

**Maryland State Rehabilitation Council
Workforce & Technology Center
November 18, 2015**

Members – Present

Jeff Moran, Chair
Sue Page
Tom Laverty
Christofer Conklin
Marsha Legg
Jani Willis
Michael Whitehill
Diane Pabich
Christy Stuart
Barry Shaw
Zosia Zaks
Cindy LaBon

Members Unable to Attend

Anil Lewis
Will Stocker
Joseph Barrett
Andrew Cohen

DORS Liaisons to Council – Present

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

Support Staff Present

Sandy Bowser

Guests:

Tom Scheurich
Eric Schmidt
Jo Anne Materkowski
Scott Dennis

Introduction and Approval of Minutes

The Chair, Jeff Moran welcomed guests and members to the Council meeting and asked that everyone introduce themselves. Sue Page introduced Sandy Bowser as

the new Support Staff for the Council. The minutes from the September 9, 2015 meeting were approved as written.

Special Guests – Tom Scheurich & Eric Schmidt, Program Income, Social Security Reimbursement and Ticket to Work

Jeff Moran introduced Tom Scheurich and Eric Schmidt. Tom and Eric were invited to give a brief overview of how Program Income, Social Security Reimbursement, and Ticket to Work fit into the VR Program.

Program Income has been in the Rehab Act for several years and applies to Gross income directly generated by the state VR program. Primary sources are Social Security, Workers' Compensation, and income generated by State operated CRPs. The income must be used to provide VR services and administration of the State Plan. It is treated as an addition to Grant Funds and cannot be used to meet non-Federal share requirement.

Cost Reimbursement Stats – FY2015

348 claims allowed, \$5,16 million received

Maryland ranks 5th in allowance rate in states with 100 or more claims allowed

Maryland's 82% allowance rate exceeds the national average of 67%

DORS consumers with SSI/SSDI benefits continue to rise

Ticket to Work is designed to:

- Reduce dependence on SSDI & SSI
- Expend employment opportunities for beneficiaries
- Provide greater choice of service providers
- Entitle beneficiaries to VR & Employment Support Services

Ticket to Work Looking Ahead:

Consumer receives continued job support, benefits planning and exemption from continuing disability reviews by SSA.

DORS continues support services after closure.

Greater likelihood consumer will maintain higher earnings resulting in greater cost reimbursement.

ENs can earn Ticket payments from SSA when consumer achieves certain earnings.

SSA – more beneficiaries exiting case benefits rolls.

Benefits Verification Program:

SSDI & SSI Benefit Verification that can be processed through the Program Income Office.

- Centralized process
- Increases data security
- Uniform interpretation of benefits information
- Minimizes verification errors
- Reduces burden on OFS & OBVS

The Program Income Office provides enhanced support for OFS & OBVS staff regarding SSDI & SSI questions; Enhanced ability to identify Tickets In-Use with Employment Networks at intake; Coordination with SSA and nationwide VR agencies for Ticket to Work assignment issues.

In moving forward the Program Income Office would like to provide:

Increase efficiency with Cost Reimbursement

Link “Tracker” software with earning data

Shift to digital claims process with SSA

Continued improvement in Ticket assignment process via new
Ticket to Work online portal

Assist with WIOA earnings data compliance

Roll out SVES/Benefits Verification Statewide

Improve Ticket coordination and handoff with out-of-state VRs & ENs
at DORS application and closure.

Continued training on Benefits Counseling service and usage statistics
to OFS/OBVS district offices

Chairperson Report – Jeff Moran

No new members present

Nomination for SRC Vice-Chair

Jeff Moran and the Council would like to thank Laurie Elinoff for her hard work, support and council serving as Vice-Chair. Laurie is invited to the SRC meeting scheduled in February in Annapolis.

There are no nominations for Vice-Chair at this time. All nominations for Vice-Chair can be emailed to Sandy Bowser at sandy.bowser@maryland.gov.

Legislators and Legislative Event

Members of the Council are encouraged to contact their Delegate or Senator whom they have a relationship with in order to secure a meeting room for the SRC February Meeting and Legislation visit.

W.I.O.A. – Sue Page & Scott Dennis

Ability to Serve All Individuals; Order of Selection for Services

This topic of the Workforce & Opportunity Act that was signed by President Obama in July 2014 has been presented to the Council for advice on how to proceed.

WIOA permits Designated State Agencies (DORS) to serve eligible individuals who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment, regardless of whether they are currently receiving VR services. DORS may serve these individuals regardless of any Order of Selection the State has established.

This statutory change has been proposed to create an exemption from Order of Selection for eligible individuals who need a specific service or equipment in order to maintain employment. With the proposed regulatory change, DORS may elect to serve these individuals outside the Order of Selection that are otherwise in place in order to serve these individuals who could be at risk of losing employment.

