



**Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Summary Minutes
October 9, 2024**

**** MEETING WAS HELD VIA ZOOM ****

Welcome and Approval of September 2024 Meeting Minutes

Tonya Gilchrist, Chair, convened the meeting. A motion was made to approve the September 2024 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the September 2024 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

Update on Maryland Department of Education, Division of Rehabilitation Service – Adam Travepiece, MA, Program Manager II for Region 6, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)

Website: <https://dors.maryland.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

Former Regional Director Beth Lash was recently promoted to Director, Office of Field Services. Natalie Mitchell is the new Regional Director for Region 6. A new Assistant Superintendent will start October 16.

Adam Travepiece was formerly a Transition Supervisor and was promoted to Program Manager II for Region 6, which serves Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. Several new counselors have also been hired to support Region 6 bringing the total to seven counselors along with two support staff. Samantha McGinley has been hired in a newly created position of Individual & Community Liaison. The position has been created to support providers and consumers throughout the state. She will be going out into the community to talk to providers and providing support to individuals who may be having issues.

The Transition Unit, which was created in 2020 before the pandemic to serve transitioning students in Montgomery County, will be fully staffed by the end of the month. The Unit assists with providing Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) - five specific services designed to help students with disabilities identify their career interests and enhance their awareness of the world of work. The Unit was serving 1,800 PRE-ETS and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) cases between 4 to 5 counselors. The Unit will now have 7 counselors as Governor Moore recently converted several contractual positions into permanent positions. DORS will continue to request additional staff to even out caseloads throughout the state to provide better service to individuals.

Through an Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) grant, DORS has partnered with Montgomery College, Howard Community College, and Prince George's Community College to provide support in getting certification in logistics associates and logistics technicians. Howard Community College also offers externships. DORS is working to refer individuals to this program and provide transportation as well as job search assistance after certification.

A new program available since August is Adult Learning Experience (ALE) - a service for a very specific type of individual that has a specific career goal who may not have experience but want to gain experience in their specified field. ALE is a short-term job opportunity that can be added to the Cooperative Agreement with DORS that will allow those adults that to gain experience in their specific field. Job developers (providers with a Cooperative Agreement) to assist in identifying those job opportunities which last up to 12 weeks. This program can benefit individuals who may have been out of the workforce for awhile and allow them to ease back into working or individuals who are seeking employment in a particular field. DORS is still seeking new providers for this program in Montgomery County.

DORS is also finalizing a new policy that would support individuals with job development and job coaching through a bridge to jobs program. The program would support those individuals with finding a temporary or interim job in order to earn income to support themselves while they also continue in their educational goals. Another new policy would provide non-adaptive computers to individuals throughout the state that do not require a formal assistive technology assessment. This would enable more individuals to further their education as most college or training programs are available online. Each region will begin delivering the first batch of computers starting at the end of the month.

DORS provides more financial support for individuals attending college or training programs. The first 60 credits will be paid at community college rates and any credits after will be paid at state rates. DORS also is able to provide support for room and board. DORS funding for certificate programs or associate of arts (AA) programs shall be at the rate of the community college attended. DORS funding for four-year colleges shall be at the rate of the in-state public college or university attended. Funding for private or out-of-state post-secondary institutions may not exceed the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) in-state rates. As of July 2023, DOR began offering room and board support. Room and board support is available at a private or out-of-state institution, but it's limited to the in-state rates at the University of Maryland, College Park. There are maximum limits that DORS will cover.

DORS currently does not require a family contribution for any services. Individuals will still need to apply for federal student aid (FAFSA), federal Pell grants or need-based grants when attending college. As DORS is federally funded, any financial aid or grants received will be subtracted from what DORS provides. In the state of Maryland when an individual applies for FAFSA, they must list an eligible in-state college to be considered for state grant aid.

TerpsEXCEED is an inclusive post-secondary education program at the University of Maryland College Park that provides Maryland students with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to participate in a college experience for two years, culminating in a certificate. TerpsEXCEED is currently not an approved eligible program through FAFSA, but they are in the process of being approved. The program has been expanding and DORS continues to provide support to those individuals attending through college assistance.

DORS is working to renew their grant/partnership with the University of Maryland's Center for Transition and Career Innovation. The grant assisted with processing PRE-ETS.

DORS continues to provide support to for the Montgomery County Project Search program available through SEEC and IvyMount. DORS supports participants through job coaching at the internship and uniforms, if needed. A new program started at the end of August / beginning of September. Last year's program served 12 individuals between NIH and MCG.

