

Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Meeting Minutes
September 23, 2021, 1-3pm EST
Please note: this meeting was held virtually.

Meeting was called to Order at 1:00pm by the Chair.

Ms. Ryan read the list of attendees from the Zoom participant list and recorded the names in the minutes.

Attendees:

- **Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Members:** Inez Canada, Joe Bellil, Naomi Goldberg, Olympia Stroud, Ellie Starr, Dawn Clark, Steve LaMaster, Rosanna Woodmansee, Matthew Bander,
- **SRC Ex Officio Members:** Commissioner Toni Wolf, Deputy Commissioner Kate Biebel, Amanda Costa, Doug Mason, Kevin Goodwin, Jim Carnazza, Liz Fancher (DDC), Cheryl Scott (WIB), Sadie Simone (SILC),
- **Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Staff:** Manel Desvallons, Jacqueline Ryan
- **Public:** Sarah Wiles (CAP), Winnie Koko, Ronaldo Fujii, Christine Tosti; Juliet Marsala, Ellen Breslin, Raisa Alam, Uma Ahluwalia and Doris Tolliver of HMA; Taciana Saab and Cecilia Nunez of BCIL

Minutes Approval- Ms. Canada

- Ms. Canada called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. LaMaster motioned for approval of the minutes. Mr. Goodwin seconded. Minutes were approved with no objections.

New Business:

Chair Update – Chair Inez Canada

- SRC Meeting Times-
 - The Chair informed the body of the proposal move the time of the All SRC Quarterly meetings to allow more schedule flexibility for Council members who work outside of government service. The chair dropped a doodle poll link in the ZOOM chat and asked that all in attendance, esp. Council members, fill out the poll with their name and preferred time choices.
 - Additionally, the Chair will send the poll out via email so ensure all council members votes are included.
- Committee Reports-
 - The Chair noted that the committee reports will not be reviewed at this meeting to allow time for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) workshop. Reports were emailed with the meeting materials; members were encouraged to read them at their leisure.
- Chair Feedback-
 - The Chair reminded committee members that as the SRC chair, she is always available if there are any questions or feedback for SRC.

MRC Commissioner Update- Commissioner Wolf

- VR Fiscal Year-
 - Commissioner Wolf stated that October 1st is the federal fiscal year for Vocational Rehabilitation. MRC has not heard a lot from RSA partners but MRC is not concerned about funding.
- Innovation Grant-

- MRC will be informed in 10 days if they are successfully awarded the innovation grant, which is aimed at creating innovative vocational rehabilitation services for youth and young adults. If funded, Commissioner Wolf can talk more in the future about this opportunity.
- Consumer Technology Program-
 - MRC continues to roll out the Consumer Technology Program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a huge digital divide. In the last year and half, MRC has spent \$6.7 million in technology support for consumers and another \$2 million this fiscal year.
- MRC/DMH (Department of Mental Health) Partnership-
 - As of July 2021, MRC and DMH have been in a partnership for 2 years. The partnership has been very positive and there has been a real focus on engagement & building relationships. Commissioner Doyle of DMH has committed to ensuring that money goes into the program from DMH. Currently there is an inter-agency agreement to continue this work.
- Hybrid Model-
 - Commissioner Wolf reported that MRC has been in the hybrid work model since mid-July 2021 (2 days in office a week). MRC staff started seeing consumers in-person in August 2021.
 - MRC is viewing the hybrid model as a model of change for the agency.
 - At MRC, hybrid means that staff can meet consumers at MRC offices, in the community or a hybrid option as it is about the addressing the needs of the consumers.
 - MRC is currently collecting data to see how many MRC consumers are choosing office meetings vs community location meetings vs virtual. MRC will be reevaluating this model in December.
 - MRC has developed a campaign, “We Are Still Here for You” to remind the disability community that services are still here throughout the pandemic.
- ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act)
 - The federal government has put significant funds into ARPA to improve services across the Commonwealth. Multiple conversations have taken place and projects are being discussed.
 - MRC has submitted 7 potential projects as a lone agency as well as collaborating with other agencies on additional proposed projects.

