

**Maryland State Rehabilitation Council Minutes**  
**September 13, 2023**

**Members Present:**

Katherine Jones – Chair

Penny Reeder

Cory Richo

Rosa Raez

Aaron Stephen

Tassie Thompson

Marlo Lemon

Melissa Blubaugh

Ronza M. Othman

**Members Unable to Attend:**

Michelle Day

Mindy Lipsey

Tamara Smith

Hunter Whitt

Kristen Patterson

**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

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Kim Schultz, DORS — Public Affairs

Marla Friedman, CAP Director

**Guest:**

Megan Jones

**Support Staff for the Council:**

Erica Kneessi, Staff Specialist for Training & Professional Development

Sherri Alban, Executive Associate

**Welcome:**

**Katherine Jones –**

Good evening, everyone.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Motion to approve the minutes – Motion accepted.

The May 10,2023 minutes are approved as written and will be available on the State Rehabilitation Council website.

**SRC Retreat**

We will be looking into the By Laws before deciding on having an SRC Retreat this fiscal year or postponing it until after official leadership has been put into place. Everyone will be updated when a decision has been made.

**Public Comment:**

**Megan Jones -**

I have applied to become a member and am waiting on the status of my application.

I am an Attorney with Disabilities rights Maryland on the Education team; I Represent youth who are beneficiaries of Social Security and who have barriers to employment and participate in their IEP meetings at schools.

Background:

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I've worked for Protection and advocacy in other states as part of CAP facilitating services for DORS consumers in Florida and Connecticut.

I also worked on the House Bill 660 commission in Maryland and made some recommendations as part of the DRM.

We engage in work on behalf of individuals who have barriers to employment, both students and adults, and are interested in being part of the SRC through that work.

## **Jody Boone**

### **DORS Leadership Update:**

My title has recently changed since Scott Dennis left. I was the Director of Office and Field Services for 7 years and I am now the Senior Executive Director, Planning, Operations, and Field Services. As part of my responsibilities, I have been delegated authority to sign and approve anything in the absence of a Director.

We are hoping to have a new Director soon but as of right now we do not have anyone waiting in the wings.

It is my Understanding that the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent are going to be doing a national recruitment for that position, but to my knowledge that has not yet begun.

We have a great team here at DORS, we are keeping things running and MSDE is keeping a close eye on everything that we do.

Our Exec staff meet routinely, and we meet with Dr. Sylvia Lawson every week to talk about all the nuts and bolts and different approvals that we are seeking.

We are all working together.

### **Upcoming New Hire recruitments:**

Vendor Coordinator which is a Staff Specialist position. The Vendor Coordinator will review and approve all vendor applications, update vendor information in our case management system and in FMIS which is our financial management information system. They will be required to create and keep several reports and the tracking of production and Expenditures of Vendors and providers. Waiting on the reclass request for that position before posting.

Ombudsman – Reaches out and works with advocacy groups, the providers and vendors and any stake holders with DORS– will be expected to work across the state. We will be developing that position description and advertising once completed.

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### **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Unit Update:**

We Created a new District (statewide) within region I, western Maryland.

All the staff and counselors are committed to serving individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, all the counselors are fluent in ASL, and some are Deaf. At least one of the administrative staff members is fluent in ASL. Ju-Lee Wolsey, Supervisor, has done a great job pulling the staff together. They meet monthly and have quarterly in person meetings.

The new unit has been quite a success, and the community has embraced it.

### **Pre-Ets –CCTI (Center for Career Transition Innovation, UM):**

CCTU is our Contractor for processing all our Pre-Ets referrals.

We have hit our one-year mark for part one of the August 2022 Pre-Ets Referral grant.

From Sept 2022 & 2023 we have incorporated 19 of 25 field offices, this does not include Blind and vision Services (OBVS).

CCTI has received 3709 referrals from DORS, they have completed 2432 intake meetings, 66% of referrals.

