

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council
Workforce & Technology Center
May 7, 2014

Members – Present

Michael Bullis
Andrew Cohen
Christofer Conklin
Charles Crawford, Interim Chair
Tim Daly
Paul Dunford
Laurie Elinoff
Paulette Epps
Thomas Laverty
Jeffrey Moran, Interim Vice Chair
Sue Page
Matt Rice
Michael Whitehill
Zosia Zaks

Members Unable to Attend

Anil Lewis
Barry Shaw
Al Sonnenstrahl
William Stocker
Josie Thomas

Council Support Staff

Polly Huston
Donna Lippa

Guests

Therese Parr, WTC
Lee Armstrong, WTC
Rita Martin, CSAVR, Speakerphone
Anita Disbrow, United Needs & Abilities, Inc.
Christine Telford, DORS, SSP

DORS Liaisons – Present

Jean Jackson
Donna Lettow
Jo Anne Materkowski
Kimberlee Schultz

Introduction and Approval of Minutes

Interim Chair Charles Crawford welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked that members and guests introduce themselves. Minutes of the November 2013 meeting were approved as written. All members in favor

Interim Vice Chair Jeff Moran thanked all the Council members for their services and acknowledged the presence of Paul Dunford, MSDE, who is representing the MSDE Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services, on an interim basis.

Presentation – Update of GED Program – Therese Parr, WTC Academics, Teacher Supervisor

The GED Program started in 1942 and was established for veterans for career and college readiness. Ms. Parr stated that GED stands for General Education Development and is not a diploma. When an individual obtains their GED it means that the State has awarded a high diploma because the individual has met the credentials for the GED certification.

The GED Program is now nationally based and computerized. There are very few sites in Maryland that are approved to do this testing. Staff at WTC has helped people apply for testing so they do not have to wait months for accommodations to be approved. The GED practice test is internet based and is not accessible. The Program is claiming that it will be fully accessible in the future, but is not currently. The WTC GED Program is conducted 4 days a week for approximately 13 weeks and consumers have to be eligible for the program which means a person would need to have an 8th grade skill level.

Mike Bullis stated that it is the law that the GED Program be made accessible.

ACTION: Charles Crawford stated that this should be noted as a recommendation of the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council in the next VR State Plan, that it is incumbent upon the State that this program is made accessible for citizens with disabilities.

Presentation – Update DORS Pathways Program – Lee Armstrong, Autism Services, Pathways Program Coordinator

The Pathways Program has been at the CCBC (all three colleges) for the past several years. Mr. Armstrong is a member of Maryland AHEAD, The Association of Higher Education and Disabilities. This group includes Disability Support Counselors from Maryland colleges to meet and discuss issues.

The Pathways Program is a support program for individuals on the autism spectrum attending community college. The DORS Pathways Program has recently expanded services to Howard Community College. We are currently in the process of developing an agency agreement with Montgomery Community College to provide services on all three of their campuses. Would like to expand to other areas in the future.

The Pathways Program provides academic support to those individuals who are DORS consumers, have autism and are on a plan for attending college and are registered with Disability Support Services through the college. Individuals are met with on campus once a week to provide individual support, i.e. organizational skills, self-advocacy skills, issues with professors, liaisons between judicial affairs and public safety if any issues arise. We meet with the students as a group in an hour long social setting to work on communication, self-esteem, self-advocacy to assist in integrating them into the community. This semester we have developed a peer mentoring program where students that are higher functioning, have been in the program for a while and have developed good appropriate social skills, are paired with someone who is relatively new to the college to help guide them in social skills through the college process.

Charles Crawford asked if there were any measures to develop how the program is doing in terms of placement of individuals. Ms. Armstrong stated that he has

information from last year but not the current updated numbers. Currently about 75% complete the program and move on to employment options or a 4 year university.

Update – S 1356, Workforce Investment Act of 2013, Rita Martin, Assistant Director, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), Rita Chapman communicated with the Council by speakerphone at the meeting today. She stated that CSAVR feels fairly comfortable that the move of the Rehabilitation Services Administration from the Department of Education to the Department of Labor was not going to take place.

