
Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) - AGENDA

A standing committee of the Workforce Development Board for Michigan Works! Southwest

Tuesday, October 20, 2026, from 2:00 – 3:30 PM

At Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49007

If you are unable to attend, you may connect virtually at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85688199855?pwd=SADEM2hWCdYaF5x0W6IW5Rygt8FfXj.1>

Meeting ID: 856 8819 9855 **Passcode:** 231255

Dial Toll-free: • 833-548-0282 • 877-853-5257 • 888-475-4499 • 833-548-0276

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|--|------------|
| I. Call to Order – Welcome and Introductions [5 min] | Co-Chairs |
| A. Approval of October 20, 2026, Agenda | |
| | |
| II. Meeting Minutes (vote) [2 min] | |
| A. Approval of September 16, 2025, and March 12, 2026, Minutes (<i>attached</i>) | |
| | |
| III. 2027 Draft Calendar (vote) (<i>attached</i>) | |
| | |
| IV. Agency Updates [15 min] | Members |
| | |
| V. Emerging Issues Related to Employment & Advocacy [5 min] | Discussion |
| | |
| VI. Unique Customer Needs – Request for Input & Resources [5 min] | Discussion |
| | |
| VII. Professional Development Opportunities [15 min] | |
| A. Disability Network Community Education http://www.dnswm.org/ | |
| B. KPL Oneplace https://www.kpl.gov/oneplace/ | |
| C. The Synergy Health Center https://synergykzoo.org/ | |
| D. Incompass Michigan - https://incompassmi.org/ - see the Education & Training tab | |
| E. DART Desktop Training Modules https://www.michiganworkssouthwest.org/resources/at-your-desktop-training | |
| | |
| VIII. Other Announcements and Upcoming Events (not covered above) [10 min] | Members |
| | |
| IX. Next DART Meeting (tentative)— Thursday, March 11, 2027, from 2-3:30 pm – at the Upjohn Institute | |
| | |
| X. Adjournment | Co-Chairs |

The Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) is a standing committee of the Michigan Works! Southwest Workforce Development Board.

DART members represent businesses, service providers, advocates, and allies with expertise in assisting individuals with disabilities with their career, training, and employment needs.

DART members will inform, promote, and advise the WDB on strategies to support career pathways, training, and employment options for individuals with disabilities, including youth, to gain and retain employment.

Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) Meeting Minutes September 16, 2025

CALL TO ORDER – DART Chair, Hank Bostic, called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m. at the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Hank Bostic (DNSW)

Elissa Ellis (APRIL)[✓]

John Fiore (MRS)

Debbie Horn (MWSW)

Alvin Littel (KRESA)[✓]

Ramona Lumpkin (Recovery Inst)[✓]

Katie McCuen (KRESA)

Michelle Miller Adams (Upjohn)[✓]

Sarah Pohl (MWSW)

Rhasheda Shepherd (ACA)[✓]

Jessica Souter (ISK)[✓]

Amanda Sutherland (KRESA)

[✓] Attended virtually

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The DART meeting agenda for September 16, 2025, was approved by consensus of members present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The DART meeting minutes of April 8, 2025, were approved by consensus of members present.

INTRODUCTIONS

Members present in person and online introduced themselves.

PROGRAM

Elissa Ellis from The Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) presented to the group virtually. Ms. Ellis reported that APRIL is a national nonprofit organization representing over 260 members and is focused on supporting individuals with disabilities in rural America. Its mission is to promote equity through advocacy, education, and collaboration. APRIL values diversity and aims to reflect inclusivity within its community. Additionally, APRIL offers technical assistance to its members, helping them with virtual events, independent living skills training, and youth program development, ensuring they have the resources needed to serve their communities effectively.

Following the presentation, a discussion ensued regarding the significant challenges associated with transportation. Members expressed a need for more comprehensive information on effectively addressing the unique transportation needs of individuals with disabilities. It was suggested that identifying potential partners, such as local churches, and negotiating reasonable rates could prove beneficial. Specific regions with successful transportation services were highlighted as examples. Hank Bostic mentioned his involvement

in developing a voucher plan and indicated that he will provide further details as the study progresses. He aims to present the plan to this group once it reaches a more conclusive stage.

