

## Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Meeting Minutes

December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 5-7pm EST

Please note: this meeting was held virtually.

### Attendees:

- **Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Members:** Inez Canada, Joe Bellil, Christine Tosti, Naomi Goldberg, Rosanna Woodmansee, Steve LaMaster, Paula Euber (VRC), Heather Wood, Dawn Clark, Ellie Starr, Rebecca Davis, Cheryl Scott
- **SRC Ex Officio Members:** Kate Biebel (MRC Deputy Commissioner), Kevin Goodwin, Doug Mason, Sadie Simone (SILC); Liz Fancher (DDC); Sarah Wiles (CAP)
- **Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Staff:** Commissioner Toni Wolf, Amanda Baczko, Bill Noone, Jessica Cimini
- **Public:** Boyang Bian, Sarah Carroll

### 1. Call to Order/Introductions

- a. Meeting was called to Order at 5:01 pm by the Chair.
- b. Ms. Baczko read off the meeting participant list. Additionally, Chair Canada had Sarah Carroll and Boyang Bian who are interested in joining the SRC introduce themselves and briefly talk about their interest in becoming voting members of the SRC.

### 2. Reading Of the Vision and Mission Statement:

Ms. Goldberg read the SRC Mission and Vision Statement.

### 3. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- a. Ms. Canada called for a motion to approve the September 2022 Quarterly meeting minutes. Mr. Bellil motioned for approval of the minutes. Ms. Goldberg seconded. Minutes were approved with no corrections.

### 4. Old Business

- a. **New Administrative Support (Inez Canada).** We had someone identified who was going to serve in this role, but they had to decline the offer due to health issues. If anyone knows someone who is of interest for this administrative position, please have their resume sent to Chair Canada, Kate Biebel and Amanda Baczko.
- b. **Finalized SRC Member Policies:** These documents are an opportunity to understand expectations and guidance around your role and contributions as an SRC member. These policies will apply to all individuals who attend SRC meetings, whether a voting member, Ex Officio or member of the public. This will ensure we are all working in a spirit of collaboration. Chair Canada thanked Mr. Fujii for his efforts to make these documents feel welcoming and suggested members share a thank you with Mr. Fujii for his efforts.

### 5. New Business

- a. **Executive Committee report (2023 calendar, 2023 Annual Report; Recruitment) (Inez Canada):**
  - i. **Recruitment:** We still have some seats vacant on the SRC that we need to identify members for, including a seat for the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) rep. Chair Canada will be working with Ms. Sadie Simone to identify someone to fill the SILC seat. There are currently three interested members of the public who are looking to formally join the SRC, two of which were able to join today's meeting and introduce themselves.
  - ii. **2023 Calendar:** Ms. Biebel walked the group through the 2023 calendar that enables us to set SRC meetings for the coming year. The 2023 meeting calendar (see attachment) was

reviewed. The full SRC meeting will continue to take place after hours. Additionally, a change was noted regarding the Needs Assessment Committee, which will now be meeting after hours monthly, to account for the Chair's work schedule. If anyone would like to receive meeting minutes and calendar invites for any Committees, they can reach out to Chair Canada, Ms. Baczko or Ms. Biebel.

- iii. Chair Canada highlighted the strong work of all Committee members, resulting in a thorough report. She noted that the SRC should be proud of its accomplishments in 2022. She recommended that everyone read the report, especially the article on Doug Mason, and send the report to their colleagues and friends. Chair Canada thanked Ms. Colleen Casey and the MRC Communications Team for a well-designed Annual Report.
- b. **MRC Liaison Recognition-** The SRC shared a thank you card that was emailed to all MRC SRC Liaisons, highlighting their strong partnership, highlighting the work over the past year, and messages of thanks from various SRC members.
- c. **Committee Reports:**
  - i. **MRC DEI-A Council Rep. (Doug Mason)-** Mr. Mason would like to create a report highlighting all the work this past year that's taken place in the DEI-A Council. Mr. Mason will also be outreaching Mr. Noone and Ms. Baczko regarding some additional work activities including the service experience survey and other data collection activities. Mr. Mason has been participating in the DEI deep dive conversations and has been learning more about MRC staff and their insight into Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Mr. Mason encourages anyone interested to attend these from the SRC, and Chair Canada seconded, adding that the conversations were helpful and touched on disrupting bias and authentic workplaces.
  - ii. **State Plan Committee (Joe Bellil)-** Mr. Bellil shared that potential SRC members should consider attending an Executive Committee meeting to learn more about the work of the SRC. The State Plan Committee is going to work with MRC to develop some vocational rehabilitation goals, and SRC will provide input. In the next few months, starting in February 2023, the State Plan Committee will work with other committees to develop the FY 2024 recommendations. The Committee works to get input from consumers regarding getting recommendations to MRC, which is a great way to get consumer input into this work. MRC will have 30 days to respond back, and can agree, disagree, or make other comments to the recommendations. The Committees will then work on the recommendations, with support from the State Plan Committee October- February. From there, the recommendation process starts again. The State Plan Committee also helps in the development of the SRC Annual Report.
  - iii. **Needs Assessment Committee (Ronaldo Fujii)-** Mr. Fujii was absent from this meeting, so his report was not shared.
  - iv. **Business Employment Opportunity (Steve LaMaster)-** For the next year, the Committee is working on supporting individuals with disabilities by promoting awareness of MassCareers job opportunities and ensure community organizations and individuals can successfully navigate the website and apply for a job through MassCareers. The second priority of the Committee is working with MRC liaison Bill Allen (MRC) to partner on an effort to improve employment of individuals with disabilities in State Agencies. The Committee will also help MRC increase its baseline understanding of self-employment and developing and identifying self-employment resources. The Committee is working with researcher and entrepreneur, Dr. Laysha Ostrow, on this endeavor. Helping to ensure rehab counselors at MRC have support and resources to support individuals seeking self-employment opportunities.
  - v. **Policy Committee (Naomi Goldberg)-** The Committee is focused on two priority areas, including developing introductory and orientation related materials for new SRC members. The other recommendation for the Policy Committee is around creating consumer friendly materials, explaining in basic terms, what to expect as a consumer of VR services. The group

