

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council
Workforce & Technology Center
November 14, 2007

Members – Present

Larry Abramson
Tom Barkley
Andrea Buonincontro
Robert Burns
Charles Crawford
Tim Daly
Niles Ellingson
Beth Lash
Carol Lewis
Kali Mallik
Mary Manzoni
Terri Massie-Burrell
Jerry Pantaleo
Anne Rea
Michael Shaw
Al Sonnenstrahl
Josie Thomas
Terri Uttermohlen
Jennifer Whitcomb

Members Unable to Attend

John Brennan
Joyce Callahan
Ross Edwards
Eric Seleznow

Support Staff - Present

Polly Huston
Donna Lippa

DORS Liaison - Present

Jean Jackson
Donna Lettow
Kathi Santora
Susan Schaffer

Guests - Present

Jim Corey, Assistant Director, WTC
Dr. Maya Desai, Medical Director, WTC
Jim Evans, Assistant Director, WTC
Linda Gibson, Nursing, WTC
Brenda Isennock, Assistant Director, WTC
Alisa Redmon, Counselor for the Deaf, Region V
Marcy Roberts, Assistant Director, WTC
Ron Winter, Director, Office of Field Services

Introduction, Council Recognition and Approval of Minutes

Chairperson Andrea Buonincontro welcomed members and guests to the meeting. Minutes of the 19 September 2007 meeting were approved with the following amendment.

Council member Jennifer Whitcomb questioned page 7, paragraph 4 of the minutes where it is states that the issue of services for the deaf and hard of hearing can be assigned to an existing committee. Ms. Whitcomb recalled that Mr. Burns stated that he would consider deaf services being an additional committee on deaf services. Mr. Burns stated that the minutes will be amended and stated that both of these are options. Ms.

Whitcomb stated that the discussion also included establishing a new committee for deaf and hard of hearing services.

- Mr. Burns stated that at each meeting, the Council recognizes DORS counselors for their outstanding performance. At today's meeting, the Council recognized Alisa Redmon for her outstanding work. Ms. Redmon last year enabled 29 individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to go into competitive employment in the community with an average wage exceeding \$14.00 per hour. She is an outstanding resource to this Division and illustrates the professionalism and the connections that DORS staff have in communities around our state. The Council thanked Ms. Redmon for her outstanding work with DORS.

Workforce & Technology Center Streamlining and Restructuring Initiatives

Jean Jackson reported the following changes have been made according to the DORS & WTC streamlining initiative focus groups. A power point presentation was presented on the information below and an outline of the power point was distributed to the Council members.

- Assisted Living Unit (ALU) has been closed
- Career Assessment Services capacity has been reduced
- A+ and Network+ training contract has been terminated
- Office Technology-Accounting program has been closed
- Cosmetology training program has been closed
- Design & Fabrication Services eliminated
- Cooperative agreement with the Department of Budget and Management and Department of Disabilities to provide services on behalf of the Telecommunications Access of Maryland program has been terminated
- 21 positions at the Workforce & Technology Center have been abolished

Ms. Jackson presented on the following WTC services and procedures:

- Admissions & Case Management
- Psychiatric Review
- Residential Services
- Medical Services
- Career Assessment Services
- Pre-vocational Services
- Rehabilitation Technology Services
- Workforce Services

Charlie Crawford inquired about the cost benefit analysis as a result of these changes. Also, is there a measurable difference to where you were in the past to where you are now? Anytime restructuring takes place, there is something gained and something lost.

Mr. Burns stated that the programs of the Division will grow smaller in terms of the number of staff and in terms of the number of people that we serve annually. We have

tried to maintain both the structure in the program in terms of the number of people served over the last three years in a revenue picture that just wasn't sufficient or consistent. There has been a growing gap between resources and the cost of doing business. WTC being a major piece of the program, representing 20-22% of the total resources the state receives for its public VR program, became the starting point. We reduced the capacities to do career assessment at WTC. While this has been a very productive unit, it is more cost-effective to partially out-source this service with the use community providers.

We operated an assistive living unit for 24 hour nursing care for individuals that needed assistance in ADLs. The Community Living Skills Unit is going to now support those services. We will bring either those support services that they had in the community to WTC, or establish the necessary supports to live in the dormitory at WTC.

