

DISABILITY ISSUES COMMITTEE MEETING

May 26, 2009

Janice Levin Center, Rutgers University

Piscataway, New Jersey

12:00-2:00

MEETING MINUTES

In attendance:

Juanito Chiluisa

Vito DeSantis

Harriet Findlay

Brian Fitzgibbons

Judith Formalarie

Joe Frattali

Nicky Gacos

Alice Hunnicutt

Joseph Jennings

Jennifer Joyce

Elaine Katz

Jody Levinson

Michele Martin

Nils Richardson

John Sinzer

Robin Widing

Welcome and Introductions

Jody Levinson called the meeting to order at 12:30. The meeting minutes from April Committee meeting were approved by all.

DiscoverAbility Project Updates

Michele Martin provided updates on the DiscoverAbility Projects:

Open Space Forum—The Open Space Forum for service providers was held on May 8 at the Heldrich Center. Michele shared a participant feedback report, which was overwhelmingly positive. She is working with Cynthia Mapp of DDS to put all discussion notes on a wiki to be shared with the participants. Based on feedback, she would suggest planning for additional Forums.

Website Development—User surveys were sent to 4 different stakeholder groups—job seekers, parents and families, employers and service providers. Michele shared a report of the results that includes links to the quantitative data for all the surveys, as well as the additional comments that were received. The major insight from the surveys is that job seekers and parents and families are more interested in using social media and social networking to connect than are the service providers. This is similar to the Open Space forum feedback where providers indicated that they were unfamiliar with most social media tools.

Only 6 employer surveys were returned, which John Sinzer indicated was comparable to the experiences the BLN has had in reaching out for employer feedback. The team is continuing to attempt to reach out to more employers for survey responses.

The Website team will be discussing the results in a call on June 2.

Staff Capacity-building—DDS will be sponsoring 5 scholarships for service providers to attend the Garden State Employment and Training Association conference on June 10-11. Michele is also in the process of gathering a library of online tutorials, webinars, etc. that provide training on issues related to employing individuals with disabilities.

DiscoverAbility 09 October Conference Update

Michele reported that the DiscoverAbility Conference planning team met on May 21 to continue planning for the consumer conference to be held in October. She and Cynthia Mapp also met with the Hyatt staff, who indicated that the original date for the conference was no longer available. The team will be setting a new date in October.

ARRA Plan and Funding for Disabilities Issues/Training/DPNs

Brian Fitzgibbons reported that DVRS is continuing to work on bringing in part-time staff to do job development.

There will be 18 Disability Program Navigators (DPNs)—one for each One-Stop. They are looking at adopting a “counter-triage” approach where they would send individuals seeking labor exchange services back to the Disability Program Navigators for services.

The Centers for Independent Living are submitting plans to the State on their use of ARRA funds.

Judy Formalarie reported that the SETC has prepared a draft modification to the State Plan for the US Department of Labor. The plan was reviewed by the Commission members and has been conditionally approved. It will be put on the SETC website on May 29 for the required 30-day public comment period.

Robin Widing emphasized that the modification is for ARRA funding only—it does not replace the State’s Unified plan. She also indicated that additional information on the DiscoverAbility plan will be incorporated, per feedback from Bill Ditto.

Vito DeSantis reported that the emphasis in ARRA funding for the Commission for the Blind is on services to the deaf/blind community, particularly job development services. They have been meeting with several groups to discuss ways that ARRA funding can be used to provide supports and have also been working with Bill Ditto on integrating the Personal Assistance Program.

Many senior citizens are reporting a need for additional training on assistive technologies and the Commission is planning a program to train seniors to set up their own job opportunities to provide such training. The Commission is also looking at putting together training for Call Centers.

Committee Updates

Alice Hunnicutt reported that the Autism Task Force report is due to come out. They received excellent feedback from Congressman Smith’s aides and the training is continuing. They are recommending that the subcommittee now be disbanded, as it has accomplished its mission.

New Business

Brian Fitzgibbons reported that it is probably time to again do audits of the One-Stops as they are receiving reports that software and equipment are getting old and that they are being under-utilized because staff do not know to use to the technologies.

Nicky Gacos asked about accessibility supports for libraries because they are now seeing many more job seekers. Vito indicated that public libraries had received training a few years ago, so there is a model for this. Robin Widing indicated that 100 librarians will be trained in accessing One-Stop services, WNJPIN, etc., so it might provide a good opportunity to integrate the accessibility training as well. She suggested that Brian speak with Michelle Richardson at LWD to see about coordinating this.

Jody Levinson suggested doing a survey with librarians—including librarians at the Library for the Blind--to find out about needs/issues they're experiencing. Vito will send contact info to SETC so that they can see about sending out surveys or, in some way, getting feedback from them.

John Sinzer reported that the NJ Business Leadership Network (NJBLN) has initiated Disabilities at Work, which is a national program that will acknowledge and reward organizations that hire individuals with disabilities. This initiative is partnering with the "Back the Plaque" consumer initiative to educate people about which companies support people with disabilities. They are making extensive use of social media, such as Twitter and Facebook and report that the majority of the hits to their website are coming from Facebook.

Meeting Adjourned at 1:27 p.m.

Next Meeting:

September 17, 2009 ~ Thursday ~ 12:00 to 2:00
Janice Levin Center, Rutgers University
Piscataway, New Jersey