

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

**September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022**

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

### **Attendees:**

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

Please Note: This meeting was held remotely.

**Meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM by the Chair.**

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

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- **Member policies update**
  - Drafting recommendations from previous meeting into a single document. Ronaldo is helping with this. Will share with Sahara to ensure we are in compliance with Open Meeting Law (e.g., how to address people who are not in compliance with SRC by-laws).
  - Goal is to have draft for review at Oct SRC Ex Com meeting, before sending them to full SRC for review

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- **Committee Reports**
  - **State Plan Committee – Joe Bellil**
    - State Planning Committee met on Aug 17 to review MRC response to SRC Recommendations
    - Looking for responses from Committee chairs by Sept 16<sup>th</sup>
    - Discussed Annual Report – asked Committee Chairs to review last years report, and begin to draft this year’s content – first draft of Committee content due date of Oct 7<sup>th</sup>
  - **Policy Committee – Naomi Goldberg**
    - Policy Committee met in Aug. Focus on 2 recommendations. Looks like will focus on materials (and less on training)
  - **MRC Diversity Equity Inclusion and Accessibility Council Representative- Doug Mason**
    - DEI Council will be meeting tomorrow, providing training information on how to better understand bias as it relates to diversity equity and inclusion. This is taking place on September 8<sup>th</sup>. Doug, Kate and Amanda will send the message to the SRC on future trainings on this topic as it relates to availability for SRC members.

- Discussion occurred regarding expanding DEIA council membership, which is being tabled at this time. Additionally, the group has determined to utilize a 66% majority vote for all decisions.
  - **Needs Assessment Committee- Ronaldo Fujii**
    - The Committee did not have a meeting this past month but are working in the background. Mr. Fujii is working with an SRC member, Ms. Tosti on disability experiences and resources individuals can use to present at the next meeting.
    - The next Committee meeting will take place Thursday September 8th from 2-3:30pm.
  - Business and Employment Opportunities Committee -Steve LaMaster
    - Absent
- **MRC Updates:**
  - **VR Operational & Service-Related Updates- Kate Biebel**
    - **Hybrid Model:**
      - MRC VR Schedules for October 2022-March 2023 is currently being submitted for approval. Starting October 3<sup>rd</sup>, VR Counselors will be asked to report 1 day per week “in office.” More scheduling flexibility and on-site meetings ensure we can flexibly meet consumer need.
    - **Next Gen Grant- Kate Biebel**
      - We are finalizing hiring practices for Peer Mentors, and considering implementation of family partners
    - **Space Updates- Kate Biebel**
      - No changes since last meeting
    - **Shifts in VR Leadership- Kate Biebel**
      - Six VR Area Director postings (Malden, Taunton, Springfield, Worcester, Lowell, Hyannis)
      - One has been approved but we have not announced yet
        - Three are in approval process
        - Two are in interview stage
      - Generally, MRC is experiencing staffing shortages like other areas of the state. We currently have over 125 open positions.
  - **Budget Update- Amanda Baczko**
    - Amanda and Kate are meeting with CFO Tuesday of next week to begin processes for implementation of budget
    - Top Priority – bringing in an Admin assistant for SRC activities
  - **Consumer Newsletter & Disability Forum- Amanda Baczko**
    - **Newsletter:** The September Newsletter will be focused on young adult focused services (Partners for Youth with Disabilities, Pre-ETS, community orgs, etc.) and set to go out Friday of next week
    - **The next forum** will be scheduled for October 11th, focused on housing and disability employment awareness month
  - **National Disability Employment Awareness Month**
    - 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Hiring Event
    - Individual and Family Forums
    - Provider/Vendor Recognition Event
    - Social Media Marketing

