



MASSACHUSETTS REHABILITATION COMMISSION

STATEWIDE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

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Dawn Clark

Vice Chairperson
Alan Greene

Secretary
James Riley

Members at Large
Steve Aalto Roxanne Hoke-Chandler

State Rehabilitation Council

Plymouth Public Library

April 4, 2017

1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M.

Meeting Minutes

Call to Order/Introduction

Attendance:

SRC statutory members: were in attendance: Dawn Clark, Alan Greene, Jim Riley, Roxanne Hoke-Chandler, Steve Aalto, , Rich Colantonio–(waiting for appointment), Kristin Britton (Director Developmental Disability Services), Doug Mason, Joan Phillips - Assistant Commissioner Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission [MRC], Naomi Goldberg -Assistant Director Client Assistance Program [CAP] -Massachusetts Office on Disability (remote participation), Joe Bellil- (remote participation)

Ex-officio: Kevin Goodwin, Annmarie Paulson, Joe Panciotti

MRC Staff - Mitch Zahn -Area Director (Acting) MRC Plymouth Area Office, Vocational Rehabilitation [VR] Program; Josh Mendelsohn - Assistant Commissioner for the MRC Community Living Division; Josh Boardman- Supervisor MRC Consumer Involvement Program

Introduction:

Dawn Clark gave a discussion about the new State Rehabilitation Council Executive Committee and introduced each member: Dawn Clark - Chairperson, Alan Greene - Vice Chairperson, Jim Riley Secretary, Roxanne Hoke-Chandler Member at Large, Steve Aalto- Member at Large

Remarks from Mitch Zahn - Acting South District Area Director

- Mitch Zahn provided the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) with the following Southern District Updates:
- At this time there is no Area Director for the Plymouth Area Office, Mitch Zahn is Acting Director at this time, and search is on for a new Area Director is underway.
- There are 9 Offices in the Southern District and as of April 1, 2017 these offices are serving over 11,000 Consumers.
- The VR Staff from the Southern District are serving 1023 High School Students, as part of the Transition Services program, established by the Federal Workforce Innovation Act [WIOA]. Each High School in the Southern District has an assigned MRC VR representative as a liaison to work with High School Students and their families as part of the Transition process, to help these individuals understand how the VR process works as they move from the Educational system into the Adult Services systems. Each MRC VR Liaison must spend at least 7.5 hours p/week. Roxanne Hope-Chandler asked if each High School in Massachusetts had an MRC Liaison in it. Assistant Commissioner Joan Phillips said there are over 400 High Schools in Massachusetts and slightly over 200 VR Counselors, because of this, the MRC has tasked each VR Counselor to work directly with Youth and their families as part of the Transition process.
- The Southern District is on target to meet this year's goals of serving and assisting consumers in finding employment.

Remarks from Joan Philips- Assistant Commissioner of the MRC VR Program

- Vocational Rehabilitation is at about 75% through the State Fiscal year and is at 90% of the Employment Goal
- Pre-Employment Transition Services for Youth Transitioning from the Educational Systems to the Adult Services VR program are on goal for this year.
- There are approximately 20 Employment Vendors who have contracted with the MRC to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services [PRETS], as part of the new Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act [WIOA]. There are an additional 15 Vendors in the approval process and possibly some will be awarded contracts with the MRC at the end of April, or early May.
- MRC's relationship with the Development Disability Services [DDS] Agency has increased in the last two years, from 553 DDS Consumers to 785 DDS Consumers. Approximately 130 DDS Consumers were placed in employment this year.

- Due to recent MRC Senior staff retirements, there are ongoing struggles related to key management decisions around the regions. Doug Mason questioned if there are significant senior staff openings throughout the MRC Districts, how this will affect the upcoming RSA audit. Joan Phillips responded by saying existing senior staff from other Areas are splitting time in those offices without senior staff, so VR staff in those offices is supported without a manager. Joan Phillips said she hopes by the end of April MRC senior staff vacancies will be filled. Alan Greene questioned how the MRC sourcing people to fill these senior staff vacancies is. Joan Phillips said this is being done by looking both internally and externally.
- There will be an MRC Hiring Event, May 15, 2017 for VR Consumers who have interests and skills for positions with Federal contractors, who are associated with the Federal Office of Contractor Compliance Program [OFCCP].
- There will be an MRC job driven training graduation on April 20, 2017 at the State House, MRC graduates from this training will have skills for working with companies such as CVS [Pharmacy Technician], Home Depot [Customer Service] - who work directly with the MRC in the training of VR clients who have the interests in and skills for such positions.

Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act WIOA update

- The rules are final and there are no major changes anticipated.
- The WIOA program requires new longer term tracking of VR Consumers employment status. The previous RSA rules only required tracking of a VR Consumer for 90 days of employment. The new WIOA rules requires tracking employment for 6 months and 12 months of staying at the job.
- Also skills gain and credentialing [Example - college courses] will also be tracked/evaluated as part of the new WIOA tracking requirements.

Remarks by Josh Mendelsohn – Assistant Commissioner Community Living

- Kasper Goshgarian [Acting Commissioner of the MRC] was going to present the MRC Budget for this year but could not attend today's meeting, due to a conflict of meetings. Josh Mendelsohn gave a high level overview presentation of the Budget process- referencing the "Massachusetts Budget Process" document [Attached]. Most MRC VR Funds come from the Federal Funds. A complete MRC Budget Presentation will be made at the next SRC Full Council meeting in June at the Burlington Library.

