

MEETING MINUTES

May 14, 2020, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting Via Microsoft Teams

Participation

Council Members Present:

Elizabeth Kamm Abdnour, Mikyia Aaron, Carol Bergquist, Myrtel Brown, Lisa Cook-Gordon, Todd Culver, Elham Jahshan, Kimberly Kennedy Barrington, Travar Pettway, Karen Schulz, David Szydowski, Jackie Tahtinen, Janet Timbs, and Aaron Andres.

Council Member Not Present:

Tiffany Guthrie

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Tina Fullerton – MRS

Bill Robinson - BSBP

DSU Liaisons Present:

Lisa Kisiel - BSBP

Karsten Bekemeier – MRS (outgoing)

Eric Bachmann – MRS (newly appointed)

DSU Staff Members Present:

Nichole Lepley - MRS

Mike Pemble - BSBP

Amie Weber - MRS

Other:

Alicia Kirkey-LEO (newly assigned staff support to Council)

Call to Order

Chairperson, Carol Bergquist, called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. via Microsoft Teams.

Roll Call

Nikki Lepley read the roll call. A quorum was present.

Introductions and Welcome

All in attendance introduced themselves and explained their role and function on the Council. Others in the meeting introduced themselves.

Approval of Proposed Agenda

Jackie Tahtinen made a motion to approve the 5/14/2020 Proposed Agenda with support from Aaron Andres. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of 2/13/2020 Business Meeting Minutes

Aaron Andres made a motion to approve the 2/13/2020 Business Meeting Minutes with support from Karen Schulz. Motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Lisa Kisiel discussed the status of the **Unified State Plan**, as well as the MCRS responses to both the MRS and BSBP VR Sections on the Plan. They have been submitted to both the US Department Labor and the US Department of Education/RSA for approval. The full UPS document includes over 300 pages, four titles, and six partners. The Council responses were to the VR portions of the Unified State Plan. Updates to the Council will be forthcoming once responses to the document are obtained. We determined that there was no need for Council approval at this time.

Old Business

Carol Bergquist discussed the plan for **MCRS New/Existing Member Orientation** during the Covid-19 period to include several short-term sessions (up to 90 minutes

each) using Microsoft Teams. More information will be forthcoming to Council members.

At this time, Carol Bergquist tabled action on the **Election of Executive Team**, review of **Bylaws**, and the **MCRS Resource Plan** until Orientation occurred.

11:30 a.m. Public Comment

Jackie Tahtinen read the guidelines for public comment. No Comments were received.

DSU Reports

Director Bill Robinson from the **Bureau of Services for Blind Persons** provided an update on challenges and opportunities his agency has faced during the COVID-19 period in Michigan. Director Robinson applauded his staff's commitment to serving dual customers during this restrictive time using innovative technology. Other management staff from BSBP, including Mike Pemble and Lisa Kisiel, also shared updates from the Training Center, Braille and Talking Book Library, Business Enterprise, and Field Services, including services to students with disabilities. It was agreed by all that customer engagement during this time has remained strong, and teamwork and collaboration between staff and consumers has resulted in positive outcomes.

Director Tina Fullerton from **Michigan Rehabilitation Services** also echoed many of the statements about opportunities and challenges during this time that staff with MRS have faced. With over eighty field offices throughout the State, she discussed the careful planning they are doing to return to in-person services once the "Stay Home Stay Safe" Executive Order expires. Ongoing services to customers during this time, including onboarding of new customers was discussed. Eric Bachmann from the MRS management staff also talked about the creative and collaborative ways his field staff have served dual customers. Both Tina Fullerton and Amie Weber discussed

budgetary challenges and considerations. Finally, in regards to MCTI, it was noted that two of the training programs were able to continue virtually during the “Stay Home Stay Safe” Order, including Pharmacy Tech and IT. While MCTI remains closed, it is hopeful that on-campus activities for the approximate 300 students who were participating prior to COVID-19 closure will be able to resume in the fall.

Noon-1 p.m. Lunch Break

1:00 p.m. Voices of MCRS Members- COVID 19 Impact from a Disability Perspective

Members shared their various experiences and concerns from a disability-advocate and business and industry perspective. All agreed that collaboration between various groups is critical, and strategies were discussed to better collaborate as a Council with SILC and the DD Council. Members of the Council are also represented on these two other councils, including Janet Timbs (DD Council) and Aaron Andres (SILC). Better alignment and strategic collaboration with partner councils, as well as other organizations that advocate on behalf of people with disabilities in the VR arena, remain goals of our Council for 2020.

Business Meeting Adjournment

Aaron Andres made a motion to adjourn the Business Meeting at 3 p.m. with support from Kimberly Kennedy Barrington. Approved.