# Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

# Rehabilitation Council Minutes

# For March 7, 2018

The quarterly Meeting of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind Rehabilitation Council was called to order by Chair Bruce Howell at 10:07 a.m.

## Attendees

In person: Bruce Howell; Commissioner Paul Saner; Mary Otiato; Joe Buizon; Patricia Hart; Loran Lang; Joe Buizon; DeAnn Elliott; Naomi Goldberg; Karen McCormack; Richard Curtis (State Street); Nora Nagle; Cheryl Scott (10:12); Inez C.; Alex C.

Prospective members present: Jerry Berrier; Lydia Greene (Tufts); Charles Curti (Harvard University); Cory Kadlik.

By Phone:

Absent: Martha Daigle, Nancy Mader, Jill Weinberg, Subhashish Acharya, Nancy Trzcinski

## Minutes Approval

Chair, Bruce Howell asked if anyone had any changes to the December 6, 2017 RC Minutes. Minutes were accepted as drafted.

## Membership Updates

The Health and Human Services Secretariat apologized on behalf of the Baker administration for the delay in confirmation of prospective council members. There is a considerable cue of nominations at this time.

## Commissioner’s Report

There are financial factors affecting VR presently:

* The PreETS shift
* Reallotment funding reductions
* Anticipated fiscal findings from RSA monitoring
* Historically flat other VR funding with costs increasing

The Governor’s FY2019 Budget allocates 22.6 million, less than a 1% increase.

VR is operating at a deficit even after $3.3 Million in annual savings including substantial decreases in salaries since the beginning of FY 2016 when there were 165 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) of which 116 FTEs were funded by Federal VR Acct. Now there are 137 FTEs of which 58 FTEs are funded by Federal VR Acct. MCBs decreases in staff are a result of early retirement programs and MCB has not filled other vacated positions including Social Rehabilitation (SR) positions.

SR services are defined as: services for consumers not seeking employment. SR services include adjustment to blindness counseling, case management, wrap around services, services for seniors. Cuts to support the projected deficit would require about a 15% reduction to the VR program or if VR were spared an even greater percentage cut to the SR program.

VR funding has been used to pay for non-VR services and this practice goes back 30 years or more: examples include the Talking Information Center (TIC) Program; large print calendars, hiring staff out of VR Acct. due to years of no restrictions on how many FTEs could be paid out of that Acct, rehab teachers hired out of the Fed Acct.

Despite the $3.3 million in savings over the last 30 months, there is a 1.55million loss annually. This is attributable to VR paying for that amount in SR salaries. This equates to 20 FTEs. The State match account reimburses federal account.

Order of Selection:

dilemma if there is not additional SR funding and/or more cuts – incumbent on MCB to implement Order of Selection.

Monitoring:

MCB was last monitored by RSA in 2009. MCB will get an RSA finding for not having a labor cost distribution system. This was agreed to be done in 2009 by the then Commissioner but was not. It could not be implemented until the Agency's workforce was reduced. It is unlikely that RSA will quantify this finding as there is no way to sort out this information. July 1st MCB will implement

labor cost distribution

Starting at beginning of fiscal year to have as much time to make adjustments as needed.

Lydia Greene asked about advocating for additional funding, MCB has likely the largest stand-alone social rehab program in the country and is committed to SR programs and hopes the administration comes forth at the beginning of the next fiscal year with additional funding for MCB.

Cheryl Scott asked for a break down in total agency funding: 30 million, 22.6 State Funding, 660k Fed. Grant for Elderly Blind, 7.1 million VR formula grant, $628K Federal reallotment funding. 1/3 funding for VR, Presently 4.2 million on SR.

Loran Lang commented - If we eliminate 1.55 million in spending Order of Selection would not be needed, none the less a structure for OOS should be drafted even if it is not put in place.

