**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**

**September 4, 2025**

**4:00 - 6:00 pm ET**

**Attendees:**

* **Executive Committee Members:** Heather Wood (SRC Chair), Joe Bellil, Naomi Goldberg, Doug Mason
* **MassAbility (MBY) Staff:** Kate Biebel, Emily McCaffrey, Amy Karr
* **Others Present:** Sarah Wiles (CAP)
* **Absent Executive Committee Members:** Steve LaMaster

Please Note: This meeting was held remotely.

**The meeting was called to order at 4:05 pm by the chair.**

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

Chair Wood called for a motion to approve the April 2025 Executive Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Bellil motioned for approval of the minutes. Mr. Mason seconded. The April 2025 minutes were approved with no corrections.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

1. Membership Update –Heather Wood

Chair Wood met with Wendy Andino-Williams, the area director of the Springfield office, a high‑volume office. Chair Wood has yet to meet with Sowmya Sundararajan, a supervisor in the Roxbury office who has worked for MassAbility for a long time. Both individuals have expressed interest in serving on the SRC in the Ex-officio Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) seat, which is currently vacant. Legal counsel Sahara Defensor will confirm if the applicant for the seat needs to be confirmed by the governor.

SRC member Rebecca Davis submitted her reappointment application in July. We have not heard any update on the status of that application.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. Committee Reports
* Business and Employment Opportunity (BEO) Committee – Steve LaMaster

The committee last met on August 14th.

Mr. LaMaster was unable to attend this meeting. Chair Wood read the following from the email he sent to Chair Wood before this meeting:

**BEO Committee update for 9-4-25 SRC Exec Committee**

The Business and Employment Opportunity Committee is advising MassAbility on three State Plan Recommendations over the coming year:

**FY26-3**

The Business Employment and Opportunity (BEO) Committee will work with MassAbility to make available instructional materials relevant to MassAbility participants becoming certified holders of the Disability Employment Tax Credit (DETC). The Committee will advise MassAbility on strategies for marketing the DETC to participants, vendors and employers.

**FY26-4**

The Business Employment and Opportunity (BEO) Committee will join MassAbility to improve the self-employment supports provided, based upon best practices from the State VR Programs of Maine and Vermont.

**FY26-5**

The Business Employment and Opportunity (BEO) Committee will advise MassAbility on additional efforts to engage additional employers to support hiring people with disabilities in the commonwealth.

A working group met on July 31st and the feedback was brought to the regular BEO Committee meeting on August 14th to offer feedback on a simple tool designed to:

1. Provide information to Career Service vendors to promote the initiative to both employers and job seekers, and
2. Provide people seeking employment with the tools/support they are likely to need to get certified.

A draft was shared and discussed, with a recommendation that the definition of disability be offered, and that the application process communicate the criteria clearly. The MassAbility representative who joined the meeting agreed to find out whether the language in the application can be edited as needed. At the scheduled August 14th meeting the group continued editing the document. At that time, we learned that the language on the MassAbility website would be modified to clarify that people with no history of receiving disability services or benefits may be asked to share information in support of a disability determination.

**FY26-5:**

On July 22nd the Chair of the BEO Committee attended a presentation by ThinkArgus, a MassAbility consultant in marketing/branding, about the employer engagement efforts they are planning to make in the coming months.

The next BEO Committee meeting in on October 9th at 1:00 pm.

* **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Council – Doug Mason**

The Council last met on August 19th in person, which was a much different experience than meeting virtually.

The purpose of that meeting was to change the name of the council. Given the current political environment, members did not want the name to be associated with DEIA. Commissioner Wolf was at the meeting. She assured the council that the Secretariat and MassAbility management were committed to continue to foster DEIA principles. In the discussion before the vote, members talked about what they wanted the council’s name to reflect. We looked at MassAbility’s mission and vision statements and core principles and the keywords MassAbility uses to identify itself. (See [www.mass.gov/info-details/what-does-massability-do](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/what-does-massability-do).)

The council is now known as the **REACH Committee**. REACH is an acronym:

*R = Resilient; E = Empowered; A = Actionable; C = Collaborative; H = Holistic*

The next meeting of the REACH Committee is on September 16th.

* **Consumer Satisfaction Needs Assessment Committee (CSNAC) – Heather Wood**

The committee last met on August 25th.

At that meeting the committee reviewed the Service Recipient Experience Survey FY2025 Annual Report. Some conversation about the results. We discussed the results and whether certain results and trends are affected by certain factors.

At the next CSNAC meeting in November we should have results from the Connect survey and basic information from the staff survey conducted by EOHHS.

The next CSNAC meeting is on November 17th at 5:00 PM.

1. Planning for the SRC September Quarterly meeting

There was a discussion about Mr. Porell presenting an overview of the year’s survey results and trends at the September Quarterly meeting. However, it was decided that Mr. Porell will attend the September Quarterly meeting and listen to MassAbility’s FY26 priorities and what the SRC committees are working on. It makes sense to have him present the information later, possibly at the December Quarterly meeting.

Because the agenda for the September Quarterly meeting is light, it was decided to have the meeting end at 6:30 pm.

1. MassAbility update – Kate Biebel

There was an end of summer update meeting yesterday. It was focused on Careers Services.

* + Staffing: There is still a hiring freeze. Career Services staff are federally funded so they are exempt from the hiring freeze. However, MassAbility does not have the money to pay, so we must prioritize which open positions to fill; open positions are not automatically filled. There are currently five current openings in Career Services. The Malden office has three openings and there may be a fourth coming. Boston has had some staffing struggles, but not quite as bad.
	+ Order of Selection/Managed Intake: We are continuing to explore this across all services. Ms. Biebel and Leigh Collupy will be meeting with members of the governor’s team on Monday September 8th to discuss MassAbility’s order of selection proposal. Joan Phillips has submitted our Order of Selection materials to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). This is a required step before we can hold public hearings. RSA approval could take several months. Ms. Biebel will check with Jessica Cimini about an estimated timeline.
	+ Things happening in Career Services:
* At yesterday’s meeting we met Brie Insalaco, a clinical consultant for MassAbility who primarily works in Home and Community Life (HCL). Many Career Service participants have complex needs and the vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRC) who help them obtain employment can often use clinical guidance. There has been a pilot program in the North district that began about six months ago. Ms. Insalaco and her team do individual and team clinical consultations, as well as provide training series around clinical issues relating to rehabilitation, getting back to work, etc. The pilot has been funded by reallotment dollars. This is the first time there has been a presentation on the program. People are finding it useful. Commissioner Wolf does want it to continue. At this point its future is uncertain.
* MassAbility is continuing to reconceptualize the Business Relations unit. At yesterday’s meeting it was announced that Jeff Roberge will be the new director of the unit. This position has been open since Bill Allen left about a year ago. Mr. Roberge was formerly the West district director of MassAbility. He will be starting in several weeks. Once he is settled in his new role, he will attend an SRC meeting.
* MassAbility is moving forward with the operations director position. We hope to more information about that in October.
* At yesterday’s meeting we met Luciana Hayner, the new Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) manager. She has been working with the REACH Committee; Mr. Mason knows her.
	+ Budget/funding: MassAbility has seen the federal “skinny budget” (an outline of the federal administration’s main budget priorities. Vocational rehabilitation (VR) is to be funded at FY24 levels. We do not know what Massachusetts will receive. Also, some things that we are required to do, and which may have been federally funded in the past, may no longer be funded. These unfunded mandates will eat into the money MassAbility does have.
* NextGen: A piece of good news is that the NextGen grant seems to be okay. There were fears it was very vulnerable, but it seems okay as it moves into year five. At some point the leaders of NextGen, Michelle Banks and David Sykes, can return to the SRC to talk about integrating the practices developed for NextGen into the work of Career Services.

Chair Wood works with high school special education students and she sees young adults fall through the cracks, and then MassAbility is being reactive, not proactive. She has mentioned in the past that she would like to form something like a “Junior Council” to get younger people involved. Heather had talked about a “Junior Council.” Getting younger people involved. Ms. Biebel will contact Ms. Banks to ask about that. Kate will contact Michelle Banks about that. We do want to design services for the needs of young adults. There is the fear of having to shut the door in people’s faces because of Order of Selection in the future. But even then MassAbility could still capture the needs of those young adults who would be

Questions/comments

* Who is putting together the Annual Report?

Currently Commissioner Wolf is the acting head of Communications. Ms. Biebel will find out who will be handling the Annual Report.

1. Open Mic

Mr. Mason may be absent from the September Quarterly meeting and will send a REACH Committee update to Chair Wood in advance of the Quarterly meeting.

The next Executive Committee meeting will be on October 2nd from 4:00 to 6:00 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:56 pm.