

**Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities
Disability Employment Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes**

Date of meeting: Monday, April 28, 2025

Start time: 12:00pm

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Members Participating Remotely	
1	Rachel Stanton – Investor Relations and Communications Graphic Designer, Clean Water Trust (Co-Chair)
2	Oz Mondejar – President, Mucho Gusto
3	Kathy Petkauskos (Chair) – Director, Work Without Limits at UMass Chan Medical School
4	Carl Richardson – ADA Coordinator, Massachusetts State House
Members Not Present	
5	Gyasi Burks-Abbott – Self Advocate Faculty, LEND Fellowship, Boston Children's Hospital (Co-Chair)
6	Chris White – CEO, Road to Responsibility, Inc
7	Lexi Semanchik – HR Marking and Communications Specialist Walks of Life: Intergenerational Employee Resource Group Chair
Other Commissioners Joining	
	Former Representative Denise Garlick – Commission Chair
	Regina Marshall – Advocates

Action Items		Person Responsible
1	Collaborate with Workforce Supports members on Employment and Providers supports panel	Co-Chairs, Imene
2	Develop mini internal newsletter to summarize subcommittee work, with potential for future public distribution	Rachel and Imene

Agenda

1. Welcome, Roll Call, and Meeting Minutes Approval
 - Meeting minutes postponed to next meeting.
2. Inspirational Quote by Mary Kay Ash provided by Lexi Semanchik:

“Aerodynamically the bumblebee shouldn't be able to fly, but the bumblebee doesn't know that so it goes on flying anyway.”

3. Navigating Employment Obstacles: The Experience of Veterans with Disabilities
Presentation by Kelly A. Durkee-Erwin, Veterans CARE, IPS Employment Services, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (cancelled); joined by Steven Croteau Director, Veterans Bonus Division Office of the State Treasurer and Receiver General and William Kalivas, Treasury Specialist, Massachusetts Clean Water Trust, Office of the State Treasurer and Receiver General

- Topics included:
 - The challenges veterans face in accessing resources, particularly post-service
 - Misunderstanding and stigma around disclosing disabilities
 - Importance of employer education on ADA compliance and veteran support
 - State resources like local veteran agents, Military OneSource, and the TAP program
 - The HERO Act requirement for employers to display veteran benefit information
- A suggestion was made to collaborate on a veteran-specific resource list for inclusion in the Commission's employment toolkit.
- Link to existing fact sheet: [Veteran Benefits Fact Sheet](#)

4. Employment Program for Young Adults with Disabilities Overview Presentation by Aadil Sulaiman, Vice President, Youth & Justice Programs and Kayla Johnson, Youth and Justice Cross program Manager at Commonwealth Corporation

- Discussion highlights:
 - The program is funded through Massachusetts Line Item 7003-0607, which has maintained a \$1 million appropriation since FY22 to support employment training for unemployed young adults with disabilities.
 - The program model includes:
 - Occupational skills training tied to in-demand fields identified by employer partners
 - Work experience opportunities such as internships
 - Job development and placement in unsubsidized, paid positions
 - Post-placement support, coaching, and case management
 - Access to support services and resources to ensure participation and transition success
 - Program Year 2024 (Feb–June 2024) served 141 participants:
 - 113 unemployed and 18 underemployed
 - 86% completed the program
 - 59% attained a credential
 - 34% were employed and retained employment for at least 30 days
 - The average wage for employed participants was \$15.21/hour

- Program Year 2025 (Jan–Dec 2025) includes expanded training across Massachusetts:
 - Grantees include: Community Work Services, Employment Options, Polus Center, Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School, and Partners for Youth with Disabilities
 - Training industries include commercial cleaning, culinary, hospitality, clean energy, customer service, pet care, and office assistant roles
 - Projected enrollment: over 100 participants across various locations
- Current RFP cycle and focus areas
- Questions on availability of programs for social media and sports-related fields
- Interest in expanding benefit counseling resources for grantees
- Clarification of “underemployment” as working below skill level or part-time involuntarily
- Discussion on tech sector access and benefit cliffs
- Appreciation for the inclusion of addiction-related barriers in the data and program design

5. Upcoming Event: Elevating Youth and Young Adult Voices

- Planning continues for the upcoming event focused on disability, employment, and inclusive workplaces.
- Speaker confirmations and logistics are in progress, with updates to follow.

6. Adjournment

Remaining 2025 Meeting Dates

- August 25
- November 17