



MASSACHUSETTS REHABILITATION COMMISSION STATEWIDE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Chairperson
Dawn Clark

Vice Chairperson

Secretary

Members at Large

Statewide Rehabilitation Council

Four Point Sheraton Hotel

1125 Boston Providence Turnpike, Norwood MA, 02062

June 27, 2019

1:15pm-3:15pm

Attendees: Dawn Clark (SRC), Joseph Panciotti (Ex-officio), Katy O'Neil (SRC), Doug Mason, Joe Bellil (SRC), Kevin Goodwin (Ex-officio), Rebekah Carter (Public) Kris Callahan (ADD), Graham Porell (MRC) Ann Marie Paulson (ex-officio), Kate Biebel (MRC), Fabienne Renelien-Hannigan (MRC), Jessica Cimini (MRC), Donald Campbell (Public) Adetokunbo Owolewa (MRC), Scott Leung (MRC), Erik Nordahl (MRC), Naomi Goldberg (SRC), Paula Euber (MRC), Joan Phillips (MRC), Erik Nordahl (MRC)

Call to Order/Introductions

Before the minutes were reviewed Dawn made to make an announcement that the Chairperson for the Business and Employment Opportunity Committee, Steve Aalto, has resigned from the SRC.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Joe Bellil made a motion to approve the March 21, 2019 meeting minutes as written. Naomi seconded the motion. All in favor.

State Plan Recommendation

Joe presented the seven FY2020 Recommendations approved by the Executive Committee to the Council for approval to be presented to the MRC. Each recommendation has been assigned to an SRC Subcommittee to work on and advise the MRC on them.

Joe made the motion to move forward with the recommendations for approval by the SRC. Naomi seconded the motion. Approval of the recommendation: all in favor

Doug asked about the results of last year's recommendations and if there were any accomplishments, and if anything that was not accomplished be incorporated in this report?

Commissioners Update

Fiscal - With the support of EHS Secretary Marylou Sudders, Governor Baker has proposed an additional 9.8 million dollars be included into MRC's base. This includes 6.1 million dollars specifically for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), consumer services, it also includes 1.1 million dollars for the VR state match. Other dollars will go to Community Living (CL) and other services.

Statewide Employment Services (SES) - The Statewide Employment Services (SES) provides supported employment and extended supports to our consumers after employment. Although SES is a mobile unit, they have been operating out of the Administrative Office. Moving forward, SES staff will be based in field offices - details are still being worked out.

SES has two roles: When someone comes in the door and are identified as an individual who would need additional supports above and beyond what our VR Counselors could provide in order to obtain and maintain employment they would be referred to the SES program. The other role is individuals who obtain employment and the kind of employment is identified that they will need long-term supports, they would be referred to SES for long term supports. These supports are vendor delivered.

Eligibility Unit Pilot Program Update

Paula presented on the start of the Eligibility Unit being piloted in the Western part of the state in an effort to streamline the eligibility process, making it easier for the consumer. There are seven counselors who are handling intakes and eligibility. The unit will be meeting to discuss adding pieces of our community living division as well as integrating the state-wide head injury program (SHIP) and the 688 program, which is how students access VR services or adult services that they are entitled to.

Questions

Q. Is 688 same as turning 22?

A. The 688 Program is a piece of legislation that in Massachusetts mandates that when kids are graduating from high school, if they're on an I.E.P., that there's something for them to go too. 688 helps to steer them to an adult service agency, if it is the Department of Mental Health, Developmental Services, whatever agency would best help them as grownups. The Turning 22 Program is a system for individuals with more complex needs, where they may not be able to maintain the ability to live independently without supports. So, Turning 22 is the point where they have to make that transition from school to an adult program.