plans to draft some basic fact sheets about key VR concept (e.g., IPE, Informed choice, etc.). These fact sheets will be reviewed with MRC for feedback and then recommended for use with consumers.

- vi. **Committee Recruitment:** A document was circulated that will allow SRC members to indicate their interest in membership on SRC Committees for the coming year. All individuals should fill this form out, including those on a current committee that wish to continue their involvement. Completed forms should be emailed to Chair Canada ([Inez.s.canada@mass.gov](mailto:Inez.s.canada@mass.gov))

- vii. **Questions & Comments for Committee Chairs:**

- **Comment-** MRC is going to be a part of project on entrepreneurship with Comm core, and Commissioner Wolf suggested Mr. LaMaster's Committee connect with these individuals.
- **Question-** When were the last Policy Committee meetings?
  - a. The Policy Committee meets every other month, and the last meeting was on the first Thursday of November.
- **Comment-** the Committee meetings for 2023 have been scheduled and the invites will go out late December early January so that people can put them on their calendars.

- d. **MRC Commissioner's Update & Report**

- i. **Commissioner Wolf** started by recognizing and welcoming the new faces in the room. Commissioner also thanked Mr. Mason for sharing his story for the SRC Annual Report
- ii. **Fiscal Update:** MRC VR is federally funded; we are in a good place this year but Congress has yet to vote to pass the federal budget so we are waiting to hear if there is a stopgap that will be signed to support a budget so there is not a delay in funding. MRC has received ARPA funds to support VR and Community Living services in the meantime.
- iii. **Staffing:**
  - MRC has roughly 50 positions vacant in Vocational Rehabilitation, some are due to retirements and others to the expansion due to the NextGen Grant and general departures from the Agency. We are working hard on hiring. Kudos were given to Ms. Cimini to develop a career pathway for our Administrative Staff and creating advancement opportunities for Clerks. The roles developed have included substantial training.
  - Ms Cimini added that three district administrative positions were created, which will have a positive impact on our relationship with vendors. This will also help alleviate some administrative work from Business Improvement Partners, so they can focus their time on technical assistance and support for vendors.
  - Additionally, there are eighteen supervisory positions open statewide, and roughly 30 positions that will be posted. We are proud of MRC for leading administrative staff through this transition.
  - There is a massive interpreter shortage within MRC, the Commonwealth, and the Country. MRC is partnering with Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH), to look at these barriers, including addressing salary gaps for state agency Interpreters. MCDHH Commissioner Dr. Opeoluwa Sotonwa has been a great partner to MRC to identify recruitment strategies.
- iv. **Performance Recognition Program-** MRC hosted their employee awards celebration for Movers and Shakers within the Agency. We hosted the event at the State House, with opening remarks from the Executive office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) Secretary, Marylou Sudders.
- v. **DEI-A Efforts:** We have had several challenges with our DEIA Council, largely due to several transitions in our DEI Managers. We haven't made as much progress as we'd like due to a lot of transition, but we are working closely with EOHHS to look at systemic issues, as well as

MRC based issues. MRC put a lot of effort into creating the DEI series and are glad SRC members were able to join. We have more to do!

vi. **Questions:**

- **The city did something unique for teachers, paying for them to go to school, and expecting a certain number of years of service in return. Could we do that for interpreters?**

a. There's a major effort on loan repayment for Interpreters and state service, and a lot of conversations surrounding that work for Massachusetts. MRC also has been seeking out internship pathways to get interpreters into the field. There are issues surrounding needing a level of professional experience beyond those just graduating from school, but these are ongoing discussions to help create mentoring programs to address this. We currently have New Bedford and Braintree as priority areas to recruit Interpreters and are creating an ad with some of our interpreter staff to spread the word.

vii. We have a new Governor coming in and are yet to know who the Cabinet level staff appointed are. There is no information we can share at this time regarding the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

viii. Commissioner closed by recognizing the group for the wonderful work accomplished, and how the Annual Report was a great product for displaying that work.

6. **Open Meeting:**

- a. The MRC Team will be joining in March to provide an update on NextGen.
- b. A shout out to MRC was given for funding and support for an amazing service animal for a consumer!
- c. The group went around and wished each other a happy holiday and health in the new year. There was also a recognition by many that this can be a difficult time for individuals as well.

The Chair called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Starr motioned to adjourn. Ms. Scott seconded. **Meeting was adjourned at 6:12pm.**