- **MRC Explore Possibility Summit -Amanda Baczko**
  - We estimate around 300 individuals attended
  - We had Sarah Wiles, Naomi Goldberg, Ronaldo Fujii and Kevin Goodwin attending from the SRC; Kevin was on the planning committee
  - Over 30 exhibit tables, 6 workshops, photo booth for free professional headshots, keynote speaker, lunch performers, speed networking and more took place
  - Looking into other more accessible locations in the future based on attendee feedback
- **Questions:**
  - **Question:** Are there data we can see about the hybrid return to work?
    - **Answer:** we are still developing a baseline of data and have collected data for three months so far. We are happy to share data in future months once we have more collected. Additionally, the services experience survey is being collected from those we serve, and it will provide a more robust picture of data. Needs Assessment committee will report back on that in the end of October.
  - **Question:** Can you provide more detail on the schedule of the events for October?
    - **Answer:** We will work with Communications Department to send a list of National Disability Employment Awareness Month events MRC has planned
  - **Question:** How are messages about the trends with prioritizing the consumers' preference for engaging being communicated to VRCs and/or MRC offices? There are clients we are aware of where clients are being communicated to about taking the preference of the counselor when meeting with clients.
    - **Answer:** Offices are receiving reports consistently on engagement in the community and are constantly being messaged to about the prioritization of client preference for location of meeting. MRC would like to hear of any Offices where SRC is seeing a trend of messaging that does not align.
  - **Question: with temp hiring for an SRC Admin, will the SRC have access to applicant resumes and interviews?**
    - **Answer:** Yes, it would be helpful to identify a point of contact and group of people who will be responsible from SRC for supporting this hiring effort. Chair Canada will be the primary point of contact. The Chair expressed wanting the Committee Chairs to review resumes. Ms. Biebel will share copies of former administrative role interview questions with the SRC Executive Team as a sample.
  - **Comment:** Some organizations are losing people of color, so we need to ensure that this recruitment for the temp position and other positions build safe space and welcome and retain staff of color.
    - **Response:** The MRC Young Professionals Employee Resource Group is focusing on recruitment and retention as their primary priorities. They are going out and doing recruitment fairs, have developed a mentoring

program for MRC staff and building engagement. Ms. Biebel will follow up on data for those exiting MRC to see if there is any alarming racial diversity trends.

- **Question:** Is the MRC interview team diverse?
  - **Answer:** MRC has spent the last two years creating an expectation and structure and have invited Disability Inclusion Leaders to sit on interview panels as well.
- **Explore Possibility Summit Report- Ronaldo Fujii**
  - The agenda was very well developed and did not feel jam packed in a way that was overwhelming. It was a good place for the disability community to interact and know what was out there for them and connect with each other. There was a deaf networking event for the deaf and hard of hearing community
  - There was a recommendation to better adapt event activities for the blind, and improve language accessibility (e.g., reading level).
  - A presentation describing the event is available to those interested
  - This is a strong opportunity for the SRC to have presence with an exhibit table and showcase the work we do and can be a good space for future recruitment.
- **Questions & Comments:**
  - **Question:** Can SRC review the data from the summit satisfaction survey?
    - **Answer:** yes, Amanda will share data results with the SRC members
  - **Comment:** Attendees enjoyed the fact that workshops were repeated
  - **Comment:** Chair Canada referenced two conferences that have been circulated to the SRC: the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehab (CSAVR) Conference (Oct 31-Nov 2) and the National Coalition of SRC (NCSRC) Conference (Oct 29-30) both in San Antonio, TX; both require prior approval from Exec Office of Health and Human /services and the Rehabilitation Services Administration The deadline to request a slot for attendance is Wednesday September 7<sup>th</sup>. The Chair will send a reminder of the deadline to the full SRC
- **September SRC agenda:**
  - MRC updates from the Commissioner- Chair Canada will circulate a request for updates people are interested in hearing more about.
  - Explore Possibility Summit Update
  - Verbal reports from Committee Chairs
  - Housekeeping- difficulty achieving quorum and shifts in member participation, taking a pulse on evening meeting schedules in preparation for the FY 2023 SRC Calendar
  - Future meeting to include shout outs to MRC Liaisons for their support and work along the way (tabled for December meeting) as well as Executive team and members who go beyond the traditional expectations
- **Open Mic**
  - Ms. Scott- As part of the Massachusetts Workforce System, there is a two-day meeting happening across all workforce partners on 9/14-9/15 at the DCU Center in Worcester, designed to discuss and strategize service delivery and current labor market needs and making use of resources. If anyone is interested in attending, there are seats available.

This will be followed by the Mass Hire Annual Awards Ceremony. For more information:  
[www.massforward2022.com](http://www.massforward2022.com)

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Bellil. The motion was seconded by Mr. Fujii. Chair Canada adjourned the meeting at 2:33pm