

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council
Annapolis, Maryland
February 6, 2007

Members – Present

Lawrence Abramson, Chair
Thomas Barkley
Andrea Buonincontro, Vice Chair
Robert Burns
Joyce Callahan
Charles Crawford
Niles Ellingson
Beth Lash
Kali Mallik
Terri Massie-Burrell
Jerry Pantaleo
Michael Shaw
Terri Uttermohlen
John Brennan

Members Unable to Attend

Tim Atkinson
Ross Edwards
James P.G. Flynn, M.D.
Anne Rea
Robert Seurkamp
Alfred Sonnenstrahl
Josie Thomas

Support Staff – Present

Polly Huston
Donna Lippa

DORS Liaison Staff – Present

Donna Lettow
Kathi Santora
Susan Schaffer

Guests – Present

Anastasia Edmonston, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Mental Hygiene Administration
Yvonne Kranitz, DORS Regional Director, Region II
Carol Lewis, candidate for membership
Toni March, DORS Rehabilitation Supervisor
JoAnne Materkowski, DORS Program Director
Henry Sanfilippo, DORS Rehabilitation Counselor
Diane Triplett, Executive Director, Brain Injury Association of MD
Ronald Winter, DORS Director, Office of Field Services

I. Introduction and Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the 8, November 2006 meeting were approved as written. Chairperson Larry Abramson welcomed guests and members to the 11th annual legislative event of the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council.

Members of Council met at 10:00 a.m. with Robert Burns, Assistant State Superintendent in Rehabilitation Services, in the Miller Senate Building for a briefing in preparation for meetings with legislators. Members proceeded to their scheduled appointments and reconvened at 12:30 p.m. for lunch and a full Council meeting.

II. Governor's Employment Initiative for Individuals with Acquired Brain Injury Panel Discussion

Robert Burns began by stating that, as part of the Administration's effort to expand employment opportunities for persons with significant disabilities, Governor Ehrlich included \$850,000 of new state funds in his FY 2007 budget proposal specifically for the Governor's Employment Initiative for Individuals with Acquired Brain Injury. DORS committed an additional \$150,000 in funding for services for persons with TBI. The goal of the initiative is to provide intensive vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with traumatic brain injuries who require long-term, ongoing support services to assure success in employment. It is anticipated that up to 50 individuals will be served the first year.

Chairperson Larry Abramson acknowledged the Division, providers and other state agencies for starting a critical service which has been a gap in the service delivery system for years.

Diane Triplett, Executive Director, Brain Injury Association of Maryland

Diane Triplett stated that, with the right resources and supports, many individuals with brain injury can do very well and be productive in the work arena. The Brain Injury Association of Maryland has worked with the Mental Hygiene Administration and the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) to begin concentrated services for individuals with brain injury. MDOD worked very closely with the Governor in looking at employment initiatives to help expand the services for individuals with brain injury. The Brain Injury Association of Maryland collaborated with DORS and other providers to modify the system to better meet the needs of individuals with brain injury.

Ms. Triplett stated that the President of the Brain injury Association of America spoke at the DORS/MRA Conference in Ocean City, Maryland in November 2007 and commented that the Governor's Employment Initiative for Individuals with Acquired Brain Injury is a unique program and Maryland should be proud of this initiative.

Ms. Triplett stated The Brain Injury Association of Maryland will now have the data to go back to our elected officials and share with them the success of the program. This program could work for people with other disabilities as well.

Anastasia Edmonston, Maryland Traumatic Brain Injury Post Demonstration Project, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Mental Hygiene Administration

Ms. Edmonston stated that the Maryland Mental Hygiene Administration (MHA) is the identified lead agency for brain injury in Maryland. MHA has applied for, received and monitored a series of grants funded through the Federal Traumatic Brain Injury Program. These grants enable States to increase their capacity to provide comprehensive and accessible services to individuals with brain injuries and their families.

The Mental Hygiene Administration is represented by the Implementation Project's Project Director, Anastasia Edmonston on the DORS Acquired Brain Injury consortium and Steering Committee.

Ms. Edmonston distributed the training schedule for the Governor's Brain Injury Employment Initiative Consortium for July 2006-April 2007. Council members requested that the training schedule be sent electronically.

JoAnne Materkowski, Program Manager, DORS Office of Field Services

Ms. Materkowski stated there is a steering committee for the ongoing development of the program, which includes representatives from DORS, MDOD, Maryland Brain Injury Association, the League, Humanim, DHMH/MHA, Workforce & Technology Center and the University of Maryland, College Park. The University of Maryland is conducting evaluation data collection to look at efficacy of the program in providing more intensive services and long-term supports.

There is also a consortium of practitioners and service providers which was established in order to solicit broad input on project strategies and processes, provide a forum to identify and share evidence-based practices, and establish a protocol of service delivery for participants.

