

**Maryland State Rehabilitation Council
Workforce & Technology Center
November 17, 2010**

Members – Present

Thomas Barkley
Michael Bullis
Charles Crawford
Tim Daly
Laurie Elinoff
Paulette Epps
Daniel Frye
Beth Lash
Carol Lewis
Kali Mallik
Suzanne Page
Josie Thomas
Jennifer Whitcomb (represented by Mary Lou Verdery)
Michael Whitehill

Members Unable to Attend

Mary Manzoni
Anne Rea
Alfred Sonnenstrahl

Support Staff Present

Polly Huston
Donna Lippa

DORS Liaison Staff Present

Jean Jackson

Guests Present

Rashid Reyazzuddin, candidate for membership
William Russell
Kimberlee Schultz, DORS
Barry Shaw, candidate for membership
Ronald Winter, DORS

Recognitions and Approval of Minutes

Kali Mallik, Chairperson, welcomed members and guests to the meeting. Minutes from the September 22, 2010 meeting were approved as written.

Welcome to New DORS Public Affairs and Planning Staff Specialist, Kim Schultz

Kali Mallik announced that Kimberlee (Kim) Schultz has assumed the position of Staff Specialist III, Public Affairs and Planning, effective October 6, 2010.

Ms. Schultz has over 20 years of combined experience in public affairs, public and media relations, web site management, training, social work, counseling, and human services work in support of disadvantaged populations, including: abused persons, individuals who are deaf, homeless families, non-English speakers, and impoverished children and adults. Most recently she served as Director of Communications for the Maryland Office of the Public Defender.

Ms. Schultz received her B.A. in Communication from the College of Notre Dame of Maryland and is a member of the Public Relations Society of America and The Association for Women in Communications. We welcome Kim to DORS!

Dan Frye reminded Ms. Schultz that in her new position with DORS, she may want to concentrate in cultivating a relationship with the people that we serve. Making yourself available within the consumer community might be one effective avenue to consider as strategies are developed.

36th National Institute on Rehabilitation Issues Forum, “The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) – State Rehabilitation Council Partnership: Working Together Works” , Beth Lash and Kali Mallik

Beth Lash stated that the Rehabilitation Services Administration sponsors the Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (IRI) under a RSA grant with The George Washington University and the University of Arkansas.

The objective of the IRI is to provide quality training materials and continuing education opportunities for vocational rehabilitation professionals in order to maximize the quality service available for enhancing employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The two Thirty-Sixth Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (IRI) are currently under review by the US Department of Education.

The two topics for this year are (1) The SRC-VR Partnership: Working Together Works and (2) Program Evaluation in Vocational Rehabilitation.

Beth has been assisting this workgroup and has written the chapter on electronic resources where Councils can go to find out information about state agencies, disability, and vocational rehabilitation in order to do their job effectively. Chairperson Kali Mallik and Vice Chairperson Dan Frye also participated in the workgroup activities.

Dan Frye stated that, as the SRC Membership Chairman and Vice Chair of the Council, this document will be an effective and comprehensive orientation piece to what the true functioning SRC really is. This will be a document that can be circulated to members of the Council new and old and will give a good comprehensive sense of what the Council role is.

Action: The 36th National IRI Report will be shared with the Council when available.

Chairperson’s Report (Kali Mallik)

- Retention of Rehabilitation Counselors in the Public VR Program – Melissa Pemberton-Diehl stated that DORS anticipates a large turnover of the counselor workforce in the next five years due to (1) separation rate (2) attrition rate (3) salary reduction and furloughs (4) competition with federal government (5) competition with neighboring states and their salaries. DORS is a constant training ground for our federal partners.

Ron Winter stated that competition from the public school systems is another competitor. The counselor works very close as a transitioning counselor with the school system, and the salary and 10 month work schedule is desirable. Also, Mr.

Winter stated that the size of the caseloads that the counselors have to work with has increased over the years. There are some counselors that have caseloads of 200 consumers. Because of hiring practices within the state, delay in being able to fill vacancies, and the number of consumers applying for services, the caseload has increased significantly which puts stress on counselors. The consumer suffers also because there is no continuity of service.

Dan Frye stated that the role of the counselor is critical and a good counselor can promote and facilitate an effective rehabilitation process. The Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) has professionalized this role to the extent that it takes some very common sense tasks and makes it hard to get people in because they must have a level of credential achievement in order to be involved. As the CSPD was being changed and rolled out there was a provision to bring people in and give them internal training, but they did not have to enter at the Master's level. One idea would be to bring people in at a slightly lower level and give them the opportunity from training.