A Transitioning Youth Resource Fair is scheduled for November 10 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the College Living Experience, 401 North Washington Street, Rockville. DORS will be in attendance along with Montgomery County Public Schools, Treatment and Learning Centers, and other providers. Another resource fair will be held in April 2025 at Montgomery College – date to be determined.

College Night event scheduled December 6. Karla Nabors, Montgomery College, will present alongside representatives from TerpsEXCEED, to discuss disability support services.

DORS is working on expanding several training programs currently offered at the Workforce & Technology (WTC) Center and making those programs available throughout the state. For example, a CVS training was offered in the Laurel area, which was attended by individuals from both Montgomery County and Prince George's County. DORS is also looking at expanding the training program into the Eastern Shore. Some training programs will also be offered virtually. Anthony Brown, Maryland Attorney General, toured the WTC a few weeks ago and was able to see all the services offered.

DORS will be creating more informational videos to be posted on their website in order to provide more information to the community throughout the state.

The floor was opened to questions.

- **Is ALE available for those in the workforce already or is it for those in Work-Based Learning Experience (WBLE) program?** It is not as ALE is for adults in the employment or vocational services. Work-Based Learning Experience (WBLE) is for individuals with disabilities that are enrolled in high school or a post-secondary program. If an individual has been able to experience a WBLE transition or able to do multiple ones, then the ALE program may not be necessary for them. Counselors work with individuals to identify specifically what field they want to target and work with them to identify an ALE in that field.
- **What types of internships are available?** DORS will connect an individual to a provider that has opportunities related that individual's areas of interest as well as their end goal for employment.
- **Can the apprenticeships be anything or are there certain apprenticeships that have already been identified?** WTC is looking at communities to identify training opportunities for jobs that are in need. WTC will work with the individual to identify an apprenticeship based on what that individual wants to do. Different apprenticeships will be available depending on the location. Apprenticeships are specific for different industries and individuals will need to apply for those and become eligible. Oftentimes, those businesses will pay for classes for that individual to become certified in that field. Some apprenticeships last for a year while some can be up to four years. It varies by industry.

Anyone with additional questions can reach out directly to Adam at 301-601-1500, Adam.Travelpiece@maryland.gov, or to Natalie Mitchell, Regional Director, at 301-967-7257, Natalie.Mitchell@maryland.gov.

Review of Top Two Policy Priorities

The Commission has developed the two following policy priorities that will be presented to the County Council Health and Human Services Subcommittee on October 16:

1. Transportation Safety & Enforcement Issues: Transportation needs to be accessible and safe so people with disabilities can participate in community life.
2. Increase Accessible, Affordable, Integrated Housing: Locating accessible housing units is a nearly impossible challenge for people who need it.

A concern was raised if recommending the elimination of cycling lanes is an appropriate measure as safe places to cycle can bring positives to our community. The concerns are about crossing the bike lanes safely especially for individuals who are blind or have low vision and cannot see the bicyclists.

Discussion and Completion of the Committee Evaluation and Review Board (CERB) Questionnaire

The CERB questionnaire is due by October 30.

There was a criticism in the comments that this historically this Commission excluded the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities in their agenda. There was a feeling amongst many of the parents that more time was needed to be dedicated to DDA policies. The Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission was established, after recommendation by this Commission, to focus solely on issues of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

There are also concerns that some of the comments made were not accurate, specifically having a Chair and Vice Chair remain in their roles for several years due to the public health emergency and the County's BCC Office having to put vacancy notices on hold which resulted in extended term limits for some Commissioners. Karen Goss, Commissioner, did not think there has been a controlled agenda due to this nor did it impede the Commission's ability to be effective. This Commission exists for all individuals with disabilities and works on policies that apply to everyone. It was noted that sometimes people join the Commission wanting to solve their

individual care plan issues which should be discussed with their case worker. The Commission works on broader issues and reviews policies of Medicaid, Medicare and Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). Also, if there is a service that is provided by the state or federal government that requires more funding, the Commission should be advocating for the state and/or federal government to be providing those funds, not Montgomery County Government.

Betsy will make suggested clarifications to the document and delete duplicate comments.

Chair Updates

Tonya reported last week she attended the proclamation for National Disability Employment Awareness Month presented by County Councilmember Gabe Albornoz. Also in attendance were Steve Riley, Chair, IDDC and Jillian Copeland from Main Street Apartments. Soulful Café is a restaurant there that staffed by individuals of allh disabilities at the Main Street Apartments, 50 Monroe Street, Rockville. Jillian Copeland is the Founder and Executive Director of Main Street in Rockville, Maryland, a first-of-its-kind inclusive, accessible and affordable apartment building and community center serving people of all abilities. View proclamation: www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOCdSctMJds.

