

Maryland State Rehabilitation Council
Workforce & Technology Center
September 11, 2013

Members – Present

Michael Bullis
Christofer Conklin
Timothy Daly
Laurie Elinoff, speakerphone
Daniel Frye, Chair
Thomas Laverty
Mary Manzoni
Jeffrey Moran
Mary O'Connor
Barry Shaw
Al Sonnenstrahl
Josie Thomas, Vice Chair
Michael Whitehill
Zosia Zaks

Members Unable to Attend

Thomas Barkley
Charles Crawford
Paulette Epps

Support Staff – Present

Polly Huston
Donna Lippa

Guests

James Evans, WTC Assistant Director
Jo Anne Materkowski, Director, Office of Field Services

DORS Liaisons to Council

Jean Jackson, Employment & Career Development Committee
Donna Lettow, Public Relations & Quality Assurance Committee
Kimberlee Schultz, Policy and Planning Committee
Susan Schaffer, Blindness & Vision Services Committee

Introduction and Approval of Minutes

Chair Dan Frye welcomed guests and members to the Council meeting and asked that everyone introduce themselves. The minutes from the May 8, 2013 meeting were approved as written.

Recognition of Members

Chair Dan Frye stated that Council member Mary Manzoni has served two full terms on the Council and cannot be reappointment for another term. Ms. Manzoni has chaired the Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee and has

represented the interest of the disability community in her professional career. The Council members thanked Mary for her commitment to the Council

Chair Dan Frye welcomed newly appointed members Jeff Moran, Mary O'Connor and Christofer Conklin.

Presentation – Workforce & Technology Readiness Services Program (Jean Jackson, WTC Director and Jim Evans, WTC Assistant Director)

Jim Evans began by stating that the primary vision of the reorganization is to ensure that all programs and services provided by WTC focus on the achievement of successful employment outcomes for the consumers who are referred for services.

As a result of that vision, a new program called Work Readiness Services has been in development. A phasing out of the Community Living Skills Training (CLST) is in process; and the blending of some components from that program, along with the current Employee Development Services (EDS) program, are being re-designed into the new singular Work Readiness Services (WRS) program.

The goals of the program are:

- Evaluation and development of job readiness potential;
- Increase awareness of the meaning, value and demands of work;
- Career exploration;
- Development and use of “soft skills”;
- Work experience through job shadowing, volunteer and community work.

Structure of the program:

- Program last 6-13 weeks;
- Two possible entry points based on student needs;
- Projected capacity is 18 with rolling enrollment of 6 consumers admitted every three weeks;
- Core staff will provide instruction;
- New referrals into program will be reviewed by the newly formed WTC Center Services Team.

Discussion – Update of Discussion at the MSRC Executive Retreat with Stephen Wooderson, DEO, CSAVR regarding S 1356

Chair Dan Frye stated that in July 2013, Senator Tom Harkin, of Iowa, was interested in reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act that contains the Rehabilitation Act. Senate Bill 1356 was rushed through the process with very little notice to the disability community and to advocates who have an interest in VR. The legislation contains a number of provisions that have been generally regarded by advocates in the disability community as troubling.

A meeting of the MSRC was convened by teleconference to discuss the legislation, and the Council voted to write a letter to Senator Harkins, Senator Alexander and Senator Mikulski registering our concerns. The Council's concerns were:

- Proposes to move the Rehabilitation Services Administration from the Department of Education to the Department of Labor;
- Keep the critical linkage between RSA and Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) to ensure the provision of transition services to students with disabilities;
- Keep the education and training requirements for qualified rehabilitation professionals, and maintain In-Service training in Title III;
- Ensure that each system under WIA has meaningful performance measures that accommodate the unique nature of each program;
- WIA, Rehabilitation Act, Section 511 – remove the entire section, as it authorizes placing workers with disabilities in sub-minimum – wage employment.
- Retain the administrative authority for the Older Individuals who are Blind Program under the RSA Commissioner and not under the proposed Independent Living Administration Director.

Dan Frye stated that it is important for Council members to contact their constituents, indicate that the Council has adopted a position, share that document with your constituency groups and ask that they articulate their concerns to their legislators.

Al Sonnenstrahl asked if there are any safeguards in place for this process and impact it might have on the Workforce & Technology Center. Dan Frye stated that the Council has done what it is able to do but is amendable to other ideas about conveying our objection. The provision of that bill do allow for the existing staff of RSA to move over to Labor, but because it would be consumed in such a large organization with such a difficult culture and experience, safeguards for our program are in jeopardy.

Public Comment

- Elizabeth Vaughn – Ms. Vaughn stated that she is a retired educator. Ms. Vaughn stated her concerns regarding why the different agencies cannot get along for the benefit of those with disabilities.

