

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council  
Workforce & Technology Center  
November 6, 2013

**Members – Present**

Thomas Barkley  
Michael Bullis  
Christofer Conklin  
Charles Crawford  
Tim Daly  
Laurie Elinoff  
Thomas Laverty  
Jeffrey Moran  
Mary O'Connor  
Sue Page  
Josie Thomas  
Michael Whitehill  
Zosia Zaks

**DORS Liaisons**

Jean Jackson  
Donna Lettow  
JoAnne Materkowski  
Kimberlee Schultz  
Susan Schaffer

**Members Unable to Attend**

Paulette Epps  
Barry Shaw  
Al Sonnenstrahl

**Council Support Staff**

Polly Huston  
Donna Lippa

**Guest**

Michael Dalto, Work Incentives  
Project Director

**Public Guests**

John Henkel  
Grace Daniels

**Recognitions and Approval of Minutes**

Vice Chair Josie Thomas welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked that members and guests introduce themselves. Minutes of the September 11, 2013 meeting were approved as written. All members in favor.

**Presentation – The Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) Program and Benefits Counseling** – Michael Dalto, Work Incentives Project Director, MDOD

Michael Dalto began by stating that the Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) is also known as the Medicaid Buy-In, EID is a work incentive that provides Medicaid, for a limited premium, to people who:

- Meet Social Security's disability criteria after reaching age 18
- Are U.S. citizens or qualified aliens aged 18-64
- Are working for pay (no minimum earnings required)
- Meet income limit (as high as \$69,972/year for individuals and \$94,092 for married couples)
- Meet resource limit ((\$10,000 for individual: \$15,000 married couple)

Medicaid provided by EID:

- Provides full coverage for people with no other insurance
- Offers “wrap-around” (supplemental) coverage for those with private insurance
- Supplements Medicare and covers Medicare out-of-pocket costs

Medicaid pays the recipient’s full cost for most medical expenses, including:

- Ambulance and wheelchair van services and emergency medical transportation
- Ambulatory surgical care services
- Clinic services
- Family planning services & supplies
- Home and community based services for people with disabilities in Medicaid Waiver programs

What it does for people with no other insurance:

- Provides comprehensive coverage
- Very low cost (pay monthly premium for EID (\$0-\$55) and no co-pays except for prescriptions ((\$3.50 for name brand drugs: \$1.15 for generics)

What it does for people with private insurance:

- Covers some services that private insurance usually doesn’t
- If private insurance puts limits on an item. Medicaid may cover it once limits have been reached.
- People have the option to drop private coverage and use only EID Medicaid, but this is never recommended.

What it does for people with Medicare:

- Medical Assistance covers premiums, deductibles and co-insurance for Medicare.
- May save individual \$1,000 – over \$12,000 per year
- Covers some services that Medicare doesn’t.

Recent Improvements:

- If a person loses employment involuntarily, EID can continue up to 6 months while looking for other work.
- Medicaid retroactive to month application received, but premiums not due until month of approval
- Resource limit for married couple increased to \$15,000. Still \$10,000 for unmarried individual.

Benefits planning are a vital service for people who get SSDI and/or SSI and are working or trying to work. It also gives one-to-one assistance to understand impact of work on all case and medical benefits and helps individuals use “work

incentive” rules to reduce impact of work on benefits. It also shows people they are better off financially if they work than if they do not.

Benefits counseling can help individuals overcome fears of benefit loss, encourage more people to work and keep working and persuade workers to increase earnings. If you receive the maximum SSI check (\$710/month), you can earn up to \$1,504/month in wages and still keep some SSI. If you earn too much to keep SSI checks, you can keep Medicaid if you earn up to \$40,751/year, and can get SSI back without reapplying if you later stop work. If you get SSDE, you can use certain deductions to earn more than \$1,040/month and still keep your checks (more than \$1,740/month if you are blind). If you work your way off SSDE, you can usually keep Medicare for an extra 7.5 years or longer.

How do you get Benefits Counseling?

- DORS provides it for people who have open cases and receive SSDE or SSI.
- Three Employment Networks (EN's) provide it after DORS closure to people who earn at least \$1,040/month, ((\$1,740/month if blind).
- Benefits counseling can actually pay for itself. If a former DORS client who receives SSDE or SSI works for SGA level for 9 months, DORS can bill Social Security for the full cost of services provided to the person and benefits counseling often encourages people to work at SGA level, helping to increase cost reimbursement.
- In fiscal year 2013, DORS set a record for cost reimbursement. The agency received \$3,254,706. The average yearly cost reimbursement for previous five years before this one was \$2,486,107.

