

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

**April 5, 2023**

**1:30-3:00pm EST**

### **Attendees:**

- Statewide Rehabilitation Council Members: Inez Canada (SRC Chair), Joe Bellil, Naomi Goldberg, Doug Mason (Ex-Officio)
- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Staff: Kate Biebel, Amy Karr, William Noone, Joanne Sellstone, Colleen Casey

Please Note: This meeting was held remotely.

**Meeting was called to order at 1:33 pm by the Chair.**

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:** Chair Canada called for a motion to approve the March 2023 minutes. Ms. Goldberg motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Bellil seconded. Chair Canada asked whether there were any corrections to the minutes. The March 2023 minutes were approved with no corrections.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **a. Software Essentials overview - Joanne Sellstone**

This is training offered through Thryv Consulting gives consumers computer skills for today's workplace. The training includes computer basics, Windows, Microsoft Office, internet safety, and browser use. It is remote via Zoom. Trainings consist of 5-12 consumers; there are beginner and intermediate classes. There have been classes for the deaf and hard of hearing and speakers of several different languages. Out of 569 participants, 515 completed, a 91% completion rate. Classes are for four hours twice a week. Individual instruction is also offered.

- In response to a question about the availability data on the training's effectiveness, Ms. Sellstone read out some positive feedback from participants.
- In response to a question about pre- and-post-training surveys, Ms. Sellstone replied that those surveys were not done. On the first day the consumer's ability is assessed to assure the appropriate class level.
- In response to a question about any data about consumers obtaining jobs after this training, Ms. Sellstone replied that the training is basic, to help consumers connect to VR and to work towards getting a job.

The SRC had previously asked whether VR consumers were receiving tech training. The MRC Commissioner wanted to provide this presentation so the SRC could learn what is being done.

This discussion is to determine what will be presented to the full SRC at a Quarterly meeting. The presentation will probably occur at the December Quarterly meeting. Ms. Sellstone will receive a copy of the minutes for this meeting, so she has a record of what members have requested to be included in the presentation.

Requests:

- Information about the topics covered in the training, and how much time is spent on each topic. Ms. Sellstone stated that the flyer does show the training modules, and that the flyer would be shared with the SRC.
- There was also a request to hear from a consumer who took the training.

**b. Committee Reports**

Chair Canada asked the Chairs only report on new items since the chairs gave full reports at the SRC March Quarterly meeting.

- **Policy Committee – Naomi Goldberg**
  - The Policy Committee last met in February. Currently the committee is creating some VR fact sheets for consumers. The next meeting is June 1. At that meeting drafts of those fact sheets will be reviewed.
- **DEIA Council – Doug Mason**
  - The Council has not met since the March Quarterly SRC meeting. The next meeting is April 18. The primary focus will be monitoring what the Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are working on to address DEI goals as spelled out by the MRC.
- **State Plan Committee – Joe Bellil**
  - The committee met in the morning before this meeting. Discussed the development of the FY24 State Plan recommendations, which are due at the May 4th Executive Committee meeting. Reviewed draft State Plan and annual report schedule. It was decided to change the due date from October 11 to August 1 for committee Chairs to provide draft write-ups for the annual reports so the annual report content can get to COMS earlier. Ms. Casey will speak with Mr. Bellil about developing a template for the format of the annual report write-ups from committees.
  - Discussed potential ideas for future recommendations, including helping people with disabilities leaving incarceration and having more vendors for consumers seeking self-employment.
  - Briefly talked about the consumer survey.

The next meeting is on 5/31 at 11 am.

- **Consumer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment Committee – Ronaldo Fujii**
  - Mr. Fujii was not present to report.
- **Business and Employment Opportunity Committee – Steve LaMaster**
  - Mr. LaMaster was not present to report.

## Questions for Chairs:

### 1. Is social media being used to solicit recommendations?

Mr. Bellil stated that he is relying more on the committees to provide recommendations. Have discussed obtaining input at the upcoming consumer conference. Both ways (committees and direct consumer input) have been used in the past. A concern is that the committees are not in need of more recommendations. Because MRC has requested more details in the recommendations, Mr. Bellil does not want to give the illusion that all recommendation offered can be used.

### 2. Is there a way to ask for feedback in a way the committees can handle, without being overwhelmed?

Can create some structure about what an “ask” should be. Chair Canada referred to the email she sent to the full SRC earlier in the day. The email contained an article about why people with disabilities choose not to work. At the end of the email, she gave a possible format for recommendations. Chair Canada said the SRC needs to make sure recommendations are actionable. The SRC has not always adhered to the guidelines for recommendations, such as using SMART goals.

Ms. Biebel would like to broaden who is heard beyond the small group of the SRC. Chair Canada would like for the committees to not be doing all the work around recommendations; the SRC may take on work it should not take on. Recommendations can be solicited online or through forums, with instructions about what suggestions should include and a disclaimer that not all recommendations will be sent to the MRC. Ms. Casey recommended not using social media but using the newsletter put out by the Office of Learning and Community Engagement and the Disability Listening & Learning Forum on April 11th. COMS does want to support ways of soliciting suggestions. Mr. Bellil stated that he will get in touch with Ms. Baczko about the newsletter. The consumer conference can give background and get suggestions, but it will be held in August this year, so would be soliciting recommendations for 2025.

### c. MRC Updates (Kate Biebel and Colleen Casey)

Ms. Biebel stated there was not much new since the Quarterly meeting in March. The next Disability Listening & Learning Forum is on 4/11. The topic will be MassHealth redetermination. The link to registration is:

[https://massrehabcommission.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_TFMwjlMJRJ6wO2eEJKRKZw](https://massrehabcommission.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_TFMwjlMJRJ6wO2eEJKRKZw)

Ms. Casey provided an update on the rebranding of MRC. In August of 2022 a strategic marketing firm was brought on board to conduct targeted research. Interviews were conducted to see how people regard the agency. A big takeaway was that the name Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission is an issue. There are negative stereotypes and stigma; the word “rehabilitation” can imply that something needs to be fixed.

Over the past year MRC has explored various names. Have looked at the names of other agencies, nonprofits, and disability organizations. There were conversations with disability inclusion leaders, staff, providers, and sister agencies. Initial testing narrowed the choices down to four different names. After more focus groups and one-on-one conversations, the choices were narrowed down to two: Department of Disability Equity and MassAbility. It took a lot of

work to get to this place. Once approval is received from administration, there will be a lengthy process through the legislature to get the name changed. Tomorrow (4/6) Ms. Casey will be meeting with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) Secretary about names and next steps.

A member commented that the chosen name may not make it clear to some people what the agency does. Ms. Casey said that taglines and communications to service seekers will help direct service seekers where to go. MRC does much more than just VR; a name can't communicate all aspects. A brand is not just a name; it includes tag lines, messaging, supplemental materials, and overall experience with the agency.

A concern was raised that after the name is changed some people currently being served who only knew the name MRC will not know where to go. Ms. Casey said that something like "previously MRC" will be used in initial communications. Will communicate that the name has changed, but not the services. Ms. Casey is excited to partner with the SRC to reach populations that need it most. Ms. Casey will present updates on the rebranding at the June Quarterly meeting.

The draft SRC recruitment brochure and flyer were sent out to the full SRC last week. After the BEO meeting next week, there will be more feedback about the materials. There were requests for an SRC virtual background and a LinkedIn badge so SRC members can promote the SRC by noting their participation. The open SRC seats are very specific, so more targeted recruiting materials can be created to help fill vacant seats.

Chair Canada called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Ms. Biebel. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bellil. The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 pm.