

Minutes from CRP Advisory Committee Meeting July 19, 2021

In Attendance:

DORS Staff: Scott Dennis, Jody Boone, Darlene Peregoy, Toni March, Wanda Peele, Randy Diehl, Patrick Peto, Kate Drake, and Jill Pierce.

Over 100 providers attended this virtual meeting. All CRPs and CAS providers were invited.

Introductions/Presentations

Scott Dennis (Assistant State Superintendent in Rehabilitation Services):

- State FY began 7/1/2021; State 2022 budget meets Match and Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements, ensuring maximum federal funding.
- Federal FY begins 10/1/2021; DORS expects a slight increase in the Federal Grant for FY 21/22.
- DORS is currently experiencing a high number of vacancies and is working to get them filled. The hiring freeze was lifted in April.
- New Superintendent for Maryland State Department of Education: Mr. Mohammed Choudhury. Mr. Choudhury began his position on July 1, 2021. The DORS Executive Team will be meeting with the new superintendent.
- DORS is developing telework plans for staff as an effort towards downsizing the physical space of offices throughout the state. The effect of this will be seen in the coming years which will mean a smaller footprint which should increase funds towards case service money.
- Office operations. Covid numbers are increasing. DORS staff will be using the conference rooms to meet with clients (social distancing) which will leave limited space for providers to use DORS offices. Providers should work with their counselors and local offices to arrange meetings.

Jody Boone (Director, Office of Field Services):

- DORS has 34 counselor vacancies. 5 offers have been accepted since May. The two biggest obstacles in the hiring process are that our wages are not competitive and there is no promise of telework at this time.
- Vendor/CRP use of office space. Currently DORS staff are using the conference room and resource room for counselor appointments. Limited space for vendors.
- Virtual/In-Person services are available. Client choice as to which format they prefer.

- BHA counselors are approved to physically go to providers. Any delays experienced are likely due to vacancies.
- **On behalf of Derick Serra:**
 - Rise Program contractor, Psychometric Solutions.
 - DORS has been working with Psychometric Solutions for a little over a year now.
 - 4 businesses have been approved.
 - DORS will pay up to \$15,000 for start up costs.
 - DORS recently met to perform an annual review of the program to date.
 - Ex. A recently approved business was a tutoring business.

Toni March (Director, Office of Blindness and Vision Services (OBVS)):

- OBVS is purchasing services from CRPs that are approved to provide services. Providers interested in working with individuals who are blind or visually impaired must complete two videos, have a conversation with Mutassim Fadl, and sign an addendum outlining the approved services to be approved for an enhanced rate (25%) above the current fees for employment services. Mutassim's phone number is: 410-554-9104.
- There was a question about a client who was taking a JAWS class and the job coach was not allowed to attend with the client. Toni March will address the issue off-line.

Darlene Perego (Director, Administration and Financial Services):

- Kate and Toni are updating cooperative agreements and removing CRPs that have not provided any services over the past three years.
- Kate and Toni are in the process of diving provider assignments. Toni has been reaching out to those newly assigned to her to update agreements and make introductions.
- Pandemic Recovery Task Force. DORS staff have been 100% in the office since July 1, 2021. Offices are pre-screening staff and visitors with a COVID-19 questionnaire. DORS staff are scheduling limited in-person meetings, virtual meetings are available. It is client choice as to whether the meetings are in-person or virtual. DORS is completing orders for air purifiers for conference rooms. WTC is expanding in-person services and will resume full services by September 7, 2021.
- A letter went out to providers in May regarding the continuation of virtual services. This letter is available on the DORS website. DORS has found many benefits to offering these virtual services. A big thank you to all providers who were able to shift to providing those services and who will continue to help us meet the needs of DORS consumers.
- As mentioned in the last meeting, DORS has been participating in a grant funded learning management system through the George Washington University. DORS is moving into Phase 2, which will include customized training available from San Diego State University. DORS is happy to have the ability to provide these resources to both new and seasoned staff to supplement the many in-house trainings provided, which will be critical to getting new staff up and running as quickly as possible.

Jill Pierce (Staff Specialist, Supported Employment and PreETS):

- DORS is still not accepting unsolicited proposals for Pre-ETS but continue to have standard PreETS services available to use (WBLEs and Explore Work).
- DORS needs additional partners for students who are deaf and/or blind to provide Explore Work/WBLEs.
- Virtual PreETS. DORS continues to offer consumer choice and are supporting PreETS both virtually and in-person (to include employer based WBLEs).

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

- Office of field services: 19, 564 open cases. Office of Blindness and Vision Services: 937 open cases.
- Waitlist: 2800 individuals
- Population: Age 24 and under: Majority of population cases: 11, 181
Age 25 and up: approx. 9,000
- In the last 12 months:
 - 10,578 referrals. In December 2020 DORS went to a fully on-line referral system.
 - 5,170 applicants for services
 - 2,500 IPEs completed
 - 198 Independent Living Plans (Older Blind)
 - 861 Employment Start Dates
 - 1,030 Employed of which 494 are stable
- Between 7/1/20 – 6/30/21:
 - 926 successful outcomes
 - \$14.88/hr. – average wage
 - Over 27 hours per week.
- In the last 12 months DORS has issued 251 Quality Incentive Authorizations (Incentive Fact Sheet is attached).
- July 1, 2021. New Policy. Disclosure/PII to providers: *Consent to Disclose to Service Providers* which providers will start to see being sent. This form will be completed by the DORS counselor with the client prior to being referred to providers. Additionally, DORS has revamped the current disclosure for information form.

Randy Diehl, Director of MIS:

- Portal. No new updates.
- System is purging records in the portal that are 4 months old.
- Invoices that are 4 months old where there may be a discrepancy need to be re-submitted.
- Invoice discrepancy report is run biweekly to identify all unprocessed invoices. This has been very helpful.

- 8,00 – 8,500 receipts over a 4 month period.
- Portal feedback – indicates a decrease in technical issues. Providers can use the feedback for suggestions; however, please be aware that if reports/invoices are sent through the feedback portal, it is not secure/encrypted. Please use the report portal to submit reports/invoices containing PII.

Wanda Peele, Program Manager, Business Service Branch:

- 3 CIE requests are currently being evaluated.
- Currently scheduling regional Statewide Workforce Meetings every other month. Information and registration for the workforce meetings can be obtained from Wanda Peele at: wanda.peele@maryland.gov
- Statewide efforts due to staff vacancies.
- Business services branch offer several trainings such as ADA training.
- AJC partnerships providing some virtual training such as assisting persons with disabilities,
- AJCs are seeing customers by appointment only.
- Newsletter: Bugle. Provides information on employment opportunities. Each BSR will send to CRPs in their area.