

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council
Minutes
Workforce & Technology Center
May 13, 2020

Members Present:

Anil Lewis
Scott Dennis
Chris Conklin
Cindy LaBon
Denise Carter-McCormick
Marsha Legg
Christy Stuart
Rene Averitt-Sanzone
Tom Laverty

DORS Liaisons to Council:

Jody Boone, DORS – OFS Director
Kim Schultz, DORS – Public Relations
Jean Jackson – WTC Director
Toni March – OBVS Director

Guests:

Darlene Peregoy – AFS Director
Laurie Elinoff – SIL Representative

Support Staff for Council:

Sandy Bowser
Patrick Peto

Welcome/Introduction:

The February 12, 2020, minutes were approved as written.

Discussion – How DORS is providing Services to Consumers Virtually

The Transition occurred rapidly for DORS to telework. On Friday, March 13th staff were informed not to return to work on Monday, March 16th.

Fortunately, most of our counselors had laptops and were used to working remotely with schools, CRPs and American Job Centers. The bigger task was moving the “brick and mortar” operations to a virtually setting – support staff, procurement, accounting and personnel. The move to work virtually took about 2 ½ weeks to get them set-up and running. There are still some issues, and fine tuning for the electronic environment, but staff is adjusting well.

Office of Field Services – Jody Boone, OFS Director

The Office of Field Services is working on implementing virtual services for consumers, especially Pre-Employment Transition Services for students. At this time, DORS is not providing summer based learning experiences.

Job Coaching/Job Development – Exceptions have been granted to individuals who are in job jeopardy.

Office for Blindness & Vision Services - Toni March, OBVS Director

The Office for Blindness & Vision Services is following the same path as OFS regarding services for consumers. Staff are providing in home assessments virtually, purchasing equipment/devices, shipping and providing instruction through google meets and/or over the phone. Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind is providing orientation/mobility discussions. The Workforce & Technology Center staff has also supported the field in some of these things virtually – interviewing for consumers, career readiness and resume writing.

BEP – currently have 12 vendors not working. Vending facilities have shut-down due to COVID 19 restrictions to offices. BEP is working with them to explore benefits available to them through small business.

Workforce & Technology Center – Jean Jackson, WTC Director

The Workforce & Technology Center's staff has been repurposed. Some WTC counselors have been assigned to the Field to help with caseloads, while others, including support staff, have been working on referral backlogs. They are also providing help with determining eligibility.

Administration & Financial Services - Darlene Peregovy, AFS Director

DORS two staff specialists have been working very closely with our Community Rehabilitation Providers – giving guidance on what they can do virtually, interview skills, time management, and topics relative to work adjustment – virtual services.

MSRC Chair/Vice-Chair Report – Anil Lewis/Marsha Legg

The following concerns were raised:

- Is technology going out to consumers in order to participate in services.

Yes, equipment is being shipped and training is being provided virtually.

Director's Report – Scott Dennis, Assistant State Superintendent

Sue Schaffer has resigned from the MSDE effective March 2020.

DORS staff is working on the initial feedback from RSA regarding the combined state plan. One area of concern in the combined state plan is the state budget at this point in time. There could be a 20-30% reduction for the 2021 budget, not only state but the federal revenue could be impacted.

Order of Selection – discussions are ongoing regarding the possible closure of Category I for a period to time. There is an increase in a number of students with disabilities applying for transition services – this is the main factor for possibly closing Category I.

Adjustments to caseloads and staffing are in the process – all counselors will take on transition students in addition to their regular caseloads in order to help reduce Transition Counselor caseloads.

A new Transition Unit has been created in Montgomery County. This unit will serve only Transition students.

Image Center, Independence Now – are providing some Pre-ETS services, working with schools, American Job Centers.

Discretionary spending has been halted by the State of Maryland. Funding has been reserved to provide only core services.

There are currently 11 vacant counseling positions statewide.

Statistics:

As of the end of April, there are 52% of individuals under the age of 24 with open cases and 24% of individuals 25 years of age and over with open cases.

Membership/Committee Discussion:

Policy & Quality Assurance – Tom Laverty – the group met virtually; discussion centered on the application process, developing separate committees to work on current business practices, new intake checklist, providing guidance to counselors for initial interviews.

Blindness & Vision Services – Cindy LaBon

Discussion was held on moving to a virtual environment, resources/events/training/support groups/conference call that are being provided in the state.

Council Sharing

Christy Stuart has shared that MSDE is seeing an increase of virtual participation of youth and families. MSDE is working on continuity learning plans for the local school systems.

Rene Averitt-Sanzone – Parents Place of MD – has started weekly coffee and conversations – every Monday specifically for high school students. There has been great attendance from families; discussions center around - families trying to figure out how to work, telework, home

Respectfully Submitted
Sandy Bowser
MSRC Staff Support