

Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Meeting Minutes
March 18, 2021
1-3pm EST

Please note: this meeting was held virtually.

Attendees:

- **Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Members:** Joe Bellil; Inez Canada; Naomi Goldberg; Steve LaMaster; Dr. Lusa Lo; Katie Queally; Ellie Starr; Roseanna Woodmansee
- **SRC Ex Officio Members:** Kris Callahan (DDS), Kevin Goodwin, Michael Stepansky (DMH), Doug Mason, Commissioner Toni Wolf, Deputy Commissioner Kate Biebel, Paula Euber (VRC), James Carnazza (VRC)
- **Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Staff:** Bill Allen, Leigh Collupy, Amanda Costa, Bill Noone, Adam Garber, Adetokunbo Owolewa, Cassandra Pierre-Louis, Joan Phillips, Graham Porell, Fabienne Renelien Rachel Reyes
- **Public:** Mona Dorsinville, Mimi Reed, Ronaldo Fuji, Sadie Simone, Cheryl Scott, Jim W.

Minutes Approval- *Ms. Canada*

- Ms. Canada called for a motion to approve the December 2020 meeting minutes. Ms. Goldberg motioned, and Mr. Mason seconded. Minutes were approved with no changes.

New SRC Chair Vote – *Ms. Canada*

- Ms. Dawn Clark has resigned as chairperson of the SRC. Ms. Clark has provided many years of invaluable service to the SRC and will remain involved with the SRC in an advisory capacity. In addition, Ms. Clark will be taking a seat on the Brain Injury Commission to advise that body.
- Ms. Canada has been recommended to assume the chair of the SRC.
- Mr. LaMaster motioned to put a vote on the floor, to elect Ms. Canada as Chairperson. Ms. Start seconded the motion, and it was put to a vote. The vote passed with 6 yeas and no nay votes.

Committee Updates:

- Written updates were submitted to the Council members prior to the meeting. For the sake of time constraints, the Committee chairs did not present oral updates today.

Commissioner's Update- *Commissioner Toni Wolf*

- MRC is in good fiscal shape for Fiscal Year 21, we received an additional \$1.5 million Community Living funding.
- Commissioner Wolf anticipates no negative legislative developments related to MRC on the horizon.
- MRC is working out the "Future of Work" initiative as announced by Governor Backer and Secretary Sudders, which tentatively looks like a 40% reduction in square footage. This may feature drop in workspaces for staff, who will work on a flexibility hybrid model. Staff will have some days working remote and other days at a drop-in space. MRC is looking at co-locations with sister agencies where appropriate. Regarding space considerations, Pittsfield, New Bedford, Roxbury, and Somerville are some of the office leases that are expiring this year. Any reduction in office footprint will not impact client services.
- MRC has spent \$6.7 million dollars on the Technology Acquisition project, which provides computers, training, and other IT resources to MRC clients who need them.

- MRC piloted a successful consumer IT helpline in western MA.
- MRC has established a successful cybersecurity training program for individuals with disabilities receiving MRC services, in partnership with Holyoke Community College and Cisco, Incorporated. MRC has also established a program to help MRC service recipients become Substance Use Disorder counselors.
- Commissioner Wolf also mentioned the ongoing Diversity Equity and Inclusion work at MRC. A recent SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis was conducted at MRC regarding diversity, equity and inclusion, and the results were presented to agency staff. A final report including next steps will be available by summer.
- The Commissioner has attended virtual visits to Vocational Rehabilitation offices and Community Living programs, to see how things are going during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Mr. Mason asked about a motion to accept Commissioner Wolf's MRC update. Ms. Canada mentioned that Commissioner Wolf's update is intended to be informational, and not meant to contain actionable items. The Council then moved to hold a vote of confidence on the Commissioner's report. Ms. Starr made the motion. Mr. Mason and Ms. Goldberg seconded, and the motion was passed.

Innovation Grant Presentation-*Greg Schmieg and Janet LaBreck of Synergy Consultants:*

- Synergy Consultants is working with MRC to draft a grant proposal for submission to the Rehabilitation Services Administration, at the U.S. Department of Education.
- This is a five-year grant award up to \$18 million.
- The idea is to innovate vocational rehabilitation services and place more clients in competitive employment. The grant will emphasize high paying, benefitted careers.
- This grant application will be submitted in consortium with the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, and the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing.
- The proposed model will be an alternative to the traditional Vocational Rehabilitation model for service delivery. The premise for the model focuses on providing a culturally competent, self-sufficiency driven services in a team service delivery model.
- After the presentation and discussion, a vote of confidence in the form of an SRC letter of support for the grant submission to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) was brought to the floor. Ms. Goldberg motioned for the vote of confidence, Mr. Bellil seconded. A roll call vote was held, and the motion passed with 8 yeas and none opposed.

Diversity Equity& Inclusion Request for Response- *Ms. Canada, Ms. Biebel*

- The Statewide Rehabilitation Council has drafted and posted a Request for Response (RFR) in partnership with MRC, for a vendor to come in and work on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and strategic plan development with the council.
- The proposed timeline for proposed activities is April 2021-December 2021.
- There were five proposal priorities identified by the SRC:
 1. Establish an assessment of SRC members' existing knowledge of and capacity to implement Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Leadership skill sets.
 2. Conduct DEI Cultural Sensitivity Training and Education for council members and SRC Leadership.
 3. Conduct SRC board training on effective membership recruitment and general operationalization of the SRC
 4. Establish a strategic plan that refines the Council's vision/mission, supports recruitment for diverse membership, develops processes for governing all SRC activities with a Diversity, Equity

and Inclusion Lens, and institutes training on how to recognize disparate impact on Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC)

5. Roadmap & Benchmark Development that includes clear timelines, metrics, role definitions, expectations and markers of success for this work.

Office of Individual & Family Engagement- *Amanda Costa*

- Ms. Costa gave a brief overview of the Office of Individual and Family Engagement.
- The main purpose of the office is to elevate the voices of individuals with disabilities and their families and chosen family allies.
- MRC will implement a “for us by us” approach, partnering with individuals with disabilities, family members and MRC Employee Champions as co-creators for this office. These partners will have a voice at MRC decision making tables, including policy development, hiring decisions, service development and delivery decisions, and have a general pulse on the work and needs of MRC service recipients and their families.

Open meeting:

- Mr. Bellil asked the Council and group attending about applying for state employment. He was asking on the behalf of a disabled applicant he knows.
 - MassCareers was mentioned as a resource.
 - All state jobs, apart from the judiciary and the Attorney General’s office are listed on MassCareers.
 - Jobs close within 14 days, so it is good to check the page often.
 - MRC Job Placement Specialists can assist an MRC client with state employment opportunities.
 - Identifying as an applicant with a disability was suggested as a helpful thing to do.
 - Cover letters tailored to minimum entrance requirements was also suggested as a helpful tactic.
 - Agency Diversity Officers are often listed on state postings. They are a helpful resource.

Next Full SRC Meeting

- June 17, 2021, 1pm-3pm
- Please note: this will be a virtual meeting

Ms. Canada called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Mason motioned to adjourn; with a seconded by Mr. Bellil. Meeting adjourned at 1:55pm.