Massachusetts Autism Commission

14-22 years of age/Employment Subcommittee Meeting

500 Harrison Avenue – Boston, MA

January 14, 2020

10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Present: Toni Wolf (Co-Chair), Sacha Stadhard (Co-Chair), Joan Phillips, Dianne Lescinskas, Carolyn Kain, Margaret Van Gelder, Carolyn Kain, Jeanne Hoerter, Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Amanda Green, Nancy Rosa and Kathleen Kelly

Remote Access: Chris Supple, Lea Hill, Janine Salomon, Michael Stephansky, Judith Ursitti, Maura Sullivan, Greg Rosen and Ilyse Levine

**Remote Participation**

Commissioner Wolf stated that the meeting was subject to the Open Meeting Law and that the Subcommittee members present would need to vote to approve the remote participation of some members because of their geographic location, whenever any members were utilizing video and/or teleconferencing. Remote access was approved unanimously by the subcommittee members present.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the 14-22/Employment meeting on November 13, 2019 were reviewed and were approved unanimously.

**New Co-Chair and Overview of MassHire**

Commissioner Wolf introduced Sacha Stadhard from the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. She is the new co-chair for this subcommittee and she is the designee for Labor and Workforce Development on the Autism Commission, taking over for Jason Albert . The Workforce Subcommittee has merged with the 14-22/employment subcommittee and this will give the members the opportunity to better address the issues on employment for transition aged youth (ASD).

**Overview of MassHire Services – Sacha Stadard**

Ms. Stadhard gave a presentation on MassHire and its offerings in the workforce system. This subcommittee has merged with the Workforce Development subcommittee and would like to gain a better understanding of the work being done by MassHire for individuals with disabilities including ASD.

* There are 16 MassHire Workforce Boards and 29 MassHire Career Centers
* MassHire has many partnerships and many partner services within MassHire Careen Centers
* MassHire is not a typical “Agency” – it is a “One-Stop” for programs and services – the staff at Career Centers may work for a variety of organizations
* Through the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) there are now multiple required partners (including MRC – see handout)
* What’s available at MassHire Career Centers – basic job search assistance, basic computer training, job fairs, more intensive 1:1 services for some individuals, access to job training for eligible individuals, access to a variety of partner services
* Universally Accessible and no eligibility criteria for basic services
* The system is designed to serve a large number of customers – in 2019 they served approximately 129,000 people
* In 2019 they served 8,703 persons with disabilities (approximately 7%)
* Many services are self-directed
* There are many online services – job listing, career information, resume builders, training opportunities
* Technology includes: computers and adjustable tables, ZOOMTEXT software, JAWS software (for visually-impaired consumers), Dragon Naturally Speaking hands free voice active software

**MRC Collaborative Projects with MassHire – Sacha Stadhard and Joan Phillips (VR Assistant Commissioner of VR and Workforce)**

* MRC and MassHire have a partnership and a total of $550,000 in funding is available for MRC consumers to participate in workforce training
* MRC training funds are available for enrollments as of October 1, 2019 and must be expended by September 30,2020 – training participation may continue beyond the end date of the training funds
* Discussion on the Massachusetts Partnership for Transition to Employment and Training (MPTE) which is a system change project aimed to increase access to work experiences and employment opportunities to youth and young adults with IDD. This initiative is working with DESE on an Occupational Certificate for students that will not earn a degree but can work towards a certificate to show they have mastered skills in certain areas
* Other initiatives include Pre-ETS – the request for response (RFR) requires bidders to coordinate with MassHire Career Centers to provide services. MassHire Lowell Career Center was selected to provide Pre-ETS Services
* Initiatives, Projects and Partnerships that are inclusive of serving persons with disabilities: Cross training for programs, services and eligibility; Career Centers need to ensure they are accessible; systematic approach to Universal Access Training and standardized Universal Design Principals throughout MassHire

*Discussion*

* The subcommittee members are interested in hearing from the Lowell Career Center and the work they are doing for individuals with disabilities through Pre-ETS
* Discussion on the self-directed model of the Career Centers – some individuals may need more 1:1 support
* The members of the subcommittee were happy to hear that the Career Centers are inclusive of individuals with disabilities and additional training opportunities for people working at the Centers was discussed
* The Career Centers worked with 8,703 persons with disabilities (approximately 7%) of the individuals served in 2019 – it was asked how that number could grow to serve more
* The subcommittee members would like to further the conversation on how they can help expand opportunities for individuals with disabilities at the Career Centers

**MRC Autism Data Report Summary and Discussion Using Data**

Commissioner Wolf provided the subcommittee members with data from MRC that included demographics, employment and current statuses (data). The disability information for potentially eligible Pre-ETS students was not available in FY2019. This information is being collected for these students as of July 1, 2019.

* There has been a lot of discussion regarding data from this subcommittee
* Mr. Supple discussed the requirements under the statute – he sent the statute to the subcommittee members via email

 *SECTION 29. The commission on autism ... shall investigate and study the higher education opportunities, employment training opportunities and employment opportunities available to persons with autism spectrum disorder and shall make recommendations in regard thereto. The commission shall determine the current status of such higher education opportunities, employment training opportunities and employment opportunities including, but not limited to, vocational training programs for teen-aged and young adult persons with autism spectrum disorder and shall make recommendations for providing appropriate higher education, employment training and employment opportunities for the population of residents in the commonwealth who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Additionally, the commission shall review the rise in the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder diagnoses among children in the past 30 years and shall make estimates of the number of children, aged 21 or younger, with autism spectrum disorder who will become adults in the coming decades and the resulting need for employment training and employment opportunities for those individuals and shall recommend a plan-of-action for the commonwealth in regard thereto.*

*SECTION 30. The commission on autism ... shall make an investigation and study of the present, and anticipated future, statewide affordable supportive housing needs for the commonwealth's population of persons with autism spectrum disorder. The commission shall develop and conduct a statewide housing survey to determine the current status of affordable supportive housing stock for adults with autism spectrum disorder and shall make recommendations in regard thereto. Additionally, the commission shall review the rise in the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder diagnoses among children in the past 30 years and shall make estimates of the number of children, aged 21 or younger, with autism spectrum disorder who will become adults in the coming decades and the resulting need for affordable supportive housing for those individuals and shall recommend a plan-of-action for the commonwealth in regard thereto.*

* It was asked if DESE could provide student data from the past 3 years and could it include level of need of students
* Discussion around data that was previously collected from state agencies and MassHealth – it is included in the 2017 Autism Commission Report – Ms. Lescinskas will send the link to the data from the report to the subcommittee members
* **Next steps** – review the data that was previously collected, look at the DESE data (current from Ms. Green) and discussion on what to do with the data moving forward
* Ms. Levine discussed the spreadsheet that she and Amy Weinstock started regarding employment resources for people with ASD in Massachusetts. The two main categories are (1) individual organizations and corporate programs that employ people with ASD, and (2) programs that help people w/ASD find employment. She will email the spreadsheet to the subcommittee members and this could be a useful tool to use with the data being collected and reviewed

**Next Meeting**

* Ms. Green from DESE will provide the subcommittee members with data on students with ASD from the past 3 years. There is already existing data that will be sent to members and this will be reviewed as well
* Review of the statue
* Discussion on next steps regarding data
* Review of the spreadsheet on employment resources
* Presentation by the Lowell Career Center regarding Pre-ETS and their work with individuals with disabilities

The next meeting of this subcommittee was scheduled for **March 10th at 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m**.