



**Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities
Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee
DRAFT Meeting Summary – January 9th, 2017**

Sue Hartung, Co-Chair -Larry Bram, Co-Chair

Present:

Parents: Lyda Astrove; Susan Hartung (Co-Chair); Larry Bram (Co-Chair), Easter Seals; Reda Sheinberg; Camelia Fawzy; Claire Funkhouser

Organizations: Shawn Lattanzio – DHHS, Behavioral Health; Kim Mayo – Community Support Network Administrator; Lu Merrick – Ivymount School; Seth Morgan – Commission on People with Disabilities, Chair; Karen Morgret – Treatment & Learning Center; Sara O’Neil - MMARS; Judith Pattik – DDA; Susan Smith – HOC; Simone Geness – Transition Services Supervisor, MCPS; Daniel Hammond – Autism Waiver Coordinator, MCPS; Jay Kenney – Chief, Aging and Disability Services, DHHS; Eldora Taylor – Community Support Network; Melissa Shaffer-Reyes; Kim Khan

Staff: Betsy Luecking

Welcome and Introductions

Susan Hartung, Co-Chair, convened the meeting and introductions were made.

Best Employment Practices for Employment of People with Disabilities – Jennifer Mizrahi, President, RespectAbility

PowerPoint: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/DDAC/RespectAbilityDDACJan9.pdf

RespectAbility Comments re: Maryland Unified State Plan - Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA):
<http://respectabilityusa.com/Resources/RespectAbility%20Maryland%20WIOA%20State%20Plan%20Comments.pdf>

Ms. Mizrahi noted that Montgomery County has the highest employment rate of persons with disabilities in the country at 54%. This data includes part-time employment and those in sheltered workshops. In comparison, Baltimore only has a 27% employment rate of persons with disabilities. Individuals are twice as likely to be employed if they live in Montgomery County. She noted that the difference in counties is not a race issue as the worst States in the country for employment of persons with disabilities are Maine and Vermont. Montgomery County’s higher rate can best be explained due to best practices and high expectations.

It is important to know what the job demand is and to create a talent pool of individuals to meet the needs of employers. Individuals with disabilities tend to be trained for jobs that do not exist and they should be trained for the real labor needs of the community. Employers need to know that by hiring people with disabilities that value is being added to their bottom line.

As noted on slide 9, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has a high number of students with autism and learning disabilities who are or will be leaving the school system to enter the workforce. STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) is great for youth on the autism spectrum. The best STEM program is at Blair High School, but Autism Supports are located at Walter Johnson. There is a severe shortage of STEM talent within the disability employment pool. Specialisterne USA <http://usa.specialisterne.com/> is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, providing programs for talent and career development for autistic people, including employment within STEM. Their goal is to enable 100,000 jobs in the United States by 2025.

The Department of Labor published regulations for Federal contractors and subcontracts in September 2013 that established a nationwide 7% utilization goal for qualified individuals with disabilities. Contractors apply the goal to each

of their job groups, or to their entire workforce if the contractor has 100 or fewer employees. Contractors must conduct an annual utilization analysis and assessment of problem areas, and establish specific action-oriented programs to address any identified problems. To view which companies are Federal contractors and have an obligation to hire people with disabilities, visit www.usaspending.gov/Pages/TextView.aspx?data=StateMostFundedRecipientsByAwardType&AwardType=C&statecode=MD&fiscalyear=2017

Project Search is a great program as individuals get to choose between different kinds of jobs as well as experience multiple jobs over the course of the program. This gives the individual more opportunities for employment. The Project Search program at the UCLA Medical Center has a contract with the hospital to provide job coaches to program participants and for if they are hired into a permanent position at the hospital once their six-month training has ended. In Wisconsin, Governor Scott Walker found Project Search to be so cost effective in employing persons with disabilities and reducing government benefits that he created a Blueprint for Prosperity Initiative that included \$850,000 to expand the number of Project SEARCH sites throughout Wisconsin from seven to 27 over the next three years. Ms. Mizrahi suggested that Montgomery County expand their Project Search sites as well as expand eligibility to include individuals who have been outside of the workforce for a period of time and/or for older adults.

Federal Government recently passed regulations that in FY18 all Federal agencies will be required to have 12% of its workforce be persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, a Federal hiring freeze is expected with the new administration taking office mid-January. It will be important to look to local government and predominately the private sector for hiring.

Ms. Mizrahi has not seen tax incentives for employers as a factor for hiring individuals with disabilities as it can be a confusing process for the company. She believes that faith-based communities could create mentorship programs for persons with disabilities. For example, the Kessler Foundation has started an initiative, Putting Faith to Work, builds the capacity of congregations and faith communities to connect their members with disabilities to employment opportunities and provide individualized support. Marriott has the Bridges to Work program which engages employers, schools, community resources, youth and their families to help businesses meet their workforce needs while offering young people with disabilities the opportunity to learn, grow and succeed through employment. The program has a 70% average employment outcome. Simone Geness, Transition Services, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), noted that MCPS currently has a contract with them to provide employment services. Lu Merrick added that Project Search in Montgomery County has a 74% average employment outcome.

