

New Jersey State Employment & Training Commission
Disability Issues Committee
The Leadership Council for DiscoverAbility NJ
Meeting Minutes
December 6, 2011

Welcome/Opening Discussion

The meeting commenced at 10:35am with a welcome by Judy Formalarie. Ms. Formalarie conveyed the regrets of Chair Nicky Gacos for his absence. Mr. Gacos was called away to attend a meeting regarding the possible loss of 200 jobs at United States Postal Centers, currently held by sight impaired individuals, due to facility closures. Introductions were done and the minutes of the October 6th meeting were approved by all.

DiscoverAbility NJ Update- Paula Barber

- NJDHS has requested a no-cost extension for the MIG Grant that funds DiscoverAbility. Still no response if the extension has been granted. Ms. Barber will be meeting with Department of Human Services to plan the activities for the remainder of the MIG. The current focus is on sustainability of efforts. Please contact her if you have ideas or suggestions.
- There will be a webinar on December 15, 2011 at 1:00 pm regarding the Social Enterprises Initiatives paper written by Elaine Katz and Ronnie Kauder. Registration is on the DiscoverAbility website.
- Leadership Academy's last day is December 7, 2011. There are 26 participants. The experience has been very positive.
- Michele Martin is working on a Micro-Enterprise project.
- Rutgers University kicked off an Interdisciplinary Disabilities Consortium on December 1st. Initial ideas for this group are to become a principle resource to influence state and national policies, foster cross-disciplinary collaboration by cross training professionals, collaboration between researchers, addressing practices of how people with disabilities are treated in academic and other formal institutions, identify entities within the Rutgers system that are resources for people with disabilities, communicating training opportunities for higher education focused on training people to work with people with disabilities, sharing field work and internship opportunities, reorganization of academics with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ). This group is not exclusive to Rutgers. Anyone interested may attend their meetings.
- TransCen report on DiscoverAbility website there are two reports: one is on job developer attitudes toward employers and the other is on job development strategies and how they match employer expectations.

- Two trainings on Disability Benefits (DB101) will be held by Cornell University. It was also announced that the online disability benefits calculator is now in English and Spanish.

State Employment Leadership Network - Jennifer Joyce, Coordinator of Employment and Day Services

As the Coordinator of Employment and Day Services at the Department of Human Services' (DHS) Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), Ms. Joyce has a strong focus on employment. DHS joined the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN) this summer and Ms. Joyce is heading that effort. A SELN survey was completed and Ms. Joyce is leading a self-survey for DHS/DDD. Once both surveys are analyzed, they will focus on a plan and gain best practices from other states.

Self-Employment

Ms. Formalarie reported on self-employment assistance efforts that are available through the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD). Rebecca Schulman also discussed Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRs) policies on self-employment assistance. Ms. Formalarie will follow up with input from Cheryl Casiano of DVRs who works with this program Elaine Katz is also working with Griffen Hammis Consulting on a self-employment conference. All members of this committee will be invited. She is also interested in creating a state model for people who have traumatic brain injury. The concept is for low dollar start-up businesses (crafts, dog walking, etc.), but it will be necessary to have family support for the business.

Michele Martin

Ms. Martin is working on an issue brief on micro-enterprises which are small businesses with a low start-up cost of \$35,000 or less. The nature of work is changing and there is a lot of opportunity for self-employment. She is looking for support for people with disabilities to become self-employed. Ms. Martin discussed a web site called Task Rabbit which is an online tool that matches small jobs with freelancers. She noted that 58% of employers are interested in hiring contingent employees (i.e.: 1099, subcontractors).

Group Discussion

There was a great amount of discussion regarding self-employment. There were concerns on the following areas:

- How well are we advising people interested in self-employment?
- How well are programs and organizations supporting people (i.e.: writing a business plan; knowing if a business plan is always necessary)?
- It is important to know the difference between being a 1099 consultant and owning a business.

- How do you get staff people to do things differently, especially long term staff? It is important to find ways to motivate all staff resourcefulness.
- Too often “pre placement” time is limited and staff does not have time to explore all possible options with their client. Job developers need to bill action against programs and they are limited to only do what they get paid to do. Funding extra time for a variety of options is an issue.

It was noted that state agencies will have requirements and obligations to have everything done legally and provide advice on business and tax implications and liability issues. Also, it is important to advise clients on programs that may allow the continuation of certain benefits, such as Unemployment Insurance. While realistically describing the risks, we need to put a positive light on self-employment and not scare people off. We need to develop a range of options as there is a large range of people with disabilities. A “best practices model” with all the information that can be used by everyone would be beneficial.

