

MSRC-DORS 2025 Public Meeting Notes:

DORS GENERAL UPDATES

Dr. Erikk Bonner

Year in Review: Progress and Achievements

Coming up on a year, and appreciating all the work that internal, external, consumers, and partners have done for Marylanders.

- Employment Outcomes
- Partnerships Strengthened
- Innovations at the Workforce & Technology Center (WTC)
- Equity and Access

Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

While we have celebrated progress, we also face pressing challenges:

- Workforce Capacity
- Resource Constraints
- Evolving Workforce Needs

These challenges, however, represent opportunities to reimagine service delivery, build resilience, and strengthen partnerships.

Strategic Vision

Looking forward, we are aligning our efforts with workforce priorities and the mission of equity and excellence. Our strategic focus includes:

- Expanding Youth Transition Services: Ensuring students with disabilities are prepared for post-secondary education and careers.
- Employer Engagement: Partnering with businesses to build inclusive workplaces and highlight the value of diverse talent.
- Innovation and Technology: Leveraging SARA and process improvements to enhance consumer experience.
- Accountability and Impact: Using data-driven performance management tools to ensure transparency and continuous improvement.

Closing Reflection

- Appreciation for staff, partners, and all other stakeholders.
- Reaffirmed commitment to PACS (Professionalism, Accountability, Communication, Safety).

OFFICE OF FIELD SERVICES (OFS) UPDATES

Beth Lash, OFS Director

DORS is a partner in a Maryland Department of Labor EARN Grant for Certified Logistics Associate and Certified Logistics Technician training at Howard Community College. Training for these nationally recognized credentials is available to accepted DORS participants with

tuition covered by the grant. Students also participate in an externship with a local employer. The next class for CLA starts 10/22/2025. Flyer attached here.

DORS implemented a streamlined Pre-ETS referral process this month. New process developed involves simultaneous initial communication with both the family and LEA, to facilitate LEA support of the process. An example is the LEA will be able to upload documentation immediately, to support the qualification of the student. This should reduce the waiting time to the development of the Service Agreement, and the implementation of services.

MPPI Grant Update/Progress –

DORS is finishing the second year of a five-year Disability Innovation Fund Grant from Rehabilitation Services Administration. The Maryland Pathways to Partnership Grant brings together DORS, LEAs, CILs, & PPMD in Caroline, Charles, & Washington counties to provide services to youth with disabilities from ages 10-21. Year 2 of the grant allowed outreach to 894 youth with disabilities in these communities. Staff connected with the grant are now working to enroll these youth and refer them to services with partner agencies. We are looking forward to fully implementing services in year 3 which starts in October. There is a website specific to this project for further information: <https://mdtransitions.org/mppi/home/>
RSA abstract: <https://rsa.ed.gov/about/programs/disability-innovation-fund-pathways-to-partnerships/grantees>

LINK (Leveraging Interagency Networks for Knowledge) DIF grant. -DORS is partnering with MDOD, MSDE, and other partners for the LINK grant. MDOD was the entity awarded the grant, and has the lead. The purpose is to enhance data sharing between partners supporting the student, so that service delivery is improved. (Abstract is located here - must scroll down to state <https://rsa.ed.gov/about/programs/disability-innovation-fund-creating-21st-century-workforce-of-youth-and-adults-with-disabilities/grantees>)
LINK website address: <https://mdtransitions.org/link/home/>

Reaching Independence through Self-Employment (RISE)

The RISE program with Psychometric Solutions LLC ended in March 2025. Interested DORS participants will develop business plans using community resources available (examples: community colleges, Small Business Administration, SCORE). DORS will continue to provide some limited funding towards approved business plans.

- Invite participants to review our latest **Success Story!**

(Tenille) <https://dors.maryland.gov/spotlight/Pages/Tinille's-Tenacity-=Success-as-a-PA.aspx>

OFFICE FOR BLINDNESS & VISION SERVICES (OBVS)

Toni March, OBVS Director

OBVS provides services for those individuals who have a vision impairment through the Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB), and Business Enterprise Programs.

The OBVS Vocational Rehabilitation Program provides services for those individuals who are seeking employment and who have low vision or blindness.

The OBVS ILOB program provides services for those individuals aged 55 years or older who are losing their vision and need training to continue to live independently in the community.

Currently the OBVS Vocational program is serving approximately 1061 consumers and the ILOB program is serving approximately 821 consumers.

The Business Enterprise Program which provides vending, cafeteria, and retail opportunities for legally blind individuals has been very busy in the past year. Since the majority of facilities operated by blind vendors are located in federal buildings, the return to in office operations by the federal government has meant requests to re-open formerly closed facilities in federal buildings. The Business Enterprise program has opened two new facilities (a cafeteria and a coffee bar) and has re-opened 7 facilities that were closed because of COVID and telework practices. This has resulted in 5 formerly displaced vendors going back to work. Additionally, changes in operations have resulted in 9 licensed vendors assuming management of vending machine routes.

In the ILOB Program, during the past year, reductions in funding available have resulted in changes regarding purchasing services and devices. The ILOB program receives a small allotment from the federal government, and historically it has been supplemented through program income generated from successfully closed VR cases.

Due to increased costs and reduced program income the ILOB program did not receive as much supplemental funding. The ILOB program continues to provide information and referral services and rehabilitation teacher services in the home, however, due to reduced funding the program is not purchasing assistive technology, low vision devices or low vision assessments currently. We will continue to provide quality rehabilitation teaching services and will adjust services as funding allows.