Office of Individual & Family Engagement Update – Amanda Costa

- Staff Introductions-
 - Ms. Costa introduced herself to the group as well as Manel Desvallons who is the Family Engagement Coordinator.
- Quarterly Individual & Family Forum-
 - Ms. Costa invited the Council members to attend the Quarterly Individual & Family Forum event on Tuesday, October 5th. The meeting theme will be National Employment Awareness Month and attendees will hear directly from MRC Counselors and Consumers.
 - The Chair encouraged committee members to attend the forum event as it is a great experience. Additionally, the Chair flagged that any questions for Commissioner Wolf, Ms. Costa and the Chair can be sent via email.

DEI Workshop- Health Management Associates: Ellen Breslin, Uma Ahluwalia, Juliet Marsala, Doris Toliver & Taciana Ribeiro-Saab (See, **MA_Full SRC_DEI_Workshop#3_HMA_09.23.21 Meeting PPT** for specific details.)

- Ellen Breslin of Health Management Associates kicked off the DEI workshop by introducing the Health Management Associates (HMA) team and sharing the DEI Workshop #3 PowerPoint Presentation.
- **Project Scope & Project Summary-** Uma Ahluwalia (HMA)
 - Uma Ahluwalia (HMA) provided an update on HMA's Project Scope of the Work.
 - Ms. Ahluwalia flagged that today's DEI workshop will be last of the 3 and will complete Tasks 2 & 3 of the Scope. Uma shared that the workshops have been very productive with high engagement and participation from members.
 - After today's workshop is completed, HMA will move on to tasks 4 & 5 which include Strategic Planning Sessions & the development of a roadmap.
 - Ms. Ahluwalia went on to review the Project Summary Slides including "Why did the SRC embark on this Work" and "What does the DEI Subcommittee Need from You".
 - Ms. Ahluwalia and the HMA team asked that all attendees stay engaged during this workshop even if things get uncomfortable.
- **Pennsylvania SRC Case Example-** Juliet Marsala (HMA)
 - Juliet Marsala presented the Pennsylvania SRC Case Example slide to the Council.
 - Ms. Marsala flagged that each state is unique and SRC's are based on how each state is able to govern these councils.
 - The HMA team wanted to highlight the importance of a purposeful council. In Pennsylvania, the SRC using the following techniques to ensure that they have a purposeful council.
 - The PA SRC members read their mission statement at the start of every meeting so that all council members are on the same page.
 - The Council uses Roberts Rules to record the motions and decisions.
 - A decision-making matrix has been developed.
 - An independent contractor has been hired to provide administrative support needs.
 - Ms. Marsala then opened the floor to questions:
 - An Attendee mentioned that it was very relevant to have a supporting staff member for policy research and legislation assistance. The attendee noted not seeing support staff in the current MA SRC structure and thinks it would be helpful for multiple reasons including educating legislators.
 - Ms. Marsala concluded this section of the workshop by providing insight into how the PA SRC members are asked to commit to the process. All incoming members are asked the following six questions:
 - Will you be active?
 - Will you attend mandated Committee meetings?
 - Will you serve on at least one sub-committee?
 - Will you review all committee materials?
 - Can you commit to volunteering outside of the Council to become part of the Community?
 - Are you a team player?
- **Laying the Foundation-** Doris Tolliver (HMA)
 - Ms. Tolliver began her presentation by reviewing the Core Concepts & Language slide, flagging that not everyone has the same understanding of terms and what they mean so it is often hard

to have DEI conversations. Ms. Tolliver reviewed each of the concepts and definitions on slide 12.

