

Howard County Commission for Transitioning Students with Disabilities
Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2019

Attendees:

Missie Baxter, Beth Benevides, Alexandra Berry, Patrick Boxall, Ernestine Bridges, Colette Jackson, Kathy Land, Judi Olinger, Cindy Parr, Laura Parsons, Heather Peart, Susan Potts, Dawson Robertson, Meghan Smallwood, Kaya Swann, Janice Yetter

Guests: Naysha Conway (Humanim), Natalie Dohner (Project SEARCH), Doris Jacobs (Humanim), Kathy van de Castle (HCPSS/Project SEARCH), Tom Waite (Best Buddies Maryland)

Absent:

Michelle Henry, Katie Collins-Ihrke, Stephanie Discepolo, Erica Lewis, Kathy McSweeney, Dianne Nagle, Kelly Ruby, Jemira Sarratt, Ann Scholz, Brian Welsh

Meeting called to order at 8:40am

Welcome and Introductions

Alexandra Berry was welcomed to the Commission as a student member. Susan Potts shared the success of the Transition Symposium held on November 9; 135 people attended, including 26 youth.

Approval of Minutes

Patrick Boxall made a motion to approve the September 12, 2019, meeting minutes. Cindy Parr seconded the motion. Minutes were approved unanimously.

HCPSS Update: High Schools and Transitioning Students with Disabilities

HCPSS received a second MSDE grant focused specifically on transition; staff is outlining next steps for this grant. High school students attended HCC to learn about disability services and tour the campus. A spring fair on Project Access and DDA Services will be held on March 30, 2020. High school students were also given an opportunity to shadow the apprenticeship programs.

December 2-6 is national Inclusive Schools Week. J. Yetter and B. Benevides co-chair the Inclusive Schools Workgroup which meets monthly to plan activities. Posters, bulletin board ideas, announcements, and online resources have been provided to schools. On December 5, students will present testimony before the Board of Education on the importance of inclusion.

Guest Presentation—Tom Waite, Best Buddies Maryland

Commission members learned of Best Buddies programs and priorities. Established in Maryland in 1995, BB Maryland has 118 school chapters (elementary through college), 4,326 members, 744 student buddy pairs, 25 job participants, 40 ambassadors (self-advocates), and 150 adult pairs (Citizens program). There is also an e-buddies pen-pal

program. BB is DORS certified for job development. 17 individuals are currently in jobs or receiving job coaching. These are paid positions, 16-20 hours per week. TJX is a new national partner.

BB recently added “inclusive living” to his offerings—people with and without disabilities live together. Started in UCLA area and will now be offered at Georgetown University.

Discussed the interest in post-high school Citizens Buddy program, perhaps through HC Rec & Parks or the volunteer system in Howard County (Department of Community Resources and Services).

Office of Children and Families Update

K. Swann invited input from the Employment Workgroup on the advertisement for the open business seats/appointments on the Commission.

Project SEARCH Update

N. Dohner will host information nights this fall and another in January. The “I Can Work” video premiere was held in October with a crowd of 70+ people.

Arc Howard County and Howard County Autism Society will host a legislative breakfast on December 4. Local and state government representatives have been invited to the breakfast in order to hear about pressing issues from the HC disabilities community.

Arc received a \$15,000 Changemaker grant from the Horizon Foundation to install at least two changing tables in the county.

Workgroup Reports

The **Community** workgroup will continue discussions with Best Buddies regarding the Citizen Buddy program.

Transition Symposium was great success. Feedback from the symposium will be shared at the January Commission meeting.

C. Jackson noted that her group has not been successful in meeting with the County Executive or his staff. The Para-Transit Committee also has not met. She added that the Developmental Disabilities Administration is looking for a new member for the DDA Stakeholder Committee.

The **Education** workgroup did not report. A. Scholz absent.

Employment Workgroup

N. Conway and the employment workgroup are creating a list of employers who are hiring people with disabilities. Will also survey employers about experience of hiring people with disabilities.

H. Peart (DORS) noted that Alisa Bonzer is the new program manager. At this time, Heather Peart is the only transition counselor. Some concerns were raised about the responsiveness to applications and queries given the shortage of staff. Also discussed the application process. H. Peart advised that students should complete the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) application in their junior year, regardless of certificate or diploma.

H. Peart will present at the January meeting of the Commission and provide information on the Pathways Program at Howard Community College, which provides additional supports to college students on the autism spectrum by assisting with self-advocacy, communication and organization skills, and helping them to identify campus resources. Pathways staff also provides education and support to college personnel regarding working with students with autism.

Member Updates

A. Berry introduced herself to the Commission and said she looked forward to learning more about the transition process, and participating on the Community workgroup.

K. Land shared that she presented at the Transition Symposium. She will present to the Commission in January about DDA service coordination.

Closing

The meeting adjourned at 10:26am.

2019-20 Meetings:

January 9, 2020 – 8:30-10:30am (Roger Carter Community Center)

Heather Peart (DORS) and Kathy Land (Service Coordination) will present

March 12, 2020 – 8:30-10:30am (Roger Carter Community Center)

May 14, 2020 – 8:30-10:30am (Roger Carter Community Center)