Order of Selection and the role of the RC:

1. Review financial and case management data that shows need
2. Categories of consumers on regulated waitlist determined by 7 functional needs assessed - communications, interpersonal skills, mobility, personal self-care, personal direction, workplace tolerance, and workplace skills (3/4/5 of 7 would be the top tier need category) and the amount of time to receive training to achieve competitive integrated employment
3. Determine when it to implement Order of Selection (dictated by funding)
4. Administration of Order of Selection

Open cases are grandfathered in and ineligible consumers go on a waiting list.

Trish Hart commented, MRC has been on Order of Selection, Order of Selection doesn’t work if every consumer is assessed as Category 1, it takes about a year to get and Order of Selection approved, there are required periodic reviews.

**Updated State Combined Plan: Cheryl Scott**

Required to provide amendments/ modifications 2 years after 2016 State Plan submitted. Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development is working with many partners and collecting modifications to the State Plan, deadline is 3/15/18.

WIOA, Title 2 EOE; WIOA Title 4 MCB & MRC, DTA, SNAP and TANF Plan

WIOA Goals:

1. Regional planning process to meet needs of regional economies
2. Streamlining Service Pathways
3. Youth Focus /Career & Credentialing Pathways
4. Servicing businesses – talent acquisition
5. Labor Market

Modifications about administrative areas, changes in regulations i.e. Adult Ed going through open and competitive process, employment outcomes. In short summary, no substantive changes to the State Plan.

**Labor and Workforce Development Initiative Updates: Cheryl Scott**

Workforce Skills Cabinet – acknowledging that there are skill gaps in workforce – identified members of this cabinet: Roslayn Acosta, Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development; Jay Ash, Secretary of Housing and Economic Development; Jim Peyser, Secretary of Education

1. Apprenticeships – workforce development, DOL expand apprenticeships to different industries/occupations (IT/Tech, Healthcare, Manufacturing)
2. Diversity within the workforce =classroom and on the job training, wage progression
3. WIOA State Plan- Regional planning teams focused on workforce development, education, economic development

Rebranding the Workforce System:

Unifying the bran, adopting brand name “Mass Hire” to replace various Career Center names and Work Force Boards

**Updated MCB State Plan: Patricia Hart**

No modifications to State Plan. There is reference to possible need to adopt an Order of Selection.

Updates: Rehab Council’s input via survey electronically sent out by Patricia Hart, Mary Otiato. Council members have until Friday to respond.

* 93% of total consumers received services from MCB, national average is 71.9%
* Employment rate for MCB is 83.1%, national average 65.8%

**MCB Employment Specialist Update: Joe Buizon**

Internship Program: 85+ consumers have been referred to the MCB Internship Program this year, majority will participate during the summer but will be offered year-round, Ernst & Young is a new partner in the Internship Program this year

MCB and DDS shared consumers –6 who have or will graduate from Perkins identified– meetings with MCB and DDS to discuss ways in which these consumers can be identified and supported collaboratively for community based integrated employment opportunities; meeting scheduled at DDS Southeast Regional Office, March 26th.

MCB Mentoring Program

Harvard Pilgrim’s Karen Young involved in this program. ICI grant attached, 18-22 PreETS consumers, there is a surplus of mentors, thinking of including this as part of the Internship Program

Project Search

Not funded. Polus Center seeking an alternative program.

MCB, The Carroll Center, Perkins are having bi-monthly job fair follow up meetings.

There was a recent hire at a hotel in Framingham and Sodhexo.

**RC Ministerial Matters: Bruce Howell**

RC By-laws need to be reviewed and “cleaned up” to ensure they are addressing realm of VR only, mission statement crafted, ensure that RC offices are filled i.e. operating without a vice chairperson now. Members are required to be on a sub-committee – standing sub committees need to be assembled and running.

Overview of Required trainings for RC Members:

Conflict of Interest Laws

RC Members must take the online Conflict of Interest training every 2 years and email Loran Lang the date you took it along with a screenshot of the certificate.

<http://www.stateprog.eth.state.ma.us/a001_welcome.html>

Open Meeting Law Training:

RC Members must do the following to comply with the Open Meeting Law: read and then sign the Certificate for the Open Meeting Law. The certification will be maintained at MCB.

## Meeting Adjourned

The RC Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen McCormack, Secretary