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**Disability Awareness Resource Team (DART)  
Meeting Minutes  
February 13, 2025**

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**CALL TO ORDER** – DART Co-Chair, John Fiore called the meeting to order at 2:07 p.m. at the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Hank Bostik (DNSW) <sup>✓</sup>  
Nikki DeWitt (Ripple Effects)  
John Fiore (MRS)  
Carrie Headworth (LEO-Veterans ES)  
Jamar Herron (MWSW)  
Sydney Kroll (BSBP)  
Kathy Lentz (ISKzoo) <sup>✓</sup>  
Alvin Littel (KRESA)  
Ramona Lumpkin (Recovery Inst) <sup>✓</sup>

Michelle Miller Adams (Upjohn)  
Kathy Olsen (MWSW)  
Rhasheda Shepherd (Arc Community Advocates)  
Becky Springett (VB CMH) <sup>✓</sup>  
Lisa Stanley (MRS BSP) <sup>✓</sup>  
Kathleen Wine (Goodwill SWMI)

<sup>✓</sup> Attended virtually

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The DART meeting agenda for February 12, 2025 was approved by consensus of members present.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The DART meeting minutes of November 12, 2024 were approved by consensus of members present.

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Members present in-person and online introduced themselves.

**PROGRAM**

Nikki DeWitt, Clinical Supervisor for the Ripple Effects Autism Learning Center shared information regarding the Learning Center, the organization's multiple locations, as well as the Ripple Effects Community Inclusion Center. She reported that the organization provides a broad range of services and support for the autism community and families. Individuals with autism often have behavioral challenges in social situations, and specialized staff work with autistic individuals on behavior modification and change. Ripple Effects also provides parent and caregiver training to help parents learn how to interact and work with their children around their behaviors and help them grow to be successful within the community. Ripple Effects also has an Inclusion Center in Portage that has recreation and meeting space, and it is open to the public. Ms. DeWitt also shared information about Registered Apprenticeship Programming for Registered Behavioral Technicians (RBT) and that they are currently accepting applications. A summary of the Ripple Effects services, the RBT Apprenticeship, and a link to the PowerPoint presentation was sent to DART members following the meeting.

## DART SURVEY

A survey was recently sent to members seeking their input for planning future meetings. Members were also open to ideas as to how to expand participation to include more business engagement. A reminder to respond to the survey will be sent to DART members following the meeting.

## AGENCY UPDATES

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

- 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 people with mobility disabilities and allow them to remain living at home. The Ramp Up program works with funders and coordinates builders and volunteer organizations to provide ramps for those in need throughout Southwest Michigan. These ramps help people connect to resources for constructing ramps on private residences. For more info contact Hank Bostic [bostich@dnswm.org](mailto: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/](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.
- Disability Network Southwest is *hiring a new CEO*. The process is in the beginning stages and the position is posted on the website.

**Van Buren Community Mental Health (VB CMH)** – Becky Springett reported that VB CMH provides assistance to agencies to help customers with Independent Living and the organization is currently undergoing CARF certification. She also reported that she seeks resources to share with customers and finds that the information shared at the DART meetings is helpful.

**Recovery Institute** <https://www.recoverymi.org/> Ramona Lumpkin reported *Peer to Peer Services* are available through weekly meetings which are held at the Recovery Institute, Monday through Thursday, and there is open studio time on Fridays. The *Calendar of Activities* is available online at <https://www.recoverymi.org/ri-calendar>.

**Integrated Services Kalamazoo** <https://iskzoo.org/> - Kathy Lentz reported the following:

- The *Urgent Care and Access Center* is located at 440 W. Kalamazoo Avenue, and it 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 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>.

**KRESA Transition Services** <https://www.kresa.org/domain/58> - Alvin Littel reported that the first field trip occurred to take students to the Secretary of State for the students to obtain a Michigan ID that is needed for employment.

**Arc Community Advocates** <https://communityadvocates.org/> - Rhasheda Shepard reported on the following:

- Staff will be participating in the *Disability Policy Seminar* in Washington, DC April 7-9, 2025, The Seminar is “Designed to help both beginners and experts elevate the impact of their advocacy.” More information is available at <https://disabilitypolicyseminar.org/>.
- *The 18<sup>th</sup> Inclusion Conference* is scheduled for Friday, March 14, 2025 at the Delta Hotel & Conference Center, 2747 S. 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49009. The conference “Aims to bring together a diverse group of professionals, advocates, and thought leaders to explore and promote the principles of inclusivity in various aspects of society, including but not limited to, education, workplace, communities, and policymaking.” More information is available at <https://communityadvocates.org/inclusion-conference>.
- The Arc Community Advocates is seeking new *Board representatives*. Interested individuals can learn more and apply at <https://communityadvocates.org/board-members>.
- In partnership with the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre, Arc Community Advocates is promoting The Penguin Project Production of *Press Start!* a new children’s musical. More information is available at <https://www.kalamazooarts.org/event/press-start-a-childrens-musical/>.
- *New Employee* - Stephanie Sutton will be working with Integrated Services Kalamazoo (ISK) and her focus will be on adult services.

**Goodwill Industries of Southwestern Michigan** – Kathleen Wine reported Goodwill Industries is working on a *Capacity Building Project* to develop post-secondary pathways in rural counties. The focus for this project will be on Allegan County to develop training for a manufacturing credential. Plans are to launch in the fall 2025.

