
Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART) Meeting Minutes April 8, 2025

CALL TO ORDER – DART Chair, Hank Bostic, called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m. at the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sharmese Anderson (Friends with Dis)[✓]
Jackie Bigelow (Upjohn Institute)[✓]
Hank Bostic (DNSW)
John Fiore (MRS)
Debbie Horn (MWSW)
Sydney Kroll (BSBP)
Kathy Lentz (ISKzoo)[✓]

Alvin Littel (KRESA)
Katie McCuen (KRESA Career Connect)[✓]
Michelle Miller Adams (Upjohn)[✓]
Kathy Olsen (MWSW)
Lisa Stanley (MRS BSP)[✓]
Amanda Sutherland (KRESA)[✓]

[✓] Attended virtually

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The DART meeting agenda for April 8, 2025, was approved by consensus of members present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Two corrections were noted for the DART meeting minutes of February 13, 2025. Hank Bostic's name was changed from Bostik to Bostic, and the date was corrected from February 12 to February 13, 2025. The minutes with the noted corrections were approved by consensus of members present.

INTRODUCTIONS

Members present in person and online introduced themselves.

PROGRAM

Amanda Sutherland (KRESA) reported that KRESA has recently undergone a rebranding initiative. In alignment with this rebranding effort, the Career Connect CTE Campus is scheduled to open for classes in Fall 2025. The official Grand Opening is scheduled for May 22, 2025, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. Although the name has changed, KRESA's Career Connect will continue to offer the same high-quality services as before, using the new and improved brand image.

Summer Work Experience Opportunities

KRESA – Amanda Sutherland reported the following:

- MyCity - Applications have closed due to an overwhelming response from 14–24-year-olds; there were over 400 applications. The program offers seasonal paid career pathway planning opportunities.
- Wayland Carpenters Internship – Opportunities for 16–18-year-old youth, where the youth have the opportunity for daily skilled trades experiences. Approximately 180 youth can be served under this internship initiative.

- Fall Internship Applications – The application period for fall internship opportunities will open in the next couple of months.

KRESA - Katie McCuen reported that the Fall Career Now sessions will be offered with a smaller group size. This will allow for a more personalized approach to addressing the needs of the youth who enroll. During the discussion, the topic of youth with disabilities arose. It was mentioned that having a disability is one of the qualifying criteria for the program, although applicants often do not disclose this information when applying.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) – John Fiore reported that MRS has provided funded work experience opportunities with schools that have students with disabilities to help them develop soft skills. Testing is conducted in small groups, with about three students per site, to ensure the students receive the necessary support for success. The referral process is near completion; however, additional referrals can still be accommodated. Community partners are contracted to establish, coordinate, and oversee the summer work experience programs. The program strives to match students with work experiences that align with their specific interests. These are paid opportunities, with the duration varying depending on the program. The staff and organizations involved have experience working with youth with disabilities.

Disability Network Southwest Michigan – Hank Bostic reported that Disability Network offers a unique summer opportunity through the Advocacy Academy for individuals aged 16-29. This program runs for eight weeks, starting June 9 and ending on July 30, with a pay rate of \$15 per hour. Participants will have the chance to engage in disability rights advocacy, develop advanced leadership skills, gain knowledge about various disabilities, and create a campaign addressing a specific issue. Applications for this program will be accepted through April 28, 2025. Holly Baker is the main contact for enrolling in this program. Additional information can be found on the Disability Network Southwest Michigan website - <https://www.dnswm.org/>.

There was a brief discussion regarding how to identify better ways to systematically provide information regarding work experience opportunities to all students and parents.

DART SURVEY RESULTS

Kathy Olsen reported on the results of the DART survey, revealing that while the response rate was low, most participants who responded expressed a desire for more presentations and updates. Some feedback suggested shortening the meetings to 1½ hours. Additionally, staggering the meeting dates and times for this current year has resulted in improved attendance. John Fiore discussed various additional topics and emphasized the ongoing search for presenters with engaging topics for the group.