Five phases of service deliver have been identified, with delivery of services dependent on identified needs of the individual. Those five phases are: (1) Assessment/diagnostic phase (2) Remediation – compensatory strategies (3) Work readiness (4) Job Development and (5) Job Coaching and Supported Employment. Eight (8) DORS counselors have been identified for this initiative. The goal is to serve 50 consumers in the first year and we are currently serving 46 individuals. Nine (9) of those are in eligibility status, thirty (30) are in service status and seven (7) are employed. The seven (7) who are employed are in the early stages of employment and may need job coaching services.

Bob Burns stated that the goal is to have 25 individuals in employment by the end of the first year. To date, the program has encumbered \$270,000 in funding. Mr. Burns stated that the steering committee will address two new elements when the programs rolls out in year two: (1) focus on the Eastern Shore where there are no specialized vocational programs for the head injured, and (2) development of a mentor program where we would couple individuals with ABI who have been able to return to work with those working toward that goal.

Henry Sanfilippo, DORS Rehabilitation Counselor

Henry Sanfilippo, a counselor in the DORS Towson Office, has been identified to work with consumers under this initiative. Mr. Sanfilippo stated that he has been working with consumers for over 20 years and many changes, especially in technology, are taking place. Brain injury is a disability that anyone can suffer at any given time, and providing funding for long term services will allow more individuals to return to work.

Years ago successful outcomes for the brain injured were typically not successful outcomes because of denial and problems with follow through. This new initiative allows the freedom to address and support these issues.

Terri Uttermohlen inquired if the consumers being served under this program are receiving benefits counseling. Mr. Burns responded that DORS has provided additional funding to two Centers for Independent Living, Independence Now, Inc. and Making Choices for Independent Living, to provide benefits counseling and work incentives planning and assistance to DORS consumers in both the Office of Field Services and the Office for Blindness and Vision Services who receive Social Security Disability Insurance, Supplemental Security Income, and/or other public assistance benefits.

Terri Uttermohlen requested that Anastasia Edmonston consider including Work Incentives Training in the training scheduled for the Governor's Brain Injury Employment Initiative. Ms. Uttermohlen volunteered her services for this training. Ms. Edmonston will contact Ms. Uttermohlen regarding this suggestion.

Larry Abramson thanked the panel and invited the group back to a future meeting to update the Council.

III. Chairperson's Report (Larry Abramson)

- Larry Abramson announced that a conference call has been arranged for later this week with staff from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), organized by Janette Shell. The purpose of the conference call is to solicit feedback from the Council regarding suggestions for improvements within the Division. Mr. Abramson welcomed members to share comments by email which they would like him to share with RSA.

IV. Director's Report (Robert Burns)

- Robert Burns announced that Council members Tim Atkinson and Dr. Flynn have spoken to him and will need to resign from the Council due to health reasons.
- DORS Budget – the Department's headquarters budget hearings are scheduled for February 8 in the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and February 13 in House Appropriations; Governor's allowance provides \$13.1 million in general revenue for DORS, approximately a \$400,000 increase from our 2006 working appropriations; at this point, we are not aware of any cuts recommended by legislative services.
- DORS will continue the order of selection and anticipates continuing a rolling 6-month waiting list in category 2. Mr. Burns stated that meetings have been arranged with DORS staff around the state and local offices so he can discuss the way we currently do business and possible changes in the way we do business. We will need to shift from a focus now where our counselors and staff are case managers and procurement people to more direct services in the way of counseling such as assessments, job developments, positive psychology counseling which are the core elements of a certified rehabilitation counselor.

- Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act – working on a national level in Washington. Hopeful that we will get a good reauthorization this year. Looks like they are going to start with last years Senate Bill.

V. Discussion on Visits with Legislators

Members of the SRC had their full council meeting in the Miller Senate Building today and council members made over 60 calls on senators and delegates updating our elected representatives on the activities of the Council and the Division; SRC chair Larry Abramson and the members did an outstanding job representing the Council.

Members commented that the information prepared by staff for presentation to the legislators was helpful, attractive and easily read.

Comments from Visits

Joyce Callahan and Carol Lewis

- Carol Lewis felt that all the legislators they visited were very receptive, particularly Delegate Susan Aumann and Senator James Brochin who commented that he will be referring his stepson to DORS once he is medically stable. Senator Brochin commented that he is very supportive of the public vocational rehabilitation program.
- Delegate Stephen Lafferty stated that he was in support of our programs and inquired about SRC meetings and where they are held. Joyce Callahan suggested that the Council send notices to all the delegates/senators regarding upcoming public meetings.
- Delegate Frank wanted to know the number of individuals on the waiting list not being served due to budget constraints.

Sue Schaffer

- Ms. Schaffer met with Delegate Shane Pendergrass who is very supportive of the public vocational rehabilitation program.
- Ms. Schaffer was able to meet with Delegate Frank Turner's Assistant who praised DORS for their services in Maryland.
- Ms. Schaffer met with Senator James Robey, new State Senator, and presented an overview of the public VR program. Senator Robey did not appear to have a lot of experience with services for persons with disabilities in Maryland.

Charles Crawford

- Mr. Crawford stated that all of his legislators who he met today know a lot about DORS and were all very supportive of the Program. Most importantly though, Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez is assigned to the Appropriations Committee.

