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**Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) Minutes**  
**September 14, 2021**

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**Call to Order** – The meeting was held virtually via the GoToMeeting platform. DART Co-Chair, Joel Cooper called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Sharmese Anderson (Friends with Disabilities)  
Pat Angerman (Goodwill)  
Mary Kay Balaguer (MWSW/ES)  
Gary Clark (LEO-WD)  
Galyn Barnum (HRI)  
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)  
Ramona Lumpkin (Recovery Institute)  
Kathy Olsen (MWSW)  
Sheldon Schwitek (Arc Community Advocates)

**Approval of Agenda**

**The September 14, 2021 meeting agenda was approved by consensus of members present.**

**Approval of Minutes**

**The minutes of June 8, 2021 were approved by consensus of members present. One correction, under ‘Approval of Minutes’ was made. The date of the minutes being approved was changed from Feb 9, 2020 to Feb 9, 2021.**

**PROGRAM**

**Recognition**

John Fiore reported Joel Cooper is retiring from Disability Network Southwest Michigan at the end of September and he wanted to take a moment to recognize Joel’s support and contributions not only to the DART Committee, but also for his devotion in assisting individuals with disabilities throughout the Southwest region. He thanked Joel for his service and noted he will certainly be missed. MRS has prepared a plaque to present to Joel when an in-person meeting can be scheduled.

**WORK GROUP UPDATES**

***Curriculum - At Your Desktop Training and Resources***

Hank Bostic reported Jill Murphy has been working on a Desktop Training module on Long-term effects of COVID-19; however, information is constantly changing, thus adding difficulty to completing this module. He asked members to submit their thoughts for future training ideas.

Members also suggested that when partner agencies provide a training, it would be helpful if it could be recorded and shared. Doing so would help to expand the menu of available trainings.

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***

It was announced that InterAct will be closing and services will be transferred to Integrated Services Kalamazoo. John Fiore reported the plan is to complete the process of transferring programs to Integrated Services by October 1, 2021 and following the meeting, the email from InterAct will be shared with DART members. This information was included in the meeting follow-up email.

Kathy Olsen reported the Partner Matrix will be updated to include the closure of InterAct and the transition of services to Integrated Services of Kalamazoo. Additional updates to the Partner Matrix should be sent to Kathy Olsen at [olsen@upjohn.org](mailto:olsen@upjohn.org).

### ***Emerging Issues Related to Employment and Advocacy***

Disability Network reported they are partnering with the Attorney General on issues pertaining to accessibility for expungement clinics that are being scheduled throughout the Southwest Michigan region. Kathy Olsen reported Michigan Works! Southwest is also very involved in the clinics. Both agencies involved are coordinating efforts rather than duplicating. Gary Clark reported the State is providing additional funding to Michigan Works! agencies to support the cost of navigators and barrier removal for employment success that would supplement other programs that do not have a lot of financial support for supportive services.

Joel Cooper reported advocacy is needed at the federal level to support affordable housing in the infrastructure package. An article "[Priorities for the American Jobs Plan Act](#)" is posted on the national website for housing advocacy. In Kalamazoo there is a housing millage to help support housing and its five-year renewal is on the November ballot.

### **UNIQUE CUSTOMER NEEDS**

Members presented information pertaining to unique customer needs. Agencies present offered suggestions for possible solutions to help these customers and made plans for further collaboration following the meeting.

- A veteran who due to spending habits, needed help. An agency advocated for the veteran to have a Representative payee. An unintended consequence was that the individual lost their second amendment rights.
- Another veteran who, as the result of a disability from an auto accident, was no longer able to perform some of the RN functions of their job after 20 years of employment. The individual did find other employment but was still having problems with their Unemployment Insurance claim that had been filed.
- Another veteran who was looking for work was on dialysis three days a week. In addition to assisting with ideas for work, one suggestion was to also help the veteran apply for SSI.

### **AGENCY UPDATES**

*Housing Resources, Inc.* – Galyn Barnum reported Housing Resources is advocating for and following all things housing related. Kalamazoo County has funding from the CARES Act as well as other financial assistance. For more information regarding the COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) grant to support rent and/or utilities assistance, and to apply, visit [www.housingresourcesinc.org](http://www.housingresourcesinc.org) or call 269-382-0287. She also reported unspent funds will be recaptured by the U.S. Department of Treasury.

*Michigan Works! Southwest*

Mary Kay Balaguer reported the Michigan Works! Service Centers are open in all four counties and this includes walk-in services. A ‘Recipe for Success’ outdoor job fair is scheduled to be held in Battle Creek on Thursday, September 16, 2021 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. She also shared a list of Employer of the Day events that were scheduled. Following the meeting, the list was emailed to DART members.

Sam Dougherty reported another cohort of the *Access for All* training that prepares individuals for entry into construction trades apprenticeship training will be offered. This one will be held in Kalamazoo and the class includes 272 hours of training centered around the construction trades industry. The class is scheduled to begin in November 2021. Further details and a link to sign-up can be found at [MIAFLCIO.ORG/AccessForAll](http://MIAFLCIO.ORG/AccessForAll).

