



COUNTY OF MERCER
Workforce Investment Board
McDade Administration Building
P.O. Box 8068
Trenton, NJ 08650-0068
Phone: 609-989-6827
Fax: 609-989-6882



Brian M. Hughes
County Executive

Kelvin S. Ganges
Chief of Staff

Andrew A. Mair
County Administrator

Elizabeth Maher Muoio
Director,
Economic Development and Sustainability

Beverly Mills
Director,
Workforce Investment Board

**Mercer County Workforce Investment Board
Disability Issues Committee
Trenton Marriott**

**Minutes from April 8, 2009
9:00 AM**

Present: **Elise Gambino** (Allies, Inc.), Roseann Loforte (Mercer County Board of Social Services), Doris Mesinoff (Mercer County Board of Social Services), Thomas Shaw (Mercer County Office/Disabled), Jeffrey Zeiger (Marriott), Melvin Crawford, (DOL, Division of Voc. Rehab.), Don Tretola (Allies, Inc.)

Staff: Beverly Mills (Mercer County WIB)

Opening/Review of Minutes:

The Mercer County Workforce Investment Board Disability Issues Committee was opened by Acting Chair, Melvin Crawford and introductions were made by attendees.

Committee reviewed minutes from February 5, 2009 meeting - -motion was made by Tom Shaw and was seconded by Doris Mesinoff to accept the minutes as presented.

Mel reiterated our first meeting was devoted to fleshing out the organizational structure of the committee as well as establishing goals and objectives. It is also the Mercer WIBs intent to have strong representation by the private sector to play a key role within the committee.

Nomination of Chair/Vice Chair:

Mel opened the floor to nominations—Bev Mills nominated Elise Gambino for Chair. Elise accepted the nomination and Jeff Zeiger volunteered to work along with Elise as Co-Chair of the WIB Disability Issues Committee. At the next meeting, the committee will formally accept Elise as Chair and Jeff as Co-Chair.

Disability Navigator Ad Hoc Committee:

Mel reported federal funding for the position of Disability Navigator within the One Stop will soon be available. The Disability Navigator, in addition to carrying out their daily function, would act as a point person for the staff. Currently the State has re-authorized funding for this position and the Navigator will receive training through a grant.

The Ad Hoc Committee met to explore roles and functions of the Navigator as to the needs of Mercer County.

Through a survey, the committee was able to determine overall interest by One Stop employees and will recommend to the State and One Stop the Navigator position includes the following criteria:

- Navigator should have an interest and sensitivity in performing their job;
- Navigator will receive appropriate training;
- Support from One Stop is mandatory to carry out functions successfully

Tom Shaw suggested the Navigator should attend the County's Disabilities Council and WIB Disabilities Issues meetings on a regular basis as a means of information gathering.

Rosemary LoForte mentioned that the GA (General Assistance) and TANF (Temporary Assistance to Need Families) communities should also be represented. Many from these populations have documented disabilities that are barriers to employment; by law they have the right to receive One Stop services. The challenge for the system is for the One Stop staff to be skilled at working with this population.

Bev Mills will speak with Liz Muoio and Virgen Velez about who might be a viable candidate for the Navigator position.

Rosemary further mentioned that the prisoner re-entry program will present people in need of this service. The records of prisoners returning to the community will be disclosed so those with disability issues will immediately be referred.

Tom Shaw also discussed the disabled youth currently at the Mercer County Correction Center and how they can be referred to the One Stop for assistance.

Mel suggested the committee address the situation of the Correction Center youth at a later date. Currently there is a pilot project underway in Mercer County involving returning youth from Jamesburg who will be referred to the One Stop and extensively tracked. Adults from the Second Chance Initiative will receive similar treatment.

The second part covered by the Disability Navigator Ad Hoc Committee involved staff training needs and a survey was distributed containing three basic questions. Mel reported receiving a wide range of responses from staff who indicated they would find this training beneficial. The ad hoc committee then explored preferred training programs and formed a basic recommendation that all staff receive training with the intent of enhancing their level of expertise.

Tom Shaw suggested that management be the first to be trained and then staff.

It will be recommended that comprehensive training should be mandatory for all direct service and supervisory staff and will cover topics outlined in the manual entitled, "*Access for All: A Resource Manual for Meeting the Needs of One Stop Customers with Disabilities.*"

Tom made the motion to accept this as a formal recommendation; it was seconded by Rosemary LoForte.

These recommendations will be presented to the full WIB at the quarterly meeting on April 28, 2009.

Infrastructure Committee:

No report at this time.

Bev Mills will follow-up with members of this committee to find out when they plan to meet.

Membership Committee:

No report at this time.

Jeff Zeiger volunteered to host an informal gathering at the Trenton Marriott to expose the community to hiring opportunities, of which they may have been unaware, from within the disabled population. Jeff will contact Michele Siekerka and Ed Kurocka, Chair of WIB Marketing Committee to set something up in the very near future.

Update from Don Tretola:

The Disability Issues Committee welcomed new member Don Tretola, Senior Director of Public Affairs of Allies, Inc.

Don updated the committee on his new position at Allies as a liaison between organizations and departments and how he plans to continue using his numerous years of experience in public affairs. Don stressed the importance of the public “buy in” and how this builds partnerships. He further discussed the importance of serving the veteran population since many are coming back with disability issues.

Rosemary reiterated Don’s point by mentioning many of the vets on General Assistance have disability issues and these groups needs special attention.

New Business:

None at this time.

Next Steps/Priorities:

- Bev will follow up with Infrastructure Committee to find out when they plan to hold a meeting and will also assist in coordinating Marriott gathering with Jeff Zeiger
- Bev will follow through with Liz and Virgen regarding possible candidates for the Disability Navigator position
- Ex-offenders and Veterans will be part of committee focus going forward
- Next agenda will contain formal election of new officers, Ad Hoc Committee reports
- Tom Shaw will try to get someone to speak on re-entry program(s) at our next meeting

Next meeting: Thursday, June 4, 2009 @ 9:00 AM. Marriott, 1 Lafayette Place, Trenton