

# Minutes from CRP Advisory Committee Meeting

## January 23, 2023

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### **In Attendance:**

DORS Staff: Scott Dennis, Jody Boone, Darlene Peregoy, Wanda Peele, Randy Diehl, Patrick Peto, Jessica Markum, Derick Serra

80 individuals representing DORS CRPs attending this virtual meeting. All CRPs and CAS providers were invited.

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### **Introductions/Presentations:**

#### **Scott Dennis (Assistant State Superintendent in Rehabilitation Services)**

- The Commission to Study DORS, created by House Bill 660 in the last legislative session, has held four meetings and submitted an interim report to the Governor, Speaker of the House and Senate President. Today (1/23) the Commission is meeting; the next meeting is scheduled for February 13. These are public meetings and the links are on the DORS website. The last Commission meeting will be March 6, and the final report is due March 15.
  - Reminder that the rate increases for job development and job coaching and new milestone payments for providers of evidence-based supported employment went into effect January 1. Any services provided through December 31 will be paid at the previous rates.
  - MSDE was able to get DORS additional State funds in the 2024 budget to ensure DORS meets match, as it is expected that the federal grant will increase by 8% in 2024.
  - The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) conducted monitoring of DORS over the summer, which included a fiscal and program reviews. DORS is waiting to receive the draft report from RSA.
  - The project with San Diego State University to develop a data tool is still in a testing phase. This will allow DORS to perform data analysis and take a deep dive into 6 years of data that will assist in program planning and decision-making.
  - DORS has purchased a software that will allow for bi-directional messaging between staff and consumers and will help with automatic collection of information, such as semester grades.
  - DORS is developing a fact sheet for supported employment consumers that explains the role of the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) specialist. Draft attached.
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#### **Jody Boone (Director of the Office of Field Services)**

- DORS is creating a new service for adult paid work experiences (similar to the Pre-ETS WBLE). This would be for adults who are job ready but need experience in line with their employment goal. This is still in development and would have fees for four phases. The CRP would be expected to serve as the employer of record to pay the consumer during the experience and be paid by DORS for the wages and employer costs. More information will be forthcoming, but CRPs can let Kate Drake or Toni Cobb-Cannon know if this is a service they are interested in providing with a goal of beginning the new service in the spring.
- Current OFS has 19 VR counselor vacancies, mostly contractual. Other vacant positions include 6.5 office secretaries, a Supervisor in Baltimore City and 1.5 regional administrative positions.

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**Patrick Peto (Program Manager, Quality Assurance, Policy, and Planning)**

- The Division has procured an electronic signature tool (Citrix RightSignature). Trainings have been held with the EDU and other regional staff. This will greatly improve efficiency in getting signature on documents.
- The new job development and job coaching rates are \$70/hr, with those providers approved for the enhanced rates receiving \$88/hr. There are now four levels of EBP milestone payments.
- Attached are slides that provide a snapshot of where DORS is with regard to WIOA performance indicators as compared to last year.

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**Derick Serra (Program Manager, Technical Assistance)**

- The RISE program (Reaching Independence through Self-Employment) is for consumers who are interested in starting a business. DORS contracts with a Vendor, Psychometric Solutions, to provide the training and assistance to consumers. Contact Derick Serra (410) 554-9381 if you have any questions or have a consumer interested in this program.
- The Eligibility Determination Unit (EDU) is less than a year old. Originally, the estimate was that the unit would need 16 counselors. There are currently three vacancies. Pamela Clayton-Johnson is the Program Manager of the EDU. The level of work is increasing, but staff are striving to meet the 60-day eligibility determination from application timeline. They may contact providers if they have records that would assist in the eligibility determination.

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**Jessica Markum (Staff Specialist for Students and Transition- aged Youth)**

- There is a similar system for eligibility determination for Pre-ETS cases through a two-year grant with the University of Maryland Center for Transition and Career Innovation

to process Pre-ETS referrals. The conduct the intake, gather the necessary documentation, and submit recommendations to the EDU.

- We are seeing an increase in referrals becoming actual Pre-ETS cases.
- DORS is not accepting unsolicited proposals for Pre-ETS at this time. If there is an area of need for the Division, there may be exceptions.
- With the increase in minimum wage, WBLE rates were adjusted. Montgomery and Howard Counties have different rates than the rest of the state.

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### **Wanda Peele (Program Manager, Business Relations Branch)**

- The Business Services Representatives (BSRs) are conducting bi-weekly resume training.
- The newest monthly edition of the DORS BSR Bugle (newsletter) is out.
- The BSRS hold bi-monthly statewide Workforce Alliance meetings, with training on various topics. Job Coaches, employment specialist, etc. are encouraged to attend. The next one is January 30, 10:30 – 12:00, via Google Meets. CEUs are offered for some of the trainings.
- Contact Wanda if interested in receiving the newsletter or other information.
- [Wanda.Peele@maryland.gov](mailto:Wanda.Peele@maryland.gov); 410-554-9408.

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### **Randy Diehl (Director of Management Information Systems)**

- As previously mentioned, the Division has procured two new technologies, the first for digital signatures (Citrix RightSignature) and the second for bi-directional communication (SaraWorks). The Bi-directional procurement will be before the Board of Public Works in March for approval. SaraWorks was built for use by vocational rehabilitation agencies.
- Randy receives reports from the State firewall, which flag emails that were sent to or from DORS that contain confidential information (Pii). It is imperative that staff and vendors who need to share information use the DORS portals instead of attaching to emails; this ensures the security of any Pii being shared.

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### **Darlene Peregoy (Director of Administration and Financial Services)**

- The DORS website is a valuable resource for CRPs. Click on the link on the top banner for Community Partners.
- CRPs should inform Kate Drake and Toni Cobb-Cannon when they have a change in CEO, Executive Director or Director of Employment/Vocational Services or an address change.
- COVID Update: The seven-day positivity rate in Maryland is trending downward (11%) following the spike over the holidays. DORS has had a number of staff out with COVID

and other illnesses, such as RSV, etc. Please take appropriate precautions, especially while working with DORS consumers. ([CDC](#)).

- DORS and Maryland Works are collaborating to monitor the requirements for providers to participate in the Employment Works program. CRPs must have a Cooperative Agreement with DORS and be in good standing (providing services to DORS consumers). A report has been created that details the monthly number of authorizations and invoices paid to CRPs who are in the EWP to help monitor the CRPs services.
- CRPs are highly encouraged to provide services in the community versus all virtual services.