

## **Maryland State Rehabilitation Council Workshop Minutes**

**February 7, 2024**

### **Members Present:**

Katherine Jones – Chair  
Jody Boone  
Penny Reader  
Cory Richo  
Kristen Patterson  
Marla Friedman

### **Members Unable to Attend:**

Michelle Day  
Ronza M. Othman  
Rosa Raez  
Marlo Lemon  
Melissa Blubaugh  
Rosa Raez

### **DORS liaisons to Council:**

Toni March, Director OBVS  
Wanda Peele, Business Services  
Patrick Peto, Program Manager Policy, and planning DORS  
Kim Schultz, DORS — Public Affairs  
Marla Friedman, CAP Director

### **Support Staff for the Council:**

Erica Kneessi  
Sherri Alban

### **Welcome: Katherine Jones**

Katherine Jones welcomed everyone and opened the meeting. Ms. Jones will be the Acting Volunteer Chair while she is awaiting re-appointment.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Motion was made via email to approve the September 13, 2023 meeting minutes.

Motion will not be made to approve the November minutes because there is no Quorum. The November minutes will be viewed as the SRC November workshop minutes.

**Public Comment:** No public comment

### **Jody Boone, Acting Assistant State Superintendent:**

Ms. Boone was named Acting Assistant State Superintendent, effective Dec 14, 2023. Mary Gable was named Acting Interim Deputy Superintendent with MSDE. For the past six months the DORS Executive Team has worked together to provide direction and leadership and will continue to do so.

There is no active recruitment underway for the DORS Assistant State Superintendent position. Effective February 21, 2024, Geoff Sanderson will be the new MSDE Deputy State Superintendent of Accountability. Ms. Boone will report directly to him. Recruitment will start once Geoff is settled in his new position, most likely in April or May.

Beth Lash has been selected and approved by the State Board of Education to be the new Director of the Office of Field Services. Beth has a wealth of experience in vocational rehabilitation services, and she is an excellent addition to the DORS Executive Team.

### **Maryland Pathways to Partnership Initiative (MPPI) – RSA Disability Innovations Fund (DIF) Grant:**

This is a five-year grant which DORS will be managing. The partners are 4 local education agencies (Allegany, Caroline, Charles, and Fredrick County), 4 centers for independent living (BACIL, Resources for Independence, The Freedom Center, and SMCIL), University of Maryland CTCL, Independence Now, MSDE DEI/SES, Abt Associates, The Parents' Place of Maryland, and the Maryland Department of Disabilities.

- DORS will be working with 10-21-year-olds; 10 to 13 is an age group that DORS has never served.
- Students with disabilities who are underserved, live in rural areas, and are minorities will be invited to participate.
- Wrap-around services and resources will be provided, such as self-advocacy, financial literacy, and support services for families. Career exploration and career development services will also be provided.
- Students who participate are not required to be DORS consumers. Recruitment will be done by the LEAs.
- DORS was awarded \$9.9 Million, 75% of which will be distributed among the project partners.
- Jessica Markum, DORS Staff Specialist, will be instrumental in helping to establish the local advisory groups for each of the areas. Jade Gingerich, MDOD, will be working closely with Jessica.
- Evaluators from Abt associates will be gathering all the data measurements for this grant, and UM CTCL is providing technical assistance for DORS and all project partners.

- The project will recruit 500 students over the next 5 years to participate in the program.
- DORS will keep you informed as the program progresses.

### **SB0859/HB 1163 – DORS Funding (Required State Share)**

SB0859 Bill submitted by Senator Craig Zucker and Guy Guzzone, and was created out of the HB 660 Commission recommendations.

The proposed bill authorizes the Governor to include in the annual budget bill an increase in the general fund appropriation to ensure the State's share of funding under the federal rehabilitation act for DORS within the MSDE is met.

The state must match the federal match requirement-

Example: For FY25 the budget appropriation is \$16,797,000. The amount available for the state match is \$16,115,000. The required match is \$16,742,000 so we are short by \$627,000.

If the State does not increase the budget, then DORS could potentially lose federal funds in the amount \$2,319,000

### **HB60 – Disability Definition**

Bill was Introduced by Delegate Guyton to change the definition of disability to match how the disability community defines individuals with a disability and matches the federal legislation.

### **Kimberlee Schultz, Director Office of Public Affairs:**

#### **MSDE Branding**

MSDE recently changed our branding from Blue to the MD State Colors, white, gold and black. DORS will not be reprinting what we currently have on hand, but we will need to redesign everything when the time comes. Our email signature has also changed to reflect the logo and color changes. Any new orders must comply with the new color scheme and branding guide.

#### **DORS Services – New Video**

- DORS has been working on a series of videos with Maryland public television. 2 videos were produced last year on information about student services.
- Presently working on a General DORS services video, the draft is completed and once it is approved it will be published You Tube.
- Kim Schultz is presently working with Toni March and her staff on an Office of

Blindness and Vision Services video.

