

June 8, 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, Joe Bellil, Christine Tosti, Inez Canada, Heather Wood
- MRC staff: William Allen, Amy Karr
- Public: Jonathan Delman

Meeting was held remotely.

Meeting called to order at 1:02 pm.

1. Introductions and announcements (as needed)

Agenda time of 2 hours is a max time. For the June meeting we have 60 minutes slated.

2. Approval of April 2023 minutes:

Mr. LaMaster called for a motion to approve the April 2023 minutes. Ms. Canada motioned to approve the minutes. Ms. Starr seconded.

Mr. LaMaster asked whether there were any corrections to the minutes. Ms. Tosti requested that her suggestion about providing information about the role of the SRC as part of MRC orientation be included in the minutes. The April 2023 minutes with the requested revision were approved.

3. Discussion of Career and Technical Education (CTE) Focus Group

This was a late addition to the agenda.

Jonathan Delman is a vocational counselor and researcher, and also a consumer. He shared a flyer recruiting for a study about Career and Technical Education (CTE). **(See Focus Group Recruitment Flyer – FINAL.pdf.)** Vocational education schools typically train in trades. That is an example where CTE is provided. CTE offers a sequence of academic and vocational instruction. It is hands on, work oriented. Some people do better with hands on training.

The ultimate goal of the study is to improve the recruitment of people of color with Mental Health Conditions to CTE. The overall larger goal is to improve the recruitment of all people with mental illness. Often emotional issues or anxiety interfere with participating in CTE. There has been much research on this topic. UMass developed a guide for educators working with people with MH Conditions called Translating Evidence to Support Transitions (TEST). The first objective is to revise the guide through a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) lens. The second objective is to assess the feasibility and accessibility of the revised guide. Will collect data to help inform any needed changes of the guide. The researchers want to speak with young adults of color with MH Conditions and experience with CTE to learn what would be helpful for educators and teachers to know.

It was noted that the flyer does not state the requirement of having a MH Condition, although having an emotional disability is a requirement for participation. Mr. Delman stated he will contact the principal investigator (PI) about this. He is not sure the flyer will be changed. However, this is more quality improvement than research so there is no need for approval by an Institutional Review

Board (IRB) to revise the flyer. This project is to develop a manual for use, not research. A member also would like the wording not to include the term “emotional disturbances” or use the word “disturbances.” Mr. Delman said the goal was to try to be broad, but will also mention this to the PI. There was also concern that many students may not have been diagnosed accurately or not been officially diagnosed, and it was suggested to not require medical documentation of diagnoses for eligibility.

Mr. Delman provided his email, jondelman@comcast.net. He encouraged members to reach out with additional comments or concerns.

4. State Plan Recommendations made by BEO

NOTE: BEO and the SRC have made the following recommendations. These have not yet been responded to, and have not been accepted by MRC as State Plan goals. These will be voted on at the June 22nd Quarterly meeting. None of these have been accepted by MRC for active work over the next year. The recommendations are in bold.

- **MRC will work with the SRC to develop practical strategies for sharing work incentives information with the business community/employers.**

DISCUSS: Where are some sources of support, and/or partnership to MRC/SRC for compiling business-relevant benefits counseling information?

Mr. LaMaster referred to an article cited in a CSAVR newsletter that discussed methods to enhance competitive integrated employment (CIE). One was state VR getting information out as marketing and practical point of view as a way to encourage the hiring of people with disabilities.

There are sources of support. UMass Medical School has Work Without Limits, a business roundtable that promotes the benefits of hiring with people with disabilities. Has pdfs, work sheets, other tools, and information about why hiring people with disabilities is good for businesses.

What are other sources and how might the SRC assist MRC in getting the information out to relevant parties? This piece needs to be put into the context of what SRC can do versus what MRC is doing and can do. This recommendation makes it sound like SRC would do something, although the intent is for MRC to develop a plan about promoting the benefits of hiring people with disabilities to businesses. Having a better understanding of the work MRC is already doing and where the gaps are is key to good productive discussion.

Perhaps creating more permanent part time jobs would help increase the employment of people with disabilities. It may be helpful if employers consider splitting up full time jobs into part time jobs. Supported employment and job carving help an employer tailor a job that has been open for a long time. Can work with the employer and candidate. The job may have more limited responsibilities and hours. In a tight labor market this may be attractive to employers.

Mr. Allen stated he could collaborate with Kate Biebel, do an employer survey to help MRC learn what skills employers are seeking. If employers see that MRC can provide suitable candidates this may increase employers working with MRC and increase the hiring of people with disabilities.

There are six advisory employer boards across the Commonwealth in strategic geographic locations. These are places to showcase consumers’ skills and resumes and for them to network

with employers. MRC did an outreach to individuals who attended the employer boards and found that about 800 people have achieved employment. The events invite employers (e.g., AAA, Ocean State Job Lot), consumers, VR counselors, Mr. Allen's MRC team. Employers describe typical working day. In one hiring event three employers competed for one individual. On June 29th there will be a major event with 300 employers together networking with vendors. About 100 employers contact MRC with open positions before posting, the number varies month to month. The employers who preferentially recruit through MRC must see an advantage in doing that. How many employers do not know that MRC can be such a resource? A gap is the employers who do not know about MRC. What is the best and most cost-effective way to reach them? Perhaps can collect comments from the employers who use MRC and develop a campaign to reach out to other employers. MRC's marketing campaign will probably unfold after the rebranding and name change.

There is a big need for personal care attendants because of the silver tsunami. Can MRC provide PCA or CNA training? There are already federal and state programs for CNA training. MassHire is offering CNA training. Should be cautious that MRC is not duplicating efforts. Should always be thinking of how MRC can maximize funds where no one else is already in the space. A big problem is the pay in that field. CNA is a job in high demand because of the growth of the population that needs CNA help, but the pay is not high, does not help people obtain financial independence and freedom. There is a disconnect between the high demand for CNAs and the low pay. It is not structured as a living wage job. A member stated that she has a homemaker to help her with chores, and this woman gives her dignity more than some doctors. She wants them to be paid more.

- **MRC will work with the BEO Committee of the SRC to analyze results of MRC Consumer, Employer, and Provider survey data to better align SRC Recommendations to relevant findings.**
- **MRC will make additional resources available for consumers with self-employment goals by developing an RFR to expand the pool of available business consultants.**
- **MRC will collaborate with SRC to identify, recruit, and engage more MRC Consumers and stakeholders from specific backgrounds, groups, and organizations required by federal regulations, including Un-served/Under-served communities, individuals with disabilities, and businesses.**

May be able to work on things at next the next BEO meeting.

The next BEO meeting is on August 10th at 1:00 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:01 pm.