

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

**October 6, 2022**

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

### **Attendees:**

- Statewide Rehabilitation Council Members: Inez Canada, Doug Mason (ex-officio), Dawn Clark, Naomi Goldberg, Joe Bellil, Cheryl Scott, Olympia Stroud, Ronaldo Fujii, Steve LaMaster
- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Staff: Kate Biebel, Amanda Baczko

Please Note: This meeting was held remotely.

### **Meeting was called to order at 1:02 PM by the Chair.**

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:** Chair Canada asked whether there were any corrections to the September 2022 meeting minutes. Hearing none, Ms. Canada called for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Fujii motioned to approve the September minutes. Mr. Mason seconded. The September 2022 minutes were approved with no corrections.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- **Member Policies Update-** feedback from the group was shared as follows:
  - The proposed draft covers all the necessary points, it's easy to read, and simple to understand.
  - The document feels like it's geared specifically towards voting members. The request was to expand it beyond non-appointed members, since a lot of work is being done within committees, and we don't want to non-voting members to feel discounted. Chair Canada will ask General Counsel at MRC about whether non-voting members can be asked to adhere to SRC policies.
  - The Policy Committee is working on orientation materials and want to ensure they're not duplicating efforts.
    - The committee discussed how this should be integrated into the member orientation materials.
  - A consideration to add an additional version of this document for non-voting members was suggested, or a table describing responsibilities by member (voting, non-voting, MRC, etc.) which is shared in advance of formal nomination.
  - Could we support people through an informal appointment/covenant process/orientation to make sure they see this type of content in advance.
  - Comments will be used to make edits and the document will be sent to the full SRC for review and comment.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- **Committee Reports**
  - **Needs Assessment Committee- Ronaldo Fujii**
    - There was no meeting between the last Exec meeting and today. There has been background work to provide feedback to the vendors completing the service experience survey at MRC. The feedback was valuable and much

appreciated. Edits have been compiled and submitted to Ms. Baczko for final considerations. The next meeting date will be October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2:00-3:30.

- **Policy Committee – Naomi Goldberg**
  - The policy committee met on 10/6 to focus on creating new member orientation materials and a recommendation to have MRC create consumer facing materials on concepts central to VR. The group has reviewed several versions of orientation materials, are providing comments, and will then propose written and video-based materials to the Executive Committee. The next meeting date will be Thursday December 1<sup>st</sup>, 11:00-12:30.
- **State Plan Committee – Joe Bellil**
  - The last meeting occurred August 17<sup>th</sup>. Committee chairs reviewed MRC responses to recommendations. The FY23 recommendation updates were in the meeting materials and attached to the calendar invite for review. Committee Chairs are being asked to review their prior annual report write-ups and submit a new Annual Report write-ups by October 7<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Biebel advised the Committee to engage herself and Ms. Baczko for any data needs and engage Communications for design purposes. Mr. Bellil will reach out to Collen Casey to get submission deadlines and the form in which the content should be sent. The next Committee meeting takes place October 12<sup>th</sup>.
- **Business and Employment Opportunities Committee -Steve LaMaster**
  - No additional updates since full SRC meeting updates. The focus is on developing self-employment resource awareness, and SRC recruitment materials. The DMH State Mental Health Planning Council has an employment sub-committee who are hosting focus groups with individuals who have received CIES services. There is an interest in conducting focus groups with MRC, but given MRC has a vendor creating a provider/vendor survey, the Committee will instead partner with MRC survey development committee to get this work started. The next meeting is Thursday October 13<sup>th</sup> from 1:00-2:30.
- **MRC Diversity Equity Inclusion and Accessibility Council Representative- Doug Mason**
  - The last meeting took place on September 20<sup>th</sup>, where the group was introduced to the new DEI Manager, Robert Arnau. The group discussed collaboration across MRC for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Feedback was also discussed regarding the recent diversity trainings, and people's experiences participating. The Commissioner and Learning and Development Director are working with the vendor to build in some debrief sessions after the training, to address any feelings or experiences that come up as a result of attendance.
  - Doug did not receive any feedback or questions from the SRC members regarding DEI work but is still open to receiving feedback to take before the DEIA Council.
    - The Chair suggested coming up with questions to ask the SRC to respond to as a way of getting feedback on DEIA concerns and will schedule a meeting with Mr. Mason to draft these.
  - A calendar of additional training has not yet been provided, but Mr. Mason will work with Ms. Biebel and disseminate as soon as received.

- A question came up regarding who from SRC is receiving the Commissioner Communication. The Executive Committee should be receiving those invites, and in the future, we will ask the full SRC to opt in.
  - Ms. Biebel and Ms. Baczko will review the capacity for upcoming DEI trainings, and capacity for SRC members to attend.
- **2023 Meeting Calendar**
  - Chair Canada reviewed the SRC Meeting calendar with the Committee with a request for all Chairs to confirm dates are correct for the calendar year. Some members provided corrections. The calendar was updated during the meeting.
    - Mr. Fujii will check with CSNAC about changing meeting time to evening as he will be working fulltime in 2023 and will not be available to meet in the afternoons.
      - The Chair also raised whether lunch meetings once a month could be an option for the committee.
- **MRC Updates:**
  - **VR Operational & Service-Related Updates- Kate Biebel**
    - **Hybrid Model:**
      - Starting October 3<sup>rd</sup>, VR Counselors will be asked to report 1 day per week “in office.” Directors and Supervisors are coming in 2x/week. This is to provide scheduling flexibility and on-site meetings ensure we can flexibly meet consumer need. We continue to collect data to see the impact this is having on engagement. We are also trying to assess foot traffic for office walk-ins and collecting data to think about physical space and use of administrative support for front offices, as well as technology surrounding administrative needs.
      - MRC is introducing a new element into all staff performance evaluations around timely responsiveness, to lean into the values surrounding customer service and timely response.
    - **Next Gen Grant- Kate Biebel**
      - We just passed the one-year mark for this grant and are open for services. The work is focusing heavily on training, coaching, and supporting staff in a new way of doing business. A consideration was brought up for having the team come to present to the full SRC at the Quarterly meeting in March 2023.
    - **Space Updates- Kate Biebel**
      - No changes since last meeting; Taunton move next door is still in progress (co-locating w/other state agencies).
    - **Shifts in VR Leadership- Kate Biebel**
      - We have identified an Area Director for Springfield. Additionally, Jack Houliker, who used to reside in Job Placement and served as a Business Improvement Partner, is now the newly appointed Worcester Area Director.
      - We continue to have huge numbers of vacancies, particularly in VR. Ongoing meeting with HR to streamline the process for interns. Due to

staffing difficulties, we are working creatively to get new excitement about hiring and employment within MRC.

- **SRC Budget Update- Amanda Baczko**
  - RSA Preapproval was granted last week for the SRC budget. Chair Canada and Ms. Baczko are meeting with the MRC Temp Agency next week to post the position for applicants interested in serving as an Administrative Assistant.
- **Consumer Newsletter & Disability Forum- Amanda Baczko**
  - The next forum is happening Tuesday October 11<sup>th</sup>, 4:30-6:30 and the focus is on Housing Navigator and Employment Awareness Month. Registration information will be shared with the full SRC.
- **Q&A:**
  - **Question:** What is the status on Southbridge Entrance for the VR Area Office?
    - **Answer:** It has been fixed and is now open
  - **Question:** Can the SRC consider a state-wide housing effort to support people with disabilities getting work and their housing concerns?
    - **Answer:** Chair Canada indicated that this isn't a fit for the SRC at this moment for direct involvement as it doesn't fall directly under Vocational Rehabilitation, and we are struggling with bandwidth and need to focus on current priorities. All members are encouraged to participate in topics of interest outside of SRC to support the disability community.
  - **Question:** Labor and workforce development is preparing transition memos. Is MRC preparing a transition memo that the SRC should be aware of?
    - **Answer:** We've been asked to prepare a transition document at this time, that is a max length of 2 pages to cover all of MRC's divisions. It is very high level and discusses big initiatives, funding streams, and advisory bodies. SRC doesn't have to do anything at this point, but MRC will keep everyone in the loop on any next steps.
  - **Question:** Was the Explore Possibility Summit held virtually, or did it have a virtual component?
    - **Answer:** We only hosted an in-person Summit this year but had recent quarterly forums that continue to be held virtually.
- **Open Mic**
  - A virtual job fair happening hosted by Labor and Workforce Development is going to be statewide w/ priority entrance for Veterans during the first couple of hours.
    - Date: November 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>.
    - This is an opportunity for job seekers to engage with employers.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Fujii. The motion was seconded by Mr. LaMaster. Chair Canada adjourned the meeting at 2:35 pm