
Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) Minutes
June 2, 2020

Call to Order – The meeting was held virtually via the GoToMeeting platform. DART Co-Chair, Joel Cooper, called the meeting to order at 2:06 p.m.

Introductions – Attendees were asked to introduce themselves, including the name of the agency/organization they represent.

Members Present:

Jake Andrews (Arc Calhoun County)
Mary Kay Balaguer (MWSW/ES)
Heather Barsy (ISK)
Hank Bostik (Disability Network)
Joel Cooper (Disability Network)
Dan Dunn (Comerica Bank)
John Fiore (MRS)
Carrie Headworth (LEO-Veterans)
Ben Hoger (MWSW/PATH)

Sarah Hutchinson-Chee (Goodwill)
Jonathan Kraker (MRC)
Sharday Lawrence (State of MI-BSBP)
Kathy Lentz (ISK)
Kathy Olsen (MWSW)
Christopher Roach (MI BSBP)
Sheldon Schwitek (The Arc Kalamazoo)
Lisa Stanley (MI LEO/MRS)

Approval of Agenda

The June 2, 2020 meeting agenda was approved by consensus of members present.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of February 11, 2020 were approved by consensus of members present.

COVID-19 Impact/Support/Response

Members shared information regarding how COVID-19 has impacted their organization and the services they provide as well as their plans for reopening.

Arc of Calhoun County - Jake Andrews reported the Arc of Calhoun County volunteer program to provide skill building services has stopped. He explained this program relies on many community sites and since many of those were closed, the program had to shut down as well. Staff have been working from home and conducting family meetings over the phone.

Michigan Works! Southwest – Mary Kay Balaguer reported Michigan Works! Southwest service centers have been closed and staff have been providing services virtually. Michigan Works! Southwest set up a hotline phone number and staff are conducting phone and video appointments, mostly to help customers navigate the Unemployment Insurance system. She reported Michigan Works! staff from across the state were trained to assist with UI issues such as unlocking accounts. This includes 30-40 staff from MW Southwest. MW Southwest is offering virtual workshops on Tuesday and Thursday and staff are becoming more comfortable and adept at using technology for these workshops. The schedule is posted at <https://www.michiganworkssouthwest.org/events/>. To sign up, individuals should email careerservices@miworkssw.org. She further reported that the Youth Program operated by Kalamazoo RESA has gone virtual with more frequent contacts and providing more resources such as food to this vulnerable population. Internal monitoring of files is being conducted virtually and the state has approved using electronic signatures. The MyCITY Summer Program will be 100% virtual this year.

A team of MW Southwest staff have been working on a start-up Response and Re-engagement Plan. The plan is 26 pages and includes five phases that are customized for each Service Center in the MW Southwest service area. The plan follows guidance from the CDC, local Health Departments and the Governor's Executive Orders for topics such as customer requirements, signage, etc. Staff are able to maintain social distancing and have discovered that a lot can be done with technology, especially with phones. Staff are also using this time to catch up on reviewing the DART Desktop training modules.

Unemployment Insurance – Mary Kay Balaguer reported customers continue to struggle with filing for Unemployment Insurance and are contacting Michigan Works! for assistance. She shared some helpful information regarding filing Unemployment Claims.

- Individuals who do not have Internet but who do have access to a phone, can call the Michigan Unemployment Insurance (MI UI) hotline to file a claim. The phone number is 1-866-500-0017.
- The best way to communicate with UI with questions/problems is to use the messaging app on the UI Claims website.
- Due to an international crime ring exploiting the COVID-19 crisis, extra precautions are being taken to protect identities. If a person receives a 'Stop Payment' Notice on their account, they will need to call MI UI hotline directly 1-866-500-0017.
- Michigan Works! can assist with some things such as unlocking accounts, phone number changes and with navigating the UI website. Customers can call 1-877-256-8294.

Disability Network – Joel Cooper reported staff at Disability Network began working from home on March 13, 2020 and staff have adjusted to using technology. Disability Network's application for a Paycheck Protection loan was approved and this avoided layoffs. Moving forward, although there is no specific timeline, the tentative plan is to open office access on June 16 and to be able to offer some customer services face-to-face. The full Return-to-Work plan for Disability Network is approaching 22 pages in length. He reported Disability Network is part of the Center for Independent Living and some CARES Act funding is available to assist customers with issues specifically related to COVID-19 such as life-sustaining food supplies, PPE (Personal protective equipment) and some level of technology.