Mr. Frye stated that a lot of what a good counselor does is help the person figure out how to access resources, how to be organized, seek employment and a Master's degree is not necessary for this. The CSPD exists and we have to honor it, but there are flexibilities that I think the agency could consider and those flexibilities might give you access to a greater volume of people.

Melissa Pemberton stated that there is a state standard in place under the CSPD whereas if you state does have a law already in existence, which Maryland does under the Workers' Compensation Law, that says if you have a lesser standard in place you can use that in lieu of the national standard of a Master's degree. Ms. Pemberton stated that the cost of tuition reimbursement that the agency spends each year averages about \$40,000 per year. Even with this incentive, the attrition rate of staff continues to rise and not fall. The job is very complex and requires a lot of knowledge and background information. Without that background knowledge and a core set of rehabilitation counseling courses, you are lost.

Beth Lash stated that her suggestion to address some of the issues of retaining counselors would be (1) consider a pay differential for the DC metro area, and (2) consider allowing paid overtime and compensation.

- CSAVR Conference & National SRC Annual Meeting – Dan Frye attended the SRC Annual Meeting in November at the start of the CSAVR and NCSAB Conferences. At this meeting Commissioner Rutledge presented a summary as to what she has been doing over the last 12 months and reaffirmed her devotion to the SRC as a strong support for the agency. There were some conversations about the IRI that will be published and how this might prove a good resource. There were several breakout sessions on employment and relationships with community rehabilitation programs (CRPs). The conference was well attended with a

presentation from RSA on the continued under utilization of ARRA funds which is a concern.

The principle substantive conversation was a more comprehensive report on the outrageous embezzlement that occurred at CSAVR. The person responsible has been sentenced for this behavior and, once out of prison will need to make restitution until the \$800,000 has been paid. It was reported that CSAVR has gone through a significant restructuring and have created some internal controls which did not exist previously. Dan Frye stated that DORS, as a member agency, should ask for copies of the audit each year. The next conference will be held in Bethesda in April 2011. The new CSAVR Executive Director is Steve Wooderson.

- SRC participation at DORS/MRA Training Conference, November 2010 – The DORS/MRA Conference was held in November at the Princes Royale Hotel in Ocean City, Maryland. There were several members of the SRC that were able to attend this conference. Mary Manzoni and Kali Mallik participated in a fund raiser representing the Council for a “Place Called Hope” which provides much needed services for children with cancer and their families. Keynote speakers were great and the training workshops were very informative.
- Announcement of Region III SRC Learning Community meeting, November 19, 2010 – Dan Frye, Kali Mallik and Sue Page will be attending the Region III SRC Community meeting in Arlington, Virginia. Director, Sue Rankin-White, Chief, Technical Assistance Unit, RSA State Monitoring & Program Improvement Division, Provided an RSA update. She reported that two additional modules are being developed for the SRC orientation elearning series. The new modules will be compatible with the two 36th IRI Topics: “The SRC/VR Partnership: Working Together works” and Quality Assurance and Program Evaluation”. Prior to the meeting, the SRC members identified three topics for discussion at the meeting: the SRC annual report; member recruitment, appointment, and retention; and the SRC role in comprehensive statewide needs assessment.

Two SRC meetings are planned for 2011. The next meeting will be held on Saturday afternoon, April 9, 2011 prior to the CSAVR meeting in Bethesda, Maryland. The fall meeting will be held in Richmond, Virginia – date and meeting site to be determined.

Committee Report

- Policy and Planning Committee, Beth Lash - Committee Chair Beth Lash stated that the Policy and Planning Committee met before the full Council today. The agenda for today’s meeting included:
 1. Topics that were presented at the last DORS Policy Review Committee meeting;
 2. Looked at the new ethics requirements for the CRCs and agency recommendations for the disclosure form;

3. Discussed whether or not the Council should develop a proposed bylaws change. Apparently there is some interest in whether or not there could be a designee for attendance for members. In Maryland, there is a requirement that there be at least 50% attendance for Council members which can be difficult for some members' to meet. No specific recommendations have been made;
 4. Talked about public meetings and did some planning. The meetings will take place in March and a teleconference will be scheduled this year during one of the meetings. Some topics that have been identified as possible topics are: budget issues, ARRA Funding, progress with the MSTC Grants, Issues with State Budget and vacancies and discussion about waiting lists;
 5. Talked about Policy and Planning committee responsibilities in monitoring the progress of the State Plan and have developed a plan to accomplish this.
- Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee, Mary Manzoni – In Mary Manzoni's absence, Polly commented that the Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee is requesting feedback from the committee chairs for the SRC 2010 Annual Report.
 - Membership and Resource Committee, Dan Frye – Committee Chair Dan Frye announced that there are applications pending in the Governor's Appointments Office for two new appointments which are pending. The Membership Committee is continuing to work on recruiting an individual to represent the autistic population.
 - Employment/Career Development Committee, Sue Page – Committee Chair Sue Page stated that a meeting will be scheduled in the very near future.
 - Blindness and Vision Services Committee, Mike Bullis – Committee Chair Mike Bullis announced that the committee met in September 2010. Several DORS instructors and teachers were present at this meeting to discuss the way they deliver blindness services, looked at the resources at the Workforce & Technology Center. The next meeting we will be planning out the next year.

