
Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) Minutes

June 8, 2021

Call to Order – The meeting was held virtually via the GoToMeeting platform. DART Co-Chair, Joel Cooper called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

Members Present:

Pat Angerman (Goodwill)

Mary Kay Balaguer (MWSW/ES)

Hank Bostic (Disability Network)

Joel Cooper (Disability Network)

Tiffany Cunningham (MI DHHS)

Sam Dougherty (WDI/MWSW)

Dan Dunn (Comerica)

John Fiore (MRS)

Carrie Headworth (LEO/Veterans)

Ben Hoger (MWSW PATH)

Aseel Hussein (MWSW)

Sarah Hutchinson-Chee (Goodwill)

Sharday Lawrence (BSBP)

Ramona Lumpkin (Recovery MI)

Kathy Olsen (MWSW)

Sheldon Schwitek (Arc Community Advocates)

Lisa Stanley (MRS)

Approval of Agenda

The June 8, 2021 meeting agenda was approved by consensus of members present.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of February 9, 2021 were approved by consensus of members present.

PROGRAM

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS)

John Fiore provided a PowerPoint presentation on Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS). The presentation included the MRS mission, vision, history, performance measures, and organizational structure. MRS customers are identified either through individuals making direct contact with MRS via phone or email or through referrals from local organizations, community partners, friends, family members, businesses, and previous customers. The presentation included the steps pertaining to the vocational rehabilitation process. Services described included pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities; eligibility and plan development; and services pertaining to Individual Plans for Employment (IPE). Information as to how to apply and how to make a referral, as well as the contact information was provided. A summary of MRS Business Services was included along with the contact information for the business services representatives. Lastly, the presentation covered information regarding MRS partnerships in the communities in which they provide services and the various programs that are provided through those partnerships.

Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP)

Sharday Lawrence provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP). The presentation included the BSBP mission, vision, authority, and federal structure. Information regarding program eligibility and services was also provided along with job placement trends. The Business Services portion of the presentation included information pertaining to the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). Information regarding eligibility and services for the Independent Living programs was also provided. Additional resource included the Braille and Talking Book Library (BTBL) and the BSBP Training Center classes. Lastly, the BSBP general referral process and contact information was provided.

Following the meeting, the presentations and links to the recordings were emailed to DART members and to members of the Workforce Development Board. It was reported that John Fiore will provide a DART Committee report to the Workforce Development Board's Executive Committee at the June 17, 2021 meeting.

WORK GROUP UPDATES

Curriculum - At Your Desktop Training and Resources

On behalf of Jill Murphy, Kathy Olsen reported Jill Murphy is working on a Desktop training on the topic of long-term COVID. She also reported that the Curriculum Work Group is seeking topic ideas for future Desktop Training modules.

Kathy Olsen reported the Desktop Training modules are posted on the Michigan Works! Southwest website. To access the training modules, viewers should select the About tab, then select Board, then scroll down to the DART heading <https://www.michiganworkssouthwest.org/about/board/> She encouraged members to share the modules with staff and partners, other Michigan Works! Agencies, and the Michigan Works! Association.

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

On behalf of Heather Barsy, Kathy Olsen reported advocacy work is currently occurring at the Federal level to expand Medicaid HCBS services, improve SSI payments, and fund national paid leave. These initiatives are being encouraged as part of COVID-19 recovery with an emphasis on disability services.

There is current state and national discussion around increasing the minimum wage. However, unless there are changes to resource and income limits, raising the minimum wage may lead to a lower overall household income for people with disabilities. Advocacy is needed on both sides of this issue.

UNIQUE CUSTOMER NEEDS

Members in attendance expressed a concern for available, safe, and reliable childcare and noted that due to COVID-19 many childcare locations either closed or have fewer openings. Many individuals cannot return to work without childcare.