There is a projected 5 million dollar differential between revenues and cost of doing business and the current plan addresses about 4.5 million dollars of that and WTC absorbed about 2 million dollars of the shortfall in terms of loss of contracts, loss of programs and loss of staff. At the same time at WTC, the benefit we wanted to maintain was to redesign our programs to be more responsive to the consumers that we serve and DORS field staff.

Josie Thomas stated concerns about the vending machines with the over-the-counter drugs where the minors are. Brenda Isenock stated that the vending machine will be located in the client canteen and the minors will be residing on the supported residence dorm which has a greater level of staff supervision and structure.

Jean Jackson stated that one of the new initiatives of WTC is to start with the individual being referred to the Center and during the pre-admission meeting give them an assignment of looking for five employers so that when they reach that stage in the training where internship falls then they can relate back to that community.

Jean Jackson stated that her staff have made these changes in the past six months and they will use the next six months to look at what is happening and to make sure it is working.

Andrea Buonincontro thanked the representatives from WTC and congratulated them for the remarkable job done with what has already changed and future plans are very well thought out and to let the Council know if they can be of assistance in the future.

SRC Strategic Federal and State Legislative Action Plan (Andrea Buonincontro)
State Legislative Update

- Letter was drafted from the Chairperson of the Council to Governor O'Malley regarding the DORS Waiting List budget initiative.
- SRC members were encouraged to contact the governor and state representatives regarding the DORS Waiting List initiative. A script and list of contacts were

provided. SRC members were encouraged to use their own professional networks and contacts to ask for support of the DORS Waiting List initiative.

Federal Action Plan

- Letter was sent to Edward Anthony, Acting RSA commissioner, regarding concerns about funding resources for the VR program in Maryland in light of the monitoring plan that has been developed with DORS.
- Letter was sent to the federal Office of Management and Budget requesting confirmation that the VR funding formula is being applied correctly.
- Letters were sent to Senators Mikulski and Cardin requesting an inquiry to the Government Accountability Office regarding a review of the formula for VR funding and the apparent inequity and disparity in funding.

Sue Schaffer announced that the National Federation of the Blind passed a resolution supporting our additional funding.

Josie Thomas suggested that the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council have a booth at the Transitioning Conference in November with SRC representation and provide information to attendees about the DORS Waiting List initiative.

Findings of Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (Ron Winter, Director, Office of Field Services)

This year DORS in conjunction with SRC undertook the triennial comprehensive needs assessment. Two members of the SRC (Niles Ellingson and Beth Lash) were an integral part of the nine-member team which collected and analyzed the data in order to ascertain the needs of individuals with disabilities throughout the state. The conclusions and recommendations of the assessment were incorporated into DORS' Goals and priorities for the purpose of improving services to persons with disabilities. Based on needs identified, the Division will:

- Continue to promote quality CRP services for individuals with disabilities who are underserved;
- Continue expansion of services to underserved areas of Maryland;
- Continue to promote services at CRPs for individuals with developmental disabilities, chronic mental illness, ABI, deaf/hard of hearing, blind/vision impaired and transitioning youth.

Larry Abramson stated that DORS is planning for expanded needs with less funding. Mr. Burns stated that we should have explicitly said this in the needs assessment that we see all the needs but Maryland unfortunately is only going to be able to address a very small part because of the limited resources we are getting from the federal government.

Chairperson's Report (Andrea Buonincontro)

- Proposed Committee Structure and bylaw change – At the Executive Committee Retreat in August 2007, discussion took place about committee restructuring. One of the issues is not having enough people, or having too many committees for the number of people that we have on the Council. We noticed that there was some overlap that already existed in the committee structure and activities.

Council members were given a new committee structure for their review to be voted on at the February 2008 Council meeting in Annapolis.

Committee Reports

Policy and State Plan Development Committee, Beth Lash

Beth Lash presented the following activities of the Policy and State Plan Development Committee:

- Beth Lash attended the DORS Policy Review Committee meeting on behalf of the committee.
- The SRC Policy and State Plan Development Committee held a teleconference meeting.

Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee, Jerry Pantaleo

Jerry Pantaleo reported on the activities of the Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee.

- Jerry Pantaleo reported that the committee is working on the 2007 Annual Report. The committee has a concern as to how to address some of the difficulties the program is facing in the report. The committee will hold a teleconference with Mr. Burns for his guidance.

