

**Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC)
Quarterly Meeting - December 16, 2021
Committee Reports**

Executive Committee

Chair: Inez Canada

As of December 14, 2021

Rec FY22-1: SRC's DEI Lens - The Executive Committee coordinated the Health Management Associates consult with the SRC through the DEI Working Group. The DEI Strategic Planning evolved into a 5yr DEI Roadmap that will be presented at the SRC December Quarterly meeting.

New Members: The Committee planned a 2hr orientation for new members of the MRC – SRC and of the Mass Commission for the Blind Rehabilitation Council. Some experienced members also attended. The orientation aimed to provide a brief overview of vocational rehabilitation, the role of the Council, and how each seat on the council provides a needed perspective on the forward motion of voc rehab. Guest presenters were Kathleen Pignone (MRC VR Counselor) and Karen Stanfill (Client Assistance Program Supervisor, Disability Rights Texas). The National Coalition of SRCs updated their new member orientation which will launch in February 2022; participants were encouraged to attend.

The Executive Committee's priorities for FY22 will include: process documentation to support committee chairs and members; ensuring a diverse knowledge membership; and implementing the 5yr DEI roadmap.

Next meeting: Thursday, January 6, 2022 from 1-3pm

Business and Employment Opportunity (BEO) Committee

Chair: Steve LaMaster

As of December 13, 2021

The committee met on 12-09-21 and reviewed a draft of the 3 Committee recommendations for the year's priorities.

Recommendation FY22-2: *Support employment of individuals with disabilities in the Commonwealth...*. The committee learned that the state agencies tasked with addressing the equity of numbers for people with disabilities in commonwealth jobs has been reorganizing and will provide an update about changes to the makeup and goals of the group, but that it continues to be a priority at MRC to facilitate this process at high personnel levels within participating agencies.

Recommendation FY22-3: *Increase availability and accessibility of SRC materials online...*. The committee received a copy of the State Plan Annual report, which has been revamped by MRC's Communications Department. There was discussion within the committee that the committee's work must extend beyond review of SRC materials to MRC materials, as the role

for the SRC is primarily about advisory guidance to the MRC. Committee members have advised that the BEO Committee focus upon reviewing ***VR materials that are specifically geared toward employers*** as opposed to just reviewing MRC's overall rebranding strategy for VR or reviewing all of their materials, in order to capture the attention of employers and make them understand that there is a great pool of qualified Persons with Disabilities with whom they can connect via VR.

Recommendation FY22-5: *Develop a baseline understanding of self-employment... to inform a strategy for self-employment services within MRC.* MRC is in the process of appointing an operational leader to work with the committee to better understand the opportunities and constraints and has pledged to assign this to an Area Director as a lead Manager to liaison with BEO and the SRC. MRC reports that it has had some staff experts over the years who could do internal consultation on Self-employment plans but have lost institutional knowledge due to retirement of staff with that expertise, etc. It is reported that this manager-appointee will have the role of pulling other staff and consumers who have worked with MRC on self-employment plans to advise and guide the process with the BEO.

Next BEO Committee meeting scheduled for Thursday, February 10, 2021 at 1 PM.

Consumer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment Committee

Chair: Olympia Stroud

As of December 10, 2021

- **Needs Assessment Survey Tool:** The committee met on 9/17 to discuss next steps for the Synergy working group. An RFR (request for response) was created to identify a vendor to support MRC and the SRC in developing a robust consumer survey. The RFR is being posted on Friday December 10th to Commbuys. The Chair of SRC Needs Assessment Committee, along with the Chair of Executive committee has appointed an SRC member to participate on the RFR process review team. The goal will be to identify the vendor and begin work together starting in February 2022.
- **FY2022 Needs Assessment survey:** AQA will conduct the FY2022 survey, the committee will review the questions from the FY2021 survey and recommend changes to the survey. AQA will then work to make the changes and then send the FY2022 survey out after making any recommendations. The FY2021 report was presented to the committee and revised based on the committee's recommendations – AQA will bring the summary and report to the Dec 20th meeting to see if there are any further questions.

The Needs Assessment Committee's next meeting is December 20, 2021 at 1:00pm.

Policy Committee

Chair: Naomi Goldberg

As of December 13, 2021

During the last quarter, the focus of the Policy Committee's work has continued to be addressing the state plan recommendation relative to procurement. The group is currently focusing on four specific issues:

1. What can be done to ensure that CIES vendors are able to meet the linguistic and cultural needs of the consumers that they serve.
2. Is there is an existing mechanism that MRC can use to purchase services/items when a contract is not in place, such as a third party that would act as a conduit for making such purchases?
3. Increasing the number of tutors that are available across the state.
4. Getting feedback from Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors about barriers they are receiving relative to procurement.

The Policy Committee continues to research these matters and speak to applicable MRC staff to develop an action plan for each item. To date, the status on each item is as follows:

1. The committee initially explored whether it would be possible to require vendors to have access to a language line to compensate for losing the ability to communicate in a particular language when a staff member leaves. Since there appear to be various barriers in the procurement process, the committee is looking at others ways to address the matter beyond positively scoring submissions that say they have the capacity to speak other languages.
2. Still researching
3. Still researching
4. Have determined that it would be possible to survey VR counselors in either a focus group or survey. Have to have further discussion with MRC and then will develop set of questions.

In 2022 The Policy Committee will begin addressing the subject of fair hearings. Specifically, the Committee will advocate for the SRC to receive notice of fair hearing decisions as well as offering assistance in finding qualified fair hearing officers. At the next meeting of the Committee there will be discussion of what steps will be taken to address the issue.

Next Policy Committee meeting: February 3, 2022 at 11 am

State Plan and Interagency Relations Committee

Chair: Joe Bellil

As of November 30, 2021

Committee's task: The State Plan and Interagency Relations Committee ensures the SRC meets its obligations regarding input from consumers in the development of both the MRC public VR State Plan and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan.

Last Action Items Completed: On October 20, 2021- The SRC Work Plan for FY2022 (template) and a copy of the SRC Work Plan for FY2020 was sent out to committee chairs for the chairs to begin to record their committee's expected activities/tasks for their assigned recommendation(s).

In November 2021, reviewed the draft SRC Annual Report.

Next State Plan Committee meeting: February 9, 2022 at 11 am