3564 referrals were returned to DORS of which 1665 were recommended to proceed (Qualify) and 1899 were closed without further action because they either did not meet the qualifications of a student with a disability or we were unable to reach or get a parent's signature of approval.

Not included in these numbers were about a hundred referrals that were duplicates.

As far as expanding to the remaining field offices, the grant is limited to 2 million of which they have already billed for half so expansion depends on whether they are able to hire more staff.

### **Portal changes to increase security of PII:**

We use several portals for providers and staff which contain PII.

MSDE has said that if we are using Alchemer (Survey Gizmo) that we will need to discontinue because it is not encrypted at the final level (when we receive the survey back).

We changed our processes and have created new passwords, to open the surveys now everyone in DORS must use a password in order to access the information.

All Staff and Providers have been notified.

### **HB 660 Commission recommendations Progress Update:**

Exec Staff Created a share document showing progress, what has been done, who is responsible for completing it and when completed.

### **Some recommendations made by the commission did not require action –**

#### **Examples:**

- DORS cannot make any changes to the Eligibility Criteria because it is Federally regulated.
- Should DORS continue to be a division of the State Department of Education? – A decision was not made on this so no action was required.
- Should DORS have a governing board separate from MSDE – A decision was not made on this so no action was required.
- Blueprint – There are no budget line items for DORS in the Blueprint for Maryland. – no action is required.

#### **Recommendations implemented:**

- Transparency and Ease of use of our website.
- Updating all MOUS between State and Local Education agencies.

#### **Working on:**

- Communication between DORS and DDA-
  - We've had 2 joint training courses so far with DORS and DDA staff pertaining to process and working with clients making sure they get what they need from both agencies.
  - A third joint training focusing on funding will be held later this month.
  - MOU with DDA- we already had one in place, we are working on updating the MOU between DORS and DDA
- The time it takes to provide VR services – CTCL (Center for Transition and Career Innovation) is addressing this with pre-Ets to speed up the process. Our Eligibility Determination Unit (EDE) has also helped with the timing of the processes.
- Transparency in outreach – The new Ombudsman position will be a part of transparency and accountability, developing relationships and will be addressing some of the concerns as well.
- Budgetary – We will need to wait until legislation in March.

### **[DORS Commission Final Report](#)**

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

First, I would like to welcome Marla Friedman to the SRC meeting. Marla is our new Client Assistance Program Director. She comes from VSP with about 20 years' experience there, we are very happy and lucky to have her here with us.

A copy of the Annual Program Plan Draft was sent out to the committee for review.

If anyone on the committee has any comments, edits, suggestions, or anything they would like to see included please email me.

### **Program Year 2022 (PY22) Statistics (see attached)**

#### **Our Waitlist initiatives:**

Starting around September, October of 2022 we started a roll off process of the waitlist, managed by the Quality Assurance team here at headquarters. Each month we would release a certain number of individuals from the list. We would invite them to update their contact information and tell us a little about themselves through a survey we created using Alchemer. This gave them the opportunity to update and upload their resume to their case file, tell their counselors what they have been up to and what types of services they may be interested in.

Individuals who responded were able to go right into job development activities. Those individuals who did not respond to the survey and after exhausting all methods of contact, within a reasonable amount of time, we closed their cases.

We have made it through the entire 2018 waitlist out of 456, 109 responded and were reintroduced into service.

Started the first group of the 2019 waitlist in June 2023 with 510 individuals on the list. We have made it through 306 with 47 responses. The remaining 2019 will go out October 2023 and the goal is to complete our 2019 waitlist by November 11, 2023.

Following that we will move on to our 2020 waitlist with 424 individuals and then to our 2021 waitlist with 543 individuals on that list.

By the end of the year, we should be well through our 2020 waitlist.

## **Toni March, Director of the office for Blindness & Vision Services**

### **OBVS Update:**

We had our Quarterly committee meeting for OBVS where I provided a general update. We had an abundant number of people from BISM attending. I did ask those present to recruit some new members.

