

**Maryland State Rehabilitation Council Minutes**  
**September 14, 2022**

**Members Present:**

Marsha Legg – Chair

Christy Stuart

Penny Reeder

Rene Averitt-Saznone

Marlo Lemon

Tassie Thompson

Penny Reeder

Scott Dennis

Kristen Patterson

Rosa Raez

**Members Unable to Attend:**

Melissa Blubaugh

Rose Carey

Michelle Day

Katherine L. Jones

Tom Laverty

Mindy Lipsey

Ronza M. Othman

Corey Richo

Tamara Smith

Aaron Stephen

**DORS liaisons to Council:**

Jody Boone – OFS Director

Tandra Hunter- Payne, Program Manager OBVS

Patrick Peto, Program Manager Policy and planning DORS

**Support Staff for the Council:**

Erica Knessi

Sherri Alban

**Welcome:**

Marsha Legg, SRC Chair, Welcomed everyone to the meeting:

I am Marsha Legg, Chair SRC

It has been my honor and a pleasure to serve the SRC in this capacity

**Approval of Minutes:**

Motion to approve the minutes – Motion accepted

The May 11, 2022 minutes are approved as written and will be available on the State Rehabilitation Council website.

**Scott Dennis**

**Recognition of departing SRC members:**

I want start out this evening with recognition of three long term members as their terms come to an end for all the hard work and dedication they have given to the State Rehabilitation council:

Marsha Legg, SRC Chair for last year and half, who I have worked with closely over a number of years. I appreciate all the hard work you have done and the guidance you have provided us over the last couple of years as the chair

Christie Stewart and Rene Averitt-Sanzone, both long term members of our council, Thank you for all your hard work and dedication to the SRC

We are going to miss your input and guidance as we go through various policy procedures, review of data, documents and so forth. You have provided good insight for us to consider as we move forward with the agency

### **Recognition of New Members of the SRC:**

I also want to recognize four new members to the council effective in October. Kristen Patterson, Dept of Labor, Marlo Lemon, Parents Place, Rosa Raez, Arc of Frederick who are here on board with us tonight and Aaron Stephen, Arc of Frederick.

### **Kristen Patterson, Disability Youth Services Coordinator MD. Dept. of Labor**

Good evening everyone I am Kristen Patterson with the Maryland Dept. of Labor.

I Work out of the Division of Work Force Development in Adult learning, specifically in the office of work Force Development where we oversee title one and title three of WIOA

My role as Disability Youth Services Coordinator comprise of ensuring that our Americas Job center system and the services we provide are compliant with Section 188 which ensures accessibility of those services. I also oversee Title 1 Youth Services program for ages 16-24 throughout the state.

My work with transitioning youth is where I met a lot of my fellow colleagues from the SRC through my work in the SATC.

I am excited to be on the SRC council and to offer any Technical assistance, expertise and whatever I have to add to the council

### **Marlo Lemon, Director of training Parents Place of Maryland**

Good Afternoon/Evening Everyone I am Marlo Lemmon, Director of training at the Parents place of Maryland.

I am also the Mom of two transitioning age young people

I am excited about all the information I can bring and learn from you all as we go into the next journey and phase of their world.

Part of our mission is to empower parents and families to be the advocate for their children. We provide them with resources so they can feel empowered as they go into IEP meetings and are aware of the resources that are out there.

I also am a proud mother of a daughter who is 17 months younger than her brothers.

I am looking forward to learning as much as possible while being on the committee and want to thank you for the invitation

**Rosa Raez, Support Coordinator / Hispanic Coordinator The Arc of Frederick**

Good evening everyone I am Rosa Ryas, Support Coordinator for the Arc of Frederick County as well as Hispanic coordinator.

I work with young adults who are already receiving services from DDS by connecting them to DORS and helping with employment. I also work with an all Hispanic group, helping them find the resources they need and I help families with IEP meetings.

Thank you for the invite, I am so happy to here.

**Scott Dennis**

Welcome, I look forward to working with you in the coming years

**Public Comment:**

N/A

**Election for New SRC Chair:**

Katherine Jones would like to be considered for SRC Chair.

Motion was made \_ Motion approved

Katherine Jones will be the new SRC Chair.

**Directors Report – Scott Dennis**

**Comprehensive State Wide Needs Assessment**

State wide needs assessment is done every three years, last one was done in 2019.

We just finished the current one and it will take effect October 1, 2022

The report was sent out to everyone on the council and for those who met with us in August, we did an extensive review of the recommendations on what the Division needs to work on and improve upon.

It is the result of an accumulation of surveys that were sent out to both internal and external consumers and Providers in order to give us a feel of what areas we needed to focus on, it will now serve as a guide for the next three years.

This Assessment will impact both our strategic plan as well as our annual plan. Both of which the SRC is involved in.

