

Commission for People with Disabilities (COPD)
February 17, 2009
Room 14 Governmental Center/Potomac Building
Minutes

Attendees:

Julie Randall
Susan Erichsen
Charbonnet
Christi Bishop
Sam Brown
Valenzuela
Vicky Brown
Sheral St. Clair
Marie Robinson
Cathy Zumbrun
Jaime Jones

Excused:

Dennis Phillips
Jolanda Campbell

Bill Nicholas
Tomica Scriber

Pam Main
Jennifer Irvin
Paula Andreas
Rocco Aiello

Visitors:

Linda Heisner
Melissa

Dottie Powell
Christina

Call to Order The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm by J. Randall. The meeting minutes were presented and approved.

Financial Update - J. Jones announced that the Department of Human Services had submitted the FY2010 budget. No other financial updates at this time.

Bylaws - J. Jones handed out a copy of the draft bylaws that had been prepared by commission members awhile back. She also met with the Legal Department and it was suggested that we format our bylaws so they are similar to the Human Service Councils. J. Jones also handed out the revised format with the new recommendations for the group to review. S. Erichsen asked if we could change the term of officers. Currently, officers can serve for two years, which the commission feels is not enough time and this could lead to a lack of continuity. J. Randall reported that the resolution is almost 20 years old and instead of just changing the bylaws we need to do a new resolution. J. Randall recommended that we have a group look at the resolutions and revamp them. The commission agreed to table the bylaws until after changes are made to the resolution. S. Erichsen and C. Bishop volunteered to look at the resolution.

Workforce Investment Board - J. Jones informed the commission that a representative from DORS has been appointed to the Southern Maryland Workforce Investment Board. Additional information will be provided at the next Human Services Council meeting.

ADA Coordinator C. Bishop handed out the U.S. Bureau of Labor Force Statistics, which included disability data. Highlighted areas of the report include:

- Unemployment rate for persons with disabilities is about double of persons with no disability
- Unemployment rate for men with disabilities was higher than women with disabilities
- Not included in statistics are people who are in institutions such as prisons, long-term care, prisons, hospital, and active duty armed forces.

J. Randall noted that in the employment to population ratio the non-disabled are employed at a 65%, whereas the disabled are employed at 20%. The numbers are deceiving because out of that 20%, 13% of them are unemployed. S. Erichsen asked if people with disabilities are penalized if they become employed as this could play a role as to why the numbers of people with disabilities employed is lower. D. Powell stated that you would have to earn a significant amount of money before SSI benefits would be cut. When determining benefits Social Security is only counting one

dollar for every two dollars when they start deducting. There are also a lot of work incentives and programs for people to work. S. Erichsen pointed out that perception around the table was that benefits were cut when people started working. M. Robinson stated that even with seminars and trainings available to families about benefits and working sometimes it may take a couple of times to sit down with families to explain how their benefits will be affected. L. Heisner mentioned that there is a program in Maryland through the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene that allows you to pay back in and continue your medical assistance while you work. Additionally, there is supposed to be benefits counselor available in the area to assist with concerns and questions. M. Robinson said that this service is provided through Independence Now, which is located in Silver Spring. S. Erichsen suggested that we invite this group down for Disability Awareness Day and have them set up a table to provide information on this topic.

Disability Awareness Day - C. Bishop passed out the flyers for Disability Awareness Day. The Printing Press has agreed to donate flyers again this year. The following indicates what has been done in preparation for Disability Awareness Day:

- P. Andreas has sent out the letter to the agencies to invite them to attend and participate
- C. Bishop has arranged activities, food, sound system, and volunteers
- C. Bishop has purchased shirts for new members and will be spending the remaining money on giveaways
- P. Main is arranging door prizes

C. Bishop stated that one of the concerns is the lack of tables for the vendors. We may need to ask vendors to bring in their own table. S. Erichsen stated that there had been a previous discussion about asking vendors to pay five to ten dollars, which would cover the cost of renting tables. C. Bishop will follow-up with P. Andreas to see if this had been requested in the letters to the vendors. In addition to Disability Awareness Day, J. Jones is making arrangements with the Board of County Commissioners to have them present the proclamation for Disability Awareness Month on Tuesday, March 17, 2009. During this time the Commission for People with Disabilities will have the opportunity to announce Disability Awareness Day, which is scheduled for Saturday, March 28, 2009. The commission members have also recommended that the Board of County Commissioners participate in a disability awareness activity on the day of the proclamation by conducting their business in wheelchairs for the day. C. Bishop and J. Jones will contact the Public Information Office regarding this request. Additionally, J. Randall will pull employment data and brief the County Commissioners about how St. Marys County is doing. V. Brown agreed that it would be better to do the proclamation and Disability Awareness Day announcement closer to the actual event and that March 17, 2009 appears to be good timing and will be on everyones mind.

DDA Accessibility C. Bishop reports that Rocco Aiello has been in contact with the College of Southern Maryland (CSM) in regards to adaptive programming at the pool; however, there hadnt been any discussion on accessibility to that point. C. Bishop contacted CSM to let them know that as the ADA Coordinator she is available and gave the staff person a website link to the National Center on Accessibility. CSM responded back and assured C. Bishop that they have a national firm involved and is positive that everything will be accessible. J. Randall suggested that we ask CSM to meet with us and to see if we can review the plans. C. Bishop will follow-up. C. Bishop also followed up with St. Marys College regarding the accessibility for the proposed footbridge. St. Marys College replied that accessibility is a top priority for them.

Needs Assessment Gap Analysis L. Heisner reported that the DDA waiting list has grown 159% over the last 5 years in St. Marys County. Currently, there are approximately 500 people on the waiting list for this county alone. There is a website that is a targeted effort by individuals with developmental disabilities and their families to reduce, and eventually eliminate, the Developmental Disabilities Waiting List. You can visit the website at www.endthewaitnow.com to learn more about this effort. L. Heisner also updated the commission members on the Seamless Transition Services grant. This is a two year grant that the school system can apply for and is

based on a national model. M. Charbonnet indicated that this project needs a lot of community support. St. Marys County Public Schools (SMCPS) has completed the needs analysis and has already started the application process for this grant. One of the biggest barriers is the lack of adult service providers and lack of employment opportunities in St. Marys County. This program was successful in Charles County because the schools system recruited adult service providers to provide support and employment development. In Charles County the adult service providers and the school system worked collaboratively. S. St. Clair is concerned that the adult providers will be increasing the number of people they are providing services to but may not be able to find adequate jobs for those individuals. M. Charbonnet added that this is where we need to come in and look at employment opportunities and look at industries other than the traditional food, flower, and housekeeping jobs. M. Charbonnet reported that one of the most underserved disability groups are kids with mental illness. SMCPS is moving forward with the application for this grant. L. Heisner asked if there was anything that SMCPS needed from this commission and D. Powell said that she would know more after the state meeting she was attending on Friday.

New Business - C. Valenzuela introduced herself as a resident of St. Marys County but also chairs the Prince Georges County Commission for Persons with Disabilities. She extended an invitation to commission members to join the Disabilities Alliance. She indicated that St. Marys County is not represented. Meetings are held in Columbia, which might present a problem due to the location. C. Bishop has been receiving e-mails and was aware of the Alliance meetings but due to the location of the meetings it has been difficult to attend. In addition, the St. Marys representative would have to vote under the umbrella of the Board of County Commissioners, which may present a problem since we are an advisory commission. We would have to get approval from our County Commissioners. J. Jones and C. Bishop will look into this and will report at the next meeting.

Next meeting date March 17, 2009 at 4:30 pm.