

Minutes from CRP Advisory Committee Meeting

January 24, 2022

In Attendance:

DORS Staff: Scott Dennis, Jody Boone, Darlene Peregoy, Toni March, Wanda Peele, Randy Diehl, Patrick Peto, Noe Turcios, Kate Drake, Toni Cobb Cannon, and Derick Serra.

Over 96 providers attended this virtual meeting. All CRPs and CAS providers were invited.

Introductions/Presentations

Scott Dennis (Assistant State Superintendent in Rehabilitation Services):

- Comprehensive telework plan has been submitted to the state superintendent and will be reviewed over the next few months. The Superintendent is looking at the overall impact on service areas in the state and the impact on the offices. The telework hybrid plan is being developed in consideration of reduced office space and as a cost saving measure.
- DORS is looking at a rate increase for Job Coaching and Job Development and expects to implement this April 1, 2022 after an additional review of cost-of-living increases. The rate increase is expected to remain effective for the next couple of years.
- Paid WBLE – Adjustments were made in December to reflect the increase in minimum wage. Jill Hill sent notification to PreETS providers prior to her departure.
- PII – As incidents of ransomware attacks and data breaches have increased DORS has developed a PII Appendix which will be attached to a provider's cooperative agreement affirming that the provider has a policy/process in place when breaches occur.
- RSA Monitoring – DORS is expecting to be monitored in August of this year. The focus of the review will be on past and present agency functioning and performance measures (2nd and 4th quarter closure results, and efforts towards consumers obtaining industry credentials and career pathways). Maryland is in the lower quartile regarding 2nd and 4th quarter closures across the nation.
- DORS has engaged San Diego State for data analysis of services provided and successful and non-successful closures. There will be a focus on internal processes and making changes.

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

- DORS has a data-sharing agreement with Unemployment to identify types of employment and training consumers have received.
- 2nd and 4th Quarter employment nationally is approximately 46%; DORS average is slightly below the National average.

- Median earnings in the 2nd Quarter after exiting VR services: National average is approximately \$4,022; Maryland is approximately \$400 under the national average.
- The Employment Rate for the 4th Quarter Nationally is Approximately 42%; Maryland is approximately 8% lower.
- Future areas of review may include a focus on comprehensive needs in service provision (i.e., training programs and/or updating IPEs).

Darlene Peregoy (Director, Administration and Financial Services):

- Described the work that DORS has done to examine DORS services and the correlation between services and employment outcomes. DORS conducted a specific study of the correlation of career assessments to employment outcomes using data over four years. The results were surprising in that the provision of career assessment services did not closely correlate to greater employment outcomes for consumers. In addition, CAS reports were reviewed and based on the variability in quality between credentialed and non-credentialed providers DORS has decided to disallow non-credentialed providers (those without the International Certified Vocational Evaluator (ICVE)), to provide CAS Services. It is clear that in regard to CAS services that there needs to be more education among counselors, consumers, and providers in terms of how to use CAS.
- DORS will send a letter to CAS providers who do not have credentialed staff over the next couple of weeks advising them of the removal of that service from their fee schedule.
- DORS is also not permitting the use of ICVE credentialed subcontractors by providers who do not have a Credentialed individual on staff.
- Darlene reminded attendees that resources for community providers are available on the DORS website, including announcements about upcoming events and CRP Advisory Committee meetings. [Community Partners \(maryland.gov\)](https://www.maryland.gov)
- COVID Update – DORS continues to remain vigilant to stay safe. DORS continues the use of masks in offices, the use of a screening questionnaire for those entering the offices, and distancing. DORS is providing both virtual and in-person services at the request of the individuals served.

Jody Boone (Director, Office of Field Services):

- Development of the Eligibility Determination Unit (EDU) – This unit will consist of 21 – 23 staff that includes 2 supervisors, 1 program manager, 2 administrative staff, and about 14 counselors. The EDU will begin to receive referrals at the end of February.
- The decision to create the EDU has based on the high staff vacancy rate and high caseload counts. It is projected that this unit will increase consistency in eligibility determinations and decrease the days for open referrals and the number of days from referral to eligibility. At the beginning of March about 50% of the referrals will be processed by the EDU over 90 days, then increasing the referrals after that period.
- Unpaid internships are a great way to get work experience. Job Coaching can be provided for paid or unpaid internships.

- Hybrid CAS Services began in October. Hybrid CAS services are part virtual and part in-person. A provider that has a credentialed staff member may apply to provide this CAS Option for Itemized, Focused, Exploratory and/or Comprehensive. For additional information you can contact: Kate Drake: Catherine.drake@maryland.gov

Derick Serra (Staff Specialist, Supported Employment and Pre-ETS):

- DORS did not receive enough applications to hire for Jill Hill's position. The position will be re-posted to solicit additional interest. In the meantime, questions about Pre-ETS services may be sent to the Pre-ETS email address: preets.dors@maryland.gov
- DORS is still not accepting unsolicited proposals for Pre-ETS but continues to have standard Pre-ETS services available to use (WBLEs and Explore Work). However, if there is a demonstrated need in a specific area and regional management supports the need, then consideration will be given to approval of those services.
- The first step in reorganizing how Pre-ETS is offered was begun by Jill Hill prior to her resignation and that was around how students 14 and in 9th grade receive Pre-ETS and/or VR services. The second step is being developed and that is in regard to referral management and the provision of services.
- Introduced Noe Turcios, Staff Specialist for Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Noe Turcios (Staff Specialist, Statewide Coordinator for Deaf Services):

