

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council
Workforce & Technology Center
May 4, 2011

Members – Present

Michael Bullis
Charles Crawford
Tim Daly
Laurie Elinoff
Paulette Epps
Daniel Frye
Beth Lash
Carol Lewis
Kali Mallik
Mary Manzoni
Sue Page
Rashid Reyazzuddin
Barry Shaw
Josie Thomas
Mary Jo Verdery
Earl Cooper

Members Unable to Attend

Thomas Barkley
Anne Rea
Alfred Sonnenstrahl
Michael Whitehill

DORS Liaison Staff Present

Donna Lettow
Kimberlee Schultz
Sue Schaffer
Jean Jackson

Support Staff Present

Polly Huston
Donna Lippa

Guests

Jessica Hawes, DORS Annapolis Supervisor
Tom Laverty, Client Assistance Program
Debra Fieldhouse, GWIB, Candidate for membership
Ron Winter, DORS Director of Field Services

Recognitions and Approval of Minutes

Chairperson Kali Mallik welcomed members to the Council meeting and members were asked to introduce themselves. Minutes from the February 3, 2011 meeting were approved as written.

Information – Community Rehabilitation Programs (Kate Drake, DORS Staff Specialist for Community Rehabilitation Programs)

AbilityOne Programs in Maryland

In Kate Drake's absence, Polly Huston presented the following information. NISH is a national nonprofit agency whose mission is to create employment opportunities for people with significant disabilities by securing federal contracts through the AbilityOne

Program for its network of community-based, nonprofit agencies – otherwise known in Maryland as Community Rehabilitation Providers.

AbilityOne wages as of FY 2008, the average hourly wage for an employee was \$10.57 per hour (with some employees earning as much as \$18 to \$20 per hour). Some participating agencies hold special certificates issued by the Department of Labor, consistent with the Fair Labor Standards Act, to pay employees less than the minimum wage based on employee productivity.

Service occupations that may be available to consumers include landscaping, building maintenance, food service, mail center operations, laundry services, order processing, administrative support and document imaging. Some agencies have employment opportunities that involve production of office supplies, military clothing, detergents, paints or surgical items.

It is our understanding that MHA does not consider AbilityOne placements to be consistent with their requirement for individualized work placements, for both evidence-based and traditional MHA sites. AbilityOne placements would be considered successful VR outcomes as long as the job is in an integrated setting. An AbilityOne placement in an integrated setting where the DORS consumer earns less than minimum wage, consistent with the Fair Labor Standards Act, would be considered a successful outcome but not a “competitive” closure.

Employment First

Employment First is a national effort to assure that individuals with intellectual disabilities/developmental disabilities consider employment on a preferred basis in planning for their lives. Employment First is consistent with our agency’s belief that individuals with disabilities, even the most significant disabilities, can work in meaningful positions in integrated settings when provided with adequate, appropriate supports. Many see this as development of a model program similar to Evidence-Based Practice in Supported Employment for individuals with persistent mental illness, with presumed eligibility, streamlined procedures, and sharing of documentation. DORS is fully supportive of Employment First in Maryland.

DORS has been partnering with the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), the Maryland Department of Disabilities and community providers in implementing Employment First in Maryland, supported by the Supported Employment Leadership Network (SELN) and the Institute for Community Inclusion out of the University of Massachusetts at Boston.

Employment will be the first option considered for all people of working age who receive DDA services. This was an outgrowth of 2008 DDA strategic planning process.

- Effort to increase employment for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities;

- Looking to develop a protocol similar to Evidence Based Practice in Supported Employment for individuals eligible for MHA supported employment, characterized by streamlined referral and eligibility, braided funding, specialized DORS counselors;
- Primarily will impact transitioning students/GTYI and those in day programs who may be interested in community employment;
- Role of families in supporting work will be critical;
- Benefits counseling will also have an important role;
- DDA will need to provide clarification on funding issues, especially related to the potential for “double dipping.”
- Community Rehabilitation Programs will provide pre-employment activities, e.g., community based assessment, “discovery,” to support employment;
- Will include an effort to have most if not all DDA supported employment providers become DORS-approved community programs;
- Pilot group of 7 CRPs – Organizational Change Peer Network;
- Considering establishing a pilot to look at transitioning students served by DDA.
- Very much a work in progress.

Paulette Epps described Alliance’s role and progress in implementing Employment First. Kali Mallik recommended that the SRC Employment Committee review the issue of double dipping in regard to DDA/DORS funding.

Client Appeals Report/CAP Report (Tom Laverty, Client Assistance Program)

Tom Laverty reported that the Client Assistance Program is aware of five appeals that have been forwarded to the Office of Administrative Hearings where CAP was involved. All cases are service provision cases.

Dan Frye stated that the Council should be mindful of any systemic patterns developing and urged Mr. Laverty to bring these issues to the Council.

Election of Officers

Sue Page announced the slate of nominations for the Chair, Dan Frye, who has served as Vice Chair for two years, and Josie Thomas as Vice Chair. Ms. Page invited nominations from the floor. Nominations were closed from the floor and seconded. Dan Frye was elected as Chair and Josie Thomas elected as Vice Chair for 2011-2012. Dan Frye acknowledged the leadership role as Chair of the Council that Kali Mallik has taken for the past two years

Council Sharing

- Dan Frye stated that the SRC Executive Retreat is held each August to begin to evaluate the work of the year ahead. Dan stated that, if there are members of the Council who would like to present ideas at this retreat, please let him know.

- Mike Bullis would like to see CAP compile a list of consumer issues. Charlie Crawford stated that when he was a CAP Director many years ago the CAP Annual Report would list the issues and resolutions to those issues.
- Mary Manzoni would like to see DORS consumers at SRC meetings to discuss the services they have received.
- Member Earl Cooper is a former consumer of DORS. Mr. Cooper stated that there needs to be more certified career counselors in the school system to help students with career guidance. There are many students who have no idea what direction to turn.
- Barry Shaw would like to assure that consumers and their families are educated on what their rights are when it comes to their benefits if they become employed. Ron Winter commented that this is the reason that DORS has started this new Benefits Counseling Program. DORS is aware of this situation.

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

Polly Huston presented this report. Each year the Council is responsible for the preparation of State Plan Attachment 4.2(c) Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of Designated State Unit; and Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations.

During FY2010, MSRC played an active role in many activities with and in support of DORS. These included:

- Advocating for increased awareness of public vocational rehabilitation programs, including educating stakeholders about the impact of DORS waiting list on people with significant disabilities;
- Asking that federal legislators continue to address federal VR inequities included in the 2009 Government Accounting Office report;
- Participating in the development of the DORS Model State Plan for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing;
- Facilitating statewide public meetings;
- Providing consultation and review for consumer satisfaction surveys;
- Providing review and analysis of Client Assistance Program outcomes and issues;
- Reviewing and analyzing DORS employment and retention study;
- Making personal office visits with members of the Maryland's General Assembly regarding the need to maintain state funding and to address the needs of underserved populations, as well as DORS staff vacancy rates;
- A letter was issued to the Maryland General Assembly in support of extension of the Tax Credit for Qualifying Employees with Disabilities;

- Providing consultation and input regarding the inclusion of DORS consumers in the planning for employment and supports related to Maryland's Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC);
- Strategizing with DORS Business Specialists regarding employer relationships;
- Actively participating in DORS strategic planning process, including planning meetings;
- The Council was active in the Region 3 SRC Community of Practice, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation and is now a member of the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils.

Motion made to approve the State Plan Attachment 4.2(c). All in favor.

Update – Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (Laurie Elinoff)

- Laurie Elinoff stated that the Statewide Independent Living Council is planning a retreat in June 2011 to include stakeholders i.e. the Centers for Independent Living, DORS and other partners.
- Two new Centers have just opened (Independent Marylanders Achieving Growth through Empowerment (The Image Center) serving Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Harford County and Accessible Resources for Independence serving Anne Arundel and Howard Counties. .

Chairperson/Vice Chairperson Reports (Kali Mallik and Dan Frye)

- Letters of support from the SRC for SB 850 (Tax Credit for Qualifying Employees with Disabilities – Sunset Extension – Kali Mallik stated that the Council sent letters in support of this legislation. The tax credit information will be sent from the SRC to the Chamber of Commerce.
- National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils Meeting (NCSRC) April 10, 2011 – Kali Mallik attended the SRC meeting at the CSAVR Conference.
- Region III SRC Learning Community Meeting, April 9, 2011 – This meeting was about the RSA Monitoring projects.

Director's Report (Sue Page)

- Dr. Nancy Grasmick has announced that she plans to retire on June 2011. The Council will send a congratulatory letter to Dr. Grasmick.
- State Fiscal 2012 Budget – Sue Page reported that we are still waiting to see how the federal budget is going to trickle down. Expecting an across-the-board .2% cut. In addition, it looks as if there is an overall 5 million dollar cut to the VR program nationally.
- 2011 Legislative Wrap-up – 2011 session was busy. DORS, through MSDE, supported the Tax Credit Bill which passed. Also opposed SB852 – Motorcycle Helmet Bill which DORS opposes every year. Also opposed SB 928 which would have given BISM procurement preference and it was felt that this bill, if passed, would eliminate jobs for individuals who are blind.

- DORS Waiting List Update/DORS Staff Capacity (effects of VSP Program) – The DORS waiting list is slowly creeping up and at the end of April 2011 it was at 2,500. Taking a serious look at what we need to do to. An amendment has been developed and sent for additional positions.
- MRA/DORS Conference, October 17-19, 2011 – Members of the Council are invited to attend this conference. Contact Donna Lippa for more information.
- WTC's New Communications Lab and Resource Room for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – WTC has a Communications Lab and Resource Room for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing. The purpose of the lab and resource room is to demonstrate to DORS consumers, DORS staff and employers some of the latest assistive technology devices and related services available for the deaf and hard of hearing. Assistive technology assessments and training are also available through the WTC Rehabilitation Technology Services program.

Committee Report

Policy and Planning Committee, Beth Lash

- The SILC and the SRC Councils will share a table of information at the MRA/DORS Conference in October.

Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee, Mary Manzoni

- Mary Manzoni thank Donna Lettow for all her work in producing the 2010 SRC Annual Report.
- Will be meeting in the future to discuss the subject of quality assurance.

Membership and Resource Committee, Dan Frye

- The Governor's Appointments Office has confirmed the following:
New appointments: Earl Cooper, Rashid Reyazuddin, Barry Shaw, and Suzanne R. Page; and Reappointments: Josie Thomas, Mary Manzoni, Tom Barkley, and Jennifer Whitcomb
- The application for MSRC membership of Zosia Zaks, representing the Autism community has been forwarded to the Governor's Appointments Office and is pending.
- Tom Laverty is official Director of the Client Assistance Program, effective today. He has submitted his application and resume for SRC membership.
- The Membership and Resources Committee has heard from the new Governor's Workforce Investment Board Executive Director, Lynn Reed, who has recommended that Debra Fieldhouse of the GWIB represent that organization on the State Rehabilitation Council. Ms. Fieldhouse will replace Eric Selzenow, previous SRC representative from the Governor's Workforce Investment Board. The Rehabilitation Act requires that the SRC include a representative of the

GWIB.

- Orientation for new members: The Committee is beginning to plan for the Orientation for New SRC Members. Tentative dates under consideration include Wednesday, September 28 or Wednesday, October 5. More information will be provided to members as plans are finalized.

Employment/Career Development Committee, Sue Page

- Sue Page stated that a meeting is scheduled for the Employment/Career Development committee on May 26, 2011. Will be talking about the Employment First issue discussed today.

Blindness and Vision Services Committee, Mike Bullis

- Mike Bullis stated that the SRC OBVS committee is made of members of the SRC as well as people in program and service delivery. The committee has been engaged recently in meetings with BISM over some concerns about services provided by BISM with resulting positive steps. Mr. Bullis wanted to thank Sue Schaffer and her office for arranging these meetings and working out the issues.

New Council Business & Adjournment

The MSRC meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m. The next meeting of the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council will be Wednesday, November 16, 2011 at the Workforce & Technology Center in Baltimore, Maryland.

Respectfully submitted.
Donna M. Lippa, MSRC Staff Support