Tonya, Commissioner Deborah Rozell, former Commissioner Jackie Simon and Betsy Luecking, Staff, have been meeting with staff from the Department of Housing and Community Affairs and the Department of Permitting Services to discuss improving the accessibility of the Design for Life Tax Incentive Program. A letter is currently being drafted that will include recommendations such as simplifying the online application process so that homeowners can more easily access the program, particularly for the nine accessibility features. The draft letter will be shared with Commissioners once it is completed.

It was noted that this Commission has always been highly regarded throughout County Government and by the County Executive and County Council. The County has enacted several pieces of legislation due to recommendations made by this Commission including brick pavers, Design for Life, zoning text amendments and People with Disabilities and Veterans hiring preference. The Design for Life program has been copied by other jurisdictions (Howard County and Richmond, Virginia).

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission (IDDC) – John Whittle, Commissioner and Liaison to IDDC

IDDC has established two policy priorities for the upcoming year – workforce development and concerns about direct service care workers including adequate training, compensation and retention problems with plans to work with state agencies and public education and community engagement to provide information to the public at-large about disability issues, options and resources.

Next meeting for IDDC is scheduled for Thursday October 17 at 5pm. It will be an in-person meeting held at 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville. It is unclear at this time if members will be able to also call into the meeting. Agenda will be available on their website: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/iddc. The IDDC has voted to meet at least 3 times in person during the upcoming Commission year. A new slate of officers began in September – Steve Riley, Chair, and Jamie Doyle, Vice Chair. Steve served on the Commission on People with Disabilities for six years.

Brief Discussion on Holding In-Person Meetings

It was asked if the County epidemiologist could provide information concerning the new COVID-19 variant as well as provide guidance regarding holding in-person meetings. There is a concern of this Commission holding in-person meetings currently due to some members being immunocompromised. Transportation is also a challenge. It was noted that all Commission members must vote and agree to hold an in-person meeting. The Commission will discuss this issue further at a future meeting.

Updates – Ex-Officio Members, Updates – Commission Members

Denise Isreal, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), reported the [Fairfax Connector Route 798](#) from Tysons to Bethesda started September 16. Weekday rush hour service only, with a total of five

stops - Tysons West*Park Transit Station, Tysons Metrorail Station, Westfield Montgomery Mall Transit Center, Rockville Pike and South Drive (adjoining Medical Center Metrorail Station) and Montgomery Lane and East Lane (Downtown Bethesda). Ride On fare for persons with disabilities and older adults is \$1.40. Denise also reported almost seven miles of bus-only lanes on state roads within Montgomery County will stay in place through at least December as part of an extended pilot project agreement among the Maryland and Montgomery County Departments of Transportation, and Metro. The bus-only lanes along Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road were installed this summer to help move shuttle bus customers along faster during the Red Line construction work.

Public Comments

No member of the public signed up to speak.

Meeting Adjourned – 7:30 p.m.

Attendees

Commissioners Present: Azeb Adere; Shameen Anthanio-Williams; Jennifer Berzok; Tonya Gilchrist; Karen Goss; Tria Gray; Leslie Green Lyles; Samuel Korper; Cindy LaBon; Ricardo Lopez; Jamila Michael-Sobratti; Rebecca Murphy; Deborah Rozell; Richard Shermanski; Mary Simons; Christopher Sinsheimer; Teresa Villani; John Whittle

Commissioners Absent: Felicia Brannon; Christian Navarro; Nina Russell; Jeneva Stone

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Present: Jennene Blakely, Montgomery Parks; Patricia Cochrane, Montgomery County Public Schools; Rebecca Grayson, Housing Opportunities Commission; Candace Groudine, Human Rights Commission; Angelisa Hawes, Montgomery County Public Libraries; Denise Isreal, Department of Transportation

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Absent: Matthew Barkley, ADA Compliance Team; Karen Hochberg, Office of Human Resources; Angela Luskey, Department of Recreation

County Staff Present:

Commission Staff Present: Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison; Carly Clem, Program Specialist II

Public: Andrea Gehrz (Sign Language Interpreter); Daphine Postl (Sign Language Interpreter); Karen Morgret; Francie Gilman; Adam Travelpiece, DORS

Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities November 2024 Meeting and Events Calendar

Full Commission Meeting – Wednesday November 13

6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

Steering Committee Meeting – Wednesday November 20

5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Program Specialist II
Betsy Tolbert Luecking, Community Outreach Manager