

**Maryland State Rehabilitation Council  
Workforce & Technology Center  
May 4, 2016**

**Members – Present**

Anil Lewis, Vice Chair  
Cindy Labon  
Barry Shaw  
Sue Page  
Jani Willis  
Tom Laverty  
Marsha Legg  
Will Stocker

**Members Unable to Attend**

Jeff Moran, Chair  
Joseph Barrett  
Diane Pabich  
Christofer Conklin  
Christy Stuart  
Michael Whitehill

**DORS Liaisons to Council**

Donna Lettow, Policy and Planning  
Jean Jackson, Employment Committee

**Candidates for Membership in Attendance**

Katja Fort-Rhoden

**Guests**

Jo Anne Materkowski, DORS – OFS Director  
Amy Blandford, OBVS – Acting OBVS Director  
John Stem, DORS  
Darlene Peregoy, DORS

**Support Staff**

Sandy Bowser

**Public Guests**

Amy Wallish  
Karyn Stenzler  
David Mitchell

**Introduction and Approval of Minutes:**

The Vice-Chair, Anil Lewis welcomed guests and members to the Council meeting and asked that everyone introduce themselves. There is a correction to be made to the minutes from the February 23, 2016 meeting. Page 2 – wheelchair bound

and wheelchair dependent to be changed to individuals who use wheelchairs. This change will be made, distributed and posted on the MSRC website. This change has been approved.

**Committee Reports:**

The Maryland State Rehabilitation Council Committee Structure was distributed to all the Committees to be used as a reference guide on their primary duties.

**Blindness and Vision Services Committee – Anil Lewis**

Anil is in the process of contacting the committee members to resume a regular meeting schedule.

**Employment/Career Development Committee – Michael Whitehill**

Darlene Peregoy, Committee Member provided the report for Michael Whitehill. A meeting schedule has been established for 2016 – May 19, July 21 and October 20, 2016. The committee is looking to expand to a few more businesses.

There are seven positions allocated for the DORS Business Relations Department. At this point six of the positions have been filled. Recruitment is in process to hire for Anne Arundel County. Their responsibilities include building relationships with businesses that will significantly improve the quality of services that are provided to DORS consumers in achieving sustained and successful employment. The Quest Internship Program (Summer Program) is in full swing and 45 individuals have applied.

The Business Relations Department is working very closely with WTC Employment Specialists to work on a new pilot program with Starbucks. This will include soft-skill training offered at WTC and the additional training to be held onsite at Starbucks.

**Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee – Jeff Moran**

Donna Lettow, DORS Liaison provided the report for Jeff Moran. A teleconference was held on April 11, 2016 to review the committee's primary duties as there are some new members. The committee invited John Stem to present on Quality Assurance and the triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. DORS' 2015 Annual Report has been approved and is now available on the website. The Maryland State Rehabilitation Council Annual Report is featured as an insert.

Membership and Resources Committee – Anil Lewis

As the new Committee Chair, Anil is in the process of contacting all of the council members.

Policy and Planning Committee – Tom Laverty

Tom is in the process of contacting the committee members to set-up a meeting to review their primary duties. The primary focus at the first meeting will be the policy change to Vehicle and Home Modifications.

**Special Guest – John Stem, Program Evaluation and AWARE Support**

Topic: Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)

VR agencies are required to conduct a triennial CSNA. John Stem is DORS' lead coordinator . The last CSNA was completed in 2013; DORS incorporated recommendations from that CSNA into our previous three program plans and state plan and will do the same with the CSNA results for this year.

Focus groups have been developed to address the areas listed below and consist of the Office of Field Services, Workforce & Technology Center, Office for Blindness & Vision Services, and MSRC members. Public Meetings will also be considered a Focus Group and are in the process of being scheduled.

- A. Individuals with most significant disabilities, including their need for Supported Employment Services.
- B. Individuals with disabilities who are minorities. Individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.
- C. Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System.
- D. Youth with disabilities, and students with disabilities.
- E. Assessment of the Need to Establish, Develop or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs within the State.

There is a new component that staff will also address – the need for Pre-Employment Transition Services.

The framework/template for reporting on the areas above includes:

- A. Introduction/background, including prevalence

- B. Needs Assessment method used (survey, focus group/public meeting, subject matter expert interview)
- C. Needs/concerns identified
- D. Strategies considered:
  - What can we do better and different re: relationship building.
  - Assistive Technology considerations (relevance, availability, reliability, training options).
- E. Recommendations

There will be a kick-off meeting on May 16<sup>th</sup> with the first activity consisting of Planning Assessment Goals. Marsha Legg volunteered to assist with the Needs Assessment area related to youth and students with disabilities along with Tom Lavery and Donna Lettow. MSRC Members interested in planning assessment goals, collecting data, providing community linkages, reviewing findings, and developing recommendations are encouraged to participate. Please refer to the meeting schedule below:

May 16 – 2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. - Activity: Planning Assessment Goals

June 13 – 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – Activity: Update on data collection and planned community activities

July 11 – 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – Activity: Update on data collection and previous/planned community activities

August 8 – 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – Activity: Preliminary review of findings and recommendations

September 19 – 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – Activity: Review draft report

All meetings will be held at the Workforce & Technology Center in T-130. Please contact John Stem if you would like to attend (teleconference option will be available for each meeting). [john.stem@maryland.gov](mailto:john.stem@maryland.gov) - 410-554-9536.

The Overall Needs Assessment Report is due September 30, 2016.

### **Public Comment**

Amy Wallish and Karyn Stenzler, Benefits Counselors from Full Circle Employment Solutions and David Mitchell, Benefits Counselor from MD Work Incentive Network attended the MSRC Meeting to discuss their concerns with the changes

in the Benefits Certification process and its leadership. Particularly, the replacement of Mr. Michael Dalto who supervised this program.

Suzanne Page responded by providing background on why the change is being implemented. Mr. Michael Dalto supervised the program as an employee of the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD). Mr. Dalto resigned from MDOD and is now an independent contractor. DORS secured a one year Sole Source Contract, with Mr. Dalto to continue Benefits Counseling Training. Due to the State Procurement Policy, DORS cannot continue to contract with Sole Source Vendors. Ms. Page did verify that letters and emails from the Benefits Counselors have been received and further discussions have been held to take in account the Benefits Counselors input and a response letter will be sent out soon. Coordination will be arranged between DORS, MDOD, Behavioral Health Administration, and Development Disabilities Administration to address the concerns of the Benefits Counselors.

### **Chairperson/Vice Chairperson Report – Anil Lewis, Vice Chair**

#### **Members Resignation**

Andrew Cohen resigned from the MSRC effective March 30, 2015.

Katja Fort-Rhoden resigned from The Statewide Independent Living Council but will remain a MSRC member.

New Member Discussion - The Council will invite Sue Schaffer to apply for membership to the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council.

Annual Report – DORS’ 2015 Annual Report has been approved and is now available on the website. The Maryland State Rehabilitation Council Annual Report is featured as an insert.

Meeting Calendar 2017 – The 2017 MSRC Meetings will be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of May, September, November 2017.

#### MSRC Meeting Dates 2017

February – Legislative Event – To Be Determined

May 10, 2017

September 13, 2017

November 8, 2017

Due to a conflict in schedules, the next MSRC Meeting scheduled for September 7<sup>th</sup> has been changed to September 14, 2017.

All MSRC Meeting dates will continue to be posted on the Website and in the Maryland Register.

