
Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) Minutes
September 15, 2020

Call to Order – The meeting was held virtually via the GoToMeeting platform. DART Co-Chair, John Fiore, called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m.

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

Members Present:

Pat Angerman (Goodwill)
Mary Kay Balaguer (MWSW/ES)
Galyn Barnum (HRI)
Heather Barsy (ISK)
Joel Cooper (Disability Network)
Tiffany Cunningham (MI-DHHS)
Dan Dunn (Comerica Bank)
John Fiore (MRS)

Mary Fortney (Disability Network)
Carrie Headworth (LEO-Veterans)
Ben Hoger (MWSW/PATH)
Sarah Hutchinson-Chee (Goodwill)
Paul Mayfield (Friends with Disabilities)
Sharon Meyer (Speedway)
Kathy Olsen (MWSW)
Lisa Stanley (MI LEO/MRS)

Approval of Agenda

The September 15, 2020 meeting agenda was approved by consensus of members present.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of June 2, 2020 were approved by consensus of members present.

Agency Updates and COVID-19 Service Delivery

As part of the agency updates, members were asked to share how they are meeting customer needs in all areas of service, what COVID-19 related needs they think and/or know are occurring with people with disabilities and any other pertinent information and announcements regarding their agency.

Disability Network of Southwest Michigan – Joel Cooper reported COVID-19 has created significant isolation for people with disabilities for many reasons such as the lack of available technology, limited data on cell phone plans, and no tools to access the internet. The Centers for Independent Living received CARES Act federal core funding to help serve customers if their situation was the result of COVID-19. He introduced Mary Fortney from Disability Network. Ms. Fortney reported staff have been fast-tracking their learning about how to best use the virtual world to serve customers. With COVID-19 restrictions, staff have needed to limit face-to-face independent living assessments and most meetings have been done virtually. Staff continue to work with individuals to remove barriers, it just looks a little different with the COVID-19 restrictions. She reported there have been some positive outcomes as a result of adding virtual services. For example, individuals who previously could not attend in-person classes due to transportation barriers can now attend virtually. Additionally, individuals outside of Michigan, such as staff from the Independent Living in the State of Florida, have attended some of the virtual sessions because they are interested in replicating the workshops. The COVID-19 funding is also helping to support pre-packaged food boxes for customers who cannot get to a food pantry.

Housing Resources, Inc. – Galyn Barnum reported housing assistance and eviction prevention resources are available by calling 211 for assistance 24/7, or individuals can be referred directly to Housing Resources. The income threshold has been raised for some of the assistance and there is also some help

available upon Notice of Eviction, prior to actually being evicted. There is a form to complete which is available on the Housing Resources home web page for individuals who are behind in their rent and who live in Kalamazoo County <https://www.housingresourcesinc.org/>. Ms. Barnum also reported that Housing Resources is hiring six to eight temporary full and part-time Program Assistants and Housing Specialists. Some of the jobs are fully remote work and some are part remote/part in-office. Housing Resources is in the process of updating the job descriptions to indicate the flexibility. Further details for these job postings is available at <https://www.housingresourcesinc.org/about/employment/>. Ms. Barnum reminded attendees that the Homes for All Housing Millage for Kalamazoo County will be on the November ballot. She offered to send the Frequently Asked Questions regarding this millage proposal to DART members following the meeting. The information was sent in the meeting follow-up email.

Goodwill Industries of Southwestern Michigan – Sarah Hutchinson-Chee reported the Goodwill stores are open and they are accepting donations. To find out the status of educational programs, individuals should contact the Goodwill Navigation staff at 269-382-0490. More information pertaining to the assistance for obtaining a GED is available at <https://goodwillswmi.org/501c3-nonprofit/west-michigan-human-services-programs/adult-education-classes/> and more information pertaining to the Basic Computer Education is available at <https://goodwillswmi.org/501c3-nonprofit/west-michigan-human-services-programs/computer-education-classes/>.

Pat Angerman reported the Forklift Training and the ACE (Achieving Community Employment) Program are both up and running. Most staff continue to work from home with approximately one day per week in the office. Many staff find working remotely is working out well and it gives them more time with their pets and families.

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) – Tiffany Cunningham reported the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Kalamazoo office finally move into their new building on Alcott Street, across from Goodwill Industries. A limited number of staff are available in the DHHS office and staff are scheduling home visits if needed. Individuals in need can apply for benefits at MI Bridges https://newmibriges.michigan.gov/s/isd-landing-page?language=en_US. Community partners are available to assist customers who have trouble navigating technology. Paper applications are also available. A positive outcome during COVID-19 for food assistance applicants is that they are getting the maximum amount allowable for the month of September.

