

## Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

November 4th, 2021, 1-3pm EST

Please note: this meeting was held virtually.

### Meeting was called to Order at 1:05pm by the Chair.

#### Attendees:

- **Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Executive Committee Members:** Inez Canada, Joe Bellil, Steve LaMaster, Naomi Goldberg & Olympia Stroud
- **Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Members:** Dr. Lusa Lo, Cheryl Scott,
- **SRC Ex Officio Members:** Deputy Commissioner Kate Biebel, Amanda Costa
- **Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Staff:** Jacqueline Ryan
- **Public:** Sarah Wiles
- **Health Management Associates (HMA):** Raisa Alam, Taciana Ribeiro-Saab, Ellen Breslin, Uma Ahluwalia & Doris Tolliver

#### Minutes Approval- *Ms. Canada*

- Ms. Canada called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Bellil motioned for approval of the minutes. Ms. Goldberg seconded. Minutes were approved with no corrections.

#### Old Business:

##### Annual Report – *Chair Inez Canada*

- The Chair inquired if MRC Director of Communications Colleen Casey has provided the MRC staff with any updates regarding the Annual Report. Amanda Costa provided an update on behalf of Colleen Casey that the first draft of the report is almost completed, and Colleen will be sending the draft over to Chair Canada.
- When the Annual Report is completed, the Chair will send it to all Executive Committee members for review. All feedback should be returned via email.

#### New Business:

##### SRC/VR Orientation – *Chair Inez Canada*

- The Chair shared that the purpose of the SRC/VR Orientation is to educate new SRC members on the work of the SRC and the VR program. This will allow meetings to be more productive and focus on the mandates and mission of the SRC. The orientation will also provide a forum for the Vocational Rehabilitation team to present on what they do, how the program works and how VR interacts with the SRC. Additionally, the Chair flagged that she is working to find an outside individual to facilitate the SRC orientation portion. The Chair shared that the goal of the orientation is to ground what the SRC does and to educate individuals on how to get the most out of the meetings. The orientation is an opportunity to educate individual on what is required for following up on Action Items to ensure that items are not getting lost or repeated. Everyone has different talents and expertise/interest so the orientation will help everyone know how to leverage those talents while still working as one Council.
- All SRC members have been invited to this orientation and Chair Canada is looking to identify an additional orientation time to allow for more member attendance.
- The Chair inquired what items/topics the Executive Committee Members would like covered in this orientation. Suggestions included:

- Expectations of board members included as well as background information on the SRC structure & the sub-committees.
- An easy to explain breakdown of how VR works and the timelines associated with VR cases.
- Information on how the SRC should be providing recommendations to the VR program and how those recommendations are being translated into action steps.
- Information regarding the scope of the SRC's advisory capacity and how SRC works within the workplan and supports the work of MRC but doesn't go outside of the scope of the advisory capacity.
- Information on MRC departments and how they are all related to each other.
- Training on how to support consumer input in a productive way.
- Connection with Vocational Rehabilitation counselors prior to the orientation in order to collect feedback regarding information that Counselors wish Consumers knew before seeking VR services. This would ensure that Consumers have a basic foundation and that Counselors are not always having to repeat the same information.
- Written documents that can be provided to members in advance so they can prepare for their first meeting. It would allow individuals to understand the expectations in advance of the meeting.
  - The Chair flagged that this orientation is a step towards creating written materials. Chair Canada shared that documents that show how to have meaningful participation and how to support MRC are in the works and information/feedback from the orientation will be included.
- Not throw too much information at individuals all at once and to instead focus on ensuring that new members know that their input is valuable. These members' experiences and knowledge is what is needed on the SRC.
- The Chair flagged that any additional orientation items can be sent to her via email to ensure that they are included.

