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

**May 2, 2024**

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

**Attendees:**

* **State Rehabilitation Council Members:** Heather Wood (SRC Chair), Joe Bellil, Dawn Clark, Naomi Goldberg, Steve LaMaster
* **Massachusetts** **Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Staff:** Amanda Baczko, Sahara Defensor, William Noone, Graham Porrell, Amy Karr
* **Others present:** Doug Mason, Christine Tosti[[1]](#footnote-1)
* **National Association of Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA):** Jill Ferrington

Please Note: This meeting was held remotely.

**The meeting was called to order at 1:03 pm by the Chair.**

**Introductions:** Chair Wood asked members and attendees to introduce themselves.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:** Chair Wood called for a motion to approve the April Executive Committee minutes. Naomi Goldberg motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Bellil seconded. Chair Wood asked whether there were any corrections to the minutes. The April Executive Committee minutes were approved with no corrections.

**OLD BUSINESS**

1. NASHIA Update – Jill Ferrington

Ms. Ferrington explained that NASHIA’s work with the SRC is divided into three primary buckets:

* Engagement: This will include looking at the SRC’s committees and their functions. NASHIA had previously looked at the committees of the SRCs of 13 states. The meeting after the March Quarterly meeting gave information about the SRC functions that most interest members. There will be also tips about running meetings, maximizing accessibility, handling conflicts, and guidance on transitioning from one topic to the next.
* Governance: Looking to help draft revised bylaws. Will help to better understand Open Meeting Law (OML) requirements and incorporate them into the bylaws to ensure the SRC complies with OML.
* Recruitment: One goal is to increase the diversification of the SRC. Will examine strategies used by other states. NASHIA will use input from the Membership Committee, and will also work with the Executive Committee and the full SRC. Looking forward to doing three recruitment events with the goal of recruiting three individuals from underserved populations and areas. There was enthusiasm about the idea of recruiting events and that this may be a missing piece in attracting people to participate in the SRC.

**Questions/comments:**

* In the chat, Ms. Tosti posted a question about whether the Membership Committee had already been created and stated that things going on outside of public meetings make her uncomfortable. Chair Wood assured her that nothing was done or decided behind the scenes besides NASHIA obtaining needed background information.

1. Committee Reassessment – Heather Wood

The ad hoc Membership Committee is starting. Chair Wood thanked Ms. Goldberg for agreeing to lead this. There is currently no Policy Committee business to discuss. The Policy Committee could be an ad hoc committee as needed going forward.

Chair Wood will speak to Dawn Clark about serving as the interim chair of the Consumer Satisfaction Needs Assessment Committee (CSNAC). The CSNAC has not been active since Chair Wood has been SRC Chair. In the post-March Quarterly meeting survey, consumer survey work was high on the priority lists of many members. Graham Porell and Bill Noone can be great assets for the committee.

If the Executive Committee approves the recommendations on June 6th, Mr. Bellil will cancel the scheduled June State Plan Committee meeting.

Ms. Ferrington noted that in other states not all SRC committees meet throughout the year. Some meet only when they need to.

In the chat, Ms. Tosti referenced the previous DEI consultants cautioning against SRC members being led to feel too much power was being held by the Executive Committee and MRC. She urged that a consumer be involved in leadership roles, such as a co-chair.

Chair Wood noted that it is challenging for the SRC to remember that it is an advisory council. It is sometimes difficult to figure out what that looks like. Perhaps we can consider having a training in the future, especially we are starting to get new members appointed.

1. Membership Update – Amanda Baczko

SRC nominations have moved out of the Secretary’s Office, where deep background checks were done. They are now in the Governor’s Office. There is no timeline, but it is a better situation that the nominations are now in the Governor’s office.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. Committee Reports

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

The committee last met on February 8th, 2024. The April meeting was canceled.

There have been 34 applications for the Disability Employment Tax Credit (DETC). Mr. LaMaster shared Joseph Reale’s presentation about the DETC with clubhouses. It was presented at the Massachusetts Clubhouse Coalition. Mr. LaMaster will continue to get the word out through his own networks unless MRC tells him to cease.

Ms. Tosti asked if it is known how many of the 34 individuals who have received the DETC certification have been employed. That data is not known. Ms. Tosti would like that information collected. Mr. Bellil suggested that this be a recommendation for FY25. Mr. LaMaster said he would submit it as a recommendation.

The date of the next BEO Committee meeting is June 13th  at 1:00 pm.

* **State Plan Committee – Joe Bellil**

The committee last met on April 17th. The committee reviewed the recommendations. At the June 6th Executive Committee meeting, the recommendations will be discussed so they can be sent on for review at the June Quarterly meeting. After that MRC has a month to respond to the recommendations.

There has been discussion of the State Plan functions perhaps becoming part of the Policy Committee.

Mr. Bellil created two draft recommendations. **(See State Plan Committee- draft recommendations.docx.)**

* The first was about consulting with MRC about restructuring the SRC committees. Mr. Bellil wanted to get that down as a recommendation.
* The second was about improving communication between MRC consumers and their VRCs.

The next State Plan Committee meeting is scheduled for June 19th, but it may be canceled if all recommendations are approved at the June 6th Executive Committee meeting. If that happens, then the next State Plan Committee meeting would be on August 21st, when MRC’s responses to the recommendations would be reviewed.

Mr. Bellil asked that if committees are currently working on tasks, they try to write them as recommendations since SRC’s job is to advise MRC. He does ask anyone creating a recommendation to answer the three questions about the recommendations that the SRC has established as part of the recommendation process.

The next State Plan Committee meeting is on June 19th at 11:00 am, unless it is canceled, as described above.

* **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Council – Doug Mason #3**

The Council last met on April 16th.

The Council had been waiting for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) to approve moving ahead with the scorecard to be used to monitor MRC. MRC did receive tacit approval with one caveat. MRC must assign a priority to each of the 15 or 16 items on the scorecard as they cannot all be done at the same time. This will be a process and somewhat of a holdup. Robert Arnáu, who was the DEIA Manager, was promoted. The new DEIA manager has only been on board for less than a month but has taken a similar position within another EOHHS agency, so Mr. Arnáu is back in a temporary capacity. In addition, one of the Council Co-chairs will be going on maternity leave so she will need to be replaced.

If the priorities are set by the time of the June Executive Committee meeting, Ms. Mason will make sure the SRC can review the scorecard at that meeting.

* Policy Committee – Naomi Goldberg

There was no Policy Committee meeting in February. The Policy Committee last met on August 1st,2023.

The next Policy Committee meeting is currently scheduled for June 6th at 11:00 am.

* **Consumer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment Committee (CSNAC)**

There was no CSNAC meeting in February. The committee last met on August 21st,2023. There currently is no Chair for the committee.

At this point, the next CSNAC meeting has not yet been scheduled.

**Questions/Comments for Chairs:**

There were no questions or comments for the Chairs.

1. State Plan Recommendations – Joe Bellil

Mr. Bellil said everything was covered in his committee report.

1. MRC Updates –Amanda Baczko
   * + The topics of the next Disability Community Partnership Forum will be brain injury and guardianship and its alternatives.
     + The Explore Possibilities Summit is Wednesday, August 28th and Thursday, August 29th. It will be at the Four Points Sheraton Norwood, a very accessible location. August 28th is for the disability community and August 29th is for vendors and providers. (Regional staff development days will be in September this year.) MRC is excited to have a full day with vendors and providers. It is a new approach. Ms. Baczko will communicate with the SRC to see how the SRC wants to be present at the conference. She may reach out to members who are associated with disability organizations. She will discuss this with Chair Wood.
     + **Employer Recognition Day** is June 28th. MRC is inviting new employers, those who MRC thinks would be open to hiring people with disabilities. Ms. Baczko will get in touch with Mr. LaMaster. Invites to the event will go out next week. Then there will be tiered invites for specific groups. This will be held at the Four Points Sheraton Norwood.
     + The **quarterly newsletter** will go out in July. The focus will be on disability pride, with a sub-focus on anti-stigmatizing language regarding disability.

**Questions/Comments:**

* Can vendors nominate employers to be awarded/recognized?

Ms. Baczko loved that idea and will talk with Bill Allen and Joan Cimini.

* Can the SRC contribute something to the quarterly newsletter, perhaps about the work it is doing?

Mr. Bellil has reached out about placing a request for feedback about VR in the newsletter. The SRC can contribute to the newsletter.

* Mr. LaMaster suggested putting up a banner about the DETC at the Employer Recognition Day. He thinks it would be good marketing. He could do it with Mr. Bellil. Ms. Baczko said she could try to source some materials.
* Ms. Tosti posted a question in the chat about how vendors who have been disrespected by MRC can submit issues to the SRC. Ms. Baczko replied that those issues are addressed by the ombuds. That information is part of the vendors’ contracts with MRC. Ms. Tosti noted that if vendors are experiencing problems working with MRC, then consumers are not receiving the help they need. She feels this is an issue that the SRC can address. She would like the topic of vendor selection addressed. Ms. Baczko suggested that the SRC should think about making this a recommendation.

1. Open Mic

* Ms. Tosti noted that April was Autism Awareness Month and Alcohol Awareness Month. She shared links to YouTube channels from people with lived experience with autism and addiction.

<https://www.youtube.com/@Eryykc>

<https://www.youtube.com/@SmilesforMiles2024>

* A member’s 16-year-old daughter uses a wheelchair and will need car modifications and an adapted driving school. Ms. Baczko will provide him with information about vendors and funding sources outside of MRC. Even though his daughter is college-bound, he was encouraged to have her have an informational session with someone in her region to see what Pre-ETS may be able to offer her.
* May is Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month. MRC is providing training for staff in the form of AAPI jeopardy. Ms. Baczko will send it to SRC members. She requested that it not be circulated outside of SRC membership.
* May is Mental Health Awareness Month. The following link was shared in the chat:  
  <https://www.mhanational.org/mental-health-month>

The meeting was adjourned at 2:13 pm.

1. Upon request, attendees’ names are used when they contribute to the discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)