Michigan Works! Southwest – Mary Kay Balaguer reported MW! partner meetings are being held virtually in each of the four counties (Branch, Calhoun, Kalamazoo and St. Joseph). Partners interested in attending should contact Mary Kay Balaguer at marykay.balaguer@kresa.org. The Michigan Works! Service Center in Calhoun County is open by appointment on Mondays and Wednesday for meeting with individuals where an in-person meeting is necessary. COVID-19 safety protocols are in place and the Service Center does have security on site during the open hours. Michigan Works! Southwest now offers virtual workshops a couple days per week and is enhancing software and technology in order to provide more workshops that will begin in October. The back area of the Michigan Works! Service Center in Kalamazoo, where staff are located, is being remodeled and should be complete by the end of September. The MyCITY Summer Youth Program is taking place virtually and the Foundation for Excellence has approved year-long follow-up for the youth who are in-school. The Summer Youth Program for WIOA eligible youth has been extended through December and includes stipends for completing activities. The State of Michigan recently announced the *Futures for Frontliners* initiative. She reported this initiative offers free tuition for essential workers for costs associated with high school completion or community college. More information and to apply is available at: <https://www.michigan.gov/frontliners/>.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) Business Services – Lisa Stanley reported in celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month during October, MRS Business Services will be

offering insightful workshops. Following the meeting, the flyer with more information was emailed to DART members. The workshops include:

- MRS: The Missing Piece (10/7 @ 3pm) – target audience: Education:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mrs-the-missing-piece-tickets-120451633077>
The MRS Business Consultants of West and Southwest Michigan will be covering the basics of the ADA, how it helps shape your educational framework and assist students with disabilities that you serve. Increase your knowledge on personal universal designs to improve individualized learning, disability etiquette, expand your options of assisting students with disabilities and possible reasonable accommodations for them.
- Let's Get Together (10/15 @ 3 pm) – target audience: Michigan Works!
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mrs-lets-get-together-tickets-120453203775>
The MRS Business Consultants of West and South West Michigan will be covering the basics of the ADA, how it helps shape your organization and assists the community you serve. Increase your knowledge of how we can collaborate together to serve businesses, the community and the people we serve. Expand your knowledge on disability etiquette, when and how to refer to MRS, and learn resources to assist people with disabilities.
- MRS: The Missing Piece (10/21 @ 3pm) – target audience: Chambers & Community Organizations
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mrs-the-missing-piece-tickets-120454146595>
The MRS Business Consultants of West and Southwest Michigan will be covering the basics of the ADA, how it helps shape your organization and assists the community you serve. Increase your knowledge how we can collaborate together, increase services to help expand your resources and your perception of people with disabilities.
- Help Us Help You (10/28 @ 3pm) – target audience: Businesses
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mrs-help-us-help-you-tickets-120454654113>
The MRS Business Consultants of West and Southwest Michigan will be covering the basics of the ADA and how it helps shape your business and opportunities for your employees. Learn tips on communicating effectively with people with disabilities, ways to implement reasonable accommodations, and wording position descriptions to attract more talent.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services – John Fiore reported MRS is providing most services virtually. Challenges for staff is that applications are below normal in some areas. He asked that if anyone encounters an individual who is having challenges with MRS to please contact him directly at fiorej@michigan.gov. Another challenge is that staff cannot go into the schools to provide services. He reported a positive outcome is that with the increase in remote work that has been created due to the pandemic, more opportunities will be available to people with disabilities, especially those who have transportation barriers.

Integrated Services Kalamazoo(ISK) – Heather Barsy reported all staff are working in the office on a rotating basis and there is no sharing of offices. Some services are being provided remotely. She added that some of the ISK provider agencies are providing their services slightly different than pre-COVID.

Veteran Services – Carrie Headworth reported a Veterans Virtual Career Fair to connect veterans and employers is scheduled for Thursday, September 17, 2020 from 9:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m. This event is being held virtually. Job seekers can register at: <https://app.brazenconnect.com/a/Michigan/e/4vjxR> and the job seeker flyer is available for download at https://www.michiganworkssouthwest.org/wp-content/uploads/VeteranCareerFair.link_FINAL.pdf.

A virtual Veterans Networking Job Club to help connect veterans and employers is held on the third Thursday of the month. The next one is scheduled for Thursday, September 17, 2020 from 10:00-11:30 a.m. Individuals and employers may register at <https://www.vnjc.org/>.

