

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council
Workforce & Technology Center
September 10, 2014

Members – Present

Andrew Cohen (speakerphone)
Christofer Conklin
Charles Crawford, Interim Chair
Tim Daly
Laurie Elinoff, (speakerphone)
Thomas Laverty
Anil Lewis
Jeff Moran, Interim Vice Chair
Sue Page
Matt Rice
Barry Shaw
Alfred Sonnenstrahl
Zosia Zaks (speakerphone)

Members Unable to Attend

Mike Bullis
Paulette Epps
William Stocker
Michael Whitehill

Support Staff – Present

Polly Huston
Donna Lippa

Guests

Dr. Lillian Lowery, MD State Superintendent of Schools
Jo Anne Materkowski, Director, Office of Field Services
Diane Pablich, GWIB, Candidate for Membership
Michelle Stewart, DORS, Transition and Supported Employment Services
Christy Stuart, MSDE, Candidate for Membership
Jessie Thomas, Benedictine School

DORS Liaisons to Council

Jean Jackson, Employment & Career Development Committee
Kimberlee Schultz, Policy and Planning Committee
Susan Schaffer, Blindness & Vision Services Committee

Introduction and Approval of Minutes

Interim Chair, Charlie Crawford, welcomed guests and members to the Council meeting and asked that everyone introduce themselves. The minutes from the May

9, 2014 meeting were approved as written. Sue Page and Council members extended a warm welcome to Dr. Lowery and thanked her for taking time out of her busy schedule to visit the Council today.

Recognition of Members

Charles Crawford announced that members Michael Bullis, Al Sonnenstrahl, Tim Daly and himself have served two full terms on the Council and cannot be reappointment for another term. The Council members thanked everyone for their commitment to the Council.

The Council welcomed newly appointed members Anil Lewis, Andrew Cohen, Mat Rice and Will Stocker.

Charles Crawford stated that he has had the distinct pleasure of knowing some very good people on this Council and also had the honor of working with Sue Page, Sue Schaffer and Bob Burns over the years.

Special Guest – Dr. Lillian M. Lowery, State Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Lowery commented that she is pleased to be attending the Council meeting today and also pleased with the way Maryland has organized itself around birth to work for all Marylanders. In Delaware, where Dr. Lowery worked before coming to Maryland, the VR agency is separate from the Department of Education and she feels this model is so much stronger. This model allows us to work collaboratively to insure that services provided for our citizens are coordinated and integrated in order to bridge gaps. Dr. Lowery stated that she appreciates the work that is done every day to make a difference in the lives that we serve.

Laurie Elinoff asked if Dr. Lowery had any changes which she would like to make in the State of Maryland for persons with disabilities.

Dr. Lowery stated that Maryland is very progressive around the work for individuals with disabilities. Dr. Lowery was able to visit the Blind Industries and Services of Maryland (BISM) with Sue Page and Sue Schaffer to look at their programs. She believes we can always do better, but Maryland has progressive leadership in this area. With the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Maryland is going to be doing some new work, but there are great VR staff that are thinking creatively about how we make this the best fit as possible.

Presentation – DORS Transitioning Services (Michelle Stewart, Staff Specialist, Transition and Supported Employment Services)

Michelle began her presentation stating that last year DORS served more than 9,000 transition age youth, which is roughly 35% of DORS open case load. Out of this group, there were 780 transitioning youth that achieved competitive employment. This year the fiscal year ends September 30th so only preliminary information for this current fiscal year is available to date. As of August 2014, DORS have already served 9,500 transition age youth, and as of that date, 746 successful placements have been achieved.

DORS has counselors in each county that are dedicated specifically to working with this population. There is a counselor assigned to each public high school in Maryland and also work with the non-public schools as well. There are very strong partnerships with local schools districts and cooperative agreements with all of them as well.

DORS begins working with students as early as the fall of their junior year or the year prior to the year they are going exit the school system, if they are certificate students. That gives DORS plenty of time to engage in career exploration types of activities. Services that DORS can provide for a student while still in school include: career assessment, business technology, job coaching, individualized plan for employment prior to existing the school to try and ensure a seamless transition from school.

The transitioning staff sits on numerous transition and youth councils statewide. Maryland has the Governor's Transition and Youth Initiative that allows students who are eligible to receive long term funding from EA or MHA to begin receiving job support and job coaching services while they are still in school.

Special initiatives in Maryland

Project Search which is a national initiative. This is a business lead school-to-work program for students who have developmental disabilities. In their final year of school, they spend the entire year immersed in business learning work activities. The students usually achieve 3 different work experiences during this time. Maryland supports 5 of those Project Search Programs that are transition based, but there are a total of 9.

