

Michigan Council for Rehabilitation Services (MCRS)



Quarterly Business Meeting Minutes

The meeting was held Thursday, November 10, 2022, 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

In accordance with the Open Meetings Act (OMA) and the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), in-person attendees met at the Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI), 11611 Pine Lake Road, Plainwell, MI 49080 and virtual attendees participated via Microsoft Teams.

Call to Order

Chairperson Carol Bergquist called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.

Member Roll Call with Location

Vice Chairperson Brent Mikulski read the roll call. A quorum was present.

Attendance

Council Members Attending In-Person:

Carol Bergquist, Chair, Brent Mikulski, Vice Chair, Kellie Blackwell and Todd Culver.

Council Members Attending Virtually:

Lisa Cook-Gordon (Melvin, MI), Steve Locke (Auburn, MI), Jackie Tahtinen (Pelkie, MI)

Council Members Excused:

Kimberly Barrington, Travar Pettway and Karen Schulz

Council Members Absent:

None

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Tina Fullerton – MRS (virtual – East Tawas, MI)

Bill Robinson – BSBP (virtual – East Lansing, MI)

DSU Liaisons Present:

Lisa Kisiel – BSBP

Eric Bachmann – MRS

MCRS Support Present:

Alicia Kirkey – Dept of Labor & Economic Opportunity, Employment & Training

Partner Guest:

Elham Jahshan, of the Client Assistance Program, is attending the meeting today and providing a partner report. She has applied for reappointment to the Council and is awaiting a response from the Governor's Office Appointment Office.

Guests:

Mike Pemble, Bureau of Services for Blind Persons

Amie Weber, Michigan Rehabilitation Services

Sigrid Adams, Michigan Rehabilitation Services

Marcy Hickman, Michigan Department of Management and Budget

Andrew Pabst, Dept of Labor & Economic Opportunity-Employment & Training

Approval of Proposed Agenda of November 10, 2022 Meeting (Attachment 1)

Todd Culver moved to approve the November 10, 2022 Proposed Agenda. Motion supported by Brent Mikulski. Motion put to a roll call vote. Vice Chair Brent Mikulski called the vote.

Name	Vote	Name	Vote
Carol Bergquist, Chair	Yes	Lisa Cook-Gordon	Yes
Brent Mikulski, Vice Chair	Yes	Steve Locke	Yes
Kimberly Barrington	Excused Absence	Travar Pettway	Excused Absence
Kellie Blackwell	Yes	Karen Schulz	Excused Absence
Todd Culver	Yes	Jackie Tahtinen	Yes

There being a unanimous vote, motion carried. Proposed November 10, 2022 meeting agenda approved.

Approval of September 8, 2022 Business Meeting Minutes (Attachment 2)

Lisa Cook-Gordon moved to approve the Minutes of the September 8, 2022 MCRS Meeting. Motion supported by Jackie Tahtinen. Motion put to a roll call vote. .

Vice Chair Brent Mikulski called the vote.

Name	Vote	Name	Vote
Carol Bergquist, Chair	Yes	Lisa Cook-Gordon	Yes
Brent Mikulski, Vice Chair	Yes	Steve Locke	Yes
Kimberly Barrington	Excused Absence	Travar Pettway	Excused Absence
Kellie Blackwell	Yes	Karen Schulz	Excused Absence
Todd Culver	Yes	Jackie Tahtinen	Yes

There being a unanimous vote, motion carried. Minutes of the September 8, 2022 MCRS meeting were approved.

Resource Plan (Attachment 3)

The updated FY2022 Resource Plan containing expenditures from last quarter was presented by Amie Weber, State Administrative Manager, Michigan Rehabilitation Services, and opened the floor for questions. Some questions were raised concerning restrictions on the budget if FY2023 budget stays consistent with the reduced expenditures associated with the pandemic. Meetings and conferences are moving towards in-person attendance. Advance planning for meetings, conferences and vendor booths would help planning for members to attend. Does the FY2023 budget allow for those changes in expenditures? Amie Weber assured the membership that if there is an uptick on expenditures, changes can be considered if warranted going forward.

Partner Mention – Michigan Career & Technical Institute (MCTI) Culinary Program

Carol Bergquist called to the attention of the full council that MCTI was hosting the meeting today that includes lunch prepared by and served by MCTI culinary program students. The students were busy with meal preparations that morning and student waitstaff will be taking lunch orders and serving lunch in the MCTI Pine Cove Restaurant. This is a great way for the students to get experience and for the council to see the MCTI culinary program first-hand.

Partner Reports

Disability Rights Michigan Quarterly Report (formerly MPAS) (Attachment 4) –

Elham Jahshan provided updates on program team activities for this quarter including meetings with MRS, issues such as Pre-ETS services, driver assistance policy, struggles with MRS rate restriction for program customers, etc. She also provided workplan summary for FY2022. There are four (4) objectives. Her report attached includes statistics for each objective.

