



Essex County
Workforce Development Board
Zoom 9AM

Minutes from Meeting: February 22, 2024

Attendees: Aleksandra Adamczyk, Michael Andreas*, Cristhian Barcelos*, Dr. Boakye*, Apryl Caldwell, Maureen Clifford, Evanthia Corrado, Martinique Costa*, Damaris Cruz, Bob Diehl*, John Ehret, Keisha Flemming, Joe Hafez*, Amir Hashemi*, Vann Holland, , Jackie Lue Raia*, Waltasia Mansano*, Hilary Mccarron*, Ivelisse Pabon, Jobi Odeneye, Valentina Richardson, Alle Ries*, Maureen Ritchie*, Janine Schaeffer, Rebecca Shulman, Lynn Sternstein, Sabrina Sullivan, Willie Tolbert*, Margaret Tyson*, Howard Weiss, David Weiner*

*WDB members

Minutes from the last meeting in December were approved.

Policy on Individual Training Accounts was approved.

Policy on Youth Requires Additional Assistance was approved.

Policy on Priority of Service was approved.

Welcome and Introduction

Willie Tolbert welcomed everyone to the meeting. He mentioned that we are being joined by Damaris Cruz, who is new person that will be providing us with technical assistance from the Department of Labor.

Director's Report

Howard Weiss stated that they have been working on a reorganization of the Department. There will now be an Office of the Workforce Development Board, which will be a separate Division in the County. Some of the units that are now under the Office of the WDB include MIS, contracting, monitoring, and outreach. Valentina Richardson-Green is now the Director of Training and Employment. As far as the WDB, a number of committees are working on various events. He added that we are a bit late on submitting the local plan and we hope to get that out to you soon for your approval. Also, Federal law requires a MOU be generated and signed by all the partners of the One-Stop System. There was a Zoom meeting with many of the partners in order to coordinate the compiling of information for the MOU as well as a required matrix that indicates what services they provide. There are approximately twenty (20) required partners and we are still waiting for some to return the required information. Also, there are a number of members whose term is up and requires reappointment and we are waiting to be added to the Board agenda. Lastly, he stated that it is a requirement that the WDB approve a number of policies.

There are three (3) today that require approval of the WDB. The three (3) needing approval are Individual Training Accounts, Youth Requiring Additional Assistance and Priority of Service. All of these were sent out prior to the meeting. Regarding the Individual Training Accounts Howard explained that all training is provided on an individual basis. The policy describes the procedures whereby an individual gets into an individual training program. The complaint procedure is also included in this policy. Howard also stated that there is a serious issue with the State's Eligible

Training Provider List, and because of this some people cannot get into programs with a particular school even though it is approved.

A vote was taken on the ITA policy and passed.

Next is Priority of Service, which is in the legislation with regards to who gets priority of the various groups. The groups with priority are Veterans and eligible spouse, recipients of public assistance, low income and those that are deemed basic skills deficient in WIOA. So in the case where we were running low on funding these people would jump to the head of the line.

A vote was taken on Priority of Service policy and passed; Bob Diehl abstained from this vote.

Last is Youth requiring additional assistance policy includes a listing of about fifteen (15) additional barriers that a youth can have and still get served in the youth program. Also listed in the document are the eligibility requirements for in-school and out-of-school youth. Howard added that there is some overlap that you can be considered an adult at age twenty-two and considered a youth up to age twenty-four.

A vote was taken on Youth Requiring Additional Assistance Policy and passed.

Division Report

Valentina Richardson-Green stated that since she is new, she has been meeting with staff and Howard to review current operations and looking at some potential initiatives and ideas. They are looking at new ways of getting the information out there for the services they provide.

Industry Partnership

Jobi Odeneye stated that he did not have anything to report on at this time.

Committee Reports:

Business & Economic Development Committee Report

Bob Diehl stated that the committee has been working with the Disability Committee on a project that is gaining a lot of momentum as there was a subcommittee meeting at the beginning of the month. They are in the process of putting together a program with four (4) or five (5) speakers and go through the various topics regarding employing individuals with disabilities. It is the intent that it will help to alleviate any fears about hiring people with disabilities. We are in the process of identifying speakers and putting together a program. The hope is to get approved for continuing education credits. Willie Tolbert suggested reaching out to SHRM, which is a HR organization that gives training on different HR subjects.

Apryl stated that in planning for the Summer Youth Program she is finding that it is difficult in connecting youth with disabilities to employers. She is suggesting that for the panel discussions that they include discussion regarding youth. She added that if we need someone from the Youth team, she would be willing to have them involved.