The SUCCESS Program is held in conjunction with UMBC and is now in its third year. This is Maryland's first 4-year post-secondary education for students with intellectual disabilities. DORS does provide some financial assistance for its participants. There are currently 8 new participants selected for this coming academic year making this a total of 21 involved in this program since it began the fall of 2012.

Maryland has the Governor's Interagency Transitioning Council (IATC). There will be a Transitioning Youth Conference on Saturday, November 15, 2014, at the BWI Marriott Hotel.

Laurie Elinoff inquired whether the DORS counselors inform the students about the availability of the Maryland Centers for Independent Living (CILS). Michelle responded that the DORS counselors are very familiar with the CILS and Sue Page stated that the Governor's Interagency Transitioning Council (IATC) currently has a representative from a Center for Independent Living.

Jeff Moran stated that Michelle Stewart met with him and a colleague of his from the Benedictine School to discuss the Project Search Program on the Eastern Shore. Dr. Lowery stated that the 9 districts of the Eastern Shore act as a consortium and meet monthly which may be a good place to go and talk about this program.

Discussion – DORS Strategic Plan – October 2014 - September 2017

Sue Page announced that DORS has developed a new Strategic Plan which outlines plans for the future. Sue thanked Polly Huston for coordinating the group who worked on this plan. The MSRC Policy and Planning Committee, including the interim Chair, Charles Crawford and Interim Vice Chair, Jeff Moran, had a chance to review and approve this document. The Strategic Plan will be available on the DORS website for review. Members of the Council approved this plan.

Update – Workforce Innovations Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 (Sue Page, Director)

Sue Page stated that the public VR program is looking forward to how WIOA will positively impact the services that DORS provides and the outcomes achieved with consumers. Staff is currently looking at the specifics of the Act and what the

impact will be on the VR Program both nationally and locally. We are looking at the following: (1) performance measures (there will be common performance among all workforce agencies), (2) how the Act will enhance services to transitioning youth, particularly the pre-employment services and how we can reach out to students in school at an earlier age, (3) how WIOA will impact our Maryland Standards for quality professional rehabilitation counselors.

DORS is currently working on developing input into the regulations. The Department of Education created a blog site where you could input regulations. The draft regulations are currently being developed and will be out within 180 days. After the draft regulations are out there will be a period for comment and the final regulations will become available.

Anil Lewis stated that there have been many changes in the Act that move toward being more accountable to employers, but he would caution, as rehabilitation professionals, not to fall into this mode. The employers are critical customers, but you have the expertise in dealing with the consumers around quality rehabilitation services for people with disabilities. If you fall into a place where you are so responsive to the employer, you will lose credibility and the ability to influence the program. Mr. Lewis feels the VR program could get lost under the umbrella of labor. As a person with a disability, Mr. Lewis would not have been able to achieve his vocational goal under the Department of Labor model. The focus would not have been on the rehabilitation necessary to get the education and gain the skills to be competitive.

Sue Schaffer stated that all of the programs under Independent Living, with the exception of the Independent Living Program for Older Blind (ILOB) Grant, have been moved to the Department of Health and Human Services. ILOB remains under the MD Division of Rehabilitation Services.

Summary of MSRC Executive Retreat, August 2014 (Charles Crawford and Jeff Moran)

Charles Crawford announced that the members of the MSRC Executive Committee and DORS staff met on August 20, 2014 at the Sheraton Columbia Hotel to discuss the following:

Maryland Open Meeting Act - Elliott Schoen, Esq. Office of the Attorney General, presented an overview of the Maryland Open Meeting Act.

- Minutes of all meetings (committees and full Council) must have minutes taken and available to the public;
- Records of meetings need to be kept for at least one year;
- Nothing spoken in-person is considered private;
- Not required by law to have agenda available to public in advance;
- Need to provide advanced notice of all meetings whether they are committee or full Council;
- Committee meetings meet same requirements at full Council meetings in regards to advanced notice and minute preparation.

Council Leadership Development and Membership

- Jeff Moran reported that recruiting members for the Council is his priority.
- Josie Thomas suggested that, due to WIOA, we should recruit a parent of a transitioning youth to the Council.
- Josie reported that she plans to renew her membership on the Council after September 30, 2014.

2015 Council Meetings

- Council meeting for November 11th has been changed to November 19th.
- Will need to start thinking about how to prepare for new member orientations without the TACE Centers.
- Mike Whitehill requested that the Council consider a future agenda item on “transportation challenges” in Maryland for individuals with disabilities. Charlie Crawford said that he would contact Wendy Clatcher, from the Secretary of Transportation’s Office to invite to a future meeting.

