



MEANINGFUL CAREERS COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

March 28, 2023

1:30 – 3:00 P.M.

Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council
3839 North 3rd Street, Suite 306, Phoenix, Arizona 85012

A committee meeting of the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (ADDPC) was convened in person March 28, 2023. Notice having been duly given. Present were the following members of the Meaningful Careers Committee, guests, and staff.

Committee Members Present

Melissa Van Hook, In person
Monica Cooper, Telephone
Erik Jensen, Telephone
Kristen Mackey, Telephone
Nathan Pullen, Telephone
Wendy Parent-Johnson, Telephone

Guest and Staff	Committee Members Absent
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Andrea Benkendorf, Vocational Rehabilitation, Telephone
Allison Cohen Hall, UMASS Boston, In Person
Oliver Lyons, UMASS Boston, Telephone
Ana Nunez, AZ Dept. of Education, Telephone
John Shepard, UMASS Boston, Telephone
Jean Winsor, UMASS Boston, In person
Marcell Crane, Grants Manager, In person
Michael Leyva, Contracts/Grants Coordinator, In person
Jon Meyers, Executive Director, In person
Jason Snead, Research & Communications Specialist, In person

J.J. Rico
James Rivera

A. Welcome & Introductions

Chairperson Melissa Van Hook welcomed everyone to the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (ADDPC or Council) Meaningful Careers Committee meeting. The meeting was called to order at 1:36 pm. Roll call and participant introductions were completed.

B. Review of November 3, 2022, Meeting Minutes

Melissa Van Hook asked members if they reviewed meeting minutes and if there were any corrections.

Motion to approve the minutes with the correction was made by Erik Jensen; seconded by Monica Cooper. The Motion carried.

C. Vocational Rehabilitation Study Share Information on Interviews and Findings

Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) team members Jean Winsor, Allison Cohen Hall, and Oliver Lyons shared information on their findings to date, qualitative data collection, and outreach to families and individuals. They also provided an overview of the study which is a comprehensive review and analysis of Arizona Vocational Rehabilitation program regarding successful employment outcomes for transition-aged youth with I/DD. They are using a mixed method approach including:

- Secondary data analysis
- Policy and practice document review, and
- Data collection from stakeholders.

The ICI Team shared a PowerPoint presentation that featured the following highlights:

Findings to Date – Arizona’s Strengths

- Guidance documents for professional staff
- Emerging use of data between DDD and RSA
- MOU between RSA and DDD regarding employment
- Dedicated and passionate staff and management
- School to work programs in multiple areas
- Transition in Arizona has been studied through multiple lenses over the past 10 years

There is strength at VR, DDD, and ADE. RSA acknowledged they have fallen off due to COVID. The MOU between RSA & DDD regarding employment is prescriptive. VR has been very helpful securing interviews, most recently with Buckeye Pre-ETS.

Findings to Date – Areas for Improvement

- Policy documents do not assume everyone can work, i.e., Strong focus on exceptions to employment
- Focus on “problem identification practices” as opposed to “barrier reduction practices”
- Training needs: state agency, provider, school, and family
- Guidance about age to begin transition planning (16 vs. 14 vs. earlier)
- Resources for individuals and families to support informed choices
- Pathway to RSA and Pre-ETS for youth who are not identified by schools
- Guidance on why youth who qualify for DDD should also work with VR
- Limited quality assurance practices for school to work contracts
- Pre-ETS providers availability, quality, skills to serve youth with I/DD, etc.

COVID has impacted Arizona's services on every level – from service providers relationships, to staffing, to family expectations for services – the pandemic has magnified longstanding issues.

There are opportunities for local innovation. Research shows that starting early increases expectations and outcomes. It should start at 14 yro. Recommendations are focused on VR but must include the other systems as well. Need to look at the labor market and labor trends. Customized employment training was requested in interviews. Some families are overwhelmed going through one system – how can they work with another system such as DDD?

Development of Recommendations

- What is the process to support and monitor that changes occur?
- How have you implemented recommendations from previous reports?
- How can we apply those strategies to our current findings?

There was discussion on how the Report can be disseminated widely, read, and recommendations implemented. The Report cannot sit on a shelf and there must be a concerted effort to utilize leadership from agencies to implement recommendations. Must find a way to include youth in the process of sharing information. Recommendation was made to utilize social media to share report and encourage stakeholders to support implementation of recommendations.

Qualitative Data Collection

- VR staff and management (current and former VR staff)
- Secondary transition specialists
- Providers including Pre-ETS providers
- School to Work program staff at schools
- Stakeholders recommended by Council
- Need to interview Youth with I/DD
- Need to interview Family members

ADDPC staff mentioned they will attend Resource and Transition Fairs, and Autism Expo and encourage individuals and family members to share their VR experiences. ADDPC will also distribute recruitment announcement through social media. VR was asked if they may make an announcement to its clients to participate in interviews. Also need to interview Pre-ETS providers.

Barriers Identified by Interviewees

- Lack of awareness that they have engaged with VR
- Limited study timeframe (2020 – 2023).

Assistance with Outreach to Families and Individuals

- Informational flyer shared with all interviewees
 - Flyer available in both English and Spanish and interviewees asked to share with their networks
- Amended project budgets to offer \$25 Amazon gift card to individuals and families members (1 per household)
- Featured in the Self-advocacy Solutions Newsletter (Arizona specific)
- List of AZ based family and self-advocate groups developed
- ICI asked for assistance networking with groups on following list
- ICI asked what other research methods to recommend?

AZ Facebook Groups

- Foundation for Blind Children – 6.9k members
- Autism parents of AZ – 6k members
- Down Syndrome Network of Arizona – 4k members
- AZ Autism Parent Support – 2.5k members

AZ Facebook Groups (continued)

- AZ Autism Community – 2.3k members
- ACCEL – 2.1k members
- HOPE Group – 1.9k members
- Family Involvement Center – 1.8k members
- STARS AZ – 1.6k likes
- Families with Special Needs in AZ – 1.2k members
- Developmental Disabilities in Arizona – 1.2k members
- Journey with Us: AZ parents with High Need Kids – 111 members

D. Call to the Public

No members of the Public were present.

E. Adjourn

Chairperson Melissa Van Hook adjourned the Meaningful Careers Committee Meeting at 3:00 pm