Michigan Alliance for Families – Tiffany Burge has taken a new position and is no longer on the Council. Therefore, there was no report. Her replacement has not been named.

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) (Attachment 5) –

Steve Locke provided a written report that was distributed to council members prior to the meeting and offered to answer any questions. He did provide an update to the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) Writing Team section of his report. Notification was received from Administration for Community Living (ACL) that the current state plan for next year will be extended one additional year. He shared his appreciation for the working relationship with MRS and BSBP. He then opened the floor for questions.

Todd Culver offered Incompass Michigan's assistance to support the CILs' vaccination efforts to get vaccines to those in the disability community interested in being vaccinated.

Bill Robinson thanked Steve for his participation in the BSBP 2022 conference. His participation enlightened many attendees with the work of the CILs. Steve shared that through community feedback, many are unaware of the CILs. Discussion then turned towards building community relationships and awareness about independent living resources and rehabilitation initiatives. Carol Bergquist added that promoting awareness is a joint effort by all the partners.

Incompass Michigan (Attachment 6) – Todd Culver had also provided a written report in advance of the meeting and offered to entertain and questions regarding that report. He did highlight a few program priorities:

- Employment First continues building capacity of field specialists.
- YEAH (Youth Employment Ambassador Host), which is a mentoring program.
- Employment 4 Life Camps, which is 5 days of programming taking place on two occasions.
- MRS Rate Restructuring – Incompass Michigan association members continue to experience challenges with those structures.
- Education Priorities – Industry-Specific Seminars, Content Outside Scope of Disability Employment, Leadership Conference 2023 will be held June 7-9, 2023 in Traverse City, Michigan.
- re:con event – Save the date for November 8-10, 2023, at the Grand Traverse Resort, Traverse City Michigan

Todd then opened the floor for questions.

Bill Robinson asked about the recruitment and retention of members of Incompass Michigan. Todd responded that staffing at all levels of workforce is a statewide challenges, high turnover rates. Brent Mikulski concurred with Todd's assessment.

Bill Robinson also inquired as to the participation in the industry-specific seminars. What is the feedback on how the program/training is going. Currently, being offered as a webinar developed by Sean Roy, of TransCen, Inc., is able to connect with others by sharing his own story. It's a dual approach to providers and families. The webinar is available on the Incompass Michigan website. Also, Incompass Michigan is also offering a live virtual training on December 12, 2022, from 3:00 - 4:30 pm. A link will be provided to council members after the meeting.

Carol Bergquist offered that Incompass Michigan has many valuable, educational resources on their website. Membership is not required to access resources. Worth visiting the Incompass Michigan website (incompassmi.org) to see what is available.

Developmental Disability (DD) Council – Vendella Collins was unable to attend meeting. No report submitted.

DSU Updates

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) (Attachment 7): Director Tina Fullerton, shared updates on the agency, including the announcement of a new Deputy Director, Sigrid Adams. She also discussed the success of the recent Champion Awards and expressed gratitude to the Council for their ongoing support. Tina has been appointed to the Governor's Michigan Workforce Development Board, which will be a chance to share workforce experiences for those with disabilities.

Finally, she discussed the ongoing challenges with staffing issues, both recruitment and retention.

Amie Weber gave an update on MRS Budget; Eric Bachman provided a verbal report on performance and noted that overall stats are good with the exception of being slightly below target on applications.

Lisa Cook-Gordon requested information related to number of students served, what services they received, skills obtained, how successful students have been in obtaining employment. Eric will speak with Lisa after the meeting to discuss stats that would be helpful in gaging success and planning.

(MRS report was interrupted to conduct public comment and lunch. Their report will continue after lunch.)

Public Comment

Alicia Kirkey read the guidelines for public comment. Comments were limited to and kept within the 3-minute time limit. She called for public comment.

- Speaker 1 – John Hart, Executive Director, Center for Independent Living for Jackson/Lenawee/Hillsdale counties, Michigan called disAbility Connections. He discussed the process of negotiating rates for services. Throughout the process, it became clear that the rates are too low to provide those services. They have successfully delivered services for several years. Under the new rates of service, they are no longer able to serve students due to the cost of programming is too much and would cut into other services. He has declined providing services in those areas as it impinges his ability to serve more students of Michigan. He feels the council should review the rates. He mentioned that rates in Minnesota and Wisconsin are less severe. Contact information is jon@disabilityconnect.org or 517-998-3082.

