MCB Statutory Advisory Board Minutes

January 14, 2022

**Present SAB:**

Joe Abely, Chair

Susan Foley

Amy Ruell

Kim Charlson

**Present MCB:**

David D’Arcangelo, Commissioner

John Oliveira, Deputy Commissioner

Loran Lang, MCB General Counsel

Regina DiMarzo, Assistant to the Commissioner

Carla Kath, Director of Communications

Nathan Skrocki, Director of Policy and Compliance

Patricia Hart, Policy

Approximately 20 members of the public also attended.

Joe asked the SAB to approve the December meeting minutes and they were approved.

The meeting was recorded with local recording permission.

**Dashboard for Tracking MCB Performance**

The SAB members had a discussion about the length of time in the registration process and raised concerns that it was taking longer. After discussion, the suggestion was to create a separate table for length of time. The final suggestion was that MCB would look at the options and present back how to track registrations complete, registrations in process, and length of registration process. The SAB and MCB members discussed closure outcomes and whether self-employment was included. MCB is launching a self-employment initiative that may take some time. Suggestion was to have a way to track self-employment. MCB would look at its data and provide a strategy for tracking self-employment to see if investment in the outcome leads to increases (even if small). Joe requested that a revised table be sent to the SAB members.

**Update on E-commerce Initiative**

David said that his recent meeting with National Industries for the Blind (NIB) was great. Fifty-five consumers attended the outreach seminar. Twelve have decided to apply for the training program. We will screen those applicants and refer them on to NIB who will make the final acceptance decision for a training program to begin in March or April. Of the 12 applicants, some have open VR cases. Some want full-time work and some only want part-time work.

We are the first VR agency to agree to participate in the program but some other agencies around the country are interested. The Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind is exploring participating in the program. After the training, the consumers could become local representatives for NIB. Joe indicated that the Carroll Center for the Blind could conduct the training. As this is a new program, details surrounding the business process are still to be worked out.

Amy asked whether the recording of the NIB meeting is available. Carla said that it is on the MCB website. Susan asked what types of businesses they would create. John said that he understands that they would start with selling the highest-selling items and go from there. He added that the amount of commission has not yet been set.

**Commissioner’s Update**

* David presented the spreadsheet on the FY 2022 spending. Joe noted that less than 50% of the budgeted VR, DBES, and Commissioner’s Office funds have been spent. He asked whether all of the funds will be spent by the end of the year. David said that they are optimistic but that many consumers still have concerns about Covid which limit their participation. John pointed out that federal VR funds can be carried over to the next fiscal year if they are not spent. He did say that the number of MCB clients attending college or other training programs is still down due to Covid.
* Joe pointed out that, in the first six months, only $30,000 of the earmarked funds have been spent according to the spreadsheet. John said that $155,000 has been encumbered but not yet paid. Another approximately $50,000 of services have been planned but not yet encumbered. On February 16, MCB will hold a “Virtual Information Session: Independent Living & Assistive Technology Programs via MCB Stakeholder Organizations” in order to inform consumers about the availability of these services and to make outreach to them.
* Amy asked whether referrals for these earmarked social services have slowed down due to the new fiscal system. John said that the migration is not yet completed but should be finished next week. Joe asked about the nature of the new fiscal system. John said that it is a purchased product called Checkbook (MCB’s internal name). Konica Minolta Business Systems (KMBS) is doing the migration and adaptation for us. Kim asked about the accessibility of the system and testing. The system has been tested for accessibility and Evan Silver has made some tweaks to it to increase accessibility.

Susan responded to MCB’s statement that we would need to look at the encumbrances to understand spending. She requested that the SAB receive that information not by vendor but in the aggregate. She added that if MCB could not provide it during a public SAB meeting, that the SAB would go into executive session. Loran said that she will discuss the request with Shandra Gardiner, the CFO. Joe asked for any relevant legal citation.

* Amy asked about the progress on a new telephone system. David said that we will start discussions with potential vendors next week. Amy volunteered to help to analyze the options. She also asked whether consultants will be used. David said that we are working with KMBS and the EHS telecom team.
* Amy also asked about staff visiting consumers and whether staff are provided with PPE. David answered that everything is done on a case-by-case basis depending on the need and the wishes of the consumer. Masks are provided to staff; other PPE is provided if needed according to CDC and EHS guidelines. John said that, at this point, about 40% of the visits are in-person with the rest being conducted through virtual or telephone meetings.
* Susan stated that the MCB CSNA done by PG&E reported that there was a need to increase/improve outreach to rural and racial and ethnic communities. She suggested that MCB determine how to track that and what the impact of COVID was. She offered to help Nate to figure out how to track those numbers. Amy asked whether MCB has adequate staff. David said that, while we do, the agency has been impacted by the retirement of some long-term staff members. He did indicate that MCB will exceed their FTE cap.
* Carla explained the agency’s MyMCB intranet initiative. MyMCB is a tool to help all staff communicate and work effectively from all areas of the state. Staff can easily connect from any device to check meeting dates, policies, procedures, forms, etc.

**Public Comment**

Jane Perry wanted to make sure that staff of Sight Loss Services would be included in the February 16 Virtual Information Session: Independent Living & Assistive Technology Programs via MCB Stakeholder Organizations. Carla said that they will be. Jane also commented that she is very glad that it will be easier for consumers to speak to a live person when a new telephone system is installed.

Next meeting: Friday, February 11 at noon.