Larry Abramson

- Mr. Abramson stated that he was able to meet with his three delegates, two of which are new, and a new senator who were all positive about the public VR program. The Montgomery County representatives were interested in visiting a local DORS office once session has ended. All three legislators seemed anxious

to find out more about services in Maryland for individuals with disabilities and the waiting list. Mr. Abramson also shared with his representatives information about all the positive initiatives happening between MDOD and DORS.

Tom Barkley

- Mr. Barkley stated that Delegate David Rudolph mentioned that he is aware in Cecil County that there is DORS representation within the social services office and would like to see DORS representation on college campuses.

Kali Mallik

- Mr. Mallik commented that Delegate John Olszewski, Jr. is a new delegate and is very knowledgeable about the transitioning program. Delegate Olszewski is a school teacher at Patapsco High School and requested that he be contacted for any support of the DORS transitioning program.

Jerry Pantaleo and Beth Lash

- Jerry Pantaleo and Beth Lash felt they had a good meeting with Senator John Astle. They spoke to Senator Astle about how DORS funding is not at the level it should be with inflation. Senator Astle agreed that he would support our program as much as possible, but wanted us to bring back to the Council that we are in for a hard time over the next few years because the financial resources are limited within the State of Maryland. There will be many things within the State that will have to be done differently. He mentioned a “black cloud” deficit in Maryland. Senator Astle stated that Democrats traditionally are seen as very supportive of human services programs and the need to avoid looking like tax spending democrats. Jerry Pantaleo mentioned that he has never heard so many comments about such a bleak future ahead.

Bob Burns

- Mr. Burns met with Senator Edward Kasemeyer who chairs the B & T sub-committee which is assigned to health issues. Senator Kasemeyer stated that DORS is in a budget situation that a lot of people are in and will not be easily remedied and maybe there is no remedy. Agencies will need to do business differently.

Toni March

- Ms. March met with Delegates Adelaide Eckardt and Jeannie Haddaway. She has met with Delegate Eckardt, who is on the Appropriations Committee, several times in the past. Delegate Eckardt asked many questions about the additional funding for traumatic brain injured and transitioning services.

Yvonne Kranitz

- Met with Senator Janet Greenip’s assistant who had never heard of DORS, but was very interested.

- Also stopped in to see Senator DeGrange and spoke about the DORS employment initiative for individuals with acquired brain injury and received a referral from that office.

Michael Shaw

- Mr. Shaw stated that one of his legislators suggested that maybe a better time to contact your representatives was during the interim when they have more time to meet with constituents.

Niles Ellingson

- Niles Ellingson suggested that the Council consider in the future scheduling meeting with representatives who sit on the Finance and Budget Committee accompanied by a DORS staff person who would be able to answer the budget questions about the Program.

Members stated that some legislators mentioned that it was important to speak to the legislators involved in appropriations.

Larry Abramson commented that, in all the years that the Council has been coming to Annapolis to meeting with representatives, this appears to be the year we have made the most contact. Bob Burns thanked the Council members and for the leadership of Larry Abramson on the Council.

VI. Committee Reports

Policy and State Plan Development Committee, Beth Lash

- Report from this committee deferred until May 2007 meeting.

Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee, Jerry Pantaleo

- Report from this Committee deferred until May 2007 meeting.

Membership Committee, Andrea Buonincontro

- Report from this committee deferred until May 2007 meeting.

Resource and Program Planning Committee, Tim Atkinson

Kathi Santora reported, in the absence of Tim Atkinson, on the activities of the Resource and Program Planning Committee:

- There are four (4) public meetings scheduled in March 2007. Preliminary information has been sent to the Council. The first meeting is at the Maryland School for the Deaf at the Frederick Campus. The second meeting is at the League for People with Disabilities in Baltimore City, the third is at Montgomery Works and the fourth is at the Chesapeake Center in Easton. The dates are currently posted on the DORS web site. We are interested in hearing comments about DORS programs, but as we tended to do in the past with input from the Council, have identified three issues that we will bring to the forefront to get discussion going about programs and services. One is the issue of transitioning services for students with disabilities in high school and obviously a higher

interest for many individuals and organizations in the state. The other is the acquired brain injury initiative that we would like to hear comments from stakeholders, participants in that program and suggestions for what will be funded in the coming years. The third item is the waiting list and limited funding and interested in hearing feedback from the community about the impact of that situation.

- Larry Abramson reinforced that this is a shared project between the SRC and the state VR and we would like to have the SRC members lead the discussions as an objective person looking to hear feedback from the community about VR services. As a Council member it is important that we attend the meetings.

Employment/Career Development Committee, Robert Burns

- Report from this committee deferred until May 2007 meeting.

Blindness and Vision Services Committee, Joyce Callahan

- Report from this committee deferred until May 2007 meeting.

Adjournment

The MSRC meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m. The next meeting of the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council will be Wednesday, May 9, 2007, 4:30 – 7:00 p.m., Room T-130, Workforce & Technology Center, Baltimore.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna M. Lippa, MSRC Staff Support