

Minutes of MOU Core Partner Meeting of November 15, 2019

Attendance sheet available upon request

Meeting called to order at 9:38 by D. Ramos

D. Ramos opened the meeting with introductions since some attendees were new to the group or sent as a representative on behalf of their organizations.

Agenda item: Career Pathways Working Group report

J. Daniels started with a review of the Career Pathways working group. James stated that initially they thought the assessment would be straightforward but quickly found it was quite the opposite. He felt the traditional career pathways were now different due to environment and attitudes. An example he used was in the marine fishing industry a person would start at deckhand, move to mate and then potentially captain and even boat owner. However, now employees, especially millennials, were not going up to the next level and instead of going to the mid-level they leave the organization or even change careers. The working group thought that conducting a survey would be one means to identify better pathways. The group also identified issues with language, culture, and education and looked into options for including this in pathways.

The group had an overall discussion about the health care pathway in relation to CNAs and a direction for that path. Concerns arose about LPN versus RN and that most would choose the RN bachelor's path. Another concern was that it seemed the LPN field was being phased out, and only available in a nursing/rehab facility environment.

J. Oliveira stated that LPN jobs should not be counted out, and that they had been saying LPNs would be phased out for years. Jim cited an example of this attitude back in 1988. He also noted the regional voke school still offered an LPN program. He stated that the concept of pathways was to provide multiple entry and exits in a particular field in increments. For example, a CNA job is not necessarily an end but a means to transform to other health related health occupations such as Speech therapists, Occupational or Physical Therapist and even imaging fields. It was a matter of motivation and counseling.

R. Vitello stated that there were interventions for the educational components of career pathways, some non-credit, and some online options such as English as a second language. Robert also offered to sign on as a member of the Career Pathways Working group and will be added to their roster.

D. Ramos noted that numerous nursing homes were closing and the trend seemed to be high-end assisted living places opening. The group agreed and briefly discussed the issue and its implications.

C. Alves asked if Spanish as a second language may also be a means for building skills development. The group discussed its potential. Carrie Irujo of UMass Dartmouth noted that they had offered some Spanish 105 courses but participation was not strong and it never really got off the ground.

J. Daniels noted they would like to survey different local industries and get a better understanding of how pathways have changed. The greatest concern was to create a pathway for the "working poor" so that they don't become disappointed think they are not able to move in that direction. They would also look into Chamber involvement in assisting with the survey. J. Daniels suggested this be explored a little further and brought back to the next meeting.

Agenda item: Transportation Working Group report

J. Oliveira noted that the first group meeting was a good one and he was glad to have Eric Rousseau on board. Transportation has been an age-old issue but things have changed since the mid-eighties and there are a lot more options.

E. Rousseau outlined MassDOT grant opportunities they are pursