

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council Workshop Minutes

November 8, 2023

Members Present:

Katherine Jones – Chair

Rosa Raez

Members Unable to Attend:

Michelle Day

Mindy Lipsey

Ronza M. Othman

Penny Reader

Tamara Smith

Hunter Whitt

Kristen Patterson

Aaron Stephen

Marlo Lemon

Melissa Blubaugh

Cory Richo

DORS liaisons to Council:

Jody Boone, Senior Executive Director, Planning, Operations, and Field Services

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

Guest:

Megan Jones, Assistant Managing Attorney with Disability Rates Maryland

Support Staff for the Council:

Erica Kneessi

Sherri Alban

Welcome:

Katherine Jones –

Good evening, everyone.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion was not made because we did not have a Quorum. Will address at the February 7, 2024 meeting.

Mr. Choudhury has stepped down as our State Superintendent of Schools. We now have an Interim State Superintendent, Dr. Carey Wright, until June 2024.

Planning of Maryland legislative Session (1/10/2024-April 8, 2024)

When the Maryland State Department of Education convenes at their next board meeting in December, we will adopt the new legislation platform. Hopefully we will have updates on what will happen in the field of Vocational Rehabilitation.

The 2024 Legislative session begins January 10, 2024 and will end April 8, 2024.

DORS Employees are not allowed to participate in any direct lobbying efforts with legislators.

Will coordinate and plan a tentative date to have a SRC retreat day in Annapolis so we can meet with and talk with our Delegates and Senators.

Megan Jones - Delegate Guyton is working on introducing a bill to change the Definition of Disability in the Education code to align with Federal law.

Public Comment::

No public comment

Jody Boone, Senior Executive Director of Planning, Operations, and Field services:

MSDE and DORS Leadership Update

Members of DORS Executive staff will be meeting at MSDE tomorrow morning at 9 am, we were told that Dr. Wright has been invited.

Dr. Wright came from Mississippi where she was the Superintendent of Schools. We are hoping to meet with and share information about DORS and to get to know her.

Tom Liniak is the new Director of Community Based and Workforce Services. Tom is getting to know everyone, the programs, training courses, and the students. We are glad to have him at DORS!

As far as we know, to date, there has been no recruitment efforts to hire a replacement for Scott Dennis, Assistant State Superintendent. I am still providing leadership, the exec staff team and I are working closely to steer the ship in the right direction, and we are having regular meetings with Dr. Lawson, Deputy State Superintendent at MSDE.

Pre-ETS CTCI Update

CCTI is the The Center for Transitioning and Career Innovation with the University of Maryland. They have been processing our Pre-ETS referrals since August 1, 2022.

This is a 2-year grant Pilot program. We just finished the 1st year and are now moving into the second year. We are looking to see what a fee for service model would look like for The University of Maryland or some other agency to continue the work that they are doing.

The Center has been gathering data and looking at the progress they have made, so hopefully by April we will have a fee for service model established, then we will decide the next steps to take when the pilot ends in July of 2024.

CTCI staff are doing very well. They have hired more staff and have increased their referral completions.

CSAVR Fall Conference Update

CSAVR-Council for State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation

There were five of us that attended this year; Myself, Darlene Peregoy, Toni March, Patrick Peto and Tandra Hunter-Payne. I also attended the 2-day Pre-conference and Directors Leadership Forum where I was able to meet new Directors and receive answers to a lot of my questions.

One of the primary topics of focus at this year's CSAVR conference was Rapid Engagement and Continuous Engagement of Consumers. Studies have shown that starting from day one, the more rapidly you get someone engaged, the more successful they will be with their employment outcomes.

Patrick Peto – I thought they CSAVR had some good breakout sessions. I attended the Policy Development session run by Minnesota. It was very interesting the way they develop, train, and revisit policy before they roll it out. The session was very intense and something I would like to explore a little more.

Another session I was able to attend was one run by Massachusetts. They talked about Digital footprint and advertising and rebranding. There was a lot of energy in the room with lots of ideas going back in forth. I am glad we were able to go.

Toni March – In addition to attending the CSAVR, Tandra and I attended the NCSAB, National Council of State Agencies for the Blind which was 2 days following the CSAVR.

It was a good opportunity for us. One session I found particularly interesting was the Pre-Employment Transition Services. They had some Pre and Post test evaluations, along with programmatic and financial planning for Pre Employment Transition Services.

A lot of what we do at these conferences is share & use ideas with the other VR agencies that would benefit our consumers.

New Positions:

Brian Haas is our new Vendor Coordinator. Brian was previously with DORS Business Services. This is a newly created position. Brian will be taking care of everything from the accounting aspect of vendor management, making sure the vendors have submitted the correct forms. Brian will also update our case management system and assisting the vendors with any concerns or payments.

Ombudsman: Position description is in progress for this position; the position was recommended in the HB660 report. Massachusetts VR presented during one of our HB660 meetings to describe the role of their Ombudsman and the success of their program. We will be basically copying their position description and tailoring it for DORS.

The Ombudsman role is different than the Client Assistance Program (CAP). The Ombudsman will be managing initial appeal requests, working with our community partners to explore their needs, and gathering data to identify trends and the training needs for DORS staff.

The Ombudsman will be out in the community meeting with individuals, CRPs, and providers discussing what is needed and how we can work better together with all of our partners.

Disability Innovation Grant (DIF) update:

This morning we had a meeting with the Rehabilitation Services administration regarding the 5 year, \$9.9 million DIF grant, awarded to DORS in October 2023.

The Project Director is Jody Boone, and the Certifying Official is Darlene Peregoy. More information about the grant will become available within the next 30 days.

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

2024 WIOA combined State Plan update:

The Combined State plan is fully updated every four years, every 2 years we are asked to go in and make edits and updates. 2020 was our most recent full edit where we went in and re-accessed the plan and added what we hoped to accomplish.

In 2022, the plan was updated to include progress to date. In 2024, we build upon the progress made and add any new information.

I have recently begun to attend a community of Practice run through the VRTAC Quality Management, one of the technical assistance centers funded by the RSA. We have another meeting tomorrow afternoon. We have been going through some of the initial steps of understanding the changes that have been made in the format of the new state plan.

The first section of the Combined State Plan discusses the State Rehabilitation Council.

Within the next few weeks I will gather a list of materials to distribute to the SRC to show what we most recently submitted as our topic areas and the feedback we received from the council, then open it up to additional feedback that we can incorporate into our state plan.

Waitlist Reduction

2019: 0 left on the waitlist

Moving on to the 2020: Plan to complete in 2 months starting in November

Hoping to start 2021 ,2022 and 2023 in February

See attached

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

SARA:

We are ready to implement SARA, an AI program that we purchased to assist our counselors. SARA can send out reminders and specific communications at certain trigger points, automatically record emails and communications in case notes and can also communicate by email, text, and in Spanish. This will be a great help to our counselors, and will help reduce the delayed list by allowing counselors time to more efficiently serve consumers.

Public meetings

We had our public meetings on October 11th and 12th. The meeting went smoothly and there was no public comment. We had very nice presentations; Kim Schultz can tell you where to locate those.

The OBVS Quarterly meeting was held on September 23rd.

OBVS Brochures

Currently the SRC sub-committee is working on an OBVS brochure. It will combine the sub-committee input with what Kim has sent me.

We finished the update for the MBEP and ILOB Brochure. They are being printed now.

Kimberlee Schultz, Director Office of Public Affairs

The Public meeting notes are on the DORS web site [2023 Public Meeting Notes](#)

The Student Services brochures and the Opening DORS brochures were updated and have been received back from the printer.

Marla Friedman and I will meet tomorrow to continue working on updates to the CAP Brochure.

DORS published two student services Videos this summer, and today we finalized the script for what we are calling the Employment services video. The script has been sent to the producer. The next video will be for Blind Services.

Donna Lettow and I have been working on making the videos accessible. All the translations are published on our web site in five languages in addition to American Sign Language and English, including Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, French, and Chinese. Our research found that these are the top five languages used in Maryland.

All the videos are captioned and have been published on YouTube. They will be linked to all other social media channels once Donna has all the web material updated.

Donna is working on the image descriptions for the videos which have been completed but are now in the process of being recorded by the two narrators.

During National Disability Awareness Month, I was able to speak with people who were past and present clients who were very happy with the services they received and their jobs. I spoke with a Mom who said that before DORS she worried her son couldn't take care of himself, but now she doesn't have to worry about him after she is gone. This makes us remember why we are doing this work.

If you want to read about it and other client experiences, you can find more on our Facebook page.

SRC Members Need for Committees

Policy & Quality assurance – Patrick Peto –

No updates on the committee.

DORS Policy Review Committee meeting scheduled for 12/5/23 at WTC from 9:30-12:30. I will be reaching out to the SRC policy committee to coordinate a meeting to discuss updates and get feedback.

Blindness and Vision Services – Penny Reader N/A

Membership – Vacant

Katherine Jones – During the public meetings, we put out a request for anyone interested in joining the SRC to contact myself or Jody Boone.

Employment/Career Development – Michelle Day, Wanda Peele N/A

Strategic Planning and Public relations – Kim Schultz N/A

Council Sharing

Megan Jones -

Disability Rights of Maryland are doing a “Charting the Life Course” training for students with disabilities who are recipients of Social Security, age 14 and up, and their parents.

We have an upcoming Saturday session in January and Friday session in March in Baltimore City.

We are trying to reach out to those students who are preparing for High school graduation and who might end up on the waitlist to ensure they are getting the supports they need from the public High schools, colleges, and universities to be able to find employment.

Katherine Jones –

For Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset County schools the Bay Area CIL is once again sponsoring the Biannual Youth Transition conference, which will be held again at the WOR WIC community college on Saturday November 18th.

We are going to have great Workshops sponsored by DORS. In addition, we will have attorneys available to talk about financial planning, alternatives to guardianship, and alternatives to group housing. In our morning session we will have health and wellness, yoga and meditation programs. In the afternoon we will have individuals from Emergency Management Services, Police officers, Firemen, and Paramedics to talk students about what Emergency Management Services means and what their jobs are all about.

Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted,

Sherri Alban

MSRC Staff Support