Disability Committee

Rebecca stated that she is pleased to be collaborating with Bob with this training. She added that when you are talking about employing people with disabilities it starts as students, whether it's starting as unpaid or opportunities when students are still in school for internships and hopefully moving them into permanent employment. She stated that the plan is to be more general by talking about tax incentives and other kinds of OJTs that are available for individuals specifically with

disabilities. There are OJTs offered through the Department of Labor, but the DVRS has their own that employers might be able to benefit them.

Rebecca added that the committee hosted the Employer Recognition Event breakfast in the fall, and it is great to see Joe from Halal guys now on the WDB because he was one of the award recipients and she stated that we really appreciate all the hard work that he does in terms of incorporating people with disabilities into his workforce. Joe thanked Rebecca for the recognition and stated that if there is anything he can assist with especially concerning how employers can have more employees with a disability and what some of the difficulties that he has had in the stores with managers and employees from the part of diversity and how to deal with certain situations.

Rebecca also mentioned that the committee is working on a training opportunity for the One-Stop staff. The topic will be dealing with difficult people. Maureen Ritchie, Co-chair suggested that we reach out to the Mental Health Players, from the NJ Mental Health Association, for training in April. David Weiner suggested that the focus not only be on the mental state of the respective clients or individuals but also upon looking inward to the organizations and what barriers or problems that they put forward that might precipitate an adverse reaction from a client. He added that there are things that can set a person off such as not getting benefits for months and stuff like that.

Literacy Committee

Lynn Sternstein stated the Literacy Committee met on February 5th and Howard proposed two (2) new initiatives for the committee the first is a Literacy Symposium, to be hosted along with North Jersey Partners, which would be panel discussions about various literacy topics and issues. The second is a Refugee Symposium, as a result of the large influx of Haitian Refugees into New Jersey there are a lot of questions, and a large impact on the literacy programs and other partners like the welfare system. Both events will be in person and the group is just starting the planning stage. Also, later in the year the group hope to hold another Meet & Greet. In addition to this all the literacy providers have classes running. There have been several IETs going on in the county as ECC has completed their CNA Training and approximately fifteen (15) students are already working. JVS is about halfway through their combined ESL and Pharmacy Technician Training with thirteen (13) students. There are also Microsoft and Google IETs going on and Home Health Aid available in the county.

Welfare to Work Committee

David Weiner stated that his members are experiencing an influx of Haitian immigrants and there are not enough interpreters the speak Creole. He added that the Commissioners approved vendor contracts. Howard added that we are going to be working on the RFP for the coming year that starts July 1st. David stated that there is a lot going on in Welfare and that there should be someone at these meetings that represents DFAB.

Youth Investment Council (YIC)

Alle Ries stated that the Youth Investment Council last met on February 8th, as they had to postpone the January meeting. She mentioned that we are just getting started with SYEP, and we will have the Summer Youth Program again this year. Last year the Summer Youth Program ran with over two hundred (200) kids. It was a very successful program, with good responses generally to the questionnaire. The committee is working on putting together a resource guide, as it came up that there are a lot of partners who are providing programmatic services for the kids, and that there might be opportunities to get classes for free.

One Stop Committee

Howard stated that the One Stop Committee has been meeting every month.

There was a discussion regarding having Everett Kilgo present at the next meeting on the Carpenter's Union and the apprenticeship programs.

Howard added that there are two (2) new committees based on the State's governance policy. The two (2) committees will both provide oversight. The first is a Programmatic Oversight and the second is a Fiscal Oversight Committee. Members asked to serve on this committee do not have a conflict of interest. The committees will be overseeing the operations including the contracts under WIOA, they are going to review the work of the staff that does the monitoring of those contracts. They will also be charged with monitoring the One-Stop system, so they will be meeting with staff that is producing reports on the works of the various partner agency organizations. Financial reports from the fiscal office will also be available. He added that he is excited to launch these two (2) new committees.

Apryl Caldwell wanted to add that the Essex County Job Fair is scheduled for May 30th at Essex County College. Rebecca mentioned that they have some funding and perhaps can provide resources or something separately but would like to connect with someone to discuss a way that they can participate in the Job Fair. Apryl stated that she and Mary Alexander will be available to talk offline. Valentina Richardson-Green added that there is a layoff notice for one hundred thirty-six (136) people and that maybe they can hold a recruitment event for those potential dislocated workers that will be coming out starting in February 29th thru May. Rebecca stated it is something that they can discuss. Willie stated to get Evanhia involved and she stated that she could do a response team presentation and to give her a call. Rebecca added that if any of the individuals that are getting laid off have disabilities Maureen and her team at DVRS have a whole network of other resources that might be able to assist them.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by

Janine Schaeffer

NEXT MEETING DATE: April 25, 2024, 9am