Q. Is there an Eligibility Unit in the North and South Districts?

A. The six month pilot is limited to the Area Offices in the West District.

Q. How will we measure consumer satisfaction?

A. We'll use surveys, and other data methods to measure consumer and staff satisfaction.

Q. Will Deaf & Hard of Hearing counselors be part of the eligibility unit?

A. There will be one Deaf and Hard of Hearing counselor, and one Bi-lingual (Spanish) counselor.

Q. Does this pilot eligibility process start after an application is complete?

A. The process starts at initial referral to VR.

Q. Will new applicants have to attend an orientation session, or will they watch an orientation video?

A. We want to be accessible to applicants wherever they are. If we do a new orientation video, we want it short, to the point.

Q. Will in-person orientation be required?

A. In-person orientations will not be required. They've been a barrier to many applicants in the past.

Q. Is it business as usual in the other parts of the state?

A. Yes, it is business as usual outside of the West District.

CIES & Pre-ETS

CIES and Pre-ETS are both in the process of being reprocured, with new contracts with providers delivering CIES and Pre-ETS to begin July 1, 2019. The new Pre-ETS model will both include students as young as 14, and will also serve potentially eligible (PE) students. PE students will receive more of a light touch, an introduction to the world of work so that folks can kind of get a sense as to whether or not, what areas they need support in and whether or not they want to go down that path towards employment. If someone needs more of those individualized services or intensives, then they would get referred for a vocational rehabilitation referral to our offices.

MRC & DMH Employment Initiative

Beginning July 1, 2019, MRC is beginning the MRC/DMH Employment Initiative. MRC is in the process of hiring 15 mental health specialty qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors specifically to support DMH ACCS consumers. Counselors will use an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) model to support job-seekers.

Maximum Obligation

Maximum Obligation is a defined dollar amount that a consumer can access to work towards a consumer's employment goal. While MRC's Max Ob was decreased in FY19, MRC will increase Max Ob for July 1, 2019. The first category has to do with vocational training, which is now up to \$2000. Occupational licenses,

equipment, is \$500. Higher education tuition and fees that is \$1600. Books and education, \$400. Driver's education, \$600. Maintenance and transportation \$400 for the life of the case. MRC will review Max Ob twice a year, in November and May, to see if our financial situation changes, and see if we need to amend what we are able to offer through Max Ob.

MRC Roadmap

Phase one of the Roadmap started in February of this year and it goes through August 2020. These are the things that we've identified as an agency that have the highest priority to us that we want to spend time and resources moving forward in these first 18 months. There were 9 priority areas identified to focus on in Phase 1 including: Organizational Redesign; Increasing Collaboration between Center and Program Administration Functions; Consolidating Intake and Eligibility Processes; Incorporating Accountability Measures for Vendors in Contracts; Establishing a Formal Policy Office; Integrating Disparate Technology Systems; Developing a Communication Plan Inclusive of Staff Feedback; Streamlining Contract Management Systems and Approval Processes; and Develop an Office of Consumer Engagement and Family Support.

Development of Office of Consumer and Family Engagement

Erik discussed his initial process for developing an Office of Consumer and Family Engagement. Erik been going across the Commonwealth to meet with advocates, clients, consumers, interested stakeholders to gather their ideas on how they see the Office of Consumers and Family Engagement fitting within MRC. We discussed how is this going to interact with the SRC? This is something the SRC already does, but, the SRC is regulatory created for VR, but are not in charged with advising in terms of the other functions of MRC. Some version of Consumer Engagement has existed in MRC over the years, but this format will be new, and include larger systems level thinking to encourage and support Consumer and Family Engagement across VR and Community Living.

Erik reported on what he has heard to date during his "research phase" of the work. A lot of folks said "You know, I've participated in groups like this, and I was the token guy in a wheelchair and asked about how do we serve people with disabilities and I felt like I wasn't really listened to." People didn't want this to be sort of a token representation of involvement in MRC policy. They wanted a voice and they wanted to be heard within these groups.

As part of that - absence of tokenism people really thought that it would be a good idea for the folks that are participating to be paid. We're a VR commission, and we help people find work, that's a part of our role, and why not hire, not employees, but contractors, and help them go through the process, establish what we're looking for these groups, and pay them for their time.

Meeting adjourned 4:15

Next Meeting Date: September 19, 2019