



# MASSACHUSETTS REHABILITATION COMMISSION

## STATEWIDE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

**Chairperson**  
Dawn Clark

**Vice Chairperson**  
Alan Greene

**Secretary**  
James Riley

**Members at Large**  
Steve Aalto      Roxanne Hoke-Chandler

### **Quarterly Meeting – West District**

Palmer Public Library

September 12, 2017

1:30pm to 3:30pm

### **Meeting Minutes**

#### **Call to Order/Introductions**

- List of those present at the meeting location
  - o Attendees: Feleshia Battles-Byrdsong, Ann Marie Paulson, Dawn Clark, Joe Bellil, Steve Aalto, Jim Riley, Douglas Mason, Rosanna Woodmansee, Roxanne Hoke Chandler, Naomi Goldberg, Alan Greene
  - o MRC Staff: Ray Singleton, Joan Phillips, Toni Wolf, Lola Akinlapa, Josh Boardman
- List of those present participating remotely
  - o Owen Doonan

#### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

- Minutes were approved with no objections or amendments.
- The minutes were motioned to be approved by Joe Bellil and seconded by Alan Greene.

#### **West District Update**

- Raymond Singleton, the West District Director, provided the following updates:
  - o Ray Singleton has been on the job for approximately 4 months.
  - o The Director said that he read up on the SRC and now had a better understanding of what the SRC does. He feels that Employment is a way to fight Poverty, connect with others and sustain a way of life.
  - o The MRC West District comprises 8 Area Offices and has 122 staff. This District serves 10,000+ people, 900+ are served by through CIS Vendors, and is now servicing 317 youth as part of the Youth Transition Program. This year the West District helped 1300+ VR Consumers find employment.

## Assistant Commissioner Update:

- Assistant Commissioner Joan Phillips provided the following update:
  - MRC VR program is on track to meet goals for 2017. This year there has been 3973 VR Consumers placed in employment for over 90 days. Since the passing of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) there are now Common Measures for Work Force Development.
  - Due to WIOA, all VR Consumer Agencies throughout the U.S., now must report results quarterly, instead of yearly.
  - A few weeks ago the MRC was audited by the Federal Rehabilitation Service Administration (RSA), to help understand how the MRC is working towards the goals of the WIOA program, and the RSA will provide Technical Assistance in areas that may need improvement. One area of interest was related to Pre-Employment and Employment Services. The RSA has asked for more details on who is paying for Transition Services. The MRC is working with the RSA on Training on the WIOA Transition program.
  - The MRC is working with over 5000 Students in addressing Pre-employment Services and this year the MRC has provided 150+ Students with Internship opportunities. This year the over 20 CVS Trained youth have been offered jobs at CVS.
  - The MRC and Department of Mental Health have completed a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU), and the MOU objectives have been rolled out into 3 MRC offices at this time, to help work with VR Consumers.
  - The 3rd Annual MRC/Employer Conference is scheduled for October, in Norwood Ma. The goal is to attract new Employers to work with the MRC.
  - Transportation is a known/ongoing problem at some MRC Offices and the new Commissioner is aware of this.
  - The MRC recently was approved for the Kessler Grant for VR Restoration Services for approximately 130 VR Consumers struggling with progressing through VR Services.
  - The MRC and the Massachusetts One Stop Career Centers now have a Memorandum of Understanding to work together towards Common Goals in helping Individuals with Disabilities find employment. Doug Mason asked what brought about this issue of Common Goals. Assistant Commissioner Phillips said these changes came about in the new Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) , the Federal Government wants the MRC VR Program to work closer with Career Centers to insure they work collaboratively for All Levels of Disabilities!

Steve Aalto asked what will be the MRC/Career Center Common Measures. Assistant Commissioner Phillips said that the MRC R& D Group will present this list of Common Measures to the SRC at the SRC Full Committee meeting at the December SRC Meeting.

- **Action:** MRC/Career Center Common Goals presentation at SRC Full Committee meeting December 12, 2017 at the Natick Public library.

### **Commissioner Update:**

- Commissioner Toni A Wolf provided the following updates:
- Commissioner Wolf said that as of this meeting date, she had been in her new position for 8 weeks. One of her primary goals this year is to help re-energize the SRC, through involvement and collaboration. As a part of this goal the Commissioner wants the SRC to advise of new and different trends of VR Consumers and the unique shift happening in and around the state. The Commissioner is eager to help.
- At this point the Commissioner briefly asked for general suggestions:
  - Rosanne Woodmansee: Asked for more MRC involvement for people/VR Consumers with Spinal Cord Injury.
  - Naomi Goldberg - MOD Assistant Director- Asked if there is any specific subjects the Commissioner felt may be helpful in re-energizing the SRC. She felt it important to understand what programs/projects the MRC is actively involved with in order to understand and then offer recommendations.
  - Steve Aalto - Felt that Mental Health is a major concern. And is there any way for Providers in the VR System to assist the MRC in helping service VR Consumers with Mental Health issues?
  - Felicia Battles-Byrdsong - Mental Health Spectrum/Opioid Addition VR Consumers, What can VR do with this ever increasing group of Consumers?
  - Jim Riley- Questioned why there were no VR Counselors attending this Palmer meeting, as well as all other SRC meetings. He also brought up questions as to how are VR Consumers notified of upcoming SRC meetings, by the VR Offices, as for the most part, there hasn't been any new VR Consumers attending any SRC Meetings. He suggested a significant MRC/SRC Marketing campaign to build awareness and involvement of the SRC.
  - Joe Bellil- Raised concerns that the SRC Member Appointment process must be made better. It is taking to long for qualifying individuals interested in being part of the SRC. He also raised concerns that there wasn't any Representation from the Independent Living Centers at this Palmer meeting?

- Owen Doonan - Raised concerns that there needs to be a better MRC/SRC process to help those VR Consumers interested in Self Employment.
- Alan Greene - brought up the subject of the new Gig-Economy, where 35% of Millennials in the VR program needs to be relooked at with an understanding how this group should be trained in the VR Program, to meet the new needs of this Gig-Economy
- Roxanne Hoke-Chandler - Gave a brief overview of the Federation for Children with Special Needs. Raised concerns about the VR program needs to change with relation to VR Counselors struggling working with the WIOA mandate of increased involvement in the Youth Transition process. A major subject is dealing with issues/concerns being raised by Parents, as part of this Transition from the Educational systems to the Adult Services systems.

## Old Business

- Gubernatorial Appointments
  - SRC Gubernatorial Appointments: Josh Boardman gave an overview of a couple new individuals that want to be part of the SRC. Josh also explained that one appointment that had been stalled in the Governor's office was recently completed and that hopefully any future Gubernatorial Appointments will not take so long. Josh was not able to complete for this meeting, the Chart of all SRC Members, including Gubernatorial Appointments, Ex-Officio and Open positions, and relationships to various SRC Sub-Committees. Josh said he would complete this and send out to SRC Executive Committee by the end of September.
  - **Action Item:** Josh Boardman to finalize complete SRC Membership Chart and send to SRC Executive Committee by end of September 2017.

## New Business

- 2017 Annual Report Recommendations.
  - Joe Bellil read aloud the Fiscal Year SRC 2018 Recommendations to the MRC.
  - Commissioner Wolf stated that this was a significant amount of recommendations and would like the SRC to Prioritize this list, because most likely the MRC would be unable to address all 10 2018 SRC Recommendations. There was brief discussion on how to do this at this meeting. Doug Mason raised his concern that if the SRC truly does not understand what the MRC's Common Goals are, it could be possible that some of these recommendations are not needed, the Commissioner agreed with this.

- Joe Bellil went forward while in this meeting to have all SRC Members attending this particular meeting, to vote/prioritize the top 3 SRC Recommendations –
  - Attached are the re-prioritized SRC 2018 Recommendations, which came from this meeting.
- Consumer Satisfaction Report
  - Lola Akinlapa from the MRC R & D Performance Management Department presented the MRC 2016 Consumer Satisfaction Survey - Executive Summary. This document is available on the MRC Website.
- Mailing list Update
  - Josh Boardman gave a brief overview of the MRC/SRC Mailing Lists distribution concerns he and Jim Riley have discussed. Josh has recreated a new mailing list, using both emails addresses and "Snail Mail" (US Postal) delivery, for those consumers who may not have access to a computer or electronic device. Jim Riley asked shouldn't there be more VR Counselors or VR Staff be part of this MRC/SRC Meetings /information Mailing List, Josh acknowledged that the VR Staff should somehow be tied directly to these MRC/SRC mailings.
- ABLE Accounts
  - Josh handed out a packet of general information on this ABLE program.
  - Jim Riley again suggested that somehow this ABLE Act documentation should be a document handed out to all VR Consumers (Existing and New) - as well as part of documents/discussion that VR Counselors hand out and discuss with Youth Transition families/Guardians.
  - **Action Item:** Review how MRC may be able to advise consumers of this information.

## Adjournment

- Next meeting date: December 12, 2017 Natick Public Library