**Director's Report – Sue Page**

2016 Legislative Wrap-Up – There were many bills in Maryland that impacted individuals with disabilities that were passed – three in particular:

Minimum Wage and Community Integration – Employment Act – HB420/SB417

This bill will phase out sheltered employment in Maryland. Beginning October 1, 2016 no more certifications will be awarded to allow organizations to provide sub-minimum wage opportunities to individuals with disabilities. Legislation will phase out the use of “14c certificates” which allow organizations, under certain circumstances, to pay people with disabilities less than minimum wage. The amendments include provisions to develop a state plan to ensure successful implementation of the phase out over four years and report individualized planning around each person’s needs. By October 2020, any program that pays individuals with disabilities sub-minimum wage will not receive state funding.

ABLE Act – HB431/SB355

This bill will establish the beginning steps for a framework of the Maryland Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Program. This bill will allow eligible Marylanders with disabilities to save money in a tax-exempt account administered by Maryland 529 (formerly College Savings of Maryland). The money saved in these accounts can be used to cover disability-related expenses not covered by other programs, and will not cause account holders to lose eligibility for local, state, or federal means-tested benefits, including Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid.

State Personnel – Individuals with Disabilities Hiring Preferences – HB928/SB818

This bill expands hiring preferences currently offered to veterans, service-disabled veterans and their spouses by extending a hiring preference to people with

disabilities who apply for certain State positions. These individuals will receive an additional five points to their score when compared to other candidates applying for the same position.

### CSAVR 2016 Spring Conference Recap

The Spring Conference is typically held in Bethesda in order to provide opportunities for members to reach out to their state legislators.

Discussion at the conference centered on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act - all states are working to implement the provisions of the act without having the final regulations. The conference is a great opportunity to network, share ideas and compare what states are doing things differently. Maryland is ahead of other states regarding Transition services.

Each year CSAVR distributes a brochure highlighting consumer success stories and Business Partnerships that works/hires individuals with disabilities across the county. The brochure for this year is titled "Investing in America". This is the third year in a row that CSAVR selected a DORS consumer to be featured in the National Brochure.

### Technical Assistance Centers

RSA now funds Technical Assistance Centers across the Nation. Each one focuses and specializes in a specific topic and area. Panels of individuals for the different Centers held discussions and provided information regarding the following areas:

- \*Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JDVRTAC) – working with states to develop/enhance services with businesses

- \*National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTAC) – working with Transition Students

- \*Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center for Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance (PEQATC)

- \*VR Technical Assistance Center for Targeted Communities (VRTAC-TC)

- \*VR Technical Assistance Center for Youth With Disabilities (VRTAC-Y)

- \*Workforce Innovation and Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) – patterning how VR can partner with the WIOA partners.

- \*American Indian VR Technical Assistance Center (AIVRTAC)

Maryland is working with George Washington (GW) University as part of the VRTAC-TC.

GW is working with Southern University in Louisiana to conduct a study on individuals with disabilities who live in impoverished and at-risk communities. Baltimore City is on the list as one of the areas where the study may be conducted.

RSA provided an update on the Combined and Unified State Plans that were submitted April 1, 2016. There are a few edit/changes that DORS will need to address. Most pertains to data updating and technical difficulties, i.e., tables moved, etc. DORS response to RSA comments is due by May 10<sup>th</sup>. Sue and DORS staff is working on the changes and will submit by the due date. The Combined Plan is to be approved by June 30, 2016.

#### Budget and Staff/Wait List

DORS continues to monitor funds. The State 2017 budget requires elimination of 657 state positions. DORS will possibly lose some vacant positions. This is expected to be announced some time before July 1<sup>st</sup>.

The vacant Director of Blindness & Vision Services position has been approved for recruitment and will be posted sometime next week.

The DORS Wait List is still in effect with a 2 year wait for services to individuals who are in Category II- Significantly Disabled. At this time, there is no estimate as to when this Category will be reopened. The Wait List is at 3,420 as of the end of April. This increase is a result of vacant positions, the hiring freeze and transferring 15% of the budget to Pre-Employment Transition Services.

#### New Council Business

The next full Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 14, 2016 at the Workforce & Technology Center.

Respectfully submitted  
Sandy Bowser  
MSRC Staff Support