

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council
Workforce & Technology Center
May 9, 2012

Members – Present

Michael Bullis
Earl Cooper
Charles Crawford
Tim Daly
Laurie Elinoff
Paulette Epps
Daniel Frye, Chair
Thomas Laverty
Carol Lewis
Mary Manzoni
Mary O'Connor
Sue Page
Barry Shaw
Alfred Sonnenstrahl
Josie Thomas, Vice Chair
Zosia Zaks

Members Unable to Attend

Thomas Barkley
Kali Mallik
Anne Rea
Michael Whitehill

Support Staff Present

Polly Huston
Donna Lippa

**DORS Liaison Staff Present and
Guests**

Lee Armstrong, WTC
James Ferrell, WTC
Brenda Isenock, WTC
Jean Jackson, WTC
Donna Lettow, DORS
Sue Schaffer, DORS
Kim Schultz, DORS
Laura Smith, WTC
Ron Winter, DORS

Community Members Present

Karen Cessna
Dontae Gaines
Thierry Ngassa
Sheree Fagan

Members of the Council and community guests were asked to introduce themselves. Chair Dan Frye welcomed all to the first meeting where the SRC had members of the community in attendance. Minutes of the February 10, 2012 meeting were approved as written.

Presentation – WTC Pre-Vocational Services

Services to Individuals with Autism – James Ferrell

There are a number of different supports that are offered to individuals on the autism spectrum. Begin by introducing ourselves to families to make them aware of services. Field office visits are sometimes necessary to meet with the families to present an overview and try to identify what the most appropriate program would be for the individual. WTC has an evening group that focuses on self-determination skills and specifically self advocacy, decision making, problem solving, social awareness, communication, etc.

DORS staff is offered trainings on working with individuals on the autism spectrum. We provide services to individuals who have been employed and are having difficulty on the job, and also work with the DORS Employment Specialists in identifying employers who have a specific interest in hiring individuals on the spectrum.

Mr. Ferrell announced that he and Lee Armstrong are in the process of planning a pilot program beginning June 2012 titled “Autism Program, Planning Success for Employment (APPS) Program.” This will be a 2-week pilot program for transitioning youth with autism spectrum disorder. They will explore their career interests, skills needed beyond the training environment with a strong focus on determination. We will also be looking for employers to offer training opportunities to help them improve their ability to work with this population. Also focusing on career interest and exploring what types of careers are suited for these consumers.

Pathways Program – Lee Armstrong

Lee Armstrong introduced himself as the Pathways Coordinator. The Pathways Program is a cooperative agreement between the Community Colleges of Baltimore County and DORS. There is a current caseload of 20 individuals on three different campuses. Mr. Armstrong provides academic support by meeting with each student and small group sessions to work on testing strategies, study skills, organization skills, time management, disability awareness, social awareness, self advocacy, and discuss career choices. For individuals that decide that college is not a career choice for them, Mr. Armstrong works with the field counselor to determine what other training programs or careers would be appropriate. Also provide training to faculty and staff at CCBC as to how to interact with students on the autism spectrum. Provides training to DORS staff and work s closely with the families to assure follow through of expectations of

students. Works with disability coordinators in the different colleges with any issues they may be having with addressing the needs of persons on the autism spectrum.

Tom Laverty, CAP Director and Council member, asked what happens to an individual when it has been determined that person will not be successful in post secondary education. Mr. Armstrong commented that contact is made with the DORS field counselor to determine if there is a more appropriate training program.

Charlie Crawford asked how long the program has been in existence and what successes has the program had. Mr. Armstrong responded that the program has been in existence for about 6 years. The first 2 years was run by the Hannah Moore School and then was taken over by DORS. Mr. Armstrong stated that about 75% of consumers that participate in Pathways enter into 4-year institutions.

Mike Bullis inquired whether there is any data available to see what the placement rate is for someone on the autism spectrum who goes through the Pathways Program. Field Services Director Ron Winter commented that there is no current data available but will see if that can be provided.

Christine Franklin, James Ferrell and Lee Armstrong have made contact with an agency out of New York “ASTEP” which is an advocacy and referral agency that works nationwide to identify employers who are interested in hiring individuals on the spectrum with college degrees. They have identified several employers in the Maryland area who are interested in employing these individuals.

Employee Development Services (EDS) - Laura Smith

Ms. Smith stated that she is case manager for the Employee Development Services Program. The objective of the EDS Program is to assist a consumer in developing skills to get into a job. Each consumer, in addition to attending classes, has a work site assignment and each student reports to that worksite each morning. This includes consumers from all disability populations; however, it has been modified in some way to include a program for the deaf and hard of hearing as well a program for the blind and visually impaired. We concentrate on soft skills, punctuality, grooming, productive on worksite, appropriate relationship with supervisor and co-workers. Consumers have been quite successful.

Zosia Zaks asked if EDS is able to make modifications for individuals on the autism spectrum. Ms. Smith stated that EDS has worked very closely with James Ferrell in order to modify the approach that needs to be taken.

Chair Dan Frye thanked the CLST staff for their presentation and work with the consumers of DORS.

Election of Officers

Sue Page announced the slate of nominations for the Chair, Dan Frye and Josie Thomas as Vice Chair. Both Mr. Frye and Ms. Thomas have served respectively as Chair and Vice Chair for one year. Ms. Page invited nominations from the floor. Nominations were closed from the floor and seconded. Dan Frye was elected as Chair and Josie Thomas elected as Vice Chair for 2012-2013. Dan thanked the Council for their confidence and support over the last year as Chair of the MSRC and will do whatever he can to represent the interests of DORS and Maryland's constituents. We thank both Dan and Josie for assuming this leadership role for another year.

Summary – MSRC/DORS Public Meetings/Public Comment and Recommendations (State Plan Attachment) for DORS (Tom Laverty)

Tom Laverty, Chair of the MSRC Policy and State Plan Development Committee stated that the committee met with Sue Page to review the following recommendations which will become an attachment to the FY 2013 State Plan.

1. The Council continues to recommend that DORS and the MSRC Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee review the methodology of satisfaction surveys and explore web-based surveys. Consider strategies to expand sample size, reach underrepresented groups, and preserve anonymity. Explore Web-based surveys, follow-up phone calls, and other response methods.
2. The Council recommends that DoRS continue to emphasize the Counselor's role in working with college Disability Support Services (DSS) offices, encouraging students to use the resources of college DSS offices, and developing appropriate individualized college supports, including those for individuals with autism-spectrum disorders.
3. The Council recommends that DORS continue collaboration with local providers, the Maryland Department of Disabilities, and the Developmental

Disabilities Administration at the State and local levels, as related to the Employment First Initiative. This should include an exploration of programmatic barriers to success and cross-agency training needs.

4. The Council recommends that DoRS continue to look at innovative transportation options. DoRS staff should be reminded of the available transportation options and resources and those statewide resources should be posted on InDoRS and on the public web site.
5. The Council recommends that DoRS continue to explore, identify, and implement innovative practices in job development and placement.
6. The Council appreciates the expansion of services for deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers at the Workforce & Technology Center and recommends that WTC/DoRS similarly expand services for individuals who are blind, vision impaired and deaf/blind.
7. The Council recommends that DoRS review the Agency's website and continue to improve its effectiveness in providing consumer information, public education and outreach.

ACTION: This attachment to the State Plan was approved as written. Dan Frye thanked Council members for attending the public meetings and for the MSRC Policy and Planning Committee for their work on producing this attachment for the FY 2013 State Plan.

Chairperson/Vice Chairperson Reports (Dan Frye/Josie Thomas)

Dan Frye began by thanking Josie Thomas and Sue Page for their support during this year. Dan Frye announced to the Council that he will be unable to represent the Council in June during the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) monitoring. Josie Thomas, Vice Chair will be the representative of the Council.

National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils meeting (NCSRC) April 20 and 21, 2012 – Dan Frye stated that he participated at the Bethesda meeting. This year the emphasis was on helping Council Chairs through a leadership training to learn more about rehabilitation council process and roles. Dan Frye stated that he is on monthly teleconference with the NCSRC.

Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) Conferences – There

are two meetings per year, one in the spring and one in the fall. During those meetings the State agencies come together, network and include the rehabilitation councils in their conversations. Council members are encouraged to become members of the committees of CSAVR and NCSAB. The main topic at CSAVR this year was their recovery from the economic issue which occurred a couple years ago. The National Employment Team (NET) run by Kathi West-Evans was prominently featured. During the legislative portion, there was a concentration on the two House Bills that proposes to reauthorize the Rehabilitation Act as part of the Workforce Investment Act. There was a new feature added to the CSAVR agenda this year titled “State of the Science” which included representatives from the University of New Hampshire and other colleges talking about the science of rehabilitation, statistics and how evidence based employment programs are working.

DORS Planning Meeting, April 18, 2012 – Josie Thomas and Dan Frye both attended the DORS Planning Meeting where DORS staff begins to strategically plan for the year ahead.

Change November 2012 Meeting Date – Due to a schedule conflict the November full Council meeting will be changed to November 28, 2012.

Director’s Report (Sue Page)

State Fiscal 2012 Budget – Sue Page stated that the General Assembly did not pass the proposed state budget so we are working with the Doomsday Budget. The Doomsday Budget for DORS would mean an 8% across the board cut in State funding and result in the loss of positions. Part of the Doomsday Budget is a reduction in the state workforce of 500 positions which would be 2-4 positions for DORS.

Sue Page has met with the new Superintendent of Schools, Lillian Lowery. She will officially begin July 1, 2012. **Action: Dan Frye suggested that we invite Dr. Lowery to a future rehabilitation council meeting.**

2013 Legislative Wrap-up – Sue commented that the Council had a successful day in Annapolis in February. DORS did not have any legislative issues this past session, but did oppose or support a several bills.

DORS Waiting List Update/DORS Staff Capacity – As of today the waiting list is approximately 2,800 consumers which equates to about a 16 month delay in providing services. DORS is still dealing with staff capacity issues.

RSA Monitoring of the VR Program – RSA visited DORS in March 2012 to conduct an on-site review of our Independent Living and Independent Older Blind Grants. We have received the draft report and have prepared comments. There were a couple findings that DORS was aware of, but the findings were good.

DORS is beginning to prepare for the RSA monitoring of the VR Program in June 2012. Conference call are being conducted and documents are being assembled for this review. The focus areas are: Organizational structure, How the VR Program DORS is organized within State government, services to special populations, financial and fiscal operations.

Al Sonnenstrahl asked a question about the RSA monitoring. Mr. Sonnenstrahl understands that RSA has closed some of its positions internally such as the deafness specialist. With the closing of the deafness specialist at the federal level, will this have any impact on the state level?

Sue Page responded that it is the State's prerogative to set the priorities depending on the situation in each state. DORS has made the commitment to expand deaf services, so I do not see that changes at all in Maryland.

WTC – Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) Survey
The WTC was reviewed by CARF and passed with flying colors. Kudos to WTC staff for an excellent review!

MRA/DORS Conference October 10-11, 2012, clarion Hotel, Ocean City, MD – Sue Page invited members of the Council to attend the fall training. Please let Donna Lippa know if you would like to attend.

Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative (Harford County) – Has been expanded into Harford County with a wonderful kick-up. Discussions are taking place with local counties on how to sustain the activities and outcomes once this grant ends.

Governor's Employment Program for Persons with acquired Brain Injuries – This program began in 2007 and has come to a close. Because of the value of this

program, DORS will continue support. The University of Maryland will no longer be collecting the data for the program. Data collection will be done by DORS staff.

Discontinuation of funding for WIPA – WIPA funding will be terminated at the end of June 2012, but Maryland has benefits counseling now available throughout the State and our model is going to allow us to continue benefits counseling once the WIPA funding ends.

Committee Reports

Membership Committee, Josie Thomas

- We are working with Mary O'Connor to complete required information to support her nomination to the Council. GWIB has recommended Ms. O'Connor for appointment to the Council representing that organization.
- Laurie Elinoff and Paulette Epps are completing their first terms on the Council in September and can be reappointed.
- Anne Rea and Kali Mallik are completing their second full terms on the Council in September and cannot be reappointed. We are grateful for their service!
- Rashid Reyazuddin has left the country and will not be seeking a second term on the Council.
- Carol Lewis has completed her first term and now has a different job responsibility at WTC. DORS will be recommending a DORS counselor for appointment to the Council.

Employment /Career Development Committee – Sue Page

Sue Page reported that the Employment Committee will be meeting Wednesday, June 12, 2012.

Blindness & Vision Services Committee – Mike Bullis

Mike Bullis reported that the committee met last week and had excellent reports on the current state of services of the Light House for the Blind as well as Blind Industries and Services of Maryland. The committee has been monitoring their services at the last few meetings.

Policy and Planning Committee – Tom Lavery

Tom Lavery stated that he is a member of the DORS Policy Committee. The only change that has occurred recently is that the agency has worked at streamlining payment or job placement/job coaching services which benefit DORS consumers. Another policy issue is the agency continues its focus on improving services to individuals of other cultures. Changes are being made to assure that information can be provided in different languages and developing training for staff members on how to work more effectively with individuals from other cultures.

Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee – Mary Manzoni

Mary Manzoni stated that the committee met last week and discussed the social media issue and the DORS Quality Assurance Report. Prior to this meeting the committee received the FY 2011 Employment Retention Results and the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. The committee recommended that the survey be emailed to consumers who have email addresses. The survey is currently mailed and the return rate appears to be low. The Council suggested that maybe a narrative at the end of the survey would benefit DORS. The current response rate for 1,068 surveys mailed is 244 returned, which is a 23% return.

Social Media – The Committee discussed the social media issue for the Council and came up with the following recommendations. The committee felt it was important to decide what the overall goal is, and if social media would help the council achieve what it needs and what value would it add to the Council work.

Charlie Crawford stated the SRC needs to consider allocation of the resources of the state to accomplish its mission and are we in a position to use every avenue available. On the other hand there needs to be some level of return on investment of person power and dollars in the technology and what point does it justify the investment.

Action: Chair Dan Frye will appoint an ad hoc committee to discuss what the SRC values are of having social media presence. This ad hoc committee will then, in conjunction with DORS staff, develop a policy about whether this will be adopted. Dan Frye will chair the committee and requests that Mike Bullis, Kim Schultz and Donna Lettow are included in this committee.

Update of Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (Laurie Elinoff)

- Laurie stated that the MD SILC is working on developing their next State Plan for Independent Living.
- The MD SILC will be developing their first IL Needs Assessment survey.
- The Center for Independent Living Directors will be meeting with the SILC to discuss the SILC Board structure in preparation for the transition to a SILC nonprofit.
- Mike Bullis, Council member and Executive Director of the IMAGE Center stated that what the Centers for Independent Living are developing expanded services to help people who are in danger of going into a nursing home and to help people in nursing homes who can move back into the community.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Lippa