Dan Frye replied that there are people of good will on both sides of the equation and people are inclined to work together. There are aspects of the bill that have some merit and, the challenge we face legislatively, is to distinguish one from the other.

- John Henkel – Has had issues with DORS in the past, but those issues have been resolved. Still seems to be having difficulties in counselors following-up with his telephone calls.
- Nancy Mickelsen – Ms. Mickelsen has been frustrated for the past couple years with the length of the waiting list. She is aware that DORS has had difficulty with staffing and budgetary cuts and other various organizational problems. The program that Jim Evans spoke about today sounds fabulous and she would like to find out more about this program. Dan Frye directed Ms. Mickelsen to the DORS website for information about the WTC Program and explained further the Order of Selection process in Maryland.

Summary of MSRC Executive Retreat, August 2013 (Dan Frye and Josie Thomas)

- Membership Development – Dan Frye stated that because Council members have term limits, we have a revolving Council and always need to be mindful that the majority of Council members need to be majority disabled and diverse. Dan Frye requested that members consider bringing to the Council names of persons, particularly those with disabilities, who they feel would be good candidates for the Council. Josie Thomas added that there are priority areas for membership for next year which includes people from Business and Industry, people who are Hispanic, African American and Asian, and younger people in the earlier stages of their career. If you have suggestions, please email them to Donna Lippa at dlippa@dors.state.md.us .
- Social Media – Dan Frye stated that the Council had decided at the May 2013 meeting that the Council would not proceed with social media because

of the volunteer nature of the Council and the time that would need to be invested. In the meantime, the State adopted a more liberal policy regarding social media with respect to Face book and Twitter, and since then the State has done a lot of work to update its website.

It was decided to limit Council information to Face book and not establish our own Face book page, but add SRC information to the DORS Face book page. Dan Frye appointed a Social Media ad hoc committee to include the Chair, Vice Chair and Director of the Agency. Information for posting will need to be approved by the Council Chair and Vice Chair and then forwarded to Sue Page to make sure there are no conflicts with state perspective. The Chair would then forward the information to DORS for posting. After posting, the Chair will let the Council know what has been posted. A picture of the Council will be taken tonight and placed on Face book.

- Disability Groups - The Council will develop a list of disability groups on an organizational level and the Chair will prepare a letter of introduction about the Council and include a copy of the Council fact sheet. Council members are asked to send their suggestions for organizations that should be on this list to Donna Lippa. The purpose of this is to have membership building and networking. A suggestion was made at the Executive Retreat to invite members of these disability groups to future Council meetings to report out on the operations of their group.
- SRC Town Hall Meeting - Suggestion was made a Executive Retreat that the MSRC hold a Town Hall Meeting and invite legislative representatives along with representatives from different disability groups. This event would take place next spring. This would not take place of the February Legislative Event, but to augment our outreach as a Council.

Donna Lettow stated that the discussion regarding the Town Hall meeting stemmed from discussion about how to change the format of the public meetings which are held in the spring. Mike Bullis stated that it may be the State Plan discussion at the meetings which does not interest people. Sue Schaffer stated that there have been times in the past where there have been hot topics at the public meetings and very well attended.

ACTION: Dan Frye suggested that a subgroup of this Council work with Sue Page and her staff. Suggestion was made that SRC Public

Relations and Quality Assurance along with the State Plan Development Committees meet to work on this new plan.

- QUEST Program Kick-off – Members of the MSRC are invited to attend the Governor’s QUEST kick-off program at the Workforce & Technology Center in October 2013. Sue Page stated that the Governor has decided to expand the QUEST Program this year.
- DORS Strategic Plan – Dan Frye stated that DORS will be developing a three-year strategic plan as the result of the conversation held with RSA during their monitoring. The Council will be asked to participate in the activities of the Strategic Planning Committee.
- Meeting Times and Logistics – Because of the new ruling from the US Department of Education regarding food services at events, there was discussion at the retreat to change the meeting time from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m. The consensus was to change the meeting time for the November 6, 2013 meeting to 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.

The Council would like to see more discussion about meeting locations. Zosia Zaks and Josie Thomas stated that you need to be aware of persons who use public transportation. The Council also suggested that video conferencing be made available for members who cannot attend in person.

- New Member Orientation – A new member orientation will be held in January 2014. George Washington TACE staff will assist in facilitating this meeting.
- Committee Restructuring – The following committee recommendations were made at the Executive Retreat in August:
 1. Jeff Moran was added as a member of the Membership Committee.
 2. Dan Frye asked to be notified of Policy and Planning Committee meeting.
 3. Mike Bullis will take over as Chair of the Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee replacing Mary Manzoni.
 4. Thomas Barkley was moved to the Employment/Career Development Committee

5. Thomas Laverty is continuing as a member of the Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee
6. Paulette Epps has accepted the duty as Chair of the Employment/Career Development Committee.
7. Charles Crawford has agreed to serve as Chair of the Blindness and Vision Services Committee. Mike Bullis and Dan Frye will remain on this committee also.
8. Jo Anne Materkowski will serve on the Employment and Career Development Committee.