AGENCY UPDATES

KRESA – Katie McCuen reported that the summer internship programs have successfully concluded, and they are looking forward to the spring cohorts. Youth participants are benefiting from dual enrollment opportunities at the Career Connect Campus, enhancing their educational experience. Furthermore, industry tours are set to commence soon, providing participants with valuable insights into various careers.

Amanda Sutherland reported that MyCITY sessions for paid work experience and internships have currently concluded in Kalamazoo but are still being offered in St. Joseph and Branch counties, with plans to resume in all areas in January. There is currently room for enrollment in MyCITY for out-of-school youth programs and limited spots for in-school youth in St. Joseph and Branch, so referrals for candidates are welcome. Ms. Sutherland further noted that, despite ongoing budget uncertainties, services will continue with minimal disruption.

Questions should be directed to Katie McCuen at katie.mccuen@kresa.org or Amanda Sutherland at amanda.sutherland@kresa.org.

Disability Network <https://www.dnswm.org/> - Hank Bostic reported that the Disability Network is collaborating with other agencies to create a transportation plan, which includes a transportation voucher system that he supports. As more details are available, he will be willing bring them to the DART Committee. Additional information about services is as follows:

- Information regarding a *Translation Services Resource* (including ASL) is available at Boost Lingo <https://boostlingo.com/>
- Many support groups are offered in-person and online; additional information can be found on the Disability Network website at [Support Groups](#).
- All information can be found on the updated website – <http://www.dnswm.org/>.
- *Community Education Events* are posted on the Disability Network Southwest website at <https://www.dnswm.org/events/>
- *Ramp Up* – Ramps provide greater independence and safety for people with mobility disabilities and allow them to remain living at home. The Ramp Up program works with funders and coordinates builders and volunteer organizations to provide ramps for those in need throughout Southwest Michigan. These ramps help people connect to resources for constructing ramps on private residences. For more info, contact Hank Bostic bostich@dnswm.org.
- *Disability Network Services* include Advocacy & Education, Information & Referral, Independent Living, Transition, and Peer Support. More information is available on the website at https://www.dnswm.org/services_menu/
- *Hours* – Office hours in Kalamazoo are Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Friday's hours are by phone by calling 269-345-1516. The Battle Creek office phone number is 269-345-1516, and the St. Joseph office phone number is 269-985-0111.

Recovery Institute <https://www.recoverymi.org/> *Peer to Peer Services* are available through weekly meetings, which are held at the Recovery Institute, Monday through Thursday, and there is open studio time on Fridays. The *Calendar of Activities* is available online at <https://www.recoverymi.org/ri-calendar>.

Integrated Services Kalamazoo <https://iskzoo.org/> - Jessica Souter reported that the Action Employment Services program assists individuals with physical or mental impairments, focusing on adults and youth aged 16 and older connected to ISK services. It is important to note that ISK is a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic that offers services for individuals who are not enrolled in Medicaid. ISK provides comprehensive services such as case management, therapy, and peer support to anyone in Kalamazoo County with a behavioral health condition. Additionally, ISK offers job coaching and follow-up support to assist individuals in achieving their employment goals.

- The *Urgent Care and Access Center* is located at 440 W. Kalamazoo Avenue, and it is open 24/7. For more information, call (269) 373-6000 or (888) 373-6200 or visit <https://iskzoo.org/all-services/>.
- *Schedule Appointments* - Customers can schedule appointments for non-urgent routine assessments or drop in Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. and on Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. For planning purposes, she recommended blocking two hours for appointments.
- The Crosstown Integrated Services location is a *Psychiatric Center*, and information is available at <https://iskzoo.org/?s=psychiatric+center>.

