

**Maryland State Rehabilitation Council**  
**Minutes**  
**February 9, 2022**

**Members Present:**

Scott Dennis  
Marsha Legg – Chair  
Tassie Thompson  
Christy Stuart  
Tom Laverty  
Penny Reeder  
Cory Richo  
Marsha Legg  
Chris Conklin  
Michelle Day  
Rene Averitt-Sanzone  
Ronza Othman  
Katherine Jones  
Calvin Doudt  
Tamara Smith

**Members Unable to Attend:**

Melissa Blubaugh  
Mindy Lipsey  
Hunter Whitt

**DORS Liaisons to Council:**

Jody Bone – OFS Director  
Jean Jackson – WTC Director  
Kim Schultz – DORS – Public Relations  
Wanda Peele – Business Services

**Support Staff for Council:**

Sandy Bowser  
Patrick Peto

**Welcome:**

Marsha Legg, SRC Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The November 10, 2021 minutes were approved as written and will be available on the State Rehabilitation Council website.

Chris Conklin is leaving the State Rehabilitation Council. Chris has served in the role as VR Counselor. A big thank you to Chris for his years of service on the SRC.

Welcome to Cory Richo. Cory is taking the place of the VR Counselor on the SRC. Cory joined DORS in 1995 as a consumer and started working with the agency in 2013 as a VR Specialist. Cory has provided presentations for Quality Rehabilitation Training (QRT) and testing for AWARE for the blind. Cory is blind and also paralyzed and is hoping to bring some insight from a consumer's point of view as well as a VR Specialists point of view and is very excited to join the team.

Welcome to Tamara Smith. Tamara works for the Federal Aviation Administration, as a Management Analyst and is the Selective Placement Program Coordinator, a Senior Recruiter and Program Manager for persons with disabilities. Tamara works closely with the Civil Rights Office and the DC Metro area DARS offices.

### **Combined Statewide Plan – Update**

The Combined State Plan is submitted to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). This is a four year plan that is submitted every two years. DORS is now providing mid-term updates. The Plan will include a number of performance measures and was submitted to the Governor's office today for signature. Once approval is granted, the Plan will be put on the DORS website.

### **RSA Monitoring**

The Rehabilitation Services Administration will monitor DORS the first two weeks in August 2022. The SRC will be invited to meet with RSA to participate and answer questions. Meeting dates will be announced sometime in July 2022.

### **Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment**

DORS Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment will end September 2022. We are in the beginning stages of developing the new Tri-Annual Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. The SRC will be invited to participate.

One area DORS is looking to improve is the outreach to the Hispanic and Asian Communities.

The kick-off will be held in mid-March 2022.

### **HB 660**

Legislation was recently introduced in the General Assembly to create a commission that will be headed by DORS to look into services that the agency provides throughout the state focusing on transitioning students. The hearing will be held on February 24, 2022.

### **DORS – Consumer Satisfaction Survey**

DORS is currently in the process of running the winter version of the Customer Satisfaction Survey. The survey began on January 14<sup>th</sup> and will end on February 18, 2022. A random sample tool was used to reach out to approximately 1,300 consumers –open and closed cases in the last 3 months. As of today's date, a total of 186 responses were received.

There are Currently 174 responses from consumers that are being served through the Office of Field Services and 12 consumers being served from the Office of Blindness and Vision Services.

In an effort to increase responses from the Office of Blindness and Vision Services, staff will call those consumers who have not yet responded to see if they would like to complete the survey over the phone.

### **Preliminary Statistics:**

DORS goal is to have a 75% overall success rate.

Anchor Question - Based on my recent experience with DORS I would recommend this program to a friend - 78% positive rate

Some negative feedback was received from individuals on the waiting list. It was also noted that staff need to continue to keep in contact with these individuals in addition to providing information on other places such as American Job Centers and One-Stop Shops where they can receive assistance while they are on the waiting list.

Individuals that were closed successful – 100% satisfaction

Individuals that were closed unsuccessful - 30% and were unwilling to refer the DORS program to a friend.

Question – DORS staff are timely when responding to emails and phone calls

69% - yes

20% - no

11% - I don't know

Question – I was given information to help choose my employment goal

80% - satisfied

10% - no opinion

Question – I am satisfied with the services I am receiving from DORS.