AGENCY UPDATES

Friends with Disabilities <https://friendswithdisabilities.org/> - Sharmese Anderson reported that Friends with Disabilities focuses on social activities that foster human connection for individuals ages 18 and older with physical disabilities. Those individuals are invited to participate in outings that occur monthly and offer a variety of engaging experiences. For example, this year the group ventured up north for a skiing excursion, where participants were accompanied by dedicated volunteers. In previous years, the group visited Cedar Point and Chicago Navy Pier. The organization plans to continue offering monthly trips throughout the year.

KRESA – Katie McCuen reported that youth programs and services are offered throughout the year, including summer programs. In summary, career coaching and employment services for youth and young adults are provided by KRESA and include Career NOW, a Career NOW

Summer Program, the MyCITY Program, and a 2Gen Summer Career and Family Program. However, KRESA accepts applications year-round for the Career Pathway Planning Program. The 2025 Career NOW Summer Program runs June 11 – Aug 7, and the application deadline for that program is May 9, 2025. The Career Pathway Planning application is available online at [Application](#), and additional information is available at <https://www.kresa.org/Page/2318>. Questions should be directed to Katie McCuen at katie.mccuen@kresa.org or Amanda Sutherland at amanda.sutherland@kresa.org.

Integrated Services Kalamazoo <https://iskzoo.org/> - Kathy Lentz reported that it is important to note that ISK is a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic that offers services for individuals who are not enrolled in Medicaid. ISK provides comprehensive services such as case management, therapy, and peer support to anyone in Kalamazoo County with a behavioral health condition. Additionally, ISK offers job coaching and follow-up support to assist individuals in achieving their employment goals.

- The *Urgent Care and Access Center* is located at 440 W. Kalamazoo Avenue and is open 24/7. For more information, call (269) 373-6000 or (888) 373-6200 or visit <https://iskzoo.org/all-services/>.
- *Schedule Appointments* - Customers can schedule appointments for non-urgent routine assessments or drop-in (*for a crisis or emergency*) Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. and on Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. For planning purposes, she recommended blocking two hours for appointments.
- The Crosstown Integrated Services location is a *Psychiatric Center*, and information is available at <https://iskzoo.org/?s=psychiatric+center>.

Bureau of Service for Blind Persons (BSBP) <https://www.michigan.gov/leo/bureaus-agencies/bureau-of-services-for-blind-persons> – Sydney Kroll reported that BSBP is currently preparing for its summer programs for students, including the upcoming WMU program. BSBP is in the process of hiring staff to support these initiatives.

KRESA Transition Services <https://www.kresa.org/domain/58> - Alvin Littel reported that the opening of the Career Connect CTE Building on May 22, 2025, is exciting news. He also reported that many transition students have already applied for summer programs. In addition, KRESA's Transition Services staff are currently working on creating a newsletter as well as collaborating with their adult partners to ensure the youth are fully prepared for the upcoming events.

A discussion regarding whether the new Career Connect campus building could be used year-round occurred. The concept of never going dark was mentioned, meaning there will be opportunities in the future to utilize the building after hours and on the weekends. School-year-based programs will operate out of the new facility, with some programs operating off-site, such as the aviation program. Accounting and Finance programs will remain at the schools where they are already established and Barbering and Cosmetology will be hosted at KVCC.

Disability Network <https://www.dnswm.org/> - Hank Bostic reported the following:

- A new *peer network disability support group* is now available in the eight-county area, offering virtual Zoom meetings on Tuesdays from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. These meetings will be facilitated by Sarah Powless and Jalyn Boyd.
- Many *support groups* are offered in-person and online; additional information can be found on the Disability Network website at [Support Groups](#).
- All information can be found on the updated website - <https://www.dnswm.org/>