The only issue that is still outstanding that we continue to advocate is the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). CSPD defines the standards for vocational rehabilitation personnel. Current law states are allowed to have a standard for their professional staff. For most states this is a master's degree. S 1356 has done is proposing to still accept a state's standards, but in the absence of state's standards it is offering a laundry list of examples of various degrees or people who would be good vocational counselors. CSAVR felt it a very slippery sloop to set professional standards on examples of who may or may not be good VR counselors.

This would reduce the education and training requirements of VR professionals. Given the complex needs of individuals with multiple disabilities, it is critical that requirements for specialized counselors who understand both disability and employment be maintained and even strengthened.

There are still some concerns regarding Section 511 but feel that a compromise will take place. Section 511 of the bill sanctions placement of individuals with disabilities in positions where they earn less than minimum wage. This is inconsistent with the abilities and capabilities of individuals with disabilities and does not support independent and self-sufficiency.

The Council thanked Rita Martin for calling into the meeting today and asked that she keep them informed in the coming weeks of any new developments.

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

Kim Schultz announced that there were six (6) Public Meetings in March and April 2014 and one teleconference. This year the public meetings were held in each of the DORS Regions. The primary purpose of the meetings is to obtain feedback regarding the State Plan for VR Services along with other agenda topics. The meetings were posted on the DORS website and Facebook page, some local channels, public bulletin boards, Maryland Register, and emailed to over 3,000 consumers and Community Rehabilitation Programs.

Ms. Schultz stated that there are so many ways to communicate today that the public meeting format may not be the best format. Need to look at other ways like video-conferencing. The Rehabilitation Act requires that the VR program have one meeting a year. If the reauthorization is passed this regulation could change.

ACTION: Tom Lavery asked for input from the Council to provide to the MSRC Policy and Planning Committee the most effective ways to reach out to individuals who utilize the service statewide.

Charles Crawford stated that when he was involved with the Client Assistance Program years ago, a pattern profile of complaints that were received by this office was developed to include how often they happened and what the impact was. Mr. Crawford suggested that problems that people have experienced, from a CAP perspective, be entered into the advertising for the public hearings so that people who had that experience would more likely participate. Tom Lavery responded that this has not been done, but is a good idea.

Chairperson/Vice Chairperson's Report, Charles Crawford and Jeff Moran

- Interim Chair Charlie Crawford announced that his term on the Council will end September 2014. Mr. Crawford stated that the Council needs to develop the interests of persons to take over leadership on the Council.
- SRC Learning Community Meeting, May 28-29, 2014, Alexandria, VA – Andrew Cohen and Jeff Moran will attend this meeting representing the Council.
- Letter of Support – MHA Supported Employment Program Grant – Letter of support was sent, on behalf of the Council, to the MD Mental Hygiene Administration, in support to MHA application to the Substance Abuse and Mental health Services Administration for Supported Employment Program Grant.
- Charlie Crawford stated that the MSRC Annual Report and other materials were sent to the Legislators since we were unable to attend the Legislative event in February 2014.

Director's Report (Sue Page)

- State Budget – Have begun to wrap-up the State Fiscal Year 2014 Budget. The Fiscal Year 2015 budget looks comparable and we do not expect to see any changes in the program funding. Currently developed state budget for Fiscal Year 2016.

- 2014 Legislative Wrap-up – DORS did not have any bills that would have a direct impact on our Agency. We opposed the motorcycle helmet law which we do every year.
- DORS Waiting List Update/DORS Staff Capacity – The current waiting list as of the end of April 2014 is 2,700. Have been working hard to lower this waiting list to serve more people quicker. DORS currently has 38 vacancies and the DDS has 17.
- Promise Grant – The MD Department of Disabilities submitted a proposal. MD was one of 6 sites awarded this grant (California, New York, Maryland, Arkansas, (a consortium consisting of Utah, Arizona, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana) and Wisconsin. The MD award is 32.5 million dollars over a 5-year period. Working with youth ages 14-16 and their families receiving SSI to better coordinate and provide more intense services to impact their move to post-secondary education. Plan is to recruit 2,000 youth who fall under these criteria.
- QUEST Internship Program – Has been in existence since 2001. Initially the session was held during the summer months. Since then the Governor committed to promote Maryland as a model employer for individuals with disabilities. In doing this, the Governor has committed to expanding the QUEST Program. Last year a winter session was held, so now we offer 2 sessions each year. A good percentage of the interns are hired by state agencies.

