

**State Employment and Training Commission**  
**Disability Issues Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**March 31, 2009**

**Janice Levin Center, Rutgers University**  
**Piscataway, NJ**

**Attendees**

Juanito Chiluisa	Joe Gazzara	Dennis Rizzo
Vito DeSantis	Patty Greg	Javier Robles
Bill Ditto	Jennifer Joyce	John Sinzer (for Dana Egreczky)
John Fig	Lenny Katz	Robin Widing
Harriet Findlay	Tony Langon	
Brian Fitzgibbon	Jody Levinson	
Judith Formalarie	Michele Martin	
Bob Haugh	Ora Raia	
Alice Hunnicutt	Nils Richardson	

**Welcome/Opening Discussion**

The meeting commenced at 12:30 with introductions. Minutes of the last meeting in January were approved by all.

**DiscoverAbility NJ Project Committee Updates**

Michele Martin, who is coordinating the DiscoverAbility NJ Project work teams, provided an update on their progress. She also introduced the Committee to the project website (called a “wiki”) where all progress is being documented. This is available to all Committee members at <http://discoverability.pbwiki.com/>

The site includes all documents being developed for the projects, meeting minutes, etc.

**Open Space Conference**

The OSC Conference is scheduled for May 8, 2009 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Heldrich Center. It is anticipated that 40-50 people will be participating.

The Conference will provide a forum for dialogue among service providers and practitioners about several key issues impacting the employment of individuals with disabilities. The focus will be on identifying potential solutions and ideas to address these issues. The areas of discussion to be explored include:

- *Attitudes, Fears and Myths*--Dealing with attitudes, fears and myths that impact job seekers, families and schools, employers and the general public.
- *Opportunities and Challenges*--New opportunities in and challenges of funding, advocacy, post-secondary education and impacts of technology.
- *Issues in Accessing Employment*--Exploring employment during a recession, transportation issues and working with employers.

A flyer announcing the Forum has been developed and distributed.

A draft schedule has been developed and is being circulated to Subcommittee members who will also be identifying potential discussion facilitators and note-takers for the event.

Logistics are being finalized with Rutgers.

Following the Forum, a brief report will be prepared and disseminated to participants. They will also be given an online survey to complete.

### **Website**

Rutgers conducted research on 22 MIG-funded websites from around the country and presented their findings to the Website Subcommittee. (Note that the report was distributed at the meeting and is also available on the project wiki, URL listed above).

The subcommittee discussed having a website geared toward three primary audiences:

- Individuals with disabilities and their families
- Employers
- Organizations/service providers.

The group has brainstormed a list of potential resources and information to include for job seekers and for employers. They have also discussed strategies for integrating social media such as Facebook, blogs and wikis.

### **Webinars**

WIB Directors and One-Stop Operators were surveyed about their interest in a series of webinars related to employment of individuals with disabilities. The survey and full results are available on the project wiki.

- 25 individuals from 14 different WIB areas responded.

- The following counties responded--AC/Cape May, Burlington, Camden, Cumberland/Salem, Essex, Gloucester, Greater Raritan, Jersey City/Hudson, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris/Sussex/Warren, Newark, Ocean, Passaic.
- There was the most interest in One-Stop-related topics. A few WIB areas were interested in WIB training/support for setting up and maintaining Disability Issues committees.
- Respondents indicated that they would provide staff with release time to attend these webinars.

Based on this feedback, the webinar subcommittee has identified 4 webinar topics to produce for One-Stops:

- Identifying Individuals with Disabilities and Making Appropriate Referrals for Employment
- Serving Individuals with Disabilities in a One-Stop Setting
- Serving Individuals with Learning Disabilities in a One-Stop Setting
- Serving Individuals with Mental Health Issues in a One-Stop Setting

The webinars will be small-group to allow for questions and interaction with presenters. This means that webinars will be presented on multiple occasions. It was suggested that they be organized regionally, as WIBs have developed regional working groups.

Webinars will be recorded for later use, including posting on the DiscoverAbility NJ website to be developed.

The subcommittee is currently in the process of identifying potential trainers. It is also working on logistics, scheduling and marketing.

A catalogue of pre-recorded webinars from other sources will be developed. The subcommittee is also looking at strategies for sharing information about upcoming webinars.

### **DiscoverAbility Conference--October 2009**

Javier Robles reported on progress for the DiscoverAbility Conference for jobseekers and their families being planned for October, 2009.

- Currently the date is set for October 29, with a possibility of extending into a second half day for a career/job fair. The conference will be held at the Hyatt Hotel in New Brunswick.
- Approximately 350 individuals are expected to attend.
- There will be several tracks for participation, similar to the tracks used for the 2007 Conference, emphasizing education/training/employment.
- The Conference Committee is currently seeking sponsorships for the Conference.

