

**DRAFT MINUTES**

Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation Board  
Disability Advisory Council Meeting  
Tuesday, June 11, 2013

Time: 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.  
Location: 707 West Milwaukee Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Room 2A  
Facilitating: Gwen McNeal, Chair

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Members Present: Gwen McNeal, Delora Williams, Verna Brocks, Harvey Brooks, Richard Carson, Shawn Burch, Jannette Howard, Felecia Simpson, Lena Barkley, Daron Calhoun, Jon Waller, Nonzwakazi Hill, Leslynn Angel  
Members Absent: John Williamson, Byron Carter, Aurora Harris, Jayna Jamerson, Patricia Little, Ammiel Thomas, Kenyetta Walker, George Parris, Tracey Miree, Katrina Gordon, Andrea Tolle, Robert Avedisian  
Guests: Danita Love-Carter/JVS Detroit, Ronnie Payne/Payne Pulliam School, Steve Egland, Detroit Public Schools  
Staff Present: Stephanie Nixon, Kristin Bailey, Lester Gayden, Carla Phelps, L’Tanya Clegg

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The Meeting of the Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation (DESC) Board Disability Advisory Council was called to order at 8:15 a.m. by Ms. Gwen McNeal, Chair.

**APPROVAL OF DRAFT MINUTES OF MARCH 19, 2013**

A motion was made by Member Verna Brocks to approve the Draft Minutes of March 19, 2013, supported by Member Harvey Brooks. Motion Carried.

**AGENCY UPDATES**

Chair McNeal allowed each member an opportunity to give a brief update on their agency.

**Grant Associates**

Member Harvey Brooks, Disability Program Navigator for the three *Michigan Works!* One Stop Career Centers, is focused on assisting individuals with disabilities in finding employment.

**PTA**

Member Verna Brocks shared that one focus of the PTA is to assure that all youth with special needs have an opportunity to complete the application process for the Year-Round Youth Program.

**Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS)**

Member Jannette Howard, District Manager for Detroit MRS, stated that MRS is working diligently to assist customers with finding employment and continuing to collaborate with partners to help enhance support available to disabled citizens in Detroit. MRS is currently working on a summer youth program with Detroit Public Schools (DPS) and Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) which begins Monday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, giving 60 DPS students

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program  
Funded by The Michigan Department of Licensing & Regulatory Affairs  
Workforce Development Agency  
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opportunities for work experiences, job shadowing experiences as well as employment opportunities once the program is complete. Member Jon Waller is also currently working to get persons with disabilities employed.

### **United Cerebral Palsy Association (UCPA)**

Member Leslynn Angel highlighted a few updates from UCPA. Beginning August 1, 2013, Work Incentive Planning Assistance programs (WIPA) will be re-funded by the Social Security Administration. Member Angel presented the history of the program and how it was developed. WIPA is focused on people receiving Social Security Disability (SSD) as well as Social Security Insurance (SSI). UCPA is continuing with fee for services, a new program that was added this year. It is a representative payee program where UCPA helps individuals live as independently as possible in their communities. It is currently working with about 20 – 25 individuals as their representative payees. All are either in apartments or other independent living-type settings. UCPA assists them with their bills and ensures that they have all of their basic needs met. There is a sliding fee that is charged based on the individual's benefit amount. The fee charged is a minimal amount to cover UCPA's administrative costs only (there is no profit involved). Member Delora Williams stated that she is still assisting persons with SSDI benefits return to work.

### **Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation (DESC)**

Ms. Carla Phelps, Program Analyst, works on special projects and assists Mr. Lester Gayden with the youth programs. Mr. Gayden, Program Analyst, stated that DESC is currently working in collaboration with Detroit Public Schools (DPS) in identifying students that have submitted applications for summer employment and also identifying youth that are interested in participating in DESC's Year-Round Youth Program. Ms. Stephanie Nixon, Director of Contract Administration, stated that since she is on the agenda today she will share her information at the designated time. Ms. Kristin Bailey, Administrative Manager, explained that her involvement specifically pertains to managing board and committee meetings and assuring that all action items are carried out. Mr. Robin Johnston, Communications Manager, is here today to observe the meeting overall and get ideas and information regarding the new DESC website. He would like to ensure that the website is as accessible as possible and added that he could use assistance regarding the type of language to be implemented on the website. Member Harvey Brooks offered to assist Mr. Johnston in this area.

### **Payne Pulliam Schools**

Ms. Ronnie Payne stated that she was invited to attend today by Member Richard Carson.

### **CVS Caremark**

Member Lena Barkley shared that CVS Caremark will be employing some of the youth for the summer and is still trying to get people with challenges more opportunities.

### **Detroit/Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency**

Member Felecia Simpson reminded members that she announced last month that the agency would move away from being an agency that is connected with the county. She explained that as of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013, the agency will be known as Detroit/Wayne County Mental Health Authority, which means that it will no longer be connected with Wayne County and will be considered a private entity although its funding will continue to come from the State of Michigan. The organization will continue to collaborate and partner with all entities here and work to increase opportunities for persons with disabilities.

### **Jewish Vocational Services (JVSC)**

Ms. Danita Love-Carter explained that she oversees job placement services for the JVS Detroit location. JVS is excited about a new summer youth program that it is beginning in collaboration with MRS and DPS.

