

Howard County Commission for Transitioning Students with Disabilities  
Meeting Minutes  
March 12, 2020

**Attendees:**

Beth Benevides, Alexandra Berry, Patrick Boxall, Ernestine Bridges, Katie Collins-Ihrke, Naysha Conway, Lea Fant (DORS), Colette Jackson, Kathy Land, Erica Lewis, Jacqueline Myers (DORS), Dawson Robertson, Jemira Sarratt, Ann Scholz, Dana Stewart (DORS), Kaya Swann, Janice Yetter

**Guests:** Natalie Dohner (Project SEARCH), Doris Jacobs (Humanim)

**Absent:**

Missie Baxter, Stephanie Discepolo, Michelle Henry, Dianne Nagle, Judi Olinger, Cindy Parr, Laura Parsons, Susan Potts, Kelly Ruby, Meghan Smallwood

Meeting called to order at 8:35am

**Welcome and Introductions**

Dana Stewart, DORS transition counselor for Howard County youth, was welcomed by Commission members.

**Approval of Minutes**

Katie Collins-Ihrke made a motion to approve the January 9, 2020, meeting minutes as amended. Judi Olinger seconded the motion. Minutes were approved unanimously.

**HCPSS Update: High Schools and Transitioning Students with Disabilities**

D. Robertson provided an update on digital portfolios. All CCE students exiting this year without a diploma will receive a complete digital portfolio. In addition, students in the following programs will participate in the MSDE JHU/CTE Digital Transition Portfolio program: Project SEARCH, Community Connections, and one 9<sup>th</sup> grade student at each high school. Two transition teachers, Sarah Hammond and Grace Dellinger, are creating a process guide. P. Boxall inquired about the roll-out of the MSDE JHU/CTE Digital Portfolio in other counties. B. Benevides will follow up with Jeff Wyatt, Secondary Transition Performance Specialist at MSDE.

The Department of Special Education “Summer Work Program” is developing training experiences in the following areas: print shop, warehouse, clerical and custodial services.

D. Robertson will participate on the MSDE Transition Assessments Workgroup, which will focus on creating an assessment framework and list of approved assessments for transitioning youth.

The Community Connections Program is considering training options in security, animal care, and coding.

J. Yetter shared that applications are due in April for the Maryland Apprenticeship Program. Stephanie Discepolo has developed a workshop for interested students to assist them with the application process and preparation for the program. The workshop covers such topics as disclosure of one's disability, completing applications fully and preparing for interviews, and program expectations and necessary social skills for the work environment.

### **Presentation—Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)**

Lea Fant, Jacqueline Myers, and Dana Stewart provided members with information about student and adult services, and eligibility requirements for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services. To qualify for VR services, medical documentation of disability and its impact on Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) is necessary. Only applicants who receive a Category I determination (most significantly affected with 3 or more ADLs impacted by disability) are currently eligible for VR services. There is at least a three-year wait list for anyone in Category II.

Information was provided on college tuition reimbursement and the Pathways for Autism Program at HCC. Students must take college credit-bearing courses and attend full-time (unless otherwise approved). Students should apply in their last year (or one year prior) of high school, and education must be a goal on the VR plan. Tuition reimbursement is based on student income if the student receives SSI; otherwise it is based on family income.

Currently there are five vendors in Howard County providing Pre-ETS. DORS counselors work with students and families to determine most appropriate vendor depending on the requested service.

J. Myers noted that students with 504s are eligible for services but they are not often referred to DORS by high school counselors. J. Yetter offered to coordinate a meeting between DORS, school psychologists and counselors, and transition teachers to address this gap.

### **Office of Children and Families Update**

K. Swann updated members on the open seats/appointments: business member and parent member. Several resumes were received for the parent position and one has been forwarded to the County Executive for further consideration. No resumes have been received for the business member position. Commission members discussed the need for business representation on the Commission, and agreed that alternative ways of receiving business input may be necessary. Several invited businesses have indicated that the time commitment is a barrier.

### **Project SEARCH Update**

Interviews for the Class of 2020-21 will take place March 23, 24, and 26. New internships for the third rotation include the Office on Aging and Independence, the Loan Closet, and the North Laurel 50+ Center. Current interns will participate in mock interviews. Participating businesses include Harkins Builders, Community Foundation of Howard

County, Howard County Economic Development Authority, Office of Workforce Development, and the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS).

### **Workgroup Reports**

The **Community** workgroup is considering outreach to doctors and pediatricians in order to share resources that are available to families. K. Collins-Ihrke will discuss with Kelly Kessler of the Local Health Improvement Coalition.

The **Education** workgroup is currently reviewing the effectiveness of the Parent Questionnaire for transitioning youth and will determine if changes to the document are necessary. A. Scholz mentioned several upcoming workshops including: Healthcare Transition (Parents Place of Maryland) and Michael Dalto on SSI (Howard County Transition Outreach Partnership). The new Central Region director of DDA has been invited to present at an upcoming Transition Journey meeting.

The **Employment** workgroup met in February. The employer survey will be disseminated in April. P. Boxall shared that the Howard County Autism Society received a \$10,000 Innovation Grant from the County Executive to support an Autism Hiring Initiative. The Commission is still interested in connecting with the Disability Group of the Society of Human Resource Manager (SHRM). N. Conway will inquire further.

### **Member Updates**

N. Dohner shared that the Association of People Supporting Employment (APSE) Maryland Communities will hold a kickoff meeting on March 17 at Maryland Works. There are several committees seeking members: membership, education/training, advocacy/public policy, business advisory, strategic initiatives, and marketing/outreach.

J. Sarrat of the Office of Workforce Development shared that OWD is hosting a job fair on March 28, as well as a Summer Employment Program in partnership with DORS. The Summer Employment Program will include 40-45 students.

K. Collins-Ihrke (Accessible Resources for Independence) highlighted ARI's 10-year Anniversary Celebration -- Save the Date for July 15, 2020. ARI is hosting a housing information session on April 16 at 6:30pm.

E. Lewis noted that Career Exploration Day will be held on April 22. At least twenty work sites will participate in this job shadowing event. Priority is given to students with disabilities in career academies. She also noted that Ande Kolp, executive director of The Arc Maryland, will provide a DDA Services Update on March 18, 9:30am, at DCRS.

The Commission on Disabilities will change the format of its annual awards ceremony on October 8. In recognition of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ADA, the ceremony will feature an art contest for all ages.

A. Berry shared that she is working at the senior center next to the Miller Library. She is also interviewing for a position at the Y.

D. Robertson advertised the Transition Fair at Cedar Lane on March 30, 2020.

**Closing**

The meeting adjourned at 10:30am.

**Upcoming 2019-20 Meetings:**

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