We have zero counselor vacancies right now.

### **OBVS Quarterly Meeting**

Our OBVS Quarterly Meeting was held on Friday May 5<sup>th</sup> where we talked about policy updates regarding financial need and higher education.

OBVS Brochures for ILOB and MBEP have been updated and are in plain language.

For anyone who has not seen the new transition videos I suggest you go to our website and check them out.

### **OBVS has approved trainings for the program, some of them were updates and some were new:**

World Services for the Blind

Clusive – training specifically for the blind

Colorado Center for the Blind

Vanward – pre-Ets service for the blind

NSITE vocational training for the blind

### **MBEP**

Still doing a lot of work to return our Blind Vendors to viable facilities.

We have 70 snack and retail operations in Maryland.

Several cafés are still closed and a few of the cafés and larger locations are being modified into smaller operations.

We are continuing to look at alternative ways to keep our blind entrepreneurs in employment.

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

#### **Website and Brochures Update:**

Jessie Markum, Staff Specialist, Pre-ETS & Transition Youth, and I along with many others worked together to rewrite the website and then worked with Maryland Public Television to produce 2 videos:

Student Employment services

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## Pre-Ets Employment Transition Services

Marla Freidman and I added a cap video to the website on September 12<sup>th</sup>

We are working on all the descriptive scripts for the videos that are in process right now.

The following brochures have been updated:

Opening DORS

PRE-Ets

ILOB

MBEP

Marla and Patrick and I will be meeting soon to work on the CAP brochure.

Once the new Director for WTC is in place, we will begin updating the WTC brochure.

### **Jody Boone:**

Toni March and I host a monthly coffee hour where we give updates on DORS, Kudos to staff and we welcome new staff. It is also a fun way for people to have access to us and ask questions.

We have a guest speaker every month and every month WTC presents a video highlighting the services that they offer.

Director for WTC position is in recruitment now. We have changed the position to Director for Community Based and Work Force Services.

Position announcement was just sent out to the Director for the office of field service.

### **SRC Membership**

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

We haven't met since our last meeting. I will be getting an invite out in November to meet to go over a few policy items that we are working on now.

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

I am very excited that there is a new emphasis on the CAP program and on community training.

#### **Membership** – Vacant

Katherine Jones – The Membership Committee has been vacant since Scott Dennis's departure.

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The sub committees do try to meet at least once Quarterly.

**Employment / Career Development – Katherine Jones**

We did not meet last Quarter; I will have a report for our next meeting.

Wanda Peele –

The Business service representatives are out in the community targeting Businesses to educate them on OJT internships and ADA dis awareness so they can become more aware of hiring people with disabilities and they have been very receptive. We informed them of various training courses that we are offering for free. We have been partnering with the WIOA partners on any kind of recruitment or Job fairs so they can let people know about DORS services and what we do.

**Strategic Planning and Public Relations – Kim Schultz**

No changes in membership. We are hopeful that we will be able to build up the committee membership soon and the other committees as well.

**Council sharing**

**Melissa Blubaugh, SILC –**

In April the Maryland Legislature passed two bills, HB 53 and SB 608, both were signed into law by Governor Moore.

The legislation codified the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council into statute as an instrumentality of the state. This took effect on July 1,2023.

We are still in the process of getting our funding situated and getting all our MOUS signed and into place.

Hopefully at our next meeting I will be able to say that we have officially started expending our own money.

**Katherine Jones -**

I would like to give a Shout out to Marla Friedman, she has already reached out to me and is actively reaching out to all the CIL Directors to make a connection with us.

I've learned a lot about CAP that I did not know before, I look forward to seeing the video on the website and using that as a resource for our new intakes and to add clarity to it I look forward to the updated brochure. Thank you, Marla.

**Marla Friedman –**

Thank you, I appreciate that, and it was nice meeting you. I do want to meet with all the leaders from the different CILS across the state, I am about halfway there.

Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted

Sherri Alban  
MSRC Staff Support