*Goodwill Industries of Southwestern Michigan* – Pat Angerman reported Goodwill Industries is open and running both in-person and virtual services. Sarah Hutchinson-Chee reported all programs are being evaluated and the hybrid model will be a permanent addition to the way services are provided by Goodwill.

*Recovery Institute* – Ramona Lumpkin reported the peer support specialists at Recovery Institute are available to meet one-on-one with customers. Individuals should call 269-343-6725 to schedule an appointment. Reservations are no longer required for groups. Staff will continue to provide a health check, social distance, wear masks, and meet in small groups to promote safety. A social event is planned for September 15, 2021 and the Kalamazoo Annual Wellness and Recovery Fair is scheduled for Tuesday, September 28, 2021 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Arcadia Festival Place. Member Feedback Group Forums are held on Tuesdays at Noon and virtual groups meet on Fridays at 3:00 p.m. For more information regarding the Recovery Institute, visit <https://www.recoverymi.org/> or call 269-343-6725.

*ARC Community Advocates* – Sheldon Schwitek reported their office is open at their new location. A grand opening was recently held and there was great turnout for the event. Meeting space is available to community members.

*Veterans Services* – Carrie Headworth reported on events and services targeted to veterans and their families. Following the meeting a spreadsheet of ongoing events ,as well as specific event dates during the months of September and October, was shared with members.

*Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)* – Tiffany Cunningham reported 20% if staff are reporting for work at the office, others continue to work remotely. She announced that DHHS is excited to welcome the people of Kalamazoo to attend the Community Fall Festival on October 6, 2021 from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. It will be held at 1323 Lake Blvd, Kalamazoo MI 49001. Proper precautions will be in place due to COVID-19. All free items are limited in supply, first come, first serve. More information, including the event flyer, and to RSVP can be accessed at [www.StepsToVictory.org](http://www.StepsToVictory.org). Additional details were emailed to members following the meeting.

*Charitable Union (Battle Creek)* – Joel Cooper reported the Charitable Union in Battle Creek is currently conducting their annual coat drive.

*Friends with Disabilities* – Sharmese Anderson reported Friends with Disabilities applied for and was awarded some grants to assist individuals with disabilities. The organization is helping people with Uber and Lyft rides and sponsored a motor coach to transport individuals to a special event in Detroit. The organization is also supporting social events for individuals with disabilities such as the WMU vs. Illinois football game.

*Disability Network Southwest Michigan* – Hank Bostic reported Disability Network is partnering with the Veterans Affairs Agency (VAA) and is now an official Veteran Connector. He requested to be added to

Carrie Headworth's email list. Disability Network has also partnered with Social Security to assist individuals apply for SSI and SSDI. A language line of services was added to their menu of services, and staff now has access to 240 languages. The community education team is working on several projects. A list of current workshop offerings was sent to members following the meeting. Staff continue to work virtually, and the office is not open to the public except by appointment. He reminded members of the upcoming Disability Justice Challenge taking place during the month of October. The content in this Challenge will cover topics including the history of the disability justice movement, intersectionality, language, ableism, representation, accessibility, systemic inequalities for people with disabilities, allyship, disability pride, and resources for continued learning. This Challenge is a collaboration between United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region and Disability Network Southwest Michigan [More info and link to sign up](#)

*Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS)* – John Fiore reported the plan for staff to return to the office on September 7 was postponed to October 14, 2021. However, they are fully open by appointment and staff are serving customers either remotely or in-person by appointment. He encouraged partners to continue to make referrals to MRS.

### **Appointment of New Co-Chair**

Motion made by John Fiore and supported by Mary Kay Balaguer to appoint Hank Bostic to serve as co-chair along with John Fiore. Mr. Bostic would be replacing Joel Cooper who is retiring. Motion carried.

### **Announcements**

Kathy Olsen announced that October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). The theme for NDEAM 2021, "America's Recovery: powered by Inclusion," reflects the importance of ensuring that people with disabilities have full access to employment and community involvement during the national recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Further details are available at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/initiatives/ndeam>

### **Professional Development Opportunities**

- Disability Network Southwest Michigan – See website for upcoming events <http://www.dnswm.org/>
- APSE Michigan -See website <https://apse.org/chapter/michigan/>
- Joel Cooper reported the Kalamazoo Public Library ONEplace has a wealth of opportunities for professional development to support the nonprofit sector in building capacity within and across organizations in Kalamazoo County. See their website <https://www.kpl.gov/oneplace/> for more information.
- Following the meeting, information regarding an upcoming conference: "Breaking the Stigma – African American Mental Health Symposium, *Shifting the Narrative*" scheduled for October 14 and 15, 2021 was shared with members. See <https://wmich.edu/events/64890> for more information and to register.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 16, 2021 from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 3:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

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