The Chair noted that because we wanted to designate a part of the meeting to DEI Strategic Planning, Committee Chairs were asked to submit written reports which will be attached to the minutes as a part of the record. See, attached "**SRC Committee Reports for Exec Comm mtg 11-04-2021.**"

#### Executive Session- SRC Leadership Training

- Ms. Canada convened Executive Session at 1:25pm for **SRC DEI Strategic Planning Session with Health Management Associates (HMA)**. All those who were not members of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workgroup were asked to log off at this time. The meeting did not reconvene a public session.

**SRC DEI Strategic Planning Session- Health Management Associates: Ellen Breslin, Uma Ahluwalia, Raisa Alam, Doris Toliver & Taciana Ribeiro-Saab** (See, **SRC DEI Strategic Planning Session #1\_final version\_09.17.21.PPT** for specific details.)

- Ellen Breslin of Health Management Associates kicked off the DEI Strategic Planning Session by introducing the Health Management Associates (HMA) team and sharing the DEI Strategic Planning PowerPoint Presentation.
- **SRC's Five Goals-** Uma Ahluwalia & Taciana Ribeiro-Saab (HMA)

- Uma Ahluwalia (HMA) provided an overview of the five SRC goals.
  - 1. To identify, attract and retain a very diverse SRC membership to reflect the BIPOC community & diverse disabilities.
  - 2. To foster a climate of equity and shared opportunities within the SRC.
  - 3. Ensure equitable statewide access to VR services across BIPOC and Disability Communities.
  - 4. To increase SRC Community engagement to deepen its understanding of consumer needs.
  - 5. Improve effectiveness of MRC VR programs for VR consumers.
- Ms. Ahluwalia (HMA) then elaborated on goals 1-3 and asked for any feedback from the SRC members.
  - Chair Canada wanted to highlight the statement that “The SRC does not currently view their membership as reflective of the diversity of consumers and the SRC acknowledges that it is challenging to fulfill the requirements under section 5 of the Rehabilitation Act”. The Chair inquired if there is way to provide more clarity around that statement especially regarding what the SRC is not complaint with at this time. The SRC understands the statement is accurate but would like to see specifics in the goal.
  - A member shared that when we think about diversity, she hopes that we are thinking outside of the box and not just looking at race and ethnicity. She has seen a lot of advisory boards from various state agencies that have the objective of recruiting and retaining self-advocated but need to think about supporting those individuals who want to participate.
    - Doris Toliver (HMA) shared that there is an opportunity to add more explicit language to address Member’s statement that the SRC needs to ensure that individuals who need accommodations in order to participate have those accommodations. Ms. Toliver also suggested an annual assessment of the membership to ensure that any needed accommodations were provided.
  - The Chair would like to see the annual Conflict of Interest Training included in Goal 2.
  - Dr. Lo shared that she appreciated the second goal as it does address the preparation to participate at SRC but there needs to be more thought about the behind the scenes before those meetings begin. Dr. Lo referenced that in quarterly SRC meetings members receive multiple documents to review prior to the meeting however not all members may be equipped to review all of that information at that time and the SRC has not asked them. Additionally, Dr. Lo flagged that she liked the round-robin idea, however it could be stressful for individuals due to the meeting time constraints. Dr. Lo also shared that she likes the idea of an annual self-assessment but it needs to be done strategically as to not feel like a test. It is about getting feedback.
- Taciana Ribeiro-Saab (HMA) presented on goals 4 & 5 and asked for any feedback from the SRC members.
  - The Chair would like to see language added to goal 5 that would capture what is not reflected in the data. For example, the data shows that a lot of the Consumers who are getting jobs are white males in their 40s however the survey responses show a number of BIPOC communities did not respond. The Chair wants to ensure that the SRC shows

that we are paying attention to that and developing a strategy to bring those voices in. It is about capturing that populations that are underserved as well as the gaps in service.