2010 Update of DORS Employment Initiatives, Ronald Winter

Ron Winter presented the 2010 update of DORS Employment Initiatives:

- Continuing to focus on federal employment by developing partnerships, encouraging use of "Schedule A" hiring authority, attending Perspectives Conference, and distributing job openings through network;
- Working with QUEST Internship Program with the state government. Ms. Jody Boone, DORS Employment Specialist, is working with Montgomery County who are setting up their own QUEST Program for that county;

- Developing a relationship with federal agencies and will continue in the coming year;
- Focusing on new job opportunities/industries in Maryland;
- Seeking partnership and customized training opportunities at the Workforce & Technology Center and in the field;
- Identifying call center job opportunities in Maryland;
- Internships with the Environmental Protection Agency, FMS/Treasury, NASA, Johns Hopkins, etc.;
- Providing On-Job-Training (OJT) and encourage its use as a job placement tool;
- Expanded Summer Youth Employment;
- Identified legitimate home-based employment opportunities;
- Supported training for DORS Business Liaisons and select DORS staff on resume writing and other relevant topics;
- Working with Business Liaisons to develop business network forums/employer trainings statewide on the ADA and other topics identified in the ODEP Employer Survey;
- Disseminated information on facilitating reasonable accommodations;
- Continuing to monitor labor market trends and educate staff;
- Supported Office of Blindness and Vision Services job squad.

Director's Report, Sue Page

- DORS fiscal Year 2011 Budget – The state is facing a 1.6 billion budget shortfall in the general fund partly due to the economy, the stimulus funding ending and rising Medicaid costs.
- DORS Fiscal Year 2010 Accomplishments – The Maryland DORS program for VR services exceeded the federal performance standards for employment outcomes and minority access to services.
 1. The Division assisted 2410 persons with significant disabilities achieve successful employment, presenting an increase of 4.2% over the previous year.
 2. The DORS Office for Blindness and Vision Services increased successful rehabilitation by 12% to 162. The average hourly wage for OBVS consumers was \$15.27.
 3. The Workforce & technology Center served 2299 persons. The open caseload of young adults transitioning from school to post-secondary education and careers was 6669.
 4. The VR program's waiting list increased from 1185 to 1789. The VR program's total open caseload increased by 8.8% to 17,617.

Action: Michael Bullis requested that DORS, for a future meeting present a breakdown of disability categories for the 17,617 people that have open cases so that the Council can see what percentages of disabilities are being served. Also, are there any statistics that would look at various categories of disability and see which ones are moving more efficiently.

- DORS Establishment of Fee for Services Benefits Planning – DORS will establish “fee for service” benefits planning for consumers, effective January 1, 2011. Individuals and non-profit organizations with credential in benefits planning/counseling are invited to apply to be a provider/vendor and seek approval to provide this service to DORS consumers.

Benefits planning/benefits counseling services are a very important part of career decision making for individuals with disabilities who already received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). Benefits planners are skilled in helping a consumer determine the effect of working on their benefits and are knowledgeable about many work incentives available to beneficiaries.

- Approval of State Plan for VR Services - The 2011 State Plan for VR Services has been approved by the Rehabilitation Services Administration and is posted on the DORS website.

Update on Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (Laurie Elinoff)

- Laurie Elinoff announced that the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council has also received approval from the Rehabilitation Services Administration for their State Plan for Independent Living.
- The Council had a display at the DORS/MRA Conference in November. Ms. Elinoff thanked the Council for supporting her attendance at this Conference.
- Laurie announced that Mike Bullis has been hired as the Executive Director for the new Center for Independent Living serving Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Harford County.

Action: Chairperson Kali Mallik stated that there are seven (7) independent living centers in the State of Maryland. Mr. Mallik requested, for a future Council meeting, a summary of how many consumers are being served at each of the centers, at any given time, and also how many are successfully closed each year.

The MSRC meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m. The next meeting of the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council will be Thursday, February 3, 2011 at the Miller Senate Building in Annapolis, Maryland.

Respectfully submitted
Donna M. Lippa
MSRC Staff Support