The Kalamazoo County 2020 Veterans Stand Down event will take place on Friday, September 18 at the Salvation Army's parking lot, located at 1700 S Burdick St, Kalamazoo, MI 49001. The Stand Down will be a "drive-thru" and pre-registration event this year. Veterans wishing to attend this year's event need to sign up at www.eventbrite.com/e/2020-veterans-stand-down-tickets-112698161234 or call 269-966-5600, ext. 37878. A timeslot will be given upon completion of registration. The Stand Down's new format allows for social distancing and adherence to the Governor's Executive Order limiting crowd sizes. Walk-ups and those using public transportation will be accommodated. Wearing a face covering or mask is required, if medically able to be worn. There is no charge for veterans attending. Free flu shots, clothing, promotional items, spiritual support, veteran's services information, and a hot lunch will be available for all veterans. Questions should be directed to the Kalamazoo County Veteran Services Office at 269-373-5361.

Following the meeting, the job seeker and employer Job Club flyers and the Veterans Stand Down event flyer were sent to DART members in the meeting follow-up email.

Speedway – Sharon Meyer reported Speedway brought people back to work with safety protocols in place. Speedway continues to hire new employees and she uses phone, text, and virtual interviewing to connect with applicants. Speedway will be trying out the Veteran Affairs / Michigan Works! Southwest virtual job fair on Thursday, September 17, 2020 and is hoping that the interviewing platform for this virtual job fair format is an improvement to what she has used so far.

Comerica – Dan Dunn reported banking is considered an essential service and their work did not stop. Lobbies were closed but drive-in service remained open. Lobbies are now semi-open with doors remaining locked. Customers must knock to enter because the bank is limiting the number of customers in the buildings at any one time. Other safety protocols are in place such as PPE, sanitation, Plexiglas, daily health assessments for staff reporting to buildings, Promise Pay, etc. He reported a positive outcome is that he sees a greater sense of individuals who want to work together to help others. For example, staff made welfare checks on customers who live alone. The interaction with staff in other states has increased as well. For example, staff in Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids assisted with closing loans for customers in Texas and Florida. Staff will be brought back to the office in phases. Plans are for the first phase to return January 4, 2021. A lot of the work plans are the result of supporting families with students learning from home and individuals caring for family. Working from home has gone smooth and the capability of technology has been found to be better than what was expected. He noted that someone doesn't really need to relocate if they transfer to a job in another state. His organization is also evaluating how much time is it really necessary to be in the office ; e.g. one day per week vs. five days per week. A negative impact is that people do miss seeing each other. If someone is found to be COVID positive, the individual was quarantined for 14 days, the office was deep cleaned and no second person in that office was found to be COVID positive.

Friends with Disabilities – Paul Mayfield reported Friends with Disabilities is seeking input regarding applications for funding. He asked DART members to share their ideas with either he or Sharmese Anderson at sharmese@friendswithdisabilities.org

Work Group Updates

Curriculum - At Your Desktop Training and Resources

No update was provided at the meeting.

Collaboration

Kathy Olsen requested that individuals send updates to the Partner Matrix to her at olsen@upjohn.org.

Emerging Issues Related to Employment and Advocacy

Joel Cooper reported there is a lot of pending legislation that may affect individuals with disabilities. He offered to provide a summary that could be sent to members following the meeting. The list of pending legislation that was included in his summary is listed below.

State Level

- HB 4980 – 4985 - Clean Slate Act (Expungement of some criminal records)
- HB 5150 & 5151 - Centralized Reasonable Accommodations Act.

Federal Level

- S 255, Disability Employment Incentive Act
- S 260, Transformation to Competitive Employment Act
- HR 555, S117 - Disability Integration Act
- HR 582, Raise the Wage Act
- HR 1529, MAPSA Act

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.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. This year's theme is increasing access and opportunities. The US DOL Media Release can be accessed at <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/odep/odep20200630> and US DOL Marketing Materials such as posters, logos, etc. can be accessed at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/initiatives/ndeam/2020/poster>.

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/>,
- APSE Michigan -See website <https://apse.org/chapter/michigan/>

Following the meeting, upcoming professional development opportunities available through Disability Networks were shared with DART members. They included a web movie titled “Crip Camp;” webinars on the topics of “Ableism 101” and “Disability Language and Etiquette;” a webinar series titled “Living Well in the Community;” and the showing of the film “Bottom Dollars” that will be featured in October during National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Following the meeting, information was shared from APSE Michigan. This included new tools and workshops developed “to help your organization navigate the shifting political and policy landscape and strengthen your organization.” These resources are available at <https://www.apsemi.org/resources.html>.

Next Meeting

The next DART meeting date is scheduled for Tuesday, November 10, 2020 from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

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