**Patrick Peto, Program Manager for Quality Assurance, Policy & Planning:**

**Waiting list data**

- Current Waitlist - 1,967
- Waitlist Rollout to begin March 1<sup>st</sup>; approx. 1 month per cohort.
- Should complete 2021 Application dates by May 31, 2024.

**QA review progress**

- 1/18 Hagerstown West
- 1/25 Frederick
- 2/1 Westminster
- 2/8 Germantown West
- 2/15 Deaf & Hard of Hearing Unit
- QA Review will complete 6/21/24 following OBVS

**Combined State Plan**

- 12/8/23 Kickoff Meeting
- 1/12/2024 Draft submitted to Maryland Labor
- Public Comments: 1/12 – 1/29/24
- Includes: Agency Program Plan, Strategic Plan, and Planning Meeting group input (7/2023), 2022 CSNA, Commission to Study DORS recommendations, Federal Performance Goals, and SRC Annual Report.

**RSA Corrective Action Plan reports**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Quarterly Update submitted to RSA 1/31/24

**1.) RSA Monitoring CAP**

- Data Validation processes/Federal Performance Measures; using data to identify training needs
- Post-Secondary Education updates
- Post-Employment Policy updates
- VR Application Process re: signatures
- Waitlist Rollout Processes/Evaluation/Metrics
- Fiscal Forecasting (upcoming training by VRTAC-QM)
  - DORS Fiscal Unit and MSDE process and Grant management

**2.) 2021 Pre-ETS Expenditures CAP**

- Standardized Pre-ETS Objectives/ New Proposals
- “Plain Language” Pre-ETS materials
  - Video produced in conjunction with Maryland Public Television
  - Updated brochures and info on the DORS public website
- Training and resources for recording staff time for Pre-ETS
- Fiscal Forecasting (see Monitoring CAP- VRTAC-QM training)
- Policy Updates- Pre-ETS spending Flexibilities (VR cases under IPE)

**Toni March, Director of the Office for Blindness & Vision Services:**

Reporting out for OBVS and the Blindness Subcommittee

OBVS is currently recruiting for a deaf/blind specialist the closing date for the recruitment is 2/9/24.

OBVS has scheduled a Transition Day for all VR staff, school staff who work with students with vision impairments, and our community partners providing programs for students (Pre ETS) in the Summer of 2024. Staff of DORS and the schools will get to hear about the summer programs being offered through Pre ETS in 2024 and be able to ask questions. Toni March will also provide an update and review the new Higher Education Policy and the new Financial Need Policy.

OBVS and the Office of Public Affairs are currently working on an OBVS Video, scheduled to meet to review the script later this week.

The Business Enterprise Program for the Blind is a program that assists blind individuals in preparing for employment operating retail and food service operations under the Randolph Sheppard Act. These retail and food service operations are primarily in Federal and State buildings. With telework becoming an option for many employees, some of the food service operations have had to downsize or close. The BEP program is starting a new training program for blind vendors who are interested in maintaining and servicing vending machines in Federal and State buildings. The BEP just purchased 6 new vending machines, which are located in a room off of the cafeteria, and are currently learning the details of operation, and monitoring of these machines in preparation for training development. This program will provide an opportunity for those vendors who were unable to open their food service sites, or to supplement the incomes of those who have reduced foot traffic in their retail / food service operations.

The Independent Living Older Blind program is preparing to send out its biannual satisfaction survey. Thank you to Patrick Peto for all of his help. Patrick is integral to the process of preparing the satisfaction survey and ensuring the distribution of the survey to a percentage of those served.

**Katherine Jones-**

Approved: With only 2 SRC members present at today's meeting, there is no quorum so the minutes for November 8, 2023 will serve as Workshop Minutes.

SRC Members to sign up for a committee.

### **Policy & Quality Assurance- Patrick Peto**

- The Policy & Quality Assurance committee has not had a meeting in a while.
- Next Policy review committee meeting is on April 9, 2024.
- Will try to schedule a meeting for some time after and will hopefully have a report at the next SRC meeting.

### **Blindness and Vision Services – Penny Reader**

See OBVS update.

### **Membership – Vacant**

### **Employment/Career Development – Wanda Peele**

New internships opportunities will soon be announced:

- Commodities Futures Trading Commission through the Pathways Program is recruiting for summer interns. Information was sent out to the VR Counselors today.
- The Obama/Chesky Scholarship, for students aged 24-26 who are interested in public service. The information was also sent out today to all the VR Counselors.

### **Strategic Planning- NA**

### **Council sharing**

Penny Reeder –

ACB Scholarship applications are due on February 14, 2024. Anyone who is interested can go to the [ACB.org](https://www.acb.org) website.

Wanda Peele –

Region III National Employment team just received access again to their NET SharePoint which means DORS staff will have access to all employment opportunities around the country.

Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted,

Sherri Alban

MSRC Staff Support