Approval of the meeting minutes

- Dawn Clark asked for Approval of the December 16, 2016 previous SRC Quarterly Meeting Minutes. Doug Mason made the motion to accept with Rich Colantonio seconding. The meeting minutes, including recent By-Law changes were accepted.

Old Business:

- Josh Boardman gave a brief overview of the gubernatorial appointments. There are still 10 openings to complete the SRC (Full Council). Josh Boardman will have a complete list of existing SRC members, the open positions with the SRC standing committee membership of each member and their membership category for the next SRC meeting at the Burlington Public Library in June.
- Josh Boardman stated that there is a new Youth Appointee [Kathrine Quigley] to the SRC .Jim Riley suggested that it may be beneficial for this individual to attend the next SRC meeting in June.

Dawn Clark gave an update about the different SRC Standing Committees:

- The Artists Beyond Challenges Sub-Committee will no longer be a stand-alone Sub-Committee, this sub-committee is being moved back into the Unserved/Underserved Committee, due to lack of attendance. Rich Colantonio questioned if there Artist Beyond Challenges MRC Website was up and running yet. Dawn Clark stated not yet, but is in process and hopefully would be up and running later this summer.
- Dawn Clark explained that according to the existing SRC By-Laws the SRC Chairperson can approve all Standing Committee Chairs. The decision for this year is that all existing current chairs will remain the same. The Executive Committee concurred with this.
- Meeting minutes from this meeting, will automatically be sent out to all attendees of this meeting.
- Ms. Clark asked for anyone attending any SRC meetings that if they have suggestions for SRC Goals, to give them to any member of the SRC Executive Committee, to help build more involvement in addressing the concerns of the public.

Presentation of the Client Assistance Program

- Naomi Goldberg - Assistant Director Client Assistance Program [CAP] - Massachusetts Office on Disability provided an overview of the Client Assistance Program
- The primary mission is for people with disabilities to participate in all aspects of life. The CAP program is funded through a federal grant and as part of this grant the MOD is required to advertise and advise that VR Services exist, what the VR services are and how to get access to them.
- The goal of CAP is to assist VR consumers who have an interest in or are part of the MRC VR Program who are having issues.
- Answer questions from the public and Track Systematic Problems
- All VR agencies are required to insure their consumers are aware that the Client Assistance Program exists and that if they are having issues/concerns they can contact CAP to discuss their issues. Mitch Zahn stated that information on the CAP is in the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation consumer handbook.
- That a staff member of the MOD must be part of the State Rehabilitation Council by statute (law).
- Dawn Clark Asked Naomi Goldberg if there were any specific issues that CAP is aware of that the SRC could look into and address. Naomi did not have any specifics at this time.

Old Business Open Questions:

- Joe Panciotti stated that over 3 meetings previous there were questions raised on the State As a Model Employer [SAME] program and that he thought there was an agreement about publishing a quarterly report, but he had not seen anything since the new Governors Administration had come into office. Dawn Clark thanked Joe for bringing this question up as there seems to nothing being discussed anywhere on this subject. Joe Panciotti suggested brining in the Director of the Massachusetts Office on Disability [David D'Arcangelo] to give the SRC an update on what if anything is happening with the SAME Program. Dawn Clark took this suggestion and will try to have David D'Arcangelo come to one of the next SRC meetings to address this subject. *Joan Phillips suggested that there is a good contact in the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity - Juanita Allen that could give this committee some update.* Joan Phillips stated that there is some hiring of Individuals with disabilities in the state agencies, - but not on the scale we want it to be.

Needs Assessment Survey/Satisfaction Survey Committee

- Rich Colantonio- SRC chair of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Committee gave a presentation on the recently completed Needs Assessment Survey [Attached] and an update on the current Needs Assessment Survey [Attached] and that there has been updates to include Youth in Transition. Rich explained that at the last VR Consumer Conference, specific time was set aside for a Focus Group of Consumers to come in and take the VR Consumer Survey and discuss points of interests and concerns. Rich explained that these Focus Group meetings have been beneficial and there will be another series of Focus group meetings at the upcoming VR Consumer Conference - which will be on June 29, 2017.
- Josh Boardman spoke briefly about the VR Customer Satisfaction Survey, which is in the process of being finalized. Annmarie Paulson suggested that due to the significant amount of data coming from the Customer satisfaction Survey, presentations on results/findings should be done in two separate SRC Full Committee meetings

SRC Committee minutes

- Dawn Clark gave an overview on her proposals on ways to minimize committee minutes being distributed out at SRC meetings and to have such reports minimized put into 1 or 2 pages with key points/issues discussed and would be distributed to SRC members two weeks prior to the SRC meetings.

Open Mic:

- Doug Mason commented on the December 16, 2016 SRC retreat that it was informative and productive and that in his opinion, every SRC appointed member and ex-officio member should have the opportunity to attend this type retreat/meeting.
- Joe Panciotti thanked the MRC for their help in maintaining the Cambridge LD/ADHD Support group he is associated with. Joe also raised a subject he has previously questioned- Is there an MRC supported Peer Support program, where individuals such as himself, could be brought in to work with/help VR Consumers with similar disabilities if they have problems. Joe thought such a Peer Support program would be less costly than psychiatric counseling. What can the SRC Council do on possibly building a Peer Support Program?

- AnnMarie Paulson discussed a subject that the Massachusetts Senior Action Advocacy Council works on many of the same issues the SRC works on and suggested possibly having a discussion between the Senior Action Advocacy Chair and the SRC Chair.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM