

**Maryland State Rehabilitation Council
Minutes
Workforce & Technology Center
September 13, 2017**

Members Present

Jeff Moran, Chair
Anil Lewis, Co-Chair
Cindy LaBon
Michael Whitehill
Sue Page
Chris Conklin
Will Stocker
Tom Laverty
Christy Stuart
Marsha Legg

Members Unable to Attend

Sue Schaffer
Katja Fort-Rhoden
Jani Willis
Joseph Barrett
Barry Shaw

Candidates for Membership in Attendance

Michelle Plummer
Denise Carter-McCormick
Rene Avertti-Sanzone

DORS Liaisons to Council

Donna Lettow, Policy & Planning
Jean Jackson, DORS - WTC Director
Toni March, DORS – OBVS Director
Brenda Isenock – DORS – RTS Director

Support Staff for Council

John Stem
Sandy Bowser

Introduction – Jeff Moran

Jeff Moran welcomed guests and members to the Council meeting and asked that everyone introduce themselves. The Council welcomed potential new member Ms. Rene Avertti-Sanzone of the Parent Training Center. Rene will take over for Josie Thomas as she retired effective May 2017. The Council wishes Josie well in her retirement adventures.

The minutes from May 10th were approved as written.

The Maryland State Rehabilitation Council and the Division of Rehabilitation Services thanked Michael Whitehill for his dedication in serving Two 3-Year Terms. Michael's hard work, dedication, and commitment is very much appreciated by the Council and DORS. Michael thanked the Council and DORS and expressed his admiration for the work the MSRC continues to provide to Maryland consumers.

Guest Speaker – Jean Jackson & Brenda Isenock

Report on 14c Subminimum Wage:

Background: The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), places extensive emphasis on the achievement of competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities. Section 511 prohibits an entity that holds a section 14c certificate from compensating individuals with a disability at sub-minimum wage unless certain requirements/conditions have been met. Section 511 of WIOA includes requirements for individuals earning less than minimum wage to receive career counseling and related instruction at least once a year for as long as they continue earning less than minimum wage. This is required to ensure those who are ready to transition to competitive integrated employment are aware of programs available in the community to help them be successful in this transition.

DORS held a meeting in January and invited the Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) holding special wage (14c) certificates to discuss how Career Counseling and Information and Referral Services for sub-minimum wage earners will be provided.

The Workforce & Technology Center assumed the responsibility for coordinating and facilitating the career counseling and guidance presentations for CRPs throughout Maryland. Presentations were provided to 26 facilities throughout the state of MD. Multiple presentations were provided at each CRP based on the number of sub-minimum wage earners and at the request of the CRP based on the disabilities and behavioral challenges. The presentation schedule was divided into six months and began in February 2017 and concluded in July 2017.

Participants and their families asked questions regarding the DORS process, particularly when previously denied services. They also wanted to know what support and help DORS can provide; specifically; services, funding, financial contributions, and transportation; and, will DORS provide funding for support all the time if my son/daughter needs consistent one-on-one support.

For the next two years, it is recommended that the 14c sub-minimum wage presentations and the coordination with the CRPs be managed by the Staff Specialist for CRPs and be coordinated with each Regional Director. Each Region can facilitate the presentations for the CRPs in their region utilizing the CRP liaison from each office. Over the next two years, the CRPs will be changing their operations as a result of the phasing out of 14c certifications.

WTC hosted a 14c Appreciation Event on July 28th for staff involved in this project. The following feedback was received from staff:

- Revise the PowerPoint to a simplified level.
- Consider pictures only for the PowerPoint, no text.
- The Benefits Planning Services for Sub-minimum Wage Earners video be replaced with a video of the actual career guidance and counseling presentation.
- Simplify the initial letter from DORS and the Career Counseling Presentation Introduction Packet.
- DORS Field representation should attend all presentations.
- CRP staff need better directions and clarification of their role to help manage the 14c employees. CRP designated contact staff should attend all presentations.

Chairperson/Vice Chairperson Report - Jeff Moran/Anil Lewis:

Summary of Maryland State Rehabilitation Council Executive Retreat – The MSRC Executive Committee Retreat was held on August 24th for discussion on the DORS Waiting List, New Appointment/Renewal Process for MSRC members, Open Public Meeting Training, DORS Planning Meeting, DORS Staffing, Budget and agenda items for 2018.

New Appointment/Renewal Process – MSRC Members:

There is a new online process required by the Governor’s office for potential new members to apply for appointment to the MSRC. Current MSRC members must also complete the online application for re-appointment.

Online Application Link: www.govappointments.maryland.gov

Go to Quick Links

Submit an Application

2 Drop Down Menus complete as listed below:

Desired Appointments

Areas of Expertise: SELECT – Education

State Agencies/Commissions: SELECT – Rehabilitation Council, Maryland State

Director’s Report: Sue Page

Regulatory Reform – The President issued an Executive Order in February to the heads of Federal Departments to establish a task force to review existing regulations to see if anything is unduly burdensome or costly and to make recommendations for what can be modified, repealed, or replaced. The Department of Education/Division of Rehabilitation established a workgroup to review the WIOA “of DORS” regulations in Maryland and Nationally. All proposed comments are to modify regulations pertaining to PRE-Employment Transition Services, Prior Approval to equipment purchases over \$5,000, Definition of Competitive Integrated Employment, and the need for more clear guidance. Maryland State Rehabilitation Council members are encouraged to review the report and provide comments to John Stem by September 15th. The final comments are due September 20, 2017.

