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## **Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) Minutes November 14, 2023**

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**CALL TO ORDER** – DART Co-Chair, John Fiore called the meeting to order at 2:06 p.m. at the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007.

### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Hank Bostic (DNSM)

Gary Clark (LEO-WD) <sup>∨</sup>

Rebecca Hill (MRS)

Ben Hoger (Upjohn/MWSW)

Michelle Miller-Adams (Upjohn)

Toni Kennedy (SWMBH) <sup>∨</sup>

Ramona Lumpkin (Recovery Institute) <sup>∨</sup>

Kathy Olsen (MWSW)

Shelby Springett (MWSW)

<sup>∨</sup> Attended virtually

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The DART meeting agenda for November 14, 2023 was approved by consensus of members present.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The DART meeting minutes of June 20 2023 were approved by consensus of members present.

### **PROGRAM – Youth Disability Employment Research**

Michelle Miller-Adams, Senior Researcher, Upjohn Institute and Professor, Grand Valley State University provided a presentation on her research project regarding youth disability employment. Research questions include: “How is the system of support organized for young adults with disabilities transitioning to employment?” and “How do young adults with disabilities and their families/guardians learn about, understand and use that system?” The initial focus of the research will be on youth with intellectual/developmental disabilities, ages 18-26, who are seeking employment (not necessarily full-time), and who are receiving services delivered through county-level agencies in Kalamazoo County. Goals and desired outcomes include understanding the nature and structure of the system serving this population; understanding how this population accesses and navigates this system; and put usable information into the hands of families and service providers to increase knowledge and alignment, and to make the system more effective. A few initial insights gathered so far are that the complexity of the system hinders user understanding and access; dedicated people are working with constraints (staffing, rules); there is a lack of clear navigation along the transition pathway; and information delivery varies from place to place. Dr. Miller-Adams asked for volunteers to meet with her to further discuss their agency’s work and to gather referrals of parents/family members of young adults with disabilities who might be willing to talk to her about their experiences. Questions regarding the research should also be directed to her. Dr. Michelle Miller-Adams can be reached via email at [Miller-Adams@upjohn.org](mailto:Miller-Adams@upjohn.org).

## AGENCY UPDATES

*MI Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (MI-LEO)* – Gary Clark reported a Request for Proposal for Barrier Removal Employment Success (BRES) for supportive services was released in April. Approximately \$14,600,000 was available. In response to the RFP, eighty-four (84) proposals were received requesting \$111 million. Due to the large response and the need to determine if bidders would be willing to take less, the award announcement is being delayed.

*Recovery Institute* – Ramona Lumpkin reported the Recovery Institute has seen an increase in customers since they moved to their new location. Recovery Institute will be closed this Thursday and Friday.

*Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS)* – Rebecca Hill reported the MRS summer program was successful. Youth had the opportunity to explore various jobs and work in summer employment. The Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) program began in July ran for ten weeks and was held at the Northside Association Training Center. Five of six participants earned their CNA certification. The next CNA class will begin in January 2024. Discussions are taking place regarding offering a CNA class in Van Buren County. There are counselor vacancies in the Southwest district that covers seven counties. The jobs are posted on the State of Michigan website, Indeed, and Handshake. She noted that Vocational Rehabilitation jobs are becoming hard to fill as many individuals currently seeking work want part-time and/or remote work.

*Michigan Works! Southwest* - Ben Hoger reported the Stryker grant that supported St. Luke's Diaper Bank was not renewed. As a result, free diapers cannot be provided by the Diaper Bank after January 1. Efforts are being made to secure a new donor to support this project. Suggestions were made to contact Walmart and Meijer.

*Michigan Works! Southwest* - Kathy Olsen reported that John Fiore from Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) and she participated in a presentation sponsored by Workforce GPS pertaining to services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The topic was focused on best practices in communication, interpretation and accessibility including information pertaining to Hard of Hearing (HoH) devices. The presentation was promoted nationwide by Workforce GPS, and a recorded version is available on the Workforce GPS website. Kathy Olsen also reported that Michigan Works! Southwest signed up to have an accessibility assessment conducted at the Kalamazoo and Battle Creek Service Centers.

*Veteran Navigator* – Toni Kennedy reported the Veterans Service office and the Veteran Navigator try to help connect veterans to available resources. As part of the veteran justice outreach, she has been collaborating with the county jails to offer assistance to incarcerated veterans. Another target population for services is homeless veterans. Resources for substance abuse and mental health issues are available through Southwest Michigan Behavioral Health (SWMBH). She also reported that there are grants available through Michigan Veterans Affairs to help veterans upgrade their homes.

*Disability Network Southwest Michigan* – Hank Bostic reported Disability Network Southwest Michigan is focusing efforts on an initiative titled “Absolutely Accessible Michigan” that is based on a program in Kent County. The initiative is designed to assist communities to make sure they are accessible. Whether it be universal design and/or ADA consultation, or building new, Disability Network can assist with advice, consultation, on-site evaluation and more. Disability Network also has a ramp program to help make homes accessible. Donations and grants are needed for supplies and volunteers are needed to help build. The ramps are available in all eight counties that is served by Disability Network Southwest Michigan. An application was submitted to MSHDA for funding to support the building of ramps, as well as for home modifications such as grab bars and railings.

## **WORK GROUP UPDATES**

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

A committee has been formed at the State level to address advocacy for individuals with disabilities. The Michigan Legislative Disability Caucus (MLDC) - a legislative caucus devoted to disability issues; a bipartisan, bicameral caucus open to all legislators who are interested in making policy that improves the lives of Michiganders with disabilities. If you have any questions, reach out to the Matthew Dargay. He is the Legislative Director for Representative Sharon MacDonell (56th District) and can be reached at [mdargay@house.mi.gov](mailto:mdargay@house.mi.gov).

One member reported that many businesses have removed checking for marijuana usage in their hiring practices.

**Collaboration – Partner Matrix** – Ramona Lumpkin requested that an update be made to the listing for Friends with Disabilities to indicate that they serve individuals with physical disabilities. Kathy Olsen requested that members continue to send future updates to her so that the document can remain current.

**Curriculum** – Hank Bostic directed members to the professional development opportunities listed under Section VIII of the Agenda.

## **UNIQUE CUSTOMER NEEDS**

There were no cases of unique customer needs brought up for discussion at the meeting.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

- Disability Network Southwest Michigan <http://www.dnswm.org/> (attached)
- 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>

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

No additional announcements.

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next DART meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 27, 2024, from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

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