## **Gloucester County Proposal**

Bill Ditto shared a proposal that was submitted to him by the Gloucester County WIB's Disability Issues Committee. They are opening an Adult Transitional Career Center on April 2<sup>nd</sup> and are looking for funding to support it. Bill is looking for feedback on:

- Whether or not some funding should be provided for the project and, if so, for what.
- Whether or not Gloucester County's model is a best practice that should be shared with other areas.

While a hard copy was distributed to those present, the proposal will be posted on the DiscoverAbility wiki for committee members to review and provide feedback.

There was a short discussion on how to deal with other proposals and the possible creation of a Funders Subcommittee.

## **Public Service Announcements**

Bill Ditto reported that they are working with a local firm to develop a series of 15 to 30-second spots aimed at job seekers and employers. These will air on NJN.

The PSAs will be produced in both English and Spanish. They will be generic enough for re-use and DHS will own them so that they can be posted on their website and used for other events/activities.

They have discussed a few concepts to utilize, including focusing on one person's story and showing photos of multiple people and situations with a voice-over. The two areas of focus will be to employers and job seekers. The BLN will be asked to assist with the employer focus PSA.

The target date for launch is October, to coincide with Disability Employment Awareness Month and the DiscoverAbility NJ Conference.

Bill will be providing drafts of the spots for the committee to review as they are developed.

## **MIG Grant Application**

Bill Ditto reported that the 2010 MIG grant application is now going into the competitive cycle year and will probably be due in July 2009 for a start date of January 2010.

At the next DI Committee meeting, Bill will be looking for feedback on the projects, strategies, etc. that the Committee would like to see integrated into the upcoming grant application. These activities and projects should be in alignment with the DiscoverAbility Plan goals. While this will become an agenda item for our next meeting, it was suggested that all ideas can be forwarded to DHS prior to that date.

Bill noted that reviewers will be considering what progress has been made previously on the Grant. He also indicated that funds from 2008 are being carried over into 2009 to pay for the October 2009 Conference.

## **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act**

Reports were given on the estimated impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) on the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Human Services, and the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

DVRS will receive approximately \$7.6 million through ARRA. They are waiting for additional guidance from the Department of Education on expending the funds.

The money will be used to fund four programs:

- Currently there is a 25% staff vacancy rate. Approximately 18 temporary staff (qualified rehabilitation professionals) will be hired, at least one for every office.
- Sponsorship of 8 Disability Program Navigators.
- Worker Cooperatives--individuals with disabilities who are cooperating to operate a small business. Currently there are 7 coops.
- For DVRS college graduates, they will create an On-the-Job Training Program for them to reimburse their new employer for their first month of salary. After that first month, the employer can apply for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.

Nationwide, ARRA funding of \$38 million is designated for Independent Living Centers but it is unclear how the funding will be rolled out. Currently there are 12 independent living centers but five are funded through the State with seven funded directly from the Federal Government.

The Commission for the Blind will receive approximately \$1.2 million for New Jersey. The funds will be used for:

- Outreach to consumers and employers, including “Lunch and Learns”
- Employer hiring incentives (considering up to 90 days)
- Internships for college students
- Providing information to the “older blind” population on assistive technology training. They are considering train-the trainers which will also help provide employment to their consumers.

Through DHS, new federal regulations have been developed governing how to access Medicaid funding to cover “mandatory growth.” There is some concern that there will not be enough funding to support expected increases in applications, but they have received some ARRA for additional Medicaid resources.

Judy Formalarie shared a matrix that she developed that includes all employment-related ARRA funding that is coming into New Jersey through all governmental departments. This will be posted on the SETC site and continually updated as new information becomes available.

Youth Corps has indicated that they will be receiving funding and are interested in partnering on a project to serve youth with disabilities.

## **Committee Membership**

Judy Formalarie indicated that Dennis Bone, Chair of the SETC, has asked Jody Levinson and Nicky Gacos to serve as private sector Co-Chairs of the Disability Issues Committee. They have both accepted and will begin serving on April 1, 2009.

The Committee recognized and thanked Brian Fitzgibbons for his work as the past Chair of the DI Committee.

The Committee would like to recruit more consumers to participate, preferably consumers who are not associated with an agency or organization serving individuals with disabilities. All potential names should be submitted to Judy Formalarie.

## **New Business**

Nils Richardson indicated that the Governor's budget shows a \$4 million cut in disability-related programs, which would eliminate over 1,000 jobs in supported employment. This appears, however, to be an oversight that they are working to address.

Harriet Findlay of the JFK Rehabilitation Center reported that they will be holding their 27th annual Career Options Day on April 30. The event is open to the public. They expect approximately 200 people to attend.

Meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

## **Next Meeting**

May 26, 2009-12:15pm --2 p.m.

Janice Levine Center, Rutgers University  
Piscataway, NJ