- In addition to the definitions, Ms. Tolliver provided a more in-depth information relating to these core concepts/language listed on Slides 12-13.
- Ms. Tolliver then opened up the conversation for attendees to unpack any concepts and/or share what ways these concepts have shown up in their experiences.
 - An attendee referenced concerns about the absence of additional systems of oppression, the largest being monetary oppressions/Classism. The attendee is looking at how the SRC can be anti-classist as that is a way to target racism & discrimination. Additionally, another term that the attendee would like to flag is Anti-ableism. The awareness that all individuals' brains work different and the pressure that everyone needs to be neurotypical when you are not.
 - An attendee inquired about access/disability access and equality. If you break down access by race & ethnicity, is access equal?
 - Cecilia Nunez echoed Ms. Tolliver's point that individuals are comfortable talking about certain topics but not others and racism is an example of that. People find it easier to talk about gender or class so they don't have to discuss less comfortable things like race.
 - A attendee stated that the reading materials were enlightening especially the information around white supremacist culture. The attendee shared that they had experienced that in large companies and there is not enough awareness in how behaviors should be done. They also shared that it is unfortunate that persons of color replicate this culture in their own businesses/organizations.
 - An attendee commented that upholding and engaging in white supremacist culture leads to a payoff and benefit for individuals. That is how people are promoted and rewarded. Additionally, an attendee shared an experience as an employee and the day-to-day bureaucracy of her workplace and how that upholds the white supremacist culture.
 - Ms. Tolliver shared that she and Ms. Ahluwalia have worked in most careers in such a system and she has experienced that tension and the realization of working inside an oppressive system. It is begging the question of to what extent are you willing and able to take risks especially as a person of color. Ms. Tolliver mentioned that over the last year to year and a half, it feels that more people are thinking about how they leverage their voices and power to speak-up and undo the ways those existing systems cause harm.
 - Ms. Ahluwalia thanked everyone for their comments and was grateful to the attendee who kicked off the discussion and led everyone to a beautiful conversation.
 - Another attendee shared that they have often been bothered that educational funding is based on property taxes. So many things start with education and there is still this great divide between the school systems depending on the community.
 - An attendee echoed the comments regarding taxes and wanted to address the prison system and how inmates are counted as residents in specific community numbers which impacts legislative representation, taxes etc.

Ellen Breslin introduce Cecilia Nunez and Taciana Saab of Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) who will be presenting for the next part of the workshop.

- **Discussing White Supremacy Culture & Alternative More Inclusive Practices-** Cecilia Nunez & Taciana Saab (BCIL)
 - Ms. Nunez began the conversation but discussing the “White Supremacy Culture” article written by Kenneth Jones & Tema Okun. The article touches upon many areas around white supremacist culture and how it relates to workplace culture. Ms. Nunez highlighted multiple points from the article including the fact that some may think of racism as individual incidents only and not realize the impact of systemic and institutional racism.
 - Ms. Saab went into further detail about how workplace culture in most organizations is rooted in white culture/power and that is not just in white run organizations. The white supremacist culture is so engrained in how individuals are raised that it is also showing up in organizations led by people of color.
 - Ms. Nunez and Ms. Saab went on to review the White Supremacy Values and Antidotes on Slides 19-20.
 - Attendees were then broken up into discussion groups to discuss the following questions: (each breakout session had a notetaker)
 - What values do you think should be prioritized to make the SRC a more welcoming and collaborative space for all people?
 - What suggestions do you have to make SRC meetings more inclusive? What is working well? What can be better?
 - What are the best strategies to recruit SRC members that truly reflect the diversity of voices and experiences of VR consumers throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
 - The breakout groups reconvened and presented highlights from their discussions.

Ellen Breslin and the HMA team took detailed notes of the breakout group feedback.

The Chair thanked the HMA, BCIL and SRC for their enthusiastic participation in today’s workshop.

The Chair called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Bander motioned to adjourn. Ms. Fancher seconded. **Meeting was adjourned at 3:06pm**