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

- CSAVR/NCSAB Conference, November 2013, Denver - Josie Thomas and Dan Frye will be attending this conference.
- SRC Learning Community Region III Meeting, October 2013, Philadelphia - Josie Thomas will be attending this meeting.

Director's Report (Sue Page, Director of DORS)

- DORS Funding - FY 2014 State Budget - Sue Page announced that the State FY 2014 is fully matching the federal funds provided.

The Governor and the General Assembly identified the need to take a look at appropriations for programs that may be impacted by the federal sequestration. The General Assembly has committed in state fiscal year 2014 (which began July 2013) \$8,800,000 to several programs. DORS was one of those programs. We have been given an additional \$800,000 by the Governor and General Assembly. That money is earmarked to work on the DORS Waiting List which has been increasing. The waiting list as of the end of August was \$3,797 which is about a 20 month delay in providing services.

- National Governor's Association Conference (NGA) – Sue Page attended the NGA Conference in Pittsburg with the Maryland team along with Secretary Raggio, Jade Gingrich, MDOD Policy staff person, Diane Provich from GWIB. This is the result of Governor's Markel's initiative of a "Better Bottom Line in Employing Persons with Disabilities." Best practices from other states were shared along with barriers to employment, what is working and not working. Part of the meeting was shared with a large organization to find out what the hiring challenges are for big companies and what VR

agencies can do to work with businesses. There was a similar meeting in Seattle a couple weeks later. As a result of both meeting, the NGA has created a blueprint which is an online tool that shares best practices nationwide.

- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services at WTC – The Division is pleased to announce that Isis Mann has been selected as the Supervisor of Deaf/Hard of Hearing Services at the Workforce & Technology Center.

Committee Reports

Policy and Planning Committee, Tom Lavery – Tom Lavery stated that the committee met on August 28, 2013 and discussed the following:

- Review of DORS procedural changes for post-secondary education.
- Review of the draft updated Cooperative Agreement between DORS and DDA.
- The proposed new form Proprietary/Private Career School justification.

Public Relations and Quality Assurance, Mary Manzoni – Michael Bullis, new elected chair of the Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee stated that he and former Chair, Mary Manzoni, met last week to review the duties of that committee.

- Donna Lettow stated that a new MSRC logo was mailed out to members for review. The Council agreed on the logo from the samples supplied.

Membership, Josie Thomas - Vice Chair, Josie Thomas, reported on the following activities of the Membership Committee:

- Appointments/Reappointments have been completed as follows:
 - reappointments of Laurie Elinoff and Paulette Epps, and
 - New appointments of Jeffrey Moran, Mary O'Connor and Christopher Conklin.
- Four priority areas for membership over the next year or so:
 - People with disabilities
 - Business and Industry
 - Hispanic background/African American/Asian
 - Younger – people at earlier stages of their career

- Mary Manzoni completes her second full term on the Council with this meeting today. We recognize and appreciate the fantastic contributions Mary has made to the Council and people with disabilities in Maryland.
- We have received applications from two young men with disabilities for Council membership, as well as an individual representing the deaf-blind community. We will be contacting these individuals and others about membership over the next weeks.

Blindness and Vision Services Committee, Michael Bullis – Mike Bullis stated that the Committee met on July 24, 2013 and discussed the following agenda items:

- Presentation on post-secondary education;
- The committee also received updates from the Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind, Blind Industries and Services of MD and the IMAGE Center.
- The next meeting is scheduled for October 16, 2013 where the Independent Living Older Blind program will be an agenda item.

Employment & Career Development Committee – This committee has not met, but Paulette Epps has been appointed as Chair of this committee. A meeting will be scheduled in October 2013 at the SHA.

Update on Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council (Laurie Elinoff)

- Laurie Elinoff announced that the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is waiting for approval of their 2014 – 2016 State Plan for Independent Living.
- The SILC has a new Executive Director, Denise Thomas, who is doing a great job. Ms. Thomas is going to be the keynote speaker at a conference in Southern Maryland on September 26, 2013 titled “Disability Awakening.”

Council Sharing

The meeting concluded at 7:00 p.m. The next full Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 6, 2013 at the Workforce & Technology Center, 3:00 – 6:00 p.m., Room T-130.

Respectfully submitted.

Donna Lippa

MSRC Staff Support