If you have an opportunity to look at it and have questions, please reach out to us between now and the last week of September. We must submit the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment to the Rehabilitation Services Administration by September 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **State Wide Assessment Key Recommendations to focus on:**

#### **1. Comprehensive Assessment of the vocational needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities**

- Individuals with developmental disabilities
- Blind and visually impaired
- Deaf and Hard of hearing

#### **2. Disabilities in the minority and underserved communities**

Biggest areas are in the Hispanic and Asian /Pacific communities

#### **3. Wait list**

Happy to announce as a result of the initiative that State Superintendent Choudhury undertook to look at the salary structure within DORS of our Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and recognized that the salary was not competitive. This has made it difficult to recruit and retain counselors. As a result of the initiative we were able to get a significant increase to the starting salary as well as an increase for existing VR Counselors resulting in a huge increase in applicants.

As a result, we have made the decision to reopen category 2 and have started pulling people off of the waiting list.

Our goal is to clear everyone who has been on the waiting list since 2017 by December and 2018 by June of 2023.

### **Intake /Eligibility Unit Update:**

- **Pre-Ets Intake Pilot Project**

Unfortunately, we have Pre-Ets counselors in some of our highly populated areas carrying between two and three hundred cases.

We are looking for ways to partner with outside sources such as Universities to help manage that case load.

Hopefully by late fall – Early winter we will have something in place and will be able to make an official announcement.

- **Eligibility Unit**

The Eligibility unit was a new initiative that started last fall as part of the planning meeting.

Several VR counselors who are part of the Work Force Technology center were tasked with working on the wait list and as a result of their work we were able to bring a number of people off that list.

We also had some of them work on Eligibility to help free up some of those counselors who were carrying multiple caseloads.

The feedback from the field was very positive, so we decided to move forward with creating the Eligibility Unit.

### **Jody Boone –**

The Eligibility Unit is going very well. We have 12 counselors at this time and are in the process of interviewing for 14 more.

Our program manager, Derrick Serra oversee the EDU. We have two Supervisors in place, each supervisor will eventually have seven to eight VR counselors who will be working on the intakes and determining eligibility.

Early on we allowed some of our field staff to transfer to the EDU and to stay working out of their field office, which in turn gave us EDU staff throughout the state.

Right now we have about fifty percent of all our districts referrals coming through the EDU. Our goal for the next six months is to have all of the referrals that are coming in throughout the state.

We are hiring two of the counselors that have interviewed so far and are in the process of splitting the two contractual positions that we have into four part time contractual positions.

Recruiting for the part time positions will be directly to the colleges for students who are interested in part time employment, internship or need to complete their practicum. We feel this will be enticing to students and also help us to build a pipeline for future staff.

### **Scott Dennis**

With the funding the Superintendent has provided us and working with MSDE, we have issued a grant to the University of Maryland Transitioning Career innovation program.

This is a 2-year pilot program working with Pre Employment Transitioning students. CTCI will act as adjunct to the EDU. They will gather the needed information from the schools, Parents etc. Make sure the forms are in order and signed before sending back to the EDU.

Presently, referrals for this year are around four thousand cases so far. This will take some of the work load off of the EDU and allow for a smoother process.

Another part of the grant is for CTCI to develop a fee for service model that we can use going forward at the end of the pilot program.

### **HB660 commission** (commission to study the Division of Rehabilitative Services (Student Job Training Reformation Act)

- Official notice went out to notify individuals who have been selected to the commission. The commission is made up of various organization's and Disability groups.
- A request was made to the sponsors, Speaker of the House and President of the Senate to extend the due date for the final report and it was granted.
- Tentatively, four meetings have been planned from now until December 15<sup>th</sup>.
- The dates will be announced shortly
- Interim report is due by December 15,2022
- Final report is due by March 15,2023

We had a training session at the SRC retreat in 2021 for new members and would like to get another one in sometime between now and November 14<sup>th</sup>. Sometime in October we will be sending out a dual request to try and find a common date and time to have it.

Topics will include overview of the Division of Rehabilitation Services, federal funding, and the responsibilities of the State Rehab Council.

The 2023 SRC meeting schedule will be sent out soon. If no objections, it will be posted to the SRC website.

### **Committee Reports:**

Blindness & Vision Services, Penny Reeder – N/A

Employment & Career Development, Michelle Day – N/A.

Membership & Resources, Marsha Legg, Chair – See Scotts welcome to new members

Policy & Quality Assurance, Thomas Laverty, Chair – N/A

Strategic Planning & Public Relations, Calvin Doudt – N/A

### **Sharing:**

**Marlo Lemon, Director of training Parents Place of Maryland** – We just started for the first time our Guiding the Journey transition class, a four week session for all Spanish speaking parents and family's. Topics of discussion will be all things DORS.

Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted  
Sherri Alban  
MSRC Staff Support