### **Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP)**

Chair McNeal shared that BSBP is also working on its summer youth camp program. Statewide, BSBP has about ten programs. Any eligible youth can attend any camp so it is best to visit BSBP's website to find all that is available. BSBP will pay for any Detroit youth that would like to attend Camp Challenge in the Upper Peninsula. BSBP is also working to increase its placements and is looking to its partners to assist in this area.

### **Youth Development Commission (YDC)**

Member Nonzwakazi Hill explained that YDC is really busy gearing up for summer. They will be hosting orientations with BSBP on Thursday, June 13, 2013. Member Hill noted that Connections for Deaf Citizens will not be hosting a program this summer so YDC is looking for a replacement site for these youth. Member Hill does have a couple of entities that she is working with in order to service this population but is asking for suggestions today to assist in placing some of the youth. Member Howard suggested that Member Hill contact her or Member Waller.

Chair McNeal asked that parents be informed that W-2's are not provided for work experience. Discussion ensued that the amounts that youth make will report out to state and federal agencies, but will not affect parents' benefits. Member Hill stated that YDC also offers benefits counseling if needed for youth under the age of 21, and their parents can be referred to them.

### **DISCUSSION: STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THE YEAR-ROUND PROGRAM**

Ms. Nixon explained that DESC is currently negotiating the Year-Round Youth program and is working with five providers. One of the providers is Neighborhood Service Organization (NSO), which is new to the process. Ms. Nixon explained that NSO has a long history of doing great work in the community, particularly on the Northeast side of the city of Detroit. Negotiations are going well but staff is particularly looking at language that includes accessibility for youth with disabilities, asking for specifics on what this will look like in the programs and what providers will do to accommodate this population. Ms. Nixon shared that DESC staff is concerned about the lack of resources needed to support individuals with special needs engage in year-round activities, explaining that MRS, BSBP and others around the table have assisted with summer youth employment. However, the ability to engage youth in the year-round programs has been a challenge. She stated that DESC recently completed a survey from the State of Michigan with at least fifty questions that asked about accessibility for youth with disabilities in DESC's programs. Those questions made staff realize how much work is needed in this area. Having a universal database where systems can talk with each other is a must-have item at this point to assist all in identifying youth that have disabilities and meeting their needs.

Mr. Gayden explained that DESC is reaching out more to individuals with disabilities and has developed a partnership with Drew Transition Center to work with them in the Year-Round-Youth program. This process will be done in two phases. The first phase will address the Summer Youth Program. The second phase is the Year-Round-Youth Program. Mr. Gayden reviewed this program in its entirety and addressed all questions.

Member Felecia Simpson noted that many might not be aware of a program that is available in Wayne County and probably some of the other counties called Project SEARCH. Project SEARCH assists persons with developmental disabilities. Blue Cross Blue Shield partners in Wayne County with this project. Member Simpson shared that Friday of this week they will graduate fifteen individuals from the program. The students are from DPS and all have been working this past year. Member Simpson stated that half of the program is centered on work experience and the other half is focused on classroom experience. Most of the participants were placed with Blue Cross Blue Shield. Member Simpson stated that this is a good pool of students to tap into since they are work-ready. Member Howard shared that Project SEARCH is an MRS program and confirmed that they collaborate with DPS and Blue Cross Blue Shield.<sup>1</sup> Blue Cross Blue Shield has been the employer working with them the past three and a half years. Member Howard stated that there is an application process and MRS has

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<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP) was also involved with MRS and JVS in Project Search.

already recruited for this upcoming year. She asked to keep their participants in mind because they are good employment candidates and that they are being referred to *Michigan Works!*.

Ms. Shawn Burch, Grant Associates, explained that they are currently working on acquiring equipment in training and resource rooms for customers that need additional assistance. Ms. Burch stated that they also have career advisors and account managers that work with employers and customers, and the career advisors' responsibility is to work one-on-one with customers when they come into the centers. They are also responsible for identifying their skills as well as employment interests, and to match them with those opportunities. The account managers' responsibility is to go out into the community and build relationships with employers and sell the skill sets that the customers have. Ms. Burch stated that they are finding this to be a challenge because some employers will say that they will give anyone an opportunity, but then do not.

Over the next couple of weeks, Grant Associates will be hosting smaller recruitment events, orientations and workshops to assist the customers that Grant Associates is trying to sell to employers. Ms. Nixon believes that something should be done to educate employers on the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities.

Discussion continued pertaining to the need to educate employers on persons with disabilities.

Member Lena Barkley stated that CVS Caremark hires persons with disabilities. Member Brooks noted that those working with these persons must make sure that they are sending individuals who are prepared and able to do the job.

Member Daron Calhoun with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) explained that the one call they do get from employers is not whether a person is disabled or not, but whether a person can perform the job with or without accommodations. The fear of the employer is that the person can't perform every function of every job, which then leads to possible discrimination. Employers must understand that a person only has to be able to perform every function of the job they were specifically hired to do. Member Calhoun stated that EEOC trainers will train employers and employees.

Chair McNeal asked Member Calhoun to be the key speaker for the September meeting with brief information on employer do's and don'ts. He agreed he would.

### **OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

The next meeting of the Disability Advisory Council will be held Tuesday, September 17, 2013.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 9:46 a.m.

Submitted by: L'Tanya Clegg