Maryland’s Open Meeting Act – Online Training:

The Open Meeting Act was amended this legislative session to require a member of public bodies to take the on-line open meeting act training. This means that the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council is required to have representation of council member/members who have taken the training attend Public Meetings, MSRC meetings and MSRC Sub-Committee meetings. This is approximately a two hour training broken down into six sessions. All MSRC members are encouraged to complete the training by October 1st. A link to the online course can be found under “Other Resources” heading at <http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/OpenGov/Openmeetings/default.aspx>. Please print your Certificate of Completion at the end of the training for proof of record and submit a copy to Sandy to be kept on file.

Customer Service:

The Governor started an initiative for providing enhanced Customer Services in the State of Maryland. All State Employee email signatures include a link to a three Question Customer Experience Survey. The responses are recorded by the Governor’s office and distributed to the appropriate State Agency. DORS reviews the customer satisfaction survey spreadsheet each month for any DORS involvement. All consumers that provide dissatisfaction with DORS are contacted by their counselor for follow-up. DORS staff are also given copies of positive consumer comments.

DORS Inactive Cases/Wait List:

Phase One – focused on contacting consumers on the Open Pending caseload for whom no actions had been taken in over a year. In April, we contacted 4,700 consumers to determine whether or not they were still interested in receiving DORS’ services. Approximately 2,000 individuals either no longer needed DORS services or did not respond to multiple modes of communication. As a result, the Open Pending caseload was reduced by 2,479 cases by the end of June.

Phase Two was implemented in June – We surveyed more than 4,000 consumers on the Wait List asking about their employment status and their continued need for DORS services. We utilized mass email mailings, letters, and phone calls in an attempt to reach every individual on the Wait List. We closed the cases of individuals who indicated that they no longer needed DORS services and individuals who did not respond to any contacts or to pre-closure letters. As of the end of August, the Wait List was reduced to 2,693 individuals who continued to be interested in receiving future services from DORS.

Phase Three – will begin at the end of September. For the first time since March 2015, DORS will begin moving individuals off of the Wait List onto Active Case Status. Between September and December 2017, DORS will roll 394 consumers off of the Wait List and begin working with them.

In January 2018, we will reassess the workload and Wait List, then plan for continued roll-off of the Wait List.

GAO Update:

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) – an independent, nonpartisan federal agency that conducts research for Congress is seeking input on two on-going research studies related to vocational rehabilitation services, as set out in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.

The GAO visited DORS on 09/12/17 and conducted two reviews:

Pre-employment transition services for youth with disabilities: GAO will assess how state VR agencies have enhanced pre-employment transition services for youth with disabilities; what challenges, if any, state VR agencies face implementing the provisions; and what guidance state VR agencies have received from federal agencies.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Employers: GAO will assess what steps state VR agencies have taken to work with employers and identify jobs with advancement opportunities, and what challenges, if any, they face; the extent of coordination with other workforce programs to serve individuals with disabilities; and what guidance state VR agencies have received from federal agencies.

As part of the project, GAO will ask VR agencies to complete a questionnaire about experiences addressing the WIOA requirements. GAO intends to use the results primarily in aggregate in their final reports to Congress.

Committee Reports:

All MSRC Sub-Committee Meetings should be scheduled at least two weeks prior to the meeting date in order to be posted on the MSRC Website.

Public Relations and Quality Assurance – Jeff Moran

Jeff is working on scheduling meetings for the remainder of 2017 and 2018.

Membership – Anil Lewis

The focus is on the make-up of the Committees and filling absent Council seats.

Blindness and Vision Services – Anil Lewis/Sue Schaffer

The Sub-Committee meeting was held on August 23rd at the Workforce & Technology Center. Discussion was held on the Workforce & Innovation Opportunity Act regarding the 14c and Referrals to the Ability One agencies. Toni March gave an update on The Office of Blindness & Vision Services. Anna Kim presented on the Blind Enterprise Program. Discussion was held on Virtu's accessibility. It was reported that all issues have been corrected. The Blindness and Vision Services Committee will meet one month before the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for October 25, 2017.

Employment/Career Development Committee – Michael Whitehill

The next meeting will be held on October 3rd at the Workforce & Technology Center.

Policy and Planning – Tom Laverty

The members are working on scheduling meetings for the remainder of 2017 and 2018.

Council Sharing:

Parents Place will hold its first training of Transition Leaders through funding from the Maryland State Department of Education this Saturday. There are about 21 parents that will be trained on everything related to transition including education, adult services and special health care. A second training will take place in Spring 2018.

The next Maryland State Rehabilitation Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 8, 2017 at the Workforce & Technology Center 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Sandy Bowser

MSRC Staff Support