The [United States Business Leadership Network](#) is a national non-profit that helps business drive performance by leveraging disability inclusion in the workplace, supply chain and marketplace. USBLN is based in D.C. and covers Northern Virginia and Maryland and is connected to companies such as Lockheed Martin.

The floor was open to questions.

Susan Hartung, Co-Chair, asked if it was more effective for companies to receive positive messages of employing persons with disabilities from other companies? Ms. Mizrahi noted that it is better to speak to larger companies rather than small businesses as large employers are more willing to take a larger group of individuals with disabilities to amortize the cost of a job coach across the group. They also have a legal obligation to hire when they are Federal contractors where a small business does not.

For example, Unity Point Health in Iowa hired a full-time job coach in their human resources department to not only source talent to fill positions, but to also identify individuals who were at risk for losing their jobs at the onset of a disability. UPH found it more cost effective to identify other positions the individual who was at risk could perform rather than advertise, hire and train a new employee, plus they retained a valued member of the organization.

It was asked how one can approach a large company about hiring persons with disabilities when the majority of employers require online applications. Ms. Mizrahi suggested approaching them in a more systematic way by making note of positions that have noted high turnover within their organization that would be more cost effective to be held by persons with disabilities.

Internships as well as volunteer opportunities are very helpful in securing employment. required to graduate high school. The DC Jewish Community Center offers an inclusive Community Service summer camp that provides a variety of community service opportunities that students can use to accrue up to 35 SSL hours. It was reported that Montgomery County Recreation has a similar SSL summer camp program.

It was asked about MCPS's data regarding hiring persons with disabilities. Simone said she does not have that information readily available. She is currently working on a subcommittee to create a pathways program for students with disabilities who would like to start an MCPS internship. She added that job coaches are available to assist students obtain their SSL hours.

Ms. Mizrahi has concerns with having no sheltered workshops. Rhode Island has tried aggressively to employ individuals with disabilities in competitive, integrated settings with little success resulting in some individuals having no place to go. The younger generation have a great advantage over older individuals as their post-IDEA educational instruction is better. Also, students exiting the system are used to expectations of dressing appropriately, showing up on time, etc., whereas those who have been unemployed for a long period of time may not be. There is age discrimination and discrimination against those who have not been in the workforce for awhile for persons with and without disabilities.

Ms. Mizrahi suggested viewing RespectAbility's webinar [Best Practices in Action: South Dakota & Leading the Nation on Jobs for People with Disabilities](#).

Update - Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) – Judy Pattik, Regional Director, Southern Maryland Regional Office (SMRO)

Judy reported that there are no changes for TY16s since last month. They are working on place 27 TY16s.

The regional office has filled all but one position. Two new hires will begin January 18th – one is the Director of Provider Relations and the other is a staff support person for Provider Relations.

A 'meet and greet' event for individuals and families will be held at SMRO in Laurel on January 19th from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Event Flyer: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/SMROOpenHouse.pdf.

Community of Practice for Supporting Families awareness events have been held across the state. One will be held on January 13th in Harford County. On June 14th and 15th an annual meeting will be held with national leaders who will look at creating policies, practices and systems to better assist and support families across the lifespan.

Update – Transitioning Youth (TY) – Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)

Update - Coordination of Community Services (CCS)

Total Care: No update.

MMARS: 44 TY17s. 35 choice letters received so far and received 5 acceptances.

Montgomery County HHS: 11 TY17s. 8 of those have sent their preference letters for provider agencies and they have started notifying agencies of selection.

New Business:

Daniel Hammond, Autism Waiver, reported that there is a shortage of providers that are approved to make environmental accessibility adaptations, including physical adaptations to the home, through the waiver program. Currently there is only one provider in the State that has been approved. The contractor/provider must be enrolled as a Medicaid provider, the total job cannot exceed \$2,000, and the contractor/provider submits for reimbursement to the State once the job has been completed. Daniel will send an e-mail to the group with more information on how providers can enroll.

Shawn Lattanzio reported that Adventist Health care will be closing two residential treatment centers. Both primarily serve youth ages 12 to 18 with serious emotional and behavioral problems.

Jay Kenney, Chief, Aging & Disability Services, recently saw Carol Beatty, Secretary, Maryland Department of Disabilities, and brought up the Committee's concerns regarding employment. She reiterated these concerns. The State is focusing efforts on employment for youth with disabilities. It was noted that the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) is now required to provide pre-employment transition services to students ages 14 years old to 22 years old.

Susan noted that the individuals with disabilities want to feel valued and that they are contributing to their community; they may not necessarily think that a higher minimum wage is of importance.

Larry Bram, Co-Chair, noted that many people who retire from sheltered workshops move to medical adult day care. The younger generation with disabilities do not view sheltered workshops as being segregated; they view it as belonging to a group with which they have much in common. In an integrated setting people with disabilities may end up more isolated.

There is a Project Search information session being held tomorrow evening.

Chair and Vice-Chair Update: None

Upcoming: Monday, February 13th, 2017 from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. The Committee will be meeting at the Rockville Memorial Library until May 2017. Address: 21 Maryland Avenue, 2nd Floor, Rockville, MD 20850.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carly Clem, Administrative Assistant

Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager

Commission on People with Disabilities