- Started with DORS in June 2021.
- Focus on Deaf consumers but can serve DeafBlind if needed.
- DeafBlind consumers are automatically assigned to OBVS, but they have a right to ask to work with Deaf services staff.
- If providers need information about Deaf Culture or Deaf services, they can reach out to Noe at: Noe.Turcios@maryland.gov.
- Noe is recruiting vendors such as interpreter contracts and Rehabilitation Communication Specialists (RCS).
- Noe's goal is to improve Deaf services for the Deaf community.

Toni March (Director, Office for Blindness & Vision Services (OBVS):

Toni March was not able to attend the meeting. Toni Cobb-Cannon reported the following items:

- OBVS continues to recruit providers for services to Blind and Low Vision individuals.
- There is a 25% incentive once a vendor is approved by OBVS to provide services to Blind and Low Vision individuals.
- A reminder that training hours for approved providers need to be current. Please submit your hours to Mutassim Fadl or Toni Cobb-Cannon.

Randy Diehl (Director of MIS):

- Portal – The portal is receiving a good number of invoices. No issues reported.
- Issues or questions regarding the portal may be submitted using the Feedback Portal.
- Separate Portals have been developed for submitting Confidential Information to DORS and for DORS to send confidential information to Providers.
- Instructions are embedded on Instruction page.

Wanda Peele (Program Manager, Business Service Branch):

- The language on the latest clarification and FAQs from RSA relative to Competitive Integrated Employment highlights “parity” which is the interaction between disabled and non-disabled individuals on the work site.
- Workforce Alliance Meetings are every other month. Providers are welcome to attend these meetings which often have representatives from various employers. Providers can email Wanda to be included in the meetings. Wanda.Peele@maryland.gov

Provider Forum (Q & A):

1. Question from a provider: Will providers still be involved in the referral process with the new EDU?

Yes. The EDU will include an individual noted on the referral as part of the intake and referral process.

2. A provider noted an overall decrease in referrals. Jody put the question out to all of the providers present and there was an overall sense of decreased referrals.

Jody noted that was likely due to hiring new staff and their training period. As staff are hired and trained, referrals will most likely increase. Providers concurred that they also have difficulty hiring new staff which is creating the potential for waitlists.

3. A question was asked about whether the research that was done regarding CAS and employment outcomes included CAS services and if so, Internal CAS or External CAS.

The research included CAS reports for four years and that included both WTC CAS and our CAS community providers. There were no Pre-ETS clients included in that research.

4. A question was asked about how CAS reports could be improved.

- **Better referral questions from DORS staff.**
- **Examine reasons for CAS referral.**
- **Increase relevant information (i.e., emphasis on current employment positions).**

5. Are face-to-face services allowed for Pre-ETS?

Yes. There is nothing stopping face-to-face services as long as the provider is approved for face-to-face Pre-ETS services.

6. A question was asked about including a provider panel as part of QRT.

This is something that was done in the past. It can be looked into with Erica for future QRT modules.

7. Can VR services be provided to students who are 14?

If a student applies at 14 and is found eligible for VR, then DORS can consider Job Development and Job Coaching. There are several factors to consider. If a student receives a student services agreement, they are Pre-ETS. If they receive an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), they are VR.

8. Clarification of the numbers shared by Patrick:

Employment Rate Second Quarter after Exit: Performance

- With few exceptions, Employment Rate Second Quarter after Exit is assessed for all Participants who exited in the prior program year (PY 2020 reflects PY 2019 exiters).
- From PY 2018 to PY 2020, performance declined by 4%.

Year	Employed in Q2 (in Q2 Numerator)	Exited After IPE (in Q2 Denominator)	2 nd Quarter Rate
2018	147,768	293,190	50.4%
2019	144,938	282,530	51.3%
2020	132,884	286,175	46.4%

Median Earnings Second Quarter after Exit: Performance

- Calculated for Participants who exited the program in the preceding program year.
- Value in which there is an equal number of higher and lower values
- Reflective of earnings in the Second Quarter after exiting from the VR program and includes part-time and full-time employment).

Year	Median Earnings
2018	\$3,875
2019	\$4,005
2020	\$4,022
Maryland 2020	\$3,626

Employment Rate Fourth Quarter after Exit: Performance

- Assessed after six quarters of post-exit reporting are complete for the majority of Participants who exited (PY 2020 reflects CY 2019 exiters).

- This indicator is not a measure of retention from the Second Quarter after Exit.

Year	Employed in Q4 (in Q4 Numerator)	Exited After IPE (in Q4 Denominator)	4th Quarter Rate
2019	129,692	297,459	43.6%
2020	128,530	308,011	41.7%

- PY 2020 National Rate: 41.7% (16 States below National Rate)
- Maryland 32.7%

Next Meeting is scheduled for May 23, 2022.