Committee Reports

Policy and Planning Committee, Tom Lavery

- Tom Lavery stated that one of the duties of the MSRC Policy and Planning Committee is to draft the recommendations of comments from the Council to be included in the attachment which is made part of the VR State Plan. Those recommendations were sent to the full Council for their approval. **ACTION: Recommendations were approved as written.**

Charlie Crawford stated the Agency needs to continue its internal review of what is accessible to its consumers to assure the knowledge and service of the agency, whether directly delivered or delivered by another party, that they are accessible and useable.

ACTION: Motion made that the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council assigns this recommendation to one of the Council's existing committees and develop a recommendation for the VR State Plan next year. All members in favor of this motion.

- The Division has developed a new Quality Assurance process. There are two aspects of this process. (1) DORS has Technical Specialists who

have authority to approve some of what is required during the rehabilitation process without having to obtain supervisory approval. The Quality Assurance Program is going to review a certain number of cases of approval by the Technical Specialists to see if their duties are being performed correctly or if additional training is needed. (2) Conduct a yearly review of cases per office/per counselor to make sure that they are meeting the necessary requirements set out by Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

Membership Committee, Jeff Moran

- Four long-term, committed and irreplaceable Council members are completing their terms of membership on the State Rehabilitation Council at the September 2014 meeting. We're so grateful for the many contributions of:
 - Tim Daly
 - Charlie Crawford
 - Al Sonnenstrahl, and
 - Mike Bullis

Many thanks for your service to the Council and to individuals with disabilities in Maryland.

- Paul Dunford of the Maryland State Department of Education will be representing the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services on an interim basis pending completion of recruitment for a Transitioning Specialist to take the position previously held by Tom Barkley.
- We have been in touch with the Maryland Work Force Investment Board regarding a representative for the Council to take Mary O'Connor's place since she left the GWIB.

Employment/Career Development Committee, Paulette Epps

- Paulette Epps stated that the committee met on January 16, 2014. The committee received an update from Darlene Peregoy and Jody Boone on current employment initiatives and the work that the DORS Business Liaisons are doing in the community.
- Want to keep in the forefront in the area of agriculture.

Blindness and Vision Services Committee, Charles Crawford

- Charlie Crawford reported that the Committee is impressed with the work being done by BISM, Columbia Lighthouse and the IMAGE Center who attend and report out at each meeting.
- Services for the Older Blind Program (ILOB) are doing well and the program is worth supporting.

- The vending facilities that exist along our highway are operated by blind vendors and are a major source of income to the Blind Vending Committee in Maryland. The Transportation Bill has to be reauthorized and refunded by Congress. There is a possibility that language change could allow for either an expansion for those who operate those facilities or commercialization of those facilities so that competing chain restaurants could try to get their hands into the equation.

ACTION: Proposal was made at the SRC/ Blindness and Vision Services Committee meeting that the Council sends a letter of endorsement to Senators Mikulski and Cardin to make them aware of the situation that there are concerns in the community that those operations are allowed to continue under the Randolph-Sheppard Program. Council approved the writing of this letter. Letter will be shared with Council for their review before sending.

Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee, Mike Bullis

- Has not met since the last meeting.

Update of Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council – Laurie Elinoff
New Council Business & Adjournment

- Laurie Elinoff sadly announced that Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council member, Gayle Hafner, passed away in March 2014. Gayle was a Senior Attorney at the MD Disability Law Center. Gayle will be greatly missed!
- Laurie attended “A Taste and Toast to Independence” at the IMAGE Center.

Council Sharing

The next full Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 10, 2014, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m., Workforce & Technology Center, Room T-130.

Respectfully submitted,
 Donna M. Lippa, MSRC Staff Support