- Information regarding a *Translation Services Resource* (including ASL) is available at Boost Lingo <https://boostlingo.com/>.
- *Community Education Events* are posted on the Disability Network Southwest website at <https://www.dnswm.org/events/>.
- *Ramp Up* – Ramps provide greater independence and safety for individuals with mobility disabilities, and ramps also allow these individuals to remain living at home. The Ramp Up program works with funders and coordinates builders and volunteer organizations to build ramps for those in need throughout Southwest Michigan. The Ramp Up Program helps people connect to resources for constructing ramps on private residences. For more info, contact Hank Bostic at_bostich@dnswm.org.
- *Disability Network Services* include Advocacy & Education, Information & Referral, Independent Living, Transition, and Peer Support. More information is available on the website at https://www.dnswm.org/services_menu/.
- *Hours* – Office hours in Kalamazoo are Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Friday's hours are by phone by calling 269-345-1516. The Battle Creek office phone number is 269-345-1516, and the St. Joseph office phone number is 269-985-0111.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services – John Fiore reported the following:

- *Summer Work Experience* – Summer Work Experience is approaching. This program is intended to get the participant into employment. Please refer students to John Fiore at fiorej@michigan.gov.
- *Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) Training* – This 10-week training class is provided through a MRS, MCTI, and Northside partnership. Data reflects high pass rates for past classes, as well as high pass rates for earning the State certification. Another CNA class is offered in the Benton Harbor area. Registration is open to anyone with a disability related to employment, as well as individuals who have been in foster care.
- MRS has *Job Openings for MRS Vocational Counselors* in Kalamazoo and Battle Creek.
- MRS welcomes individuals with disabilities who are interested in employment and seeking training opportunities, whether vocational or college based.
- *Referrals* - If you are, or know of, a person with a disability facing barriers to advancement, a case can be opened to address those obstacles. For more information, contact John Fiore at fiorej@michigan.gov.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services – Business Network Division

<https://www.michigan.gov/leo/bureaus-agencies/mrs/businesses> – Lisa Stanley reported that MRS Business Services is seeking partners who are interested in conducting mock interviews with job-ready clients. They are also seeking business partners who are eager to provide tours for MRS clients, allowing the clients to explore various industries and career opportunities. For more information, interested individuals should contact her at StanleyL@michigan.gov.

MI Works! Southwest – Kathy Olsen reported that services are available to the public, job seekers, and employers at all four service centers located in the Michigan Works! Southwest service area.

- A job fair will be held at Three Rivers Health during the week of April 14, 2025.
- Representatives from all the hospital departments will be present at the job fair, and a flyer promoting the event will be sent out after the meeting.
- A link was requested for people to visit to find information about the available programs.
- Beacon Health is in the process of taking over some Ascension facilities.

EMERGING ISSUES RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT & ADVOCACY

Members acknowledged the various changes being introduced and implemented at the federal

level, some of which have the potential to impact services for individuals with disabilities. It was emphasized that now is a critical time for members to actively engage in communication with legislators to advocate for programs that support the most vulnerable in our society.

The significance of identifying job developers was also highlighted.

UNIQUE CUSTOMER NEEDS

There were no comments at this time.

COLLABORATION – Partner Matrix – Kathy Olsen requested that members review the partner matrix and let her know if they have any updates to their agency's listing. In response to a question regarding the DART-developed desktop training modules, it was reported that these modules are posted on the Michigan Works! Southwest website. Awareness of and how to use them is reviewed during new employee orientation.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A list of professional development opportunities was included on the agenda, and other opportunities were shared by members. The professional development opportunities mentioned were as follows:

- Disability Network Southwest Michigan <http://www.dnswm.org/> is an ongoing training, and the website is the best place for information.
- There are always trainings at KPL ONEplace <https://www.kpl.gov/oneplace/>
- The Synergy Health Center <https://synergyzoo.org/>
- Incompass Michigan – <https://incompassmi.org/> - see the Education & Training tab
- DART Desktop Training Modules <https://www.michiganworkssouthwest.org/resources/at-your-desktop-training>
- Michigan Works! Association Professional Development <https://www.michiganworks.org/professional-development>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Al Littel announced that the Spring Transition Network Meeting for KRESA is scheduled for May 5, 2025. This year, they have already held two successful meetings and are considering adding one additional meeting next year.

NEXT MEETING

The next DART meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 26, 2025, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at the Upjohn Institute. [Note: this meeting was eventually cancelled.]

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

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