- Ms. Scott shared that it would be helpful to put in language that speaks to identifying what further data collection and analysis needs to take place to get to this point of what is effective job place services. Ms. Scott flagged that the current language makes it seem that the data we currently have is sufficient to make recommendations but that is not the case and more work needs to be done. It is about further enhancing the analysis in addition to collection more data.
- Ms. Costa would like the Consumer Service Experience added to Goal 5. Ms. Costa shared that is the sub-committee chaired by Ms. Stroud and is what the AQA team at MRC works on daily. It is not just about how many individual consumers receive services; it is about if they are satisfied with the services. Ms. Costa flagged that the data section needs to be a collaboration of Ms. Stroud's sub-committee and the AQA team and we need to cross walk that data to this goal.
- **SRC Survey - Uma Ahluwalia (HMA)**
  - Ms. Ahluwalia (HMA) presented on the SRC Survey and the proposed survey plan. Ms. Ahluwalia asked for feedback from the attendees.
    - Ms. Costa shared that she will send edits to the survey as she was under the impression that we were not going to go with a vendor as Chair Canada didn't want to have to develop and then re-develop. Ms. Costa flagged that there are other options available such as the MRC AQA team.
      - Chair Canada agreed with Ms. Costa.
    - Ellen Breslin (HMA) inquired if the group is comfortable with moving forward with the survey. Ms. Breslin shared that HMA feels that a survey is the only way to compare data to the VR Consumers.
      - Mr. LaMaster shared that he was comfortable with the survey as long as we can protect the privacy of individuals involved.
      - Ms. Costa agreed with Mr. LaMaster and flagged that the MRC AQA team has to hold all of the data/confidentiality of all Consumers and staff. The team is trained under ethical research and has practice in this space. Ms. Costa flagged that the AQA team uses extensive confidentiality protocols such as firewalls and ID numbers.
      - A member shared that these subjects should be a part of every survey. The member would like to discuss the option "choose not to self-identify". She shared that she was recently filling out an application and chose not to identify because as a black person, she knew that would be used against her. A member flagged that if she says that she is black or African American, her application will be going to the bottom of the pile or into the trash. She then inquired how much of this option is working for us verses against us. The member shared that she is not saying that is it a bad idea as we want to know that representation, but if individuals "choose not to identify" how is that helping with data collection.

- Ms. Tolliver (HMA) shared that she thinks that it is still telling if there is a large share of respondents who choose not to identify or prefer not to answer. To her, that speaks to the concerns that a Member raises about trust. Ms. Tolliver shared that this is an opportunity to build some good will across community of color/non-majority communities. Additionally, Ms. Tolliver shared that it is will be a chance strategize about how to build that trust so that individuals feel more comfortable in knowing that information will not be held against them and there is a value in providing that information.
- The Chair shared with the group that part of the conversation around this survey did focus on individuals not responding. The Chair has emphasized the importance of setting a platform of how the data will be used so that individuals are encouraged to fill out the survey in its entirety. Chair Canada flagged that the way we frame this in the beginning will be very important in terms of how we encourage individuals to be responsive.
  - Ms. Tolliver (HMA) shared that it is framing but also putting it in the broader context. Yes, it is about being informative but also being clear about communication strategies around the desire that equity is at the center of this work.
- Ms. Stroud shared that her recommendation is if we want to have a bond and a safe space as a committee, she would not put down the option of “choose not to identify”. Ms. Stroud recommends that SRC puts what we want to hear and let participants know why we are asking and that this is more important than hiding right now. Ms. Stroud stated that she was not saying we do not need the survey, she was saying that we are not going to get the answers we need. Ms. Stroud shared that we need to build an infinity space so that this survey helps us. Participants need to know that we are asking these questions to love on them and hear them, we are not taking this information for any other reason.
  - Ms. Ahluwalia (HMA) inquired if everyone is in agreement with Ms. Stroud’s recommendation to remove the “choose to not identify” option.
    - Chair Canada was in support.
    - Ms. Tolliver (HMA) suggested that an “Other” category with a fill in box be included.
    - Ms. Scott agreed with Ms. Tolliver as there may be individuals who have challenges with identifying themselves within one category. It may not be that they don’t want to answer, they just may not be able to identify within the specific options.
- Ms. Stroud appreciated Ms. Tolliver & Ms. Scott’s comments regarding the fill-in option. Ms. Stroud flagged that the bi-racial option is missing from almost all surveys. Ms. Stroud shared that she feels that 2% black is black but not everyone thinks that way. As individuals grow up, they might consider themselves more one race than other but we don’t want them to chose one category but instead chose the option of bi-racial.