**Veterans Services** – Carrie Headworth reported Veterans Services has *job openings* and they are posted at <https://www.michigan.gov/mdcs>. She also shared a copy of a booklet published by the Michigan legislature titled “*Veterans Benefits & Services*”. Following the meeting, it was discovered that the publication is available online and per the Table of Contents, it was dated “Rev 9/2024”. The link to the document is <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/Publications/VeteransBenefits.pdf>

**Bureau of Service for Blind Persons (BSBP)** <https://www.michigan.gov/leo/bureaus-agencies/bureau-of-services-for-blind-persons> – Sydney Kroll reported on the services available through the Bureau of Service for Blind Persons. Following the meeting, she provided the electronic links to access the information.

- *Training Center (Kalamazoo)* <https://www.michigan.gov/leo/bureaus-agencies/bureau-of-services-for-blind-persons/bsbp-training-center>. A virtual tour can be viewed at [Virtual Tour](#).
- Virtual [Meet and Greet](#) events are scheduled at the Training Center with two dates to choose from: February 20, 2025 at 6:30 pm and March 22, 2025 at 12:00 pm. Additional information can be found on the event [Flyer](#).
- *Referrals for BSBP services* can be made using online forms which are available on their website for– [BSBP Services Referral Form - State of MI](#) and [Referral for BSBP Services](#)
- *Pre-Employment Transition Services* information is posted on their [Website](#) and on this [Flyer](#).
- *BSBP Events* are posted at <https://www.michigan.gov/leo/bureaus-agencies/bureau-of-services-for-blind-persons/bsbp-events>
- The BSBP *Post Secondary Readiness Program* includes a partnership with WMU.

### Michigan Rehabilitation Services – Business Network Division

<https://www.michigan.gov/leo/bureaus-agencies/mrs/businesses> – Lisa Stanley reported MRS Business Services is seeking opportunities to build additional partnerships for On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities. For more information, interested individuals should contact her at [StanleyL@michigan.gov](mailto:StanleyL@michigan.gov).

### Michigan Rehabilitation Services – John Fiore reported the following:

- *Summer Work Experience* – He noted that it is not too early to be thinking about Summer Work Experience. This experience is intended to be for one summer; however, it could be for a second, depending on circumstances. The intent is to get the participant into employment. Please refer students to John Fiore at [fiorej@michigan.gov](mailto: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 earning the State certification. Another CNA class is also 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 Counselors* in Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. For more information, contact John Fiore at [fiorej@michigan.gov](mailto:fiorej@michigan.gov).

**WMed Honor Society – Inclusive event: Cupid's Gala** – Michelle Miller-Adams reported the WMed Honor Society is hosting a Cupid's Gala on Saturday, February 15, 2025. Registration for this inclusive event was time sensitive, and information was forwarded to all members during the DART meeting.

**MI Works! Southwest** – Carrie Headworth reported that partner organizations are encouraged to share their organization's literature in the Resource Room at the MW! Southwest Service Centers. She also reported that partner organizations interested in participating as an Employer of the Day, or as a Resource of the Day, should contact a Michigan Works! Service Center. Contact information is available on the Michigan Works! Southwest website at <https://www.michiganworkssouthwest.org/contact>.

**KRESA** – KRESA staff were not present at the meeting; however, information provided by KRESA regarding programs and services that are offered throughout the year, as well as summer programs was shared with members via two emails following the meeting. In summarizing, 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. It was noted that the application deadline for young learners interested in participating in the summer internship is March 24, 2025. However, KRESA accepts applications year round for the Career Pathway Planning Programming. 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 either Katie McCuen at [katie.mccuen@kresa.org](mailto:katie.mccuen@kresa.org) or Amanda Sutherland at [amanda.sutherland@kresa.org](mailto:amanda.sutherland@kresa.org).

### EMERGING ISSUES RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT & ADVOCACY

Members noted that there are multiple changes being introduced and/or implemented at the federal level, many of which are impacting, or could impact, services to individuals with disabilities. Members were encouraged to continue to contact legislators to advocate for support of programs that affect the most vulnerable. Examples provided included wages for Direct Care workers, Medicare, and Medicaid.

## UNIQUE CUSTOMER NEEDS

Carrie Headworth noted that the Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) brochure at the Michigan Works! Service Center in Battle Creek needs a new contact card and handout.

Kathy Olsen shared an example of a customer needing ASL services at one of the MW! Southwest service centers and staff from MRS were able to assist with a short notice.

**COLLABORATION – Partner Matrix** – Kathy Olsen requested that members review the partner matrix and to let her know if they have any updates to their agency's listing.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

John Fiore referred members to the list of professional development opportunities that were listed on the agenda as well as other opportunities shared by members. The professional development opportunities were:

- Disability Policy Seminar, April 7-9, 2025 in Washington, D.C.  
<https://disabilitypolicyseminar.org/>
- ARC Community Advocates 18th Inclusion Conference, Friday, March 14, 2025 at the Delta Hotel & Conference Center, 2747 S. 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Kalamazoo, MI  
<https://communityadvocates.org/inclusion-conferenceon>
- Disability Network Southwest Michigan <http://www.dnswm.org/>
- 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>
- Michigan Works! Association Professional Development  
<https://www.michiganworks.org/professional-development>
- The Arc @ School - [Special Education Advocacy Curriculum](#) - Get free access to online special education training. Thanks to scholarships provided by Lids and CoBank, the Arc is offering free access to The Arc@School's [Special Education Advocacy Curriculum](#) for parents, guardians, and other family members of students with disabilities. The training is online, self-paced, and available in both English and Spanish. Scholarship availability is limited, and the Arc will create accounts on a rolling basis until all slots are filled – so submit your request as soon as possible. Click here to [Request Free Access](#)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no additional announcements.

## NEXT MEETING

The next DART meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 8, 2025, from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

## ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

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