

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council
Workforce & Technology Center
Minutes – November 5, 2008

Members – Present

Larry Abramson
Thomas Barkley
Michael Bullis
Robert Burns
Joyce Callahan
Charles Crawford
Ross Edwards
Dan Frye
Beth Lash
Carol Lewis
Kali Mallik
Mary Manzoni
Anne Rea
Michael Shaw
Eric Seleznow
Alfred Sonnenstrahl
Josie Thomas

Members Unable to Attend

Andrea Buonincontro
Tim Daly

Support Staff-Present

Polly Huston
Donna Lippa

DORS Liaison Staff-Present

Jean Jackson
Donna Lettow
Kathi Santora
Sue Schaffer

Guests

Kate Drake, DORS Staff Specialist, Community Rehabilitation Programs
Ken Stottlemire, DILA (representing Council member Jennifer Whitcomb)
Ron Winter, Director, DORS Office of Field Services

Introduction, Council Recognition and Approval of Minutes

Kali Mallik, Vice Chair, welcomed guests and members to the Council meeting. The minutes of the 17 September 2008 meeting were approved as written.

Presentation – New Regulations, Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID)

Program. Anne Rea, Way Station, Inc.

Anne Rea shared with the Council the four (4) changes to the EID Program that went into effect October 1, 2008.

1. Now have established a disability determination process. Prior to this you had to have already had a prior social security disability determination in order to be eligible for the program. It is now possible to have a separate disability determination to enter into the program.
2. Were able to get an exclusion of resources, particularly resources of certain retirement resources so individuals would be able to set aside money for retirement and all of that income would be excluded.
3. There has been a change in the premium structure. Before there was a \$75 premium for everyone every six months. Now there is a tiered premium structure. Some individuals, if their income is low enough, may not have a

premium. Most individuals will probably fall in the \$25 per month premium category.

4. Under the old program we talked about something called a grace period which was in regulation a period in time that allowed people to move from one job to another and maintain their eligibility. That language is now out of the regulations altogether and there is nothing that articulates whether or not a person is eligible or ineligibility during this time period.

Charlie Crawford asked approximately how many people are currently enrolled in the program. Anne Rea stated that there are a little over 300 currently enrolled. Not as much as we had hoped, but continues to increase each month.

Bob Burns announced that the DORS DDS that adjudicates social security claims, to set up a separate adjudication process for individuals who meet or equal the social security listing, but have not received a decision or been on benefits in the past. Also, any case the DORS closes as an SSDI, that goes into employment, we give this contact information to Michael Dalto in the EID Program to outreach to. Anyone that DORS makes an eligibility decision on that is receiving SSI/SSDI we provide them with an EID Fact Sheet as part of this outreach activity.

The DORS Workforce 2010 Task Force, Sue Schaffer, Director Office for Blindness and Vision Services.

Sue Schaffer stated that she and Melissa Pemberton, Staff Specialist, Staff Development, will be co-chairing the DORS Workforce 2010 Task Force. The Task Force has been established to identify strategies, tools and resources to engage and retain its workforce. The workgroup will brainstorm, explore and recommend innovative practices. The first meeting of the task force will be November 21, 2008 and complete work by May 2009. The Task Force will begin by looking at the following strategies:

- Prepare a strategic plan that will support the hiring and retention of qualified and dedicated workforce.
- Study the feasibility and cost-benefits and cost-benefits of technologies that will increase staff productivity and quality of service delivery.
- Perform a high-level analysis of central and field office functions and recommend changes that should be considered to increase efficiencies.
- Identify special initiatives that will provide increased flexibility and professional growth for DORS staff.

Bob Burns asked for input from the Council members on this subject. Eric Seleznow, Governor's Workforce Investment Board (GWIB) stated that Maryland has the sixth oldest state government workforce in the country.

Kali Mallik asked if there was an exit interview process in place and what are they saying as to the reason they are leaving. Mr. Burns stated that the exit interviews are conducted by Rich Pescatore, MSDE HR. A report is received every other year. The biggest reason that we get is because of lack of opportunity. People feel that they do not have enough opportunities within the agency.

Josie Thomas stated that many people may not leave the job of counselor to go into a more administrative position because they would be leaving the thing they love to do the most which is working with people.

Michael Bullis stated that people in the field may not want to come to another area where the job promotions are because they would not be able to be as flexible as working in the field and distance traveling has a lot to do with this decision.

Action: The DORS 2010 Workforce Task force update will become a standing update item at all future MSRC meetings. Mr. Burns stated that importance of the Councils input and analysis of this topic.