KRESA Transition Services <https://www.kresa.org/domain/58> - Alvin Littel reported that there are a few updates as the new school year begins. The primary focus over the past month has been on establishing connections with local coordinators and agencies to facilitate the upcoming activities and support for the school year.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services – John Fiore reported the following:

- Summer work experience has been completed, and Mr. Fiore reported a successful season with increased participation over last year.
- Due to the lack of a state budget as the fiscal year's end approaches, MRS is preparing for a potential closure. A stopgap measure will be put into place to ensure minimal customer impact.
- There will be a statewide expansion of a customized employment pilot, a new job exploration and placement model distinct from existing methods, and they are seeking certified organizations to provide this service. Mr. Fiore invited organizations interested in providing this service to reach out to him directly for further discussion.
- MRS welcomes individuals with disabilities who are interested in employment and seeking training opportunities, whether vocational or college-based.
- *Referrals* - If you are, or know of, a person with a disability facing barriers to advancement, a case can be opened to address those obstacles. For more information, contact John Fiore at fiorej@michigan.gov.

MI Works! Southwest – Sarah Pohl reported that, like others, Michigan Works! Southwest is awaiting updates on the state budget. In the meantime, a contingency plan is being developed in case negotiations are delayed. Operations will continue as usual for now, unless any significant changes occur.

EMERGING ISSUES RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT & ADVOCACY

Michelle Miller-Adams proposed that early work experiences, such as internships or summer jobs, significantly enhance job prospects for individuals with disabilities in the future. Ms. Miller-Adams noted that many parents are unaware of available opportunities in the community. She reminded

the group that last spring, a discussion took place at the DART meeting about compiling a comprehensive list of these opportunities for parents. Those in attendance agreed to reconvene at the November meeting to brainstorm solutions to these challenges and possibly designate a work group to spearhead this project.

UNIQUE CUSTOMER NEEDS

Michigan Works! Southwest requested information regarding resources for an ASL translator to support a participant requiring ongoing assistance in Kalamazoo County. A variety of resources were provided, including the use of Boostlingo for interpretation services. Further discussions were held concerning the specific needs of this participant.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A list of professional development opportunities was included on the agenda, and members shared other opportunities. The professional development opportunities were as follows:

- Disability Network Southwest Michigan <http://www.dnswm.org/>
- KPL ONEplace <https://www.kpl.gov/oneplace/>
- The Synergy Health Center <https://synergykzoo.org/>
- Incompass Michigan – <https://incompassmi.org/> - see the Education & Training tab
- DART Desktop Training Modules <https://www.michiganworkssouthwest.org/resources/at-your-desktop-training>
- Michigan Works! Association Professional Development <https://www.michiganworks.org/professional-development>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Michigan Rehabilitation Services will be partnering with Incompass Michigan to facilitate the re:con conference in Kalamazoo, scheduled for November 5, 2025.

Further details, including a link for additional information, were emailed to the group on Tuesday, September 23, 2025.

NEXT MEETING

The next DART meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 13, 2025, from 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Debbie Horn, Policy and Program Trainer
Michigan Works! Southwest

Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART)
Meeting Minutes
March 12, 2026

CALL TO ORDER: DART Co-Chair John Fiore called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m. at the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007.

Members Present:

Jami Dykstra (MRC)	John Fiore (MRS)	
Carrie Headworth (VES) [✓]	Katie McCuen (KRESA)	Linzee Studzinski (MRC)
Kym Hollars (Goodwill) [✓]	Michelle Miller-Adams	
Ramona Lumpkin (Rec Ins) [✓]	(Upjohn) [✓]	[✓] Virtual
	Hilary Smigiel (MRC)	

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The DART meeting agenda for March 16, 2026, was postponed until the next meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The DART meeting minutes of September 16, 2025, were postponed until the next meeting.

INTRODUCTIONS

All attendees present in person and online introduced themselves.

