**Statutory Advisory Board (SAB)**

**January 2, 2024**

**Minutes**

SAB Attendees: Blair Wong, Brian MacDonald, and Kathy Petkauskos

MCB Staff Attendees: John Oliveira, Nathan Skrocki, Lucy Evangelidis, Loran Lang, and Evan Silver

Meeting Held via Zoom; Recordings made available to public on MCB YouTube channel

Public invited to participate through Q&A made at end of the meeting.

Minutes

Blair motions to accept the minutes from the December meeting. Minutes accepted.

Commissioner Update: John Oliveira

Agency staff meeting this week called the Round Table. Strategic Mapping will be presented to staff.

Brian asks when the SAB would receive the updated mission statement and vision. John says they will release it to staff and have a period of review and then display it online and in our brochure. It will be emailed to the SAB on Thursday.

An ongoing issue is the lack of qualified personnel to fill open positions in the agency. A team of staff, vendors, and educational institutions will be formed to discuss issues and develop solutions. It has been proposed that we do not require a master’s degree for entry level VR Counselors. It is necessary to attract higher numbers of candidates for positions.

Brian asks if this requirement is completely gone or if they will need to get the degree within a certain amount of time. John says he just received this an hour ago so he will give more details once he has properly reviewed.

Brian asks how this decision was made. This has been in discussion for quite a few years. Labor relations works with the unions and staff representatives. This proposal is only affecting the VR counselors.

Kathy asks if someone comes in with a bachelor’s degree if RSA or the state will pay for their master’s degree. John says that still needs to be negotiated but he is in favor of it.

Kathy says she is wiling to be part of the outreach team that is being formed. She also asks if these positions can be offered remotely. John says O&M instructors and Vision Rehab Teachers need to work with consumers in person although some things can be done remotely. VR counselors can work in a hybrid environment. Some consumers still prefer 1:1 in person.

Brian and Blair both also offer their assistance on the team.

Budget Update. Federal FY22 has been closed. Currently using funds from Federal FY23 to run the agency. All funds have been drawn down.

We have received an allotment of our FY24 funding but have not drawn down any of those funds.

We continue to stay on top of the budget. Finance is meeting with each of the regional directors to make sure allocations are appropriate.

Dashboard RFR will be released this week.

Still no approval regarding the all-consumer survey.

Vacancies within the SAB are in process. Candidates are being reviewed.

Dashboard Update: Nathan Skrocki

No big changes from last month. 1,850 people have been registered in 2023.

SR cases have increased by 90.

VR cases have stayed pretty much the same. Decreased by 2 in VR adults and by 1 in Pre-ETS.

111 closed SR children’s cases for the year and 2,150 closed SR adult cases. These are successful closures.

66 successful VR closures and 54 unsuccessful closures.

4,200 cases referred to support services.

7,921 COBs, 1,115 IDs, 467 EDPs, and 70 handicap placards.

Kathy asks if there are concerns about the VR successful closures. Nate says we are right in line. Things tend to ramp up in the Spring.

Brian asks if the handicap placards are just from our agency. Nate says that numbers are only counting ones that go through the registration team.

Blair asks how we would evaluate or rate MCB’s ability to communicate regularly to the entire consumer list about events. John says we put announcements out through all our social media channels. If MCB sends out the communication, we can track how many people are opening it, but if the vendors are sending them out, we have no way of tracking the interactions. John says not all MCB consumers have email, so we have created a Community Calendar page on our website. We are not able to do direct mail for announcements.

Blair asks to be included in internal meetings regarding the job fair as well as other MCB programs.

Questions from the Public

David Kingsbury asks if it is possible to break out the number of VR successful closures that are employed consumers returning to get a refresher in training vs consumers who start a new job. John says that when people return for training, they still have to go through all the steps to create a plan and have a stable employment period so it is unlikely that consumers will have 2 VR cases closed in the same fiscal year. There is a different category for what David is referring to and that is called job retention cases and further advancement in a current job.

David Kingsbury asks if competitiveness of salaries and benefits play a role in the staffing issue discussed earlier. John says MCB, Carroll Center, Perkins, and the school systems are all competing for the same candidates. Everyone seems to be struggling to find qualified candidates.

Kathy asks if creating a group with the vendors struggling with VR staffing would have a collaborative approach? Is that part of the thought process? John says yes it could be but has not been discussed yet.

Meeting adjourned.