AGENCY UPDATES

Housing Resources, Inc. - Kathy Olsen reported on behalf of Galyn Barnum that COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) funding is available. This rental assistance program can help those struggling with past due rents and utility payments. English and Spanish versions of a flyer with further details regarding eligibility and documents required to apply was emailed to members following the meeting.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) – Lisa Stanley reported on a Business Resource fair for employers and provided the link to the event in the meeting chat. The link to the workshop “[Immediate Workforce Solutions for Michigan Employers](#)” was also emailed to DART members following the meeting. [Note: the recording for this workshop can be accessed via the same link.]

John Fiore reported MRS is ramping up the Youth Summer Work Experience. Current plans are for some staff returning to the office mid-July; however, he expects not all staff will return at the same time and that in-person meetings will be by appointment only.

Goodwill Industries of Southwestern Michigan – Pat Angerman reported staff returned to the office during July and August. The rehabilitation team is working on a summer program and plans are to begin next week in Allegan County. Summer programs will also be offered in Kalamazoo and St. Joseph Counties.

Disability Network Southwest Michigan – Hank Bostic reported support groups at Disability Network continue to meet virtually. He also reported there are many upcoming events to support individuals with disabilities. The [June issue of Disability Digest](#), a publication of Disability Network, was emailed to DART members following the meeting.

Joel Cooper reported that beginning this week, employees have been invited back into the office and during the next three months there will be a combination of in-office and remote workers. Currently customer appointments are by appointment only. Beginning June 21, 2021 paid internships are available for involvement in Disability Rights. This is the 9th year for this internship opportunity, and it includes planning a program. Six interns were selected to participate.

Veterans Services – Carrie Headworth reported on events and services targeted to veterans and their families.

- An Invest in Vets – Manufacturing & Skilled Trades Networking Event is scheduled for Thursday, June 10, 2021 at 2:00 p.m. Email info@investvets.org to register. The event flyer was emailed to members following the meeting.
- A Military Friendly Virtual Job Fair – An online job fair is planned for June 25, 2021 from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. The event flyer was emailed to members following the meeting.
- A Women Veterans Day Virtual Town Hall is scheduled for Saturday, June 12, 2021 from 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon via the Battle Creek VA Medical Center. Individuals can call-in to participate by dialing 855-274-1447; or they may listen via the VA Facebook Page where the event will be streamed. Brief overviews from Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency and the Battle Creek VAMC Women Veterans Program Manager will be provided. Event organizers will also be seeking feedback on some topics and will answer general questions.
- For Gulf War Veterans, due to high demand, Veterans Affairs is offering another virtual class on Gulf War exposures and health. The virtual class *Gulf War Exposures & Health Concerns* is free and is designed to help Gulf War Veterans understand potential exposures and health effects, steps to manage symptoms, research findings, and available resources. Individuals can join this class on Tuesday, June 22, from 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. (ET). They can attend through their personal computer, smart phone, or tablet. To learn more about the class and to register, see the class flyer at [Gulf War Exposures and Health Concerns \(va.gov\)](#). Individuals can also register by emailing VA's War Related Illness and Injury Study Center at NJWRIISCEDTEAM@va.gov.

Michigan Works! Southwest

Mary Kay Balaguer reported the Michigan Works! Service Centers are operating on a hybrid schedule with both in-person appointments at the Service Centers and virtual meetings and services. The Kalamazoo location is open on Mondays and Wednesdays, the Calhoun location is open on Tuesday and Thursdays, the Branch County location is open on Wednesdays and the St. Joseph County location is open on Thursdays. Staff are anticipated opening more quickly soon. Customers who are not completely vaccinated are encouraged to wear a mask and individuals not feeling well are being asked to not come into the office. She also provided an update on the Work Search activity for Unemployment Insurance claimants. The information provided described work search activities and a new MARVIN call-in schedule. The information was emailed to DART members following the meeting.

Sam Dougherty reported another cohort of the *Access for All* training that prepares individuals for entry into construction trades apprenticeship training is being offered in the Battle Creek area. Current plans are to offer another class in Kalamazoo this fall.

Ben Hoger reported same day appointments are currently not available. He also reported a security guard is on-site at the Service Centers.

Recovery Institute – Ramona Lumpkin reported the Recovery Institute is open by appointment only and attendance is limited to groups of six.

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/>

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 14, 2021 from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

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