It was also suggested that more education needs to be done for DVRS staff but it will be important to have DVRS buy-in. It was felt that vendors don’t have time to provide this service. This committee will try to have DVRS address some of these concerns at our next meeting. In addition, some other concerns were:

- DVR does not reach everyone and we need to be able to reach all people with disabilities.
- The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) is piloting an Entrepreneurial Achievement Center for nontraditional careers and people with disabilities under Lorraine Allen. They had some funding. Ms. Formalarie will contact Lorraine Allen for more information.
- The concept of self-employment must be an informed choice and decision; there is no ‘right’ decision as self-employment is not the path for everyone.
- It was noted that all staff need to know the options of self-employment. Models with a “specialist” don’t work historically.
- Other resources, such as the Small Business Developmental Corporations (SBDC), SCORE, should be included for assistance instead of just DVRS. We need those with business background and that entrepreneurial mindset.
- How are agencies communicating that the world of work has changed? How do we foster the entrepreneurial mind set? How do we give power to the client? It was noted that this needs to begin with parents and children with disabilities while in grades K-12 education.

It was also noted that the state needs to find a way to reach beyond DVRS to the Division of Developmental Disabilities, especially those in residential care. We need to start empowering individuals while in residence care so that they can move into employment/self-employment.

The Commission for the Blind and Visionally Impaired (CBVI) has a business enterprise model for clients to open vending stand businesses in governmental buildings like Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) and recently began a self-employment program. However, individuals must have three years of experience in private business and develop a business plan to be eligible. CBVI is also working with TCNJ.

It was decided that the Disability Issues Committee should form a working committee on the issue of self-employment. Anyone who is interested should contact Judy Formalarie.

Business and Post-Secondary Education Summit Update – Anthony Camuso

Anthony Camuso, of the National Organization on Disabilities (NOD), is working to place professional people with disabilities and not having much success in high level white collar jobs. Mr. Camuso convened a summit on November 4, 2011 to connect businesses with post-secondary individuals. Rutgers University Career Services representatives were the opening speakers. Attendees included state agencies, non-profits, educators and employers. Employers discussed hiring trends. There were breakouts into business sectors. More training is needed at all levels for staff as well as students (i.e.: on disclosure). Students need more information on how more effectively self-advocate.

It was noted that there is a need to get more people in college Career Services Offices, especially people with disabilities as their unemployment rate is significantly higher than people without disabilities. These offices could offer a great deal of assistance.

Mr. Camuso will forward information on the summit via email for Lilah Gumbas to distribute to this committee.

Employment First Conference Report, October 28, 2011 – Jan Goodman

Ms. Goodman reported on the Employment First (EF) conference. There is an overall interest in having EF in New Jersey, but all agreed there is much work to do. We should look at other states for best practices. There is a huge disconnect with students in transition who want employment, because too often they get sent to supported employment rather than getting help with obtaining competitive employment. Students with disabilities frequently have no work history and graduate without internships, mentorships, or work experience.

Family Resource Centers can be a key; however, there is also a need for vocational rehabilitation connections at all county colleges.

A discussion expressed the following concerns:

- It was asked if some Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) grant funding could be used to work with community colleges. The Cornell University Northeast EDA Center, formerly known as the Disability Business and Technical Assistance Center (DBTAC) also has funding. There is a need for assistance in developing college Disability Services Offices.
- There is a need to educate people with disabilities to learn how to speak up for themselves. It was agreed that self-advocacy begins at home and school.
- It was asked that all agencies look at themselves and determine how they are providing and encouraging self-empowerment of their clients.

Announcements

Bob Haugh	Dare to Dream in 2012 – High School Student Leadership Conference Eight (8) locations and dates were distributed.
Rebecca Shulman-	APSE Conference – Facing the Future XX Doubletree Hotel – Somerset, NJ on March 23, 2012
Judy Formalarie	2012 Disability Issues Committee meeting dates were distributed and will also be emailed to all. Meetings will continue to be held at The Arc of Middlesex from 10:30 to 12:30.

Closing

The meeting concluded at 12:30 with a reminder that the next meeting will be on Friday, February 3, 2012 at the Arc of Middlesex in the Training Room.

Attendees

Anthony Camuso	Kirk Lew
ShellyAnn Dacres	Cynthia Mapp
Anthony Ferrara	Michele Martin
Judy Formalarie	Colleen McLaughlin
Eileen Gallo	Nils Richardson
Joe Gazzara	Clara Pacheco-Rivera
Jan Goodman	Rebecca Shulman
Bob Haugh	Edward Sroczynski
Jennifer Joyce	Susan VanHook
Bert Kormann	Susan Vetterl