rea
Rashid Reyazzuddin
Alfred Sonnenstrahl

DORS Liaison Staff Present

Donna Lettow
Sue Schaffer
Kimberlee Schultz

Support Staff Present

Polly Huston
Donna Lippa

Guests Present

Tonya Gilchrist, SILC
Yvonne Kranitz, DORS
Tom Laverty, DORS
Tandra Hunter-Payne
Mary Jo Verdery, DILA
Ronald Winter, DORS

Recognitions and Approval of Minutes

Dan Frye, Vice Chairperson, welcomed members and guests to the meeting. Minutes from the November 17, 2010 meeting were approved as written. Dan Frye stated that he felt the message to the legislators today in support of the Governor's Budget was timely and productive and stressed the mission of employment in these tough economic times. Mr. Frye thanked DORS staff and the members of the Council for taking the time to come to Annapolis to meet face-to-face with their legislators.

Discussion on Visits with Legislators

Dan Frye – Mr. Frye reported that he was able to meet with all four representatives from his district in Baltimore City and all seemed supportive and attentive.

Tom Barkley – Unfortunately his representative had to cancel the meeting, but materials were left.

Charles Crawford – Mr. Crawford was able to meet with his representatives who were attentive and receptive and in support of the DORS program.

Beth Lash – Ms. Lash met with Senator Astle and Delegate McMillan and these appointments went very well. Both the Senator and Delegate are very supportive of the program. Ms. Lash met with Delegate Ronald George and he suggested that, for future reference, when advocating for a budget issues, it is more effective to reference the page in the budget and the line item in place of referencing the agency name. It is difficult for legislators to keep well informed of all agencies. It is also important to stress that the Agency is 80% federally funded. This will also help in avoiding Agency budget cuts.

Laurie Elinoff – Ms. Elinoff was able to meet with Delegate Tony McConkey who was very supportive of the DORS budget. She was also able to meet with Senator Edward Reilly who was very interested in the DORS program. Arrangements will be made at a later date for Ms. Elinoff to meet personally with Delegate Cathleen Vitale who was unavailable today.

Yvonne Kranitz – Ms. Kranitz was able to meet with Delegate Costa who is very supportive and he would support the DORS budget and any legislative issue needed for our DORS hiring exception. Ms. Kranitz was also able to meet with Senator James Degrange who personally knows some of our consumers who have become successfully employed.

Carol Lewis – Ms. Lewis met with Delegates Stephen Lafferty, William Frank and Susan Aumann and the legislative aide to Senator Brochin. All were in favor of not cutting the DORS budget. Several mentioned that they have spoken to individuals who have received services from DORS who had favorable interactions. The question was asked regarding which type of industries we placed consumers in last year. They were generally pleased to see the statistics in the hand outs. They suggested that we reinforce the information in the statistics hand-out in the future when meeting with representatives.

Josie Thomas – Ms. Thomas met with Senator Raskin, Delegate Hixson and Delegate Mizeur and they are all very receptive. Delegate Hixson is the Chair of House Ways and Means and she and her legislative aide were interested in the type of jobs which DORS consumers are hired and their average wages

Sue Page – Ms. Page met with Senator Joseph Getty who was very interested in the DORS budget and was even more interested in the federal money that DORS receives. The Senator also inquired as to why we were part of the Maryland State Department of Education. Ms. Page also spoke with Delegate Wayne Kach and he stated his concern that the Governor's Budget does not have the money to back it up, but assured me that he would do what he could and felt that DORS is a worthwhile program.

Sue Schaffer – Ms. Schafer met with Senator Robey and the delegates from Howard County. Senator Robey was really interested and concerned about the Voluntary Separation Program (VSP) and how state agencies were going to cope. He stated that he would never touch the DORS budget. Delegate Guy Guzzone is on the Appropriations Committee and a long time supporter of the program and will continue to support.

Barry Shaw – Mr. Shaw was able to meet with the administrative staff of his three legislators. They were all very interested and receptive. Very good meetings for his first time doing this.

ACTION: Staff will develop a follow-up letter which will be sent to all the legislators who were visited today based on the information requested from these visits.