PROGRAM

Jami Dykstra, Hilary Smigiel, and Linzee Studzinski from MRC presented in person to the group. The mission for MRC Industries is to empower individuals with disabilities and mental illness through equity, independence, and inclusive community opportunities. The Vision is to foster a community where individuals with disabilities and mental illness are supported to thrive. Core services include Bridgeways, Case Management, Community Employment, Skill Building, ArtWorks, Thriftability, and Community Living Supports. The pre-employment transition services assist more than 160 students with disabilities across four counties. The program goals for pre-ETS are as follows: workplace readiness, self-advocacy, job exploration, post-secondary planning, and work-based learning experiences.

MRC hosts a summer work experience program to provide real-world job experience, skill development, and exposure to various career paths. Many work sites and community partners work together to provide these opportunities.

Following the presentation, a discussion addressed inquiries concerning application deadlines, the referral process, available support, and how summer work experiences are communicated. For additional information, contact Jami Dykstra at 269-343-0747 Ext. 332.

AGENCY UPDATES

- **KRESA** – Katie McCuen reported that KRESA is gearing up for its summer programs by engaging in school outreach and through partnerships. Ms. McCuen will share the flyers that can be distributed to the group. Industry Tours will begin on March 23, 2026. Additionally, the CTE programs are in full swing at the new Career Connect Campus facility.
- **Veterans Employment Services** – Carrie Headworth reported an upcoming Military-friendly job fair on March 23, 2026, and she will provide a flyer for distribution to the group after the meeting. Updates for veterans include the renewal of veteran forms, while updates from LEO highlight that 23 agencies are in ADA Compliance.
- **Michigan Rehabilitation Services** – John Fiore reported that MRS will be hosting first Friday events beginning in April; however, the April date will be the 2nd Friday (April 10th) due to the first Friday being Good Friday. A flyer including this information will be shared with the group after the meeting.
- **MRC Industries** – Hilary Smigiel reported that there is a growing social enterprise, and they just opened a thrift store on Gull Road in Kalamazoo. Ms. Smigiel encouraged the group to come check it out.
- **Recovery Institute** – Ramona Lumpkin reported that the Recovery Institute will relocate to Crosstown Parkway in mid-summer of 2026.

EMERGING ISSUES RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT & ADVOCACY

Hilary Smigiel mentioned that she is not getting the qualified applicants that she typically would see. A recommendation was made to utilize the Pure Michigan Talent Connect (PMTTC) for assistance.

UNIQUE CUSTOMER NEEDS

Debbie Horn requested resources for a Mental Health Awareness Training for the job seeker side. Katie McCuen suggested Integrated Services Kalamazoo (ISK) and will provide a follow-up email to Ms. Horn after the meeting.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- A. Disability Network Secondary Education <http://www.dnswm.org/>
- B. KPL Oneplace <https://www.kpl.gov/oneplace/>
- C. The Synergy Health Center <https://synergykzoo.org/>
- D. Incompass Michigan <https://incompassmi.org/> - see the Education & Training tab
- E. DART Desktop Training Modules <https://www.michiganworkssouthwest.org/resources/at-your-desktop-training>

NEXT MEETING

The next DART meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 20, 2026, from 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. at the Upjohn Institute.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Debbie Horn, Policy and Program Trainer/WDB Liaison
Michigan Works! Southwest

Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) 2027 Meeting Schedule

2027 Meeting Schedule

Meetings are scheduled from 2:00-3:30 pm

at the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49007

We encourage in-person attendance; however, a virtual option will also be available for all meetings to accommodate tight schedules.

- Thursday, March 11, 2027
- Tuesday, October 19, 2027

Agenda packets will be emailed approximately one week prior to each meeting.

DART Purpose Statement

The Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) is a standing committee of the Michigan Works! Southwest Workforce Development Board.

DART members represent businesses, service providers, advocates, and allies with expertise in assisting individuals with disabilities with their career, training, and employment needs.

DART members will inform, promote, and advise the WDB on strategies to support career pathways, training, and employment options for individuals with disabilities, including youth, to gain and retain employment.