2015 Council Legislative Event

- Mike Whitehill suggested that the Council put legislators on notice and the Legislative Event that they need to support level funding for DORS.
- Polly Huston stated that after the elections in November, there will be many new players in Annapolis.
- Council members requested list of committee chairs and committee assignments for legislative event in Annapolis.
- Suggestion made to set-up appointments with legislators out of the Council members’ areas.

- Suggestion made to send out literature in advance to legislators.
- There will be a briefing at the MSRC full council meeting scheduled for November 19th for the Legislative Event.
- Would be nice to know the number of consumers in the areas that you live when visiting legislators.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Motion made by Council to hold elections for new Chair and Vice Chair at the meeting tonight. All members were in favor. Motion made to nominate Jeff Moran as Chair and Laurie Elinoff as Vice Chair of the Council for the 2014-2015 calendar year. Interim Chair asked if there were any nominations from the floor for Chair and Vice Chair. Having none, the members voted that Jeff Moran has been elected Chair and Laurie Elinoff elected Vice Chair of the Council. All members were in favor.

Director's Report (Sue Page, Director of DORS)

DORS Funding/Budget – The DORS budget is 80% federal and 20% state funded. The state fiscal 2015 year started on July 1, 2014 and the state has provided level funding of state dollars. The state has had one round of budget containment and managed to pass through without any problems. The state has been very supportive of the VR program in Maryland.

The federal fiscal year 2015 begins on October 1, 2014 and are hoping that the leaders in the White House will be able to pass a continuing resolution before the end of the month.

Request for Reallotment from RSA – Some of the state VR programs return money back to the Department of Education because, either the states are not able to match the federal funds, or the maintenance of effort is not met. All of this money goes into a reallotment fund, and states that are interested in additional money and who can meet the match on additional money, can request reallotment funds. Maryland has received word that we will be receiving reallotment funding this year.

DORS Over-the Target Funding Request – DORS has prepared the Fiscal Year 2016 budget which will begin summer of 2015. DORS has requested an over-the-target request to be exempted from the state hiring recruiting processes.

DORS Waiting List/DORS Staff Capacity - Maryland is currently under an order-of-selection and currently have a waiting list. DORS is serving individuals in Category I immediately (individual with a most significant disability), and those placed in Category II (individual with a significant disability) may wait up to a certain amount of time to be served. Sue Page stated DORS has made significant progress on its waiting list. At the end of September 2013, the waiting list was 3,843 individuals. This year as of the end of August 2014, the waiting list was 2,326 individuals.

Learning Collaborative on VR Program Management – DORS applied for and was approved for a grant from the Research and Technical Assistance Center on Vocational Rehabilitation Program Management. This is through the Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts. The purpose of this grant is to address two (2) areas: (1) Develop an effective system for monitoring and evaluating community rehabilitation programs (CRPs); (2) Look at the fee schedule to establish a fair payment system. Kate Drake, DORS Staff Specialist for Community Rehabilitation Programs is the Project Manager for this project.

Committee Reports

Policy and Planning Committee, Tom Laverty

Tom Laverty, Chair of the Policy and Planning Committee, stated that the committee met to review the DORS 2014-2017 Strategic Plan which has been approved by the Council. The committee also discussed the changes to the VR program as a result of WIOA and developed a schedule of committee meetings for the upcoming year.

Public Relations and Quality Assurance

This committee has not met since the last Council meeting.

Membership Committee

Jeff Moran reported on the activities of the Membership Committee.

- Four long-term, committed and irreplaceable Council members are completing their terms of membership on the State Rehabilitation Council tonight. 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.

- Christy Stuart is the new MSDE Transitioning Specialist. She is here this evening. We will be including her in the packet of candidates to be sent to the Governor’s Appointment office.
- We have continued to reach out to the Maryland Work Force Investment Board regarding a representative for the Council to take Mary O’Connor’s place since she left the GWIB. Potential members representing the GWIB have been advised there may be a conflict of interest, which has delayed identification of a representative for the SRC.
- We have been working with DORS Employment Specialists to try to identify some additional representatives of business and industry for the council.

Employment & Career Development Committee

The Employment & Career Development Committee has not met since the last Council meeting.

Blindness and Vision Services Committee

Charles Crawford reported on the following activities of the Blindness and Vision Services Committee. The committee met on July 23, 2014 and received an employment update from Darlene Peregoy. Sue Schaffer also presented an overview of the activities of the DORS Office for Blindness and Vision Services. Representatives from the Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind, Blind Industries and Services of Maryland and the IMAGE Center were also present with updates.

Update on Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (Laurie Elinoff)

- Laurie Elinoff announced that the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is waiting for approval of their 2014 – 2016 State Plan for Independent Living.

The meeting concluded at 7:00 p.m. The next full Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 19, 2014, Workforce & Technology Center, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m., Room T-130.

Respectfully submitted.

Donna Lippa
MSRC Staff Support