

April 13, 2023 minutes

Statewide Rehabilitation Council

Business and Employment Opportunity (BEO) Committee

1:00 – 2:00 pm

Attendees:

- SRC Members: Steve LaMaster (Committee Chair), Ellie Starr, Sarah Wiles, Joe Belil, Christine Tosti, Inez Canada, Olympia Stroud, Heather Wood
- MRC staff: William Allen, Amy Karr
- Public: Karen Moore, Amelia Dillon

1. Introductions and announcements (as needed)

For the April meeting we have 60 minutes slated, instead of the normal two hours.

2. Approval of February 2023 minutes:

Mr. LaMaster called for a motion to approve the February 2023 minutes. Mr. Bellil motioned to approve the minutes. Ms. Starr seconded. Mr. LaMaster asked whether there were any corrections to the minutes. The February 2023 minutes were approved with no corrections.

3. Update: Content review SRC E-brochure and Flyer

The e-brochure and flyer are essentially finished. **(See SRC eBrochure 3.30 PDF and SRC Flyer final 3.30 PDF.)**

- **In addition to future SRC recruitment, who should this info target?**

The materials were created out of a need to fill SRC vacancies, but not used just for this one purpose. Can be used to educate stakeholders about the existence of the SRC and its role in guiding MRC. Could be shared with providers, employers, MRC vendors. Can use the materials to inform employers about a way to provide feedback about MRC services. MRC could provide this information to people who have applied for services during the enrollment process, including those who have been denied services. We should be making sure that individuals, once found eligible for MRC services, receive information about the SRC, its purpose, and how to participate. Consumers and others can join SRC meetings as members of the public; the SRC wants more people engaged and involved.

Other ways to recruit were discussed. Mr. Allen is targeting employers who have hired people served by the MRC, because they can relate to the message of the MRC. He can work with his MRC team to identify specific employers to carry the SRC message to their companies and their networks. Many employers know people with disabilities or have their own experience. Given parameters he will find the right employers. Mr. LaMaster would like that list to use as a resource.

Suggestions about two more places to broadcast SRC information: Representative Josh Cutler, who had recommended establishing a permanent commission for people with disabilities, and UMASS Work Without Limits, which has a fairly broad-based employer collaborative to help employers network with people with disabilities.

Discussed customized employment, how the general public does not know of this. Employers do not often consider it. Mr. LaMaster suggests pausing this topic until the discussion about recommendations regarding self-employment. A member shared a link about customized employment: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/customized-employment>

Mr. LaMaster asked attendees to email any additional ideas or comments. When the committee does make a recommendation, will consider recommending that MRC partner with the SRC to broadcast SRC information.

The job of the SRC is to provide feedback, insight, etc. In order for the SRC to have awareness and make on target recommendations, there is a need for regular discovery opportunities for guests to present to and educate the SRC. For example, may either want to book a guest to present about customized employment or gather information to send to the committee if it is decided a presentation is not needed.

- **Process and lead time needed to adapt content to various formats (e-mail, twitter/LinkedIn posts, printed trifold brochure, etc.)**

COMS will need to reformat the brochure and flyer to these additional formats.

4. State Plan Recommendations (all recommendations to SRC Exec Comm by May 4, 2023)

NOTE: The BEO and the SRC make recommendations – the best recommendations align with perceived needs by MRC and are supported by good awareness/information by the SRC.

The items below were brainstormed at the April 5th State Plan Meeting – additional ideas welcome!

- **Outreach and Trainings for MA employers in work incentives**

Help employers understand incentives. Recommendation might be for MRC to educate employers. Need to know what MRC is already doing related to outreach and employer education to avoid iterative recommendations.

- **Need areas from MRC Consumers surveyed**

A copy of the survey results will be sent to any members who have not seen it. **(See MRC Consumer Experience Survey Report 2022 Q4 (002).)**

In response to a question about whether there is rolling data collection or collection quarterly, Ms. Canada said the survey happens at different times and in different points in the service process, but this can be clarified at next week's Consumer Satisfaction & Needs Assessment Committee (CSNAC) meeting.

Most of the respondents were satisfied. There were outliers, of course. Trend to watch: 23% reported at least one problem working with MRC. Market Decisions Research said that the rate is similar to other states. Need more information about the dissatisfied consumers. Can work with Mr. Noone and other MRC staff to help the SRC understand more about these people. Are there any trends in disability types, ethnicities, geographic area, urban vs. rural? Might want to make a state plan recommendation about the BEO committee receiving regular reports containing that level of awareness.

Discussed how to increase consumer involvement in designing the survey. Committee meetings are open to anyone, and the CSNAC meetings are held after hours so they are open to working people. Consumers can attend meetings and give input even if not SRC members. The SRC is advisory; it does not decide what MRC does, and cannot change MRC's choices. The MRC did involve the SRC (through CSNAC) in developing some of the survey questions.

Suggestion that CSNAC use participant action research principles. Also suggestion to perhaps invite Jonathan Delman, a U Mass researcher with lived experience who has been involved in surveying consumers, to join a CSNAC meeting when next developing survey questions.

- **Persons with disabilities coming out of incarceration – what can be done to improve access?**

Discussed connecting traumatized people with animals. There is a program in Georgia that has inmates interact with animals who were to be put down, and there is a similar program in Worcester.

- **RFR for business consultants re: self-employment**

MRC should send out RFR for business consultants to advise consumers pursuing self-employment. Two consultants are not enough. In a CAP case, the VR counselor did not have self-employment expertise. For example, Laysha Ostrow could become a consultant/vendor for MRC.

- **Priority areas “10 critical areas to promote CIE” [Competitive Integrated Employment \(CIE\) | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](#)**

In addition, a link to the WorkAbility Report about what Massachusetts needs to do to promote better access to employment for persons with disabilities
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/workability-report/download>

How to engage a more diverse consumer group to participate in the SRC and MRC? What value does an MRC consumer get from being on the SRC? What is being done to welcome consumers?

What does MRC think about the areas the SRC's recommendations should address? Does MRC have any ideas to suggest to the SRC? MRC wants to listen to both consumers and employers in order to create pathways to help both be where they want to be.

The next BEO meeting is on June 8 at 1:00 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:04 pm.