**Presentation – Update of DORS Deaf/Blind Services** – Christine Telford, DORS Staff Specialist, Deaf/Blind Services

Ms. Telford began by stating that she began with DORS in March 2013. She has provided education in the field of rehabilitation teaching, importance of braille, and orientation and mobility.

Ms. Telford feels that her biggest accomplishment so far with DORS has been Support Service Providers (SSP) Program for individuals who are deaf/blind. Typically SSPs are used for individuals who use ASL. The difference between an SSP and an interpreter, is an interpreter interprets what is being said, while an SSP is providing environment feedback and helping with various tasks such as transportation to and from various appointments, filling out doctor appointment forms, etc. The SSP project has been recognized as a priority for the past few years, even though the population is small. The SSP services are limited to VR activities only. The vendor providing this service is the Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind (CLB). This will not be an ongoing service once the individual's case is closed with DORS.

Mike Bullis thanked Sue Schaffer and her staff for listening to the people and providing this necessary service to individuals who are deaf/blind.

### **Vice Chairperson's Report (Josie Thomas)**

- Discussion about Vacant Chairmanship – Josie Thomas asked that the Council begin thinking about the Chairmanship of the Council. Josie will be taking over as Acting Chair of the Council until the May Council elections. Mike Bullis stated that these positions are important if the Council is going to have an effect on policy and a working relationship with DORS.
- SRC Learning Community Region III Meeting – Josie Thomas attended the SRC Learning Community meeting in October 2013 with other Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Mid-Atlantic Region. The discussion at this meeting involved leadership development (having members step up to the plate to participate on the SRC and to leadership roles). We also talked about succession planning which everyone struggles with. The group also talked about legislative advocacy. Of the states involved in this learning community, there are only two that have a legislative advocacy program like Maryland has (Pennsylvania and Maryland). The next SRC Learning Community meeting will discuss this topic.
- New Member Orientation, March 2014 – A new member orientation will be scheduled for some time in March 2014 with the GW TACE Center facilitating. The GW TACE staff would like to attend our Legislative Event in February. We will make sure that they are invited.
- SRC Legislative Event, Annapolis, February 4, 2014 – The legislative event will be held next year in Annapolis on February 4<sup>th</sup>. Face-to-face appointments will be made for Council members and the MSRC Annual Report and fact sheet is distributed to each of them. DORS staff delivers packets to other legislators who are not personally visited.

### **Director's Report (Sue Page)**

- DORS Fiscal Year 2014 Budget – Sue Page stated that there was nothing new to report at this time. Congress has not passed the budget.
- DORS Fiscal Year 2013 Accomplishments –

The Maryland Disability Determination Services (DDS) cleared a new all-time record 80,783 disability claims, representing a 3% increase over FY 2012.

The Maryland Vocational Rehabilitation program assisted 2533 persons with significant disabilities achieve successful employment, representing a 1% increase over the previous year.

The Office of Field Services (OFS) achieved 2,370 successful closures (1.6% more than the previous year). Additionally, OFS served a total of 25,663 individuals with significant disabilities, a 1.5% increase over FY 2012.

DORS Office of Blindness and Vision Services (OBVS) assisted 163 persons with vision impairments achieve successful employment. The average hourly wage for OBVS consumers was \$15.03, more than double the State minimum wage of \$7.25.

The Workforce and Technology Center (WTC) served 2343 persons with significant disabilities in FY 2013.

DORS served a total of 9,431 youth with disabilities transitioning from school to post-secondary education and careers. Transition individuals comprise 38% of the Division's total open caseload.

- DORS Waiting List Update – The end of September 2013, the DORS waiting list was at 3,839.
- PROMISE Grant – The State of Maryland applied for a PROMISE Grant through the US Department of Education. PROMISE stands for (Promoting the Readiness of Minors on Supplemental Security Income). This Grant will work with youth between the ages of 14-16 currently receiving SSI disability benefits. They will be able to work with the youth earlier in their years to look at employment and options available. DORS has partnered with MSDE Division of Early Education and Special Education, Department of Human Resources, Department of Licensing, Labor and Relations, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Juvenile Services. Sue will keep the Council informed as the project moves along. Jade Gingrich, MDOD, is the Project Manager.
- S1356 Workforce Investment Act of 2013 – This is a bill that the Senate Health Committee passed. The main components of this bill are to move the Rehabilitation Services Program from the US Department of Education to the Department of Labor on the federal level. It would also change the requirements for vocational rehabilitation professionals and lower the

experience and educational requirements of the VR counselors. The Maryland State Department of Education sent a letter to members of the Health Committee regarding their concerns about some parts of the bill and the MSRC also sent a letter to legislators. Since then, CSAVR has partnered with a law firm and have done many visits to legislative offices expresses concerns about this bill.

- Project Search High School Transition Program – There are several Project Search models across the state where a collaborative effort between a business working with a school system and DORS to provide internship opportunities for youth with intellectual disabilities to provide a working experience.
- Governor’s QUEST Program Kick-off – DORS had a kick-off meeting for the new winter QUEST Internship Program. The QUEST Internship program has been running for 12 years in partnership with Department of Budget and Management and DORS and has been a very successful program providing internship opportunities. Over the years, 275 individuals who have received services through DORS have been provided meaningful work experiences. The Governor announced at the ADA Celebration in July 2013 that he plans to expand the QUEST Internship Program.
- DDA/DORS MOU for Employment Services – The MOU focus is on employment first with the idea of employment rather than people automatically going from high school into sheltered workshops. Currently looking at what type of training will be required.
- Kennedy Krieger Institute Fellows Visit - The former Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Nancy Grasmick, contacted Sue Page’s Office. One of her part-time jobs is at Kennedy Krieger Institute and she has developed and implemented a Fellow Program to provide a leadership development opportunity for individuals in special education. She brought two Fellows to the Workforce & Technology Program to find out what we are doing with transitioning youth.

**Update of Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council** – Laurie Elinoff

- The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) has had their 3-year state plan for 2014-2016 approved.

- Needs Assessment - The Council is beginning to make plans to send out their 2<sup>nd</sup> Needs assessment.
- Elections – The SILC elected a new Vice Chair, Martin Barrett and Secretary Cari Watrous.
- Legislative Day – The SILC Legislative day will be held on February 18, 2014 in Annapolis, MD.
- DORS Quality Rehabilitation Program – Mike Bullis and Laurie Elinoff presented on the Maryland Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council at the QRT meeting.
- Center for Independent Living – Mike Bullis stated that there is now a new Center for Independent Living on the Eastern Shore.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **Policy and Planning Committee, Tom Lavery**

- Tom Lavery reported that the committee has not met since the last meeting,
- The committee and the Division have suggested that the MSRC/DORS Public Meeting for the Spring 2014 be held on a regional level. Each DORS Region would be responsible for advertising for their own public meeting. Kim Schultz would still provide support for these meeting.
- Tom Lavery commented that currently DORS Policy allows an individual who is requesting a specific type of van or home modifications to take 25% of the cost and not have it go out as to bid. That is not consistent with state policy on procurement and there has been discussion about making the policy more consistent with state law.

#### **Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee, Michael Bullis**

- Mike Bullis stated that the Committee has not met since the last meeting. Will be working with DORS staff to schedule a meeting. Have received documents to review for a future meeting.

#### **Membership and Resource Committee, Josie Thomas**

- We are finalizing the membership packet to be forwarded to the Governor's office to include:
  - New members Mat Rice, Will Stocker and Andrew Cohen;
  - A new representative of the NFB.
  - Reappointments of several members
- Four priority areas for membership over the next year or so:
  - People with disabilities

- Business and Industry
  - Hispanic background/African American/Asian
  - Younger – people at earlier stages of their career
- We hope to have orientation for new members in January. The TACE Center will assist with this. More information to follow.

#### Employment/Career Development Committee, Paulette Epps

- Paulette Epps was not present at the meeting today, but the committee met on October 30, 2013.
- Jean Jackson provided the committee with an update on the Workforce & Technology Center activities.
- The committee agreed to continue to explore potential opportunities in agriculture. Michael Whitehill shared with the members that he has reached out to E.C. Townsend, DORS Regional Director to further pursue discussions.
- JoAnne Materkowski provided the committee with an update of DORS initiatives.
- The consensus of the committee was that the current location and time for the meetings was convenient for all.
- Marian Vessels shared a “How-to-Guide Summary” on how to improve your Business Relationships in your Community from the Pennsylvania standpoint.
- DORS will be celebrating their 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Each region is charged with planning an exciting educational month celebration leading up to the anniversary.
- Alliance will be celebrating their 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on November 6, 2013.
- Larry Abramson is working closely with Beth Lash, Regional Director, in PG County to explore a need for Mental Health Employment Services to meet Evidence Based Practice Standards.

#### Blindness and Vision Services Committee, Charles Crawford

- The committee met on October 16, 2013.
- Had a presentation from Tandra Hunter-Payne about the Older Blind Independent Living Program (ILOB).
- Had reports from Brandon Cox, Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind, and BISM, Andy McIver.
- DORS and BISM have initiated a program where students are participating in the BISM Deaf and Blindness Training Program concurrently with starting college at either Baltimore County Community College or UMBC and getting the support they need.

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

The next full Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 7, 2014, 4:00 –



7:00 p.m., Workforce & Technology Center, Room T-130.

Respectfully submitted,  
Donna M. Lippa, MSRC Staff Support