Membership Committee, Andrea Buonincontro

Andrea Buonincontro updated the Council on the activities of the Membership Committee:

- An SRC orientation was held before today's meeting for new members.
- Membership packet was forwarded to the Governor's Appointments Office to include the new appointment of Eric Seleznow and the reappointment of Josie Thomas, Beth Lash, Mary Manzoni, Jennifer Whitcomb, and Michael Shaw.

Resource and Program Planning Committee, Niles Ellingson

Niles Ellingson reported on the activities of the Resource and Program Planning Committee:

- Have not had a committee meeting since the last meeting.
- Have begun to map out all of the activities of the committee.
- Anticipating having public meeting in March 2008. Kathi Santora has been contacting regional directors to get their input from them as to locations for those meetings.

Employment/Career Development Committee, Robert Burns

- Mr. Burns reported that the Employment/Career Development Committee met on October 24, 2007 at SHA. Meeting was attended by Dennis Phillips, Eric Seleznow, Jean Jackson, Marian Vessels, Ross Edwards, Terri Massie-Burrell, DORS staff Stephanie Webb and Jim Evans. Briefing was presented on the status of the restructuring of WTC, and update on an employment initiative with the bank PNC.

Blindness and Vision Services Committee, Joyce Callahan

Susan Schaffer reported on the activities of the Blindness and Vision Services Committee.

- Ms. Schaffer announced that Stephanie Webb, OBVS, Job Specialist, will be leaving DORS.
- The OBVS SRC Blindness and Vision Services Committee will meet on November 28, 2007.

Director's Report (Robert Burns)

DORS Fiscal Year 2007 Accomplishments

- Closed out the year September 30 successfully in view of the budget challenges. The Division closed the year with 3,100 successful employment outcomes which was a slight increase over the previous year.
- Transitioning students increased to 6,855 individuals which was an increase over the previous year.
- The Office for Blindness and Vision Services continues to see dramatic gains. There were 227 individuals blind or severely visually impaired placed in successful employment. The average wage was \$14.73 per hour.
- WTC participated in the employment outcomes of 743 individuals.
- There were 4,549 individuals with a newly developed IPE in FY 2007, which is a 16% reduction over the previous year.
- Total active caseload at the end of the year was 14,148 which is a reduction of 13% from the previous year.

Mr. Burns thanked the Council for their support and partnership this past year with the tough issues that the public VR program has been facing. The Council is a terrific partner and has been very helpful to him and the senior staff as we sound out these ideas and try to focus priorities.

DORS Fiscal Year 2008 Budget

Mr. Burns stated that it will be a very difficult year ahead for the public VR program. We have placed significant restrictions on access to services. We closed the federal fiscal year with just under 4,500 persons on a waiting list. Would expect when this program year is closed in September 2008, this waiting list will grow.

DORS has abolished about 34 staff. By the end of December, we may need to abolish more positions. We are in a hiring freeze.

The only program operating without restrictions is the Independent Living Older Blind Program which is federally funded with a 10% state match program.

2008 Agency Action Plan

Mr. Burns stated that the DORS Fiscal Year 2008 Agency Action Plan mirrors the results of the RSA Onsite Review with a strong focus on transitioning, focus on increasing in earnings of our consumers, focus on minority populations (Asian and Latino) so we have a focus on increasing outreach to that group. Special populations identified were blindness and vision services, evidence-based supported on severe and persistent mental

illness, acquired brain injury, homeless and working collaboratively with Department of Social Services. Collaborations with Centers for Independent and the Statewide Independent Living Council.

Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative

Mr. Burns announced that Maryland has received a grant from the US Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration. Maryland was one of six states under a competitive grant process to receive this grant. Maryland's proposal was the highest rated of all. Polly Huston, Scott Dennis, Berenda Riedl and Rich Luecking from TransCen were the primary grant writing team. The Collaborative will focus on evidence based transition practices, including paid work experiences, that TransCen has field tested in Charles County working with individuals with development disabilities. Through this grant, the Collaborative will expand evidence based transition practices to broader populations, rolling it out to at least 7 other LEAs and making sub-grants to those LEAs over the next five years. Over 400 students with disabilities will be served directly.

Adjournment

The MSRC meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m. The next meeting of the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council will be Tuesday, February 5, 2008, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Annapolis, Maryland.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna M. Lippa, MSRC Staff Support