Hank Bostik reported many Disability Network services are available virtually; however, issues encountered include determining if the customer has access to technology and whether or not they know how to use it. Services include the Independent Living Program, Benefit Planning and Veterans Services. A lot of work is conducted via phone calls and text messaging. The Community Advocacy Department has remained very busy. They are offering many webinars and trainings and they are filling up fast. Peer support groups are taking place virtually. Staff are getting good at using multiple platforms such as Google, Microsoft and Zoom. Staff have been developing programs that can be done virtually and that are interactive for the customers.

Comerica Bank - Dan Dunn reported banking is considered an essential service and Comerica Bank has remained open. The bank moved quickly from a full-service lobby to drive up only. Sixty-five percent of staff are working from home and this will continue. The plan is to bring back staff very cautiously and to maintain social distancing in conference rooms and other spaces. For the most part, the move to working virtually has been very successful. Staff who have been negatively impacted by the transition to work from home will be the first to be brought back into the office, perhaps this fall. Those who were able to transition to work-from-home without missing a beat will be the last to return to the office. A number of things have been put in place to protect employees such as providing PPE, adding barriers where needed, Promise Pay, support for underlying health conditions, support for disruptions to child and eldercare situations, impacts to spouses, outplacement services, frontline pay, virtual medical visits, etc. The CEO is very supportive and the communication from the top down has been critical.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) – John Fiore reported staff cannot sit back and wait as it is their job to provide services. With job placement, staff believe in informed choice so that the customer can decide whether or not they can implement the safety precautions needed for the job placement. Some customers have chosen to wait. MRS staff are providing many services virtually as they do not want to have anyone “falling through the cracks”. Challenges have been encountered with job coaching services and evaluations. Following advice from the Attorney General, policies and procedures were modified to accept electronic signatures. Regarding reopening, the message has been very clear to continue to provide services and moving back to the office will not be rushed. Guidance from the State is to have a local level plan that works for each individual district as well as the individual offices. As of this date, the DNR work experience was not cancelled; however, they are not moving forward with any of the other sites. Transportation to the DNR site might be a challenge. The Michigan Career Technical Institute (MCTI) is conducting career assessments remotely and is also looking at what training services can be provided remotely. For in-person services, wearing a mask might be difficult for some who rely on lipreading. Hank Bostik shared that he would send a link where clear masks could be ordered. This information was emailed to DART members following the meeting.

Integrated Services Kalamazoo (ISK) – Heather Barsy reported Integrated Services Kalamazoo (ISK) is planning a soft reopening on June 15 and is coordinating with other agencies. Services will be provided to support customers and staff. This includes virtual services for outpatient therapy, benefits counseling, supports and case management, as well as some in person services. She reported many providers were shut down because they were considered non-essential services; subsequently, many customer lost work due to losing support. As a result, staff expect to see an increase in customers seeking assistance with job search and job placement. The grant requirements for placement for the federal grant awarded to ISK that has been reported on at previous DART meetings, will be evaluated at year-end and the COVID-19 impact will be considered.

Veterans Services – Carrie Headworth shared information regarding free homestyle cloth masks. She followed up after the meeting with an email that included more information regarding the types of masks along with photos. This information was emailed to all DART members following the meeting.

Goodwill Industries of Southwestern Michigan – Sarah Hutchinson-Chee reported Goodwill Industries was able to quickly change to remote services and staff policies and procedures were also quickly updated. Google, Zoom and GoTo Meetings are the platforms Goodwill has been using for conducting meetings. She reported Goodwill received some funding to expand navigation services. The main gateway to access these resources and others in the greater Kalamazoo area is to call 211. Customers can also contact Goodwill Industries directly. She shared information regarding PPE Face Shield made at Goodwill. For more information, individuals should visit their website at <https://goodwillswmi.org/face-shields/>. On May 29, 2020, five stores in outlying areas opened to customers. On June 15, 2020 some staff will return to the office. Overall, staff will continue with a combination of both remote and in-office work. During the COVID-19 shutdown, some vocational rehabilitation programs had paused. The start date for the Career Camp in Three Rivers was changed to start later this summer.

Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP) – Chris Roach reported the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons continues to focus on keeping everyone safe and is in no rush to return to in-person services. Their provider network is very limited due to COVID-19, especially for youth under the age of 18.

The Arc of Kalamazoo – Sheldon Schwitek reported he is new in his position and is spending time reviewing policies and procedures. With only four staff, only one staff is allowed in the office at any one time and there is no plan to immediately open the full office.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) – Business Services – Lisa Stanley reported staff continue to work in the field with business and are strategically planning for a safe re-entry to the office. The time frame for

re-entry plans is unknown at this time. Staff are trying to be creative in the way they reach out to area businesses. She reported MRS Business Services also offers some services virtually. This includes many online webinars at no cost to businesses and partners. For more information, individuals should contact Lisa Stanley at stanleyl@michigan.gov. Topics include, but are not limited to, Disability Awareness, Mental Health for Mindfulness, Stress Management, Virtual Job Fairs 1010-How to Prepare Customers, and How Things Relate to COVID-19-Reasonable Accommodations.

Work Group Updates

Curriculum - At Your Desktop Training and Resources

Hank Bostik reported he will check with Jill Murphy regarding the status of the next Desktop Training module.

Collaboration

Kathy Olsen reported information regarding the Recovery Institute and the Arc will be updated on the Partner Matrix. Any additional updates should be sent to Kathy Olsen at olsen@upjohn.org.

Emerging Issues Related to Employment and Advocacy

Members were reminded that if there are issues and/or proposed and pending legislation regarding employment with individuals with disabilities, that they should bring this to the attention of Kathy Olsen at olsen@upjohn.org so that it can be shared with the full DART membership.

Unique Customer Needs – Resources Needed

Members were reminded that if they have a customer with unique needs or if they just need additional information and/or resources, please send the request to Kathy Olsen at olsen@upjohn.org so that the request can be shared with the full DART membership.

Additional Agency and Guest Updates

Items not covered in previous discussion.

Friends with Disabilities – via email, Sharmese Anderson shared a schedule of upcoming Zoom meetings on topics to assist individuals with disabilities. The schedule included “Adapting to the New Normal” on Tuesday, June 9 from 2:00-3:00 p.m.; “Community Resource Sharing” on Tuesday, June 16, 2020 from 2:00-3:00 p.m.; and “Staying Safe” on Tuesday, June 23, 2020 from 2:00-3:00 p.m. Following the meeting, the flyer was emailed to members.

Disability Network – Joel Cooper reported there will be a webinar on Mon, June 22, 2020 (1-2 pm) regarding Tips for Online Meetings for People with Disabilities and other Virtual Meetings Tips. For more information and to register: <http://www.dnswm.org/online-meetings-june2020/>. Following the meeting the handouts “Virtual Meeting Tips” and “Zoom Shortcuts” were shared with members. He also reported that the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) will be celebrated in 2020. More information is available at <https://www.adaanniversary.org/>.

Professional Development Opportunities

It was noted that professional development opportunities could be found on the websites listed below. Some opportunities may offer continuing education credits.

- Disability Network Southwest Michigan – See website for upcoming events <http://www.dnswm.org/>, and
- APSE Michigan -See website <https://apse.org/chapter/michigan/>

Following the meeting, additional information regarding professional development opportunities available through the Disability and Employment eLearning Task Force in collaboration with the Employment and

Training Administration (ETA) was emailed to DART members. It included the release of three eLearning Training Modules to help support the professional development needs of the workforce development staff across the country. A flyer was included with the email notice. The link to the flyer is https://disability.workforcegps.org/-/media/Communities/disability/Files/2020-Documents/DE-TA_ModulesFlyer_20200514_508.ashx and the link to further details and to register is <https://disability.workforcegps.org/resources/2019/07/30/19/50/Disability-and-Employment-eLearning-Task-Force>

Next Meeting

The next DART meeting date is scheduled for Tuesday, September 15, 2020 from 2:00-3:30 p.m.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kathy Olsen, Project Coordinator / WDB Liaison
Michigan Works! Southwest