Four Points to keep in mind:

- Discretionary - DORS can choose to do so or not
- If Yes – Becomes part of State Plan
- Consistent with individual's IPE
- Specific Services or Equipment

DORS currently operates under an Order of Selection and has a Waiting List consisting of about 2,600 individuals. DORS gives priority to individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities.

Discussion was held discussing the Pros and Cons of implementing:

Pro: Consumer on waiting list needing a specific service would be served immediately
Individual will receive services quickly to maintain employment

Con: No additional funds
Individuals on Waiting List may stay on longer
Individual could lose job if not served immediately
Back on Social Security
Not enough Staff to provide services
Number of individuals to be served – could be very large
Impact DORS Budget
Waiting List will get longer
Employee will need to disclose their disability to their employer

Ideas: Educate Staff – training/information
Refer “Job-in-Jeopardy” individuals to other resources
Grants, ADA, Benefits Counseling, Employer to provide Reasonable Accommodation

Statistics:

- DORS served 252 individuals last year who were employed and closed successful, spending 1.2 Million Dollars.
- Fiscal Year 2016 – DORS has been allocated 20 Million dollars; 4 Million given to PETS, 16 Million divided between the Regions and OBVS for Adult Case Services which equals out to approximately 266 thousand a month per department.

A lengthy discussion was held debating all aspects of implementing the Specialized Provision of Services (WIOA). At this time no decision has been made.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (P.E.T.S.) – Sue Page & Scott Dennis

PETS is a New Program for DORS implemented by WIOA to focus on providing more services and supports to students with disabilities while in school. Research shows that the earlier we can reach students in school and provide job readiness activities and paid job experiences the more likely students are become successful after graduation.

The Act requires VR agencies to make Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) available to ALL students with disabilities.

VR agencies are to set aside at least 15% of their Federal funds to provide PETS to students with disabilities.

There are 5 specific services that must be provided to Pre-Employment Transition Students:

1. Job Exploration Counseling
2. Work-Based Learning Experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, experiences outside of the traditional school setting, and/or internships
3. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs
4. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
5. Instruction in self-advocacy

Students eligible to receive PETS:

- Students who have disabilities and receive services under an IEP, 504 or have a disability for purposes of section 504;
- Students in secondary school who have not exited, graduated or chosen to drop out;
- Students who are at least 14 years old but less than 22

High school students with significant disabilities interested in applying for traditional VR services, may do so during the fall of their next-to-last year of school. Pre-employment transition services are also available to those students who have been determined eligible for VR services as well as those currently receiving services under an IPE.

High school students on the DORS wait list for VR services are eligible to participate in pre-employment transition services while they wait.

Six Additional Contractual VR Specialist positions have been approved to work specifically with the PETS caseloads.

Director's Report – Sue Page

The MRA/DORS Training Conference was a big success and well attended.

CSAVR 2015 Fall Conference was attended by Sue Page, Scott Dennis and Sue Schaffer. The agenda focused entirely on implementing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). A few of the businesses that participated on the panel discussion were the Hyatt, CVS, a bank, Microsoft and Nordstrom.

DORS is working on filling vacant positions as quickly as possible.

The DORS Wait List currently has 2697 individuals and continues to increase.

2016 Statewide Needs Assessment – Is led by the State Rehab Council and completed every 3 years. This is an activity that will be worked on during the 2016 Council meetings.

Committee Reports – Jeff Moran

Membership Committee – Chair-person is needed. This position also serves as the Vice Chair for the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council.

Public Relations and Quality Assurance Committee – Kim Schultz is now on this committee.

Primary discussion focused on PETS and the CILS interaction.

Policy and Planning Committee – Tom Laverty

Discussion held on how DORS will implement PETS

Blindness and Vision Services Committee – Anil Lewis

Discussed proposals on PETS projects and budget. Most community providers currently serving children and teens and have programs in place.

BISM, CLD, NFB and Maryland School for the Blind presented their proposals.

Employment/Career Development Committee – Michael Whitehill

Working on developing the Annual 2016 Calendar. First meeting expected to be held in January 2016. The goal to bring in new ideas and from the outside with speakers presenting on special topics.

Council Sharing

The CILS are collaborating with DORS on the State Plan. 51% of the Federal Directors will be required to sign the State Plan.

The Legislative Activity is expected to take place sometime in early February, 2016. Exact date to be determined. Once the room is secured, Council members will be notified.

The meeting concluded at 7:00 p.m. The next full Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 4, 2016, Workforce & Technology Center, Room T-130, Baltimore, Maryland.

Respectfully submitted.

Sandy Bowser
MSRC Staff Support