Chairperson/Vice Chairperson Reports (Kali Mallik)

- SRC Letter to Governor – Staff presented to the Council for review a draft of a letter to be sent to Governor O'Malley in appreciation for his tremendous support of the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services. **Action: Dan Frye stated that the letter should indeed acknowledge the fact the Governor has given the agency additional money and thank him for his effort, but urge him to be mindful that the waiting list is not fully eliminated and that within the confines of the trouble budget year to make every effort to help us resolve the issue so that it is completely addressed. Mike Bullis stated that is the economy is going to get worse the one things that the state and federal government typically do not do, in fact they create more of them, they create jobs programs. We need to position ourselves so that we are seen as a jobs program that should not be cut, but expanded. The more people who do not get our services end up on other benefits. Council members were asked to send any additional language which they would like added to the letter before sending to the Governor.**
- SRC Legislative Event 2009 – Larry Abramson stated that last year the SRC event was a success. Appointments were made with Council members to meet face-to-face with their legislators. For each legislator we had the number of people that have received services in their district which really made a connection with their home territory. This year we will go to the legislators and talk about how the additional money was spent last year and how important it is to keep level funding. The Council members decided to use the same format as was used for the 2008 SRC Legislative Event.

Director's Report (Robert Burns)

- DORS Fiscal Year 2009 Budget – So far DORS has been pretty fortunate. Just like all state agencies, both in June and prior to the October cuts, DORS had to submit schedules that listed possible budget reductions by priorities. DORS has been fortunate in 2009 to have not taken any reductions in case services. The only reductions we have had occurred in the October where the Division lost 10.5 vacant positions. Those positions were spread over headquarters (5 positions) our DDS (3 positions) Field Services (2 positions) and OBVS lost ½ position which

was a teacher for the blind. We began the year with 18.8 million dollars of case services and to date that funding has been untouched. We are spending at a level which suggests that we should not anticipate any curtailment of services through the entire state year. We are also working down our waiting list.

- DORS Fiscal Year 2008 Accomplishments and DORS Fiscal Year 2009 Agency Action Plan – We downsized the agency in 2008 by eliminated 42 ½ positions and the number of consumers we downsized our caseload. In September 2006 DORS had a total of 16,200 open cases, 1,555 cases on the waiting list which would mean that we 14,682 open active cases. This year we had 15,200 open, just under 4,000 on the waiting list which means open active cases were 11, 346. DORS reduced their caseload by 22% from fiscal year 2006 to 2008 before the new funding. This transferred over to outcomes. When we looked at the number of successful employment outcomes achieved in the year we had 2,290 which is a 26% reduction in outcomes. On a positive note, we increased out open caseload for transition cases by 9.1% in fiscal year 2008 and today transitioning cases represent 33% of our open caseload.
- Mr. Burns briefly reviewed the 2009 Agency Action Plan. DORS is anticipating achieving 2,900 employment outcomes this year which is a significant increase from last year. OBVS is focusing on building their VR services caseload which good strategies. Continues with a robust older blind program with approximately 1,200 individuals served in that program. Another goal is to decrease out waiting list from 5,300 to 2,500 which surpasses the commitment we made to the General Assembly and the governor. A number of special initiatives around a task force for deaf and hard of hearing. Al Sonnenstrahl has agreed to be on that workgroup. Once the Staff Specialist for Deaf and Hard of Hearing is hired we will get this group going and work to implement the model state plan for services that came out of Arkansas research and training center. Special populations around Acquired Brain Injury and Autism, Evidence Based Supported Employment and outreach to minorities we will continue to make gains in these areas.
- DORS 2010 Budget Submission – DORS asked for 2.7 to eliminate the waiting list completely and this did not make the State Board of Education's top three requests. The process of the DORS budget submission begins within the Division initially then a presentation is made to the Superintendent on what DORS priorities are within the Division. Those priorities are then presented to the State Board of Education beginning at their July meeting and then come back at an August meeting and set the priorities for the Department. Those priorities are then presented to the Department of Budget and Management. Budget hearings are held with Secretary Eloise Foster and with representatives from the Governor's staff to go each Department's budgets.

Beth Lash stated that we focus much on state funding, but the real challenge budget wise has been the federal funding formula. We have been asking the state for more money to make up for our federal deficit in funding.

- Conference call with Government Accountability Office (GAO) regarding VR Federal Formula –
- BRAC Workgroup -

Committee Reports

Policy and Planning Committee, Beth Lash

Beth Lash presented the following activities of the Policy and Planning Committee:

Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee,

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

Membership and Resource Committee, Kali Mallik

Kali Mallik updated the Council on the activities of the Membership and Resource Committee:

Employment/Career Development Committee, Robert Burns

Blindness and Vision Services Committee, Joyce Callahan

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

Adjournment

The MSRC meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m. The next meeting of the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council will be Tuesday, February 3, 2009, 9:00 – 2:00 p.m., SRC Legislative Event, Annapolis, Maryland.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna M. Lipa, MSRC Staff Support

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