QUALITY ASSURANCE, POLICY & PLANNING, POLICY UPDATES

Patrick Peto, Program Manager

- Return to financial participation (5/7/2025)
 - no assessment, interpreter or communication aids necessary to participate in services.
- transportation updates (5/1/2025)
 - \$0.35 per mile; 3 quotes for transportation needs
- post-secondary education/training (5/1/2025)
- End of the RISE contractor (3/14/25) and how DORS can continue to support self-employment goals.

WIOA performance measures

- Employment 2nd Quarter After Exit: 45.5%
- Employment 4th Quarter After Exit: 43.3%
- Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit: \$4,674
- Credential Attainment: 42.4%
- Measurable Skills Gains: 55.3%

Accomplishment of Successful Rehabs for the last Program Year

- PY24: **1,082 (+73 over PY23)**
 - o Avg. **\$18.48/hour; 27 hours/week**
 - o Total Participants Served: **14,619 (+1491 over PY23)**
- PY23: **1,009**
 - o Avg. **\$17.53/hour; 26.2 hours/week**
 - o Total Participants Served: **13,128**

Current state of our wait list for services (as of 9/15/25)

- Total Waiting List: **2914**; ages 21 and under: **948**
 - o 2021- 2025 application dates

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS & ACCESSIBILITY **Kimberlee Schultz**

CRPs and Digital Accessibility Requirements

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has been updated to include specific standards for web and mobile accessibility, which will be required for Maryland State government-related websites and apps beginning April 24, 2026.

Entities that subcontract with DORS, including Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) must meet these revised standards and have accessible websites, web content, and mobile apps (if applicable) beginning April 24, 2026.

To assist CRPs with this transition, Donna Lettow, DORS Digital Accessibility & Communication Administrator, is conducting two trainings on ADA Web Content Accessibility Guidelines & Responsibilities. These online information sessions cover several topics, including the new rules, how to meet them, and how to do some simple tests to see how usable a site and documents are accessible to people with a wide spectrum of disabilities.

New CMS For DORS And MSRC Websites

The State of Maryland's Department of Information Technology, or DoIT is changing the State websites' content management system (CMS). This change will be applied to the DORS and MSRC websites sometime within the next year.

WORKFORCE & TECHNOLOGY CENTER (WTC) COMMUNITY SERVICES AND PARTNERSHIP UPDATES

Tom Liniak, Director, Community-Based & Workforce Services

Demand for our Programs and Services Increased Significantly

- Enrollment in training programs and other services was up 24% year over year

Turning to some Highlights in Rehabilitation Technology Services

- Driver's education programs – We have programs for specific and nonspecific populations.
- Doubled the number of DE programs for individuals with Autism. Those classes include a behind the wheel component in the community
- Added a DE program for Deaf individuals for the first time
- In another area, we added College of Southern Maryland to our Pathways program for students with autism. Now serve 7 community colleges. In person and online programs that fill critical service gaps

Moving to some Highlights in Workforce Services

- We have added new business partner to our training programs that have already been returning results for our job seekers.
- Sodexo at Morgan State University as an internship training partner in our Food Service program. First cohort led to 8 hires there
- Also, in Food Service we are entering into a partnership with BCPS to be an internship site in food service and warehouse. They have significant hiring needs. We already have our first hire. Needs of both sides match.
- Entered into a hiring partnership with AA County Public schools' food service, already have our first hire
- Expanded in employment training programs in the community – away from WTC Baltimore. Our CVS Retail program with PGCC in Laurel is year-round and we added a training program in Salisbury as well
- Marked the First time we had employment training programs in three locations across the state simultaneously
- RSA, our federal funding source, is producing a success story for every state. A former WTC student who attended our CVS Retail and Pharm tech programs and has passed the National PT Exam was chosen for the MD story. The video will be debuting in October. Pleased and honored

MSRC

Dr. Katherine L.R. Jones, MSRC Chair

- Maryland was represented at the National Coalition for State Rehabilitation Councils in Seattle in the fall of 2024 and in Bethesda the spring of 2025. Maryland will also be represented in San Diego in the fall of 2025.
- Retreat/Orientation was held on August 27th in Columbia.

- “Call to Action” virtual statewide meeting was held to encourage advocates to educate our elected officials on the need for vocational rehabilitation federal funding.
- 23 members strong.
- Sub-committees include: Blindness and Vision Services, Employment and Career Development, Policy and Planning, and Public Relations and Quality Assurance.
- Sub-committees do allow members of the community to join and fully participate.
- Annual letter will be prepared by the Chair of the SRC for the Governor’s office and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).
- The SRC is still in need of a parent advocate, and an early childhood special education educator to fill two more vacant positions. We have already identified an individual from the NFB who is interested in applying for a position.

CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CAP)

Marla Friedman, Director

The CAP office also includes Jhoselin Beltran Contreras, CAP Specialist.

The Maryland Client Assistance Program (CAP) is a federally funded program that provides information, advice, and advocacy to individuals applying for and receiving services from Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and Centers for Independent Living (CILs).

CAP was established by the 1984 amendment to the Rehabilitation Act because navigating through these services can be overwhelming.

The goal of CAP is to protect clients and client-applicants to ensure respectful and fair treatment consistent with agency policies and federal laws.

CAP is not a neutral party. We always represent the client or client-applicant.

CAP aims to resolve disputes using the least formal means possible.

If you have questions, concerns, and need to be pointed in the right direction, please reach out to us. Putting information in the chat.

Contact CAP at:

Website: dors.maryland.gov/CAP

Voice: 410-554-9361

Toll-free: 1-800-638-6243

E-mail: cap.dors@maryland.gov

COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

9/16/25 - Anonymous Comment from an attendee: *For the Thursday morning meeting, I'd suggest refraining from abbreviations and acronyms. Examples: LEA and RSA.*