- Ms. Breslin (HMA) asked Ms. Costa if the “other” option would change or have implications for the Consumer Survey.
  - Ms. Costa shared that the Consumer Survey has the option for the write in and they will not be removing the “choose not to ID” option. Ms. Costa flagged that it is easy to compare data across the two surveys event with one area missing. It would be a shift in the analysis process.
- Ms. Stroud agreed with Ms. Costa and flagged that a committee survey is different than a consumer survey. Ms. Stroud shared that we need to give our Consumers that safe space to identify. For the SRC survey, that is an infinity space of 10-20 people. Ms. Stroud echoed that we have to protect the Consumers.
- Ms. Scott shared that we need to go with a process that allows for the cleanest data analysis. In regard to adding a category for bi-racial/multi-racial, Ms. Scott likes that idea however that could lose the identification of the ethnic groups. It may complicate things if you are allowed to check more than one race.
- Ms. Breslin (HMA) shared that the next step is to have HMA update the survey with this feedback then send it back to this group for review, comment and approval. Once accepted, the goal would be to get the survey out before HMA’s end of business with the SRC on 12/31/21. Ms. Breslin (HMA) inquired if the full SRC would be willing to embrace this survey and if so, does this information need to be presented to the larger group?
  - Ms. Stroud that she thinks it is about HMA explaining the why to the whole group. This is a new thing for the committee and Ms. Stroud feels that we need HMA to explain and support the work as they are the experts.
  - Ms. Costa flagged that there had been discussions about presenting the survey at the all SRC meeting. This would allow for background information as well as the opportunity for participants to complete the survey in real time and be provided any needed assistance.
  - Ms. LaMaster shared that he was fine with HMA paving the way for the survey but would not underestimate Chair Canada’s credibility to the SRC. It may behoove us to have the Chair introduce HMA by stating that SRC was heavily involved in this process and is endorsing the work.
    - Chair Canada stated she was happy to promote participation in the survey.
- **Vision & Mission – Doris Tolliver (HMA)**
  - Ms. Tolliver (HMA) presented on the updated SRV Vision & Mission. HMA had updated the Vision & Mission based on SRC feedback. Ms. Tolliver asked for feedback from the attendees.
    - The Chair stated that she had made some changes to the wording of the Vision Statement. The Chair proposes the following wording “Partner with MRC to innovate Consumer driven Vocational Rehabilitation Services to provide opportunities to all eligible individuals with disabilities to live their best lives through meaningful/sustainable careers in competitive and integrated environments.”
      - Ms. Stroud stated that she was on-board with what Chair Canada was stating. Ms. Stroud shared that she hopes that the partnership aspect is real and that the SRC members need to hold themselves accountable for what is written in the mission and vision. Ms. Stroud flagged that if we are saying it, we have to do it.

Ms. Stroud went on to share that there are certain things in the mission/vision that makes us look and sound great but are we actually doing it and holding ourselves accountable. Ms. Stroud shared that she is flagging this because she sees that a lot of this work of DEI for on two-three black individuals on this committee. Ms. Stroud wants everyone to know that this work falls on all of us and if the SRC needs to keep recruiting individuals of color so that the work does not fall on the same 2-3 POC individuals then we need to do that.

- The Chair commended the SRC DEI working group for their great work and thanked the HMA team for their hard work on this initiative.
- Ms. Breslin (HMA) thanked the DEI working group for all they have done and it has been a wonderful experience for the HMA team.

The Chair called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Scott motioned to adjourn. Ms. Goldberg seconded.  
**Meeting was adjourned at 3:05pm**