74% - satisfied

8% - unsatisfied

Individuals in Employed Status

87% - satisfied with their job

10% - no opinion

3% - disagree

Question – Any feedback you would like to offer

85 - Total comments

29 - Positive comments

22 –negative comments

34 – Neutral comments

All negative comments will be addressed by the Regional Directors.

Overall – positive results were received.

### **Director Report – Scott Dennis**

#### **Governor's FY2023 Budget for DORS**

The Governor's FY 2023 Budget Appropriate request –The governor gave DORS enough appropriation to meet all of our match requirements for the VR Program, the Independent Living Program, the Independent Living Older Blind Program, and Supported Employment Program with a little left over.

The federal government is still under continuing resolution so we do not have a final figure for our FY22 budget. The expectation is that DORS will receive about 800- 900 thousand dollars in increased federal funding for FY22.

DORS has been experiencing a number of staff vacancies throughout the state thus creating a big issue with taking individuals off the waiting list.

### **Formation of Intake/Eligibility Unit – Update**

The Eligibility Determination Unit (EDU) will focus mainly on determining eligibility for the entire state.

Staff training for the Eligibility Determination Unit will start on February 15, 2022.

Staff that worked in the Career Assessment Department have been reassigned to the Eligibility Determination Unit and other staff from around the state have transferred into the unit. The unit will be made up of new and seasoned staff. The new staff will be paired with the seasoned staff to help with eligibility training.

The Unit will consist of:

- 10 Counselors
- 3 Administrative Staff
- 2 VR Supervisors
- 1 Program Manager

The Eligibility Determination Unit is slated to start on March 1, 2022, beginning with the five busiest DORS offices. The next five busiest offices will start April 1, 2022 with the goal to have all new referrals going to the EDU by June 1, 2022.

### **First half of Performance Year 21 performance update:**

This quarter began October 1 – December 31, 2022.

Preliminary Information:

- Successful Closures – 243
- Average Wage - \$15.04
- Average Hours per week – 27 ½ hours
- Measurable Skills Gains – 135 - these are individuals who are enrolled in a training program or schooling that is going towards a recognizable certification.

There are 1,082 individuals enrolled in a training program

More data will be given at the May 2022 meeting.

### **Membership Discussion**

Policy & Quality Assurance – Tom Laverty

- The last meeting focused on the Eligibility Determination Unit.

Blindness and Vision Services – Penny Reeder

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- There are still a number of vacancies in OBVS.
- The NFB reported that the Federation has contributed tuition expenses for fourteen individuals who are in school to obtain certification as vision teachers. They have to have a commitment to work in the state for people with visual impairments and blindness for three years.
- The Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind has a new support group that is very successful and meets once a month. They have individuals attending from the DC Metro area as well as internationally.
- Orientation & mobility training is being held all over the State of Maryland
- The American Council of the Blind Annual Conference will be held February 25 & 26, 2022.

#### Membership – Marsha Legg

- The SRC is recruiting for members; and to specifically target some under-served populations, such as the Hispanic and Asian Communities, former clients, current clients, and parents who have children with a disability.
- There are 25 seats on the SRC with 17 filled seats.

Marsha Legg, Christy Stuart and Rene Averitt-Sanzone will be leaving the SRC in September 2022.

#### Employment/Career Development – Michelle Day

- The Employment/Career Development Committee is looking to recruit members.
- Tracking Employment Outcomes for Pre-ETS Students - this topic will be discussed at future meetings.
- Labor Market Status - Reach out to businesses about the DORS program.
- Marketing & Partnering with different workforce development organizations.
- Update on what's happening at the Workforce & Technology Center.

#### Strategic Planning and Public Relations – Calvin Doudt

Calvin Doudt is the new chair for this committee.

The Strategic Planning and Public Relations is looking for SRC members to join this committee.

#### Council Sharing

The Parents Place of MD conducts a transition leadership training – Guiding the Journey – which helps parents understand Pre-ETS and VR programs.

The Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council has NEW information:

- Website – [www.marylandsilc.org](http://www.marylandsilc.org)
- Email – [silcmaryland@gmail.com](mailto:silcmaryland@gmail.com)
- Phone Number- 443-961-4630
- Facebook Page – [www.facebook.com/Marylandsilc](https://www.facebook.com/Marylandsilc)

The Youth Transition Conference will be held at Worwic Community College on March 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjournment**

Respectfully Submitted  
Sandy Bowser  
MSRC Staff Support