**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**

**February 6, 2025**

**4:00 - 6:00 pm EST**

**Attendees:**

* **Executive Committee Members:** Heather Wood (SRC and Executive Committee Member Chair), Joe Bellil, Steve LaMaster
* **Other State Rehabilitation Council Members:** Tay Silveira
* **MassAbility (MBY) Staff:** Sahara Defensor, Emily McCaffrey, William Noone, Amy Karr
* **Others present:** Doug Mason
* **Absent Executive Committee Members:** Naomi Goldberg

Please Note: This meeting was held remotely.

**The meeting was called to order at 4:06 pm by the chair.**

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Chair Wood called for a motion to approve the September 2024 Executive Committee minutes. Mr. LaMaster motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Bellil seconded. Chair Wood asked whether there were any corrections to the minutes. The September 2024 Executive Committee minutes were approved with no corrections.

Chair Wood called for a motion to approve the October 2024 Executive Committee minutes. Mr. Bellil motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. LaMaster seconded. Chair Wood asked whether there were any corrections to the minutes. The October 2024 Executive Committee minutes were approved with no corrections.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

a. Membership update – Sahara Defensor, Heather Wood

There are no updates regarding those waiting for appointment. Chair Wood has received no information about the status of her reappointment application submission. Mr. LaMaster did receive confirmation that his application was received and complete.

b. Vice-Chair position availability reminder– Heather Wood

Chair Wood reminded the members that the Vice-Chair position is still open.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. **Committee Reports**

* **Consumer Satisfaction Needs Assessment Committee (CSNAC) – Heather Wood**

The committee last met on January 27th. At that meeting there were updates and follow-up about the Staff, Provider and Business surveys. Results of the MRC Connect survey were discussed. The committee also discussed changing its name to reflect that the committee now discusses more than just the Participant Survey, but no decision was made at this meeting.

The CSNAC will next meet on March 24th at 5:00 PM.

* **Business and Employment Opportunity (BEO) Committee – Steve LaMaster**

The committee last met on December 12, 2024. It has not met since the January Executive Committee meeting.

The next committee meeting is on February 13th at 1:00 PM.

* **State Plan Committee – Joe Bellil**

The committee last met on December 18th, 2024. It has not met since the January Executive Committee meeting.

The 2024 State Plan is on the website. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/src-annual-reports>

Mr. Bellil asked the Executive Committee whether there will be changes in the current committee structure. Chair Wood said she has still not met with Ms. Goldberg to discuss the status of the Ad Hoc Membership Committee. Chair Wood said that potential committee restructuring could be put on the agenda for a future meeting.

At the next State Plan Committee meeting, there will be a draft timeline for the FY26 recommendations, which will include having MassAbility involved in the process earlier, as has been discussed with Commissioner Wolf.

The next State Plan Committee meeting is on February 1*9*th at 11:00 am.

* **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Council – Doug Mason**

There is not much to report. So far, the council has not felt the effects of what is going on at the national level regarding DEIA. At the next meeting, new members of the council will come on board. There will be a meet and greet where they can ask questions.

The next DEIA Council meeting is February 11th.

1. **MassAbility update – Heather Wood**

Kate Biebel was unable to attend this meeting. Chair Wood related the following information from information provided by Ms. Biebel.

* **Federal landscape**

MassAbility and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) are closely monitoring information and directives from the federal administration. EOHHS has a command center where all information received from federal funders and partners is funneled so we can have a coordinated and aligned response across agencies. Currently there are no clear directives impacting MassAbility, but we are of course waiting for this.

Ms. Defensor added that everyone is being asked to take a deep breath at this time. MassAbility is closely watching the situation, taking every rumor seriously, reaching out to all our partners, keeping an eye on social media. If anyone on the SRC does hear any information, please contact Ms. Defensor and/or Ms. Biebel. Molly Karp is out on leave indefinitely so it is currently just Ms. Defensor in the legal department.

* **MassAbility Connect**
  + There was a dip in the number of applicants in November and December, but the volume is back up in January. The number of applications is almost identical to last year at this time.
  + Assisted Intake (the ‘turbo-tax’ like version of doing eligibility for the agency) is still going through cybersecurity testing. It is expected to go live in late February. Assisted Intake will be an option for applicants coming through Connect and it is hoped that it will assist us with managing volume and decreasing wait times.

1. **Planning for Client Assistance Program (CAP)/Ombuds/Survey trends/concerns – Heather Wood**

This presentation will be at the March Quarterly meeting. Chair Wood asked if anyone has any questions or wanted specific information included in the presentation. Ms. McCaffrey will contact Ms. Goldberg to work on this. Ms. McCaffrey asked if anyone had anyone with questions or suggestions for the presentation to please send them to her.

1. **Revisions to membership application – Heather Wood, Sahara Defensor**

Members had received a copy of the current online membership application marked up with suggested edits from NASHIA. **(See MA SRC Membership Application Edit Recommendations.docx.)**

Ms. Defensor made the following comments:

* There needs to be an explanation of why the questions are being asked.
* Change “refuse to answer” to “prefer not to answer.” We do not want to turn people off.
* Decisions about application revisions are more administrative. There is no need for a vote. If a vote is desired, there is no need for a roll call vote. It is sufficient to just ask if anyone objects.

Ms. Defensor noted that changes to the application are administrative and there does not need to be a vote. However, if a vote is desired, it does not need to be a roll call vote. It is sufficient to ask if anyone objects to the proposed changes.

Chair Wood said that she would send out an email asking for any objections to the proposed changes by February 15th. Mr. LaMaster and Mr. Bellil indicated at the meeting that they approved the proposed changes.

1. **American Sign Language (ASL) and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services – Kate Biebel**

The discussion of whether to continue to provide ASL and CART services at each SRC Quarterly meeting was postponed because Ms. Biebel was unable to attend this meeting.

1. **Discussion of different day/time for Exec Committee meeting – Heather Wood**

Chair Wood was concerned that moving the meeting to 4 pm may increase the work days of some members of the Executive Committee. Mr. LaMaster and Mr. Bellil both indicated that the current 4 pm time works for them. Ms. Goldberg and Mr. Mason were not present at this meeting to comment. No change in the meeting day/and or time was made.

**OPEN MIC**

Members expressed interest in the CAP/Ombuds presentation to be given in the March Quarterly meeting. An update about the federal situation was requested for that meeting, even if not much is known. Ms. McCaffrey said she would reach out to Commissioner Wolf about that. At the next Executive Committee meeting we will prepare the agenda for the March Quarterly meeting.

The next Executive Committee meeting will be on March 6th from 4:00 to 6:00 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 pm.