Minutes from CRP Advisory Committee Meeting
September 28, 2026

In Attendance:

- **DORS Staff:** Patrick Peto, Beth Lash, William Georg, Wanda Peele, Tamla McDowell-Omodho, Jessica Markum, Catherine Drake, Robert Trombley, Tandra Hunter-Payne, and Muttasim Fadl
- Individuals representing DORS CRPs attended this virtual meeting. All CRPs and CAS providers were invited.

Introductions & Welcome

Kate Drake opened the meeting and welcomed participants along with co-hosts Tamela McDowell-Omoto and Bill George.

DORS Staff

Rob Trombley (Director of External Impact):

- **Background:** Introduced himself as taking over former responsibilities of Kim Schultz; previously spent 13 years in federal service (US Department of Education, ODEP at US Department of Labor).
- **State Job Fair (October 28):** Hosted by Kennedy Krieger Institute during NDEAM. Targeted specifically to DORS consumers and wait list individuals to help reduce the wait list; attendance is by targeted invite only.
- **Modernization:** Expanding social media outreach (e.g., Instagram) and preparing for a state-wide website transition to Drupal over the next 6 months.

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

- **Overall Federal Performance:** DORS achieved 106% of its overall federal performance goals for PY25 (ended June 30).
- **Key Metrics:**
    - **2nd Quarter Employment Rate:** Achieved 43% (Goal: 52%).
    - **4th Quarter Employment Rate:** Achieved 43% (Goal: 49%).
    - **2nd Quarter Median Earnings:** Achieved $4,823 (Goal: $4,600 — 105% of goal).
    - **Credential Attainment Rate:** Achieved 43% (Goal: 30% — 143% of goal).
    - **Measurable Skills Gains (MSG):** Achieved 61% (Goal: 54% — 113% of goal).
- **Successful Outcomes:**
    - **Office of Field Services:** 973 successful outcomes at an average wage of $18.49/hour.
    - **Office for Blindness & Vision Services:** 72 successful outcomes at an impressive average wage of $29.52/hour.
    - **Agency Total:** 1,045 successful outcomes (Average wage: $19.57/hour; 27.6 hours/week).

- **Client Satisfaction Survey Feedback:** Over 990 responses collected since March. Highlights include praise for frontline staff and community partners, with areas for improvement identified in post-exit job retention, communication consistency, and simplifying administrative processes.

Beth Lash (Director, Office of Field Services):

- **Job Retention Focus:** Emphasized the critical importance of job retention (measured at 6 and 12 months post-case closure). Requested CRP ideas and collaboration to improve retention performance.
- **PRIME Grant (Baltimore City):** Part of a federal Disability Innovation Fund grant via University of Wisconsin-Madison (Promoting Retention in Meaningful Employment). Offers voluntary job retention training with live counselors alongside AI-driven check-ins.
- **DDA Partnership & Initiatives:** Ongoing cross-training with DDA per the MOU signed last fall; participating as an employer in Governor Moore's Department of Service & Civic Innovation (DSCI) initiative (onboarding 20 counselor aide intern positions for 9 months).
- **Operations:** Reminded CRPs that service authorizations must be in place prior to service delivery; field offices are required to meet with CRPs at least monthly.
- **Retirement Announcement:** Announced her retirement effective January 1, 2027, and expressed sincere gratitude to all CRP partners.

Bill Georg (Program Manager, Community Resources & Administration):

- **Web & Forms Reminders:** Encouraged regular visits to the public CRP webpage for updates, resources, and current forms.
- **Digital Accessibility Deadline:** State/federal compliance deadline extended to April 24, 2027 (though pending NFB litigation against DOJ/HHS could potentially affect this timeline).
- **Events & Compliance:** Highlighted Maryland Works' upcoming Maryland Disabilities Forum (gubernatorial forum). Reminded Employment Works Program (EWP) providers to maintain core service requirements (10% of total business or minimum 2 referrals/month) and keep cooperative agreements/contact info up to date.

Jessica Markum (Staff Specialist, Transition):

- **Pre-ETS Authorizations:** Urged providers to condense services and prevent long, lingering authorizations to assist financial forecasting and timely billing.
- **Certificate of Completion Endorsements:** Highlighted optional student endorsements in post-secondary education, career readiness, and community citizenship developed through the State transition collaborative.
- **Technical Assistance & Proposals:** Open for new Pre-ETS proposals. Hosts monthly TA office hours every 4 weeks on Wednesdays from 2:30–3:30 PM.
- **Pathways to Partnership (DIF Grant):** Serves youth ages 10–21 in Caroline, Charles, and Washington counties. Currently has 190 participants enrolled toward a 500-student goal by Sept 2028 (20 competitive integrated employment placements achieved to date).

Tandra Hunter-Payne & Muttasim Fadl – Office for Blindness & Vision Services (OBVS):

- **Leadership Transition:** Tandra Hunter-Payne introduced as Director of OBVS following Toni March's transition to Senior Executive Director.

- **Enhanced Rates:** Up to a 25% rate enhancement is available for job development and Pre-ETS for consumers who are blind, low vision, or deaf-blind. Requires completion of OBVS training and annual refresher training.

Wanda Peele (Program Manager, Business Relations Branch):

- **Job Club & On-the-Job Training (OJT):** Successful state-wide Job Club activities; 10 individuals completed OJTs, with 5 already transitioned to permanent employment.
- **Training Schedule:** Developing a consolidated training schedule (GovDelivery format) for CRP signup following the state job fair.

Jeffrey Henriksen (MIS Director):

- **Role Introduction:** Introduced as new MIS Director, succeeding Randy Diehl.
- **Portal & Database Initiatives:** Overseeing the invoice/reporting portal and establishing an updated master database of site locations and services to streamline service matching and invoice processing.

Questions/Concerns from Attendees:

- **Job Fair Eligibility (Chat Question):** Confirmed that job fair invites were sent directly to targeted consumers and wait list individuals rather than open CRP distribution due to venue capacity constraints.
- **AI Usage in Job Retention / PRIME Grant (Cindy Freeman, Spectrum Support Inc.):**
    - **Q:** Expressed security/privacy concerns regarding AI check-ins and asked whether AI is intended to replace human job coaches.
    - **A (Beth Lash, Jeffrey Henriksen, Patrick Peto):** Clarified that AI is strictly an optional communication/scheduling tool (like the SARA overlay) to flag early retention issues. High security and data protection protocols were verified via the University of Wisconsin-Madison and MSDE IT/security gauntlet. Reassured partners that AI will not replace human caseworkers or job coaches.

Next Meeting:

- Anticipated toward the end of January 2027. Official dates and minutes will be distributed via email.

End of Meeting