- Speaker 2 – Teri Langley, Community Relations Director, Disability Network/Michigan, which represents all 15 centers for independent living (CIL) in Michigan. Teri works with all CILs in furthering relationships with partners in Michigan. Actively working to improve relations with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS). There's been some confusion and communications issues. Looking forward to improving communication in 2023 and increasing CIL presence in meetings, such as the MCRS meeting. They want to be a partner and made sure that services are not negatively impacted by decisions made at the state level.

11:45 a.m. Lunch

The MCTI culinary program students served lunch to the in-person council members. They were able to prep ingredients for the lunch in addition to serving the lunches. This allowed them to gain valuable experience tending to customers. At the end of the lunch, each student introduced themselves. The pride demonstrated by the students was invaluable.

1:00 p.m. Resuming Meeting

Due to time constraints, Chair Carol Bergquist stated the following agenda items will be carried forward to the next quarterly business meeting:

Unfinished Business

- Council member vacancies and term expirations 2022

New Business

- Ad Hoc and Work Teams – Carol Bergquist
- Annual Report – Carol Bergquist
- Conferences – comments from participants – Carol Bergquist

DSU Updates – Continued (*MRS report continued*)

Since Director Tina Fullerton needed to attend another meeting, Deputy Director Sigrid Adams continued with the MRS report.

VR rate implementation will continue Phase 4 into FY2023. RSA provides progress, technical assistance, etc., regarding the new rates. RSA supports MRS rates for VR services.

MRS met with various ISD school personnel regarding addressing misinformation regarding rates. Looking forward to continued dialogue.

Moving forward, rates will continue to be monitored. When data shows changes are needed, MRS will adjust the rates accordingly.

Eric Bachmann referred the council to the MRS report for further updates regarding MCTI and grant summary, one year into a five-year grant.

Steve Locke's question to MRS is if there is enough data feedback regarding the current rate changes to determine if changes are warranted. Sigrid Adams indicated that it is still a little early.

Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP) (Attachment 8): Director Bill

Robinson, Director, provided a report in advance. He said he would be happy to answer any questions after sharing a few updates.

Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Conference

Update: RSA is concerned about lack of VR agencies to expend their grants.

Michigan has not left grant monies unexpended. As inflation rises, grants increase too. Since some states did not expend their grants prior to inflation increases, with the increased grant amounts, more money is returned.

CSAVR Priorities: Per the Executive Committee, the three priorities challenging the VR system the most are 1) recruit and retain VR staff, 2) redesign and streamline internal processes, and 3) increase public awareness of VR services.

Bill is chairperson of priority #2 - redesign and streamline internal processes and have added customer engagement. Bill asked the council to contact him with thoughts and comments on this topic.

Statistical Data shared by RSA:

- Measurable Skill Gains, Program Year (PY) 2021 – Michigan was at 56.8%
- Employment Rate, Q2, PY2021 – Michigan was 65.1%; #2 in nation.
- Median Earnings, Q2, PY2021 – Michigan was \$7,338; #1 in nation
- Employment Rate (post-exit), Q4, PY2021 – Michigan was 56.5%
- Credential Attainment Rate, Q4, PY2021 – Michigan was 38.5%
- Attrition before an IPE – Michigan 24%, which is average

This group, consumer groups, community partners, etc., should be proud of Michigan accomplishments. It's a collaborative effort.

State of Michigan Email Accounts (Attachment 9): Marcy Hickman, Michigan Department of Management and Budget, and Andrew Pabst, Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity, Office of Employment & Training. Marcy discussed Governor Whitmer's transparency directive and the email account that will be setup to comply with this directive. The email accounts have been reviewing the processes, addresses some of the bumps in the road to roll out board and council members use and manage these accounts. Processes and procedures will be developed and rollout of State of Michigan email accounts will be implemented.

Member Engagement: Brent Mikulski and Todd Culver discussed the potential development of a future survey for members to address training needs, onboarding experience, consumer satisfaction, etc. They will provide a survey

draft to the executive team with hopes of presenting more information to the Council in February.

Council Member Share, Announcements, Wrap Up

Carol Bergquist thanked the staff and students of MCTI for hosting the council. The February meeting will be in Lansing.

Business Meeting Adjournment

There being no further business, Todd Culver moved that the meeting be adjourned. Motion seconded by Lisa Cook-Gordon. There being a unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at 1:56 p.m.

MCTI Campus Tour: Following the business meeting, council members were invited to attend a tour of the MCTI campus.

FY2023 Quarterly Meeting Schedule

- Thursday, November 10, 2022, Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI), 11611 Pine Lake Road, Plainwell, MI 49080 and virtually via Microsoft Teams.
- Thursday, February 9, 2023, location TBD
- Thursday, May 11, 2023, location TBD
- Thursday, August 10, 2023, location TBD
- Thursday, September 7, 2023, location TBD