Dan Frye took a few moments to acknowledge the work of the DORS support staff who worked hard to make this legislative event day so successful. The logistical backing of the staff and the supportive documents help to make this a successful event.

Chairperson's Report (Dan Frye, Vice Chair)

Dan Frye announced that he, Kali Mallik and Sue Page joined the SRC Chairs, Vice Chairs and VR Directors from Region III, (Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania and D.C.) for a Region III Learning Community Forum. This was an opportunity to meet and talk about issues that may transcend state boundaries to learn from one another about effective practices of their State Rehabilitation Councils and to gather information on how each council functions to gather best practices across the state. The group is going to meet again in the fall of 2011 and again in connection with the CSAVR Conference in April 2011. It was a good exchange of conversation and Maryland was represented well.

Director's Report (Sue Page)

Sue thanked the SRC Council for taking the time today from their busy schedules to meet with their legislative representatives. Ms. Page stressed the importance of having a public face in Annapolis.

State Legislative Budget Update

The Governor has proposed his budget for FY 2012. The allowance for DORS is \$96.6 million dollar which represents an increase of \$1.9 million dollars from last year. There is information in the budget about the possibility of merging state agencies, particularly Maryland Higher Education Commission with the Maryland State Department of Education.

DORS will not be introducing any bills this year during the General Assembly session, but there may be a couple bills that DORS will be interested in following. The Maryland Higher Education Commission is submitting legislation to clarify applications to individuals receiving SSI/SSDI for community college tuition waiver program. There has not been a hearing yet, but DORS may be asked to support this legislation.

Federal Legislative Update

DORS has received the schedule for the RSA Monitoring of State Agencies. Maryland will not be monitored until 2012.

DORS Counselor Vacancy Rate and State Recruitment Process

The State Employee Voluntary Separation Program (VSP) was introduced the implemented on January 31, 2011. This program entitled state employees to apply and leave state service with a monetary incentive for their years of service. All applications were sent to Department of

Budget and Management (DBM) where separation decisions were made. DORS had 15 employees apply for the program and lost 12 of those positions.

Couples with the VSP, the state recruitment process is very lengthy. Requests to fill each vacant position are submitted to DBM for authorization which is a cumbersome and lengthy process. A proposal has been drafted which has been sent to MSDE asking for a waiver of from this process for certain position for DORS. We would only look at positions that are 80%-100% federally funded. The other qualifier would be that these positions have direct communications with our consumers. We currently have direct care positions at WTC that are exempt from this hiring exception process along with the DDS that is 100% federally funded.

Charlie Crawford asked about the bottom line impact of the loss of those positions due to VSP. Sue Page stated that in 2005 DORS (excluding the DDS) had 491 positions, and today after VSP and other positions eliminations, DORS is currently at 423 positions. Ms. Page will be looking into acquiring more contractual positions and then, as vacancies are created, move people into permanent positions.

DORS Waiting List

The current waiting list has now grown to over 2,000 individuals in category II. Currently, DORS does not have the staff to serve all individuals who have applied for services who are placed in Category II. Many times secretarial positions in the regional and local offices, as they become vacant, are converted into counselor positions if possible. The field program currently has over 10,000 consumers under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). There are a total of 119 field positions and 105 are filled to date. Individuals in Category I, most significant disabilities, are not placed on a waiting list and are being served...

DORS Fee-for-Service Benefits Planning

Effective January 1, 2011, DORS established a fee-for-service model for provision of benefits planning services for consumers who are beneficiaries of Supplemental Security Income (SSIO) and/or Social Security disability Insurance (SSDI) through the Social Security Administration (SSA).

DORS will consider applications from individuals and organizations with certain qualifications, through the Provider/Vendor Approval process. Those approved as providers/vendors will be required to have current certification as Community Work Incentives Coordinators through SSA. They will be required to complete training and certification in state benefits through the Maryland Department of Disabilities within 6 months of DORS approval for benefits planning.

CSAVR Legislative Task Force

Sue Page has been asked to serve on a CSAVR legislative task force and has accepted. The group has not met to date. Sue will share information with the Council as it becomes available.

Driver Education for Individuals who are Deaf

WTC now offers Driver's Education for Individuals who are Deaf. The program consists of approximately 50 hours of classroom instruction.

NIDRR Grant –“Enhancing Out based Performance Measures for the Public VR Program”

NIDRR in collaboration with the University of Virginia, the University of Richmond, Bureau of Disability Economics and the Virginia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency and Maryland VR are looking at return of investment (ROI) of the public vocational program. Sue Page has been assigned to the Advisory Council, and John Stem, DORS Staff Specialist, will be working on the project management team. Sue will keep the Council up-to-date on this initiative.

MD Adult Learning Advisory Council

Sue announced that this Council has not met yet, but she will share more information in the future.

MSRC/DORS 2011 Public Meetings (Beth Lash)

Beth Lash announced that the MSRC/DORS Public meetings will be held in March 2011. The dates are: March 22nd – Easter Seals Greater Washington-Baltimore Region, March 23rd –Blind Industries & Services of Maryland, March 28th-Statewide teleconference, March 29th-Lower Shore Enterprises and March 30th-The Arc of Carroll County. The topics of discussion this year will be: (1) 2012 State Plan for VR Services; Budget & Capacity; Benefits Planning; and Blind Services in Maryland. Vice Chair Dan Frye encourages all SRC members to attend at least one of these public meeting to encourage comment and possible recruitment of new members.

Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (Laurie Elinoff)

Laurie Elinoff reported that several members of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) attended the SILC Congress in Georgia last month. The main focus of the meeting this year was to discuss the IL State Plan and how to effectively monitor the plan.

The SILC will be having their first IL Awareness Day in Annapolis in a couple weeks.

There are two new CILS preparing to open in Maryland in the next few months. One will serve Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Harford County and the other will serve Anne Arundel and Howard Counties.

The SILC is planning a Conference for June who will include SILC members, Center for Independent Living (CIL) Directors and their CIL Board members.

Committee Report

- Policy and Planning Committee, Beth Lash - Committee Chair Beth Lash gave her report above on the DORS Public Meetings (see above).
- Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee, Mary Manzoni – In Mary Manzoni’s absence, Donna Lettow reported that the committee has finished the SRC 2010 Annual Report which was available at the meeting today and was distributed to the legislators. Will be reviewing the SRC website.
- Membership and Resource Committee, Dan Frye – Committee Chair Dan Frye reported on the activity of the membership committee:

The Governor’s Appointments Office is still reviewing the membership packet forwarded last year, including (1) three new candidates for membership: Earl Cooper, Rashid

Reyazuddin, and Barry Shaw; (2) Suzanne R. Page, new DORS Director; and (3) the following reappointments: Josie Thomas, Mary Manzoni, Tom Barkley, Jennifer Whitcomb

The Membership and Resources Committee is finalizing the application for membership of Zosia Zaks, representing the Autism community. Kali Mallik had an opportunity to interview Ms. Zaks and recommends her appointment.

The Membership and Resources Committee has requested a replacement for Eric Selzenow, previous SRC representative from the Governor's Workforce Investment Board.

Mike Bullis continues as a member of the Council but no longer represents the Maryland Department of Disabilities since he is now the Executive Director of The Image Center, the new Center for Independent Living serving Baltimore City and Baltimore & Harford Counties. The Committee has contacted Cathy Raggio, Secretary of MDOD about a new member to represent that agency on the Council.

Once the appointments and reappointments are finalized, we will schedule an orientation for new members.

Employment/Career Development Committee, Sue Page – Committee Chair Sue Page stated that a meeting will be scheduled in the very near future.

- Blindness and Vision Services Committee, Mike Bullis – In the absence of Mike Bullis, Sue Schaffer stated that the last meeting discussed the future of blind services in Maryland. Talked about the summer program for transitioning blind youth.

The MSRC meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m. The next meeting of the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council will be Wednesday, May 4, 2011 at the Workforce & Technology Center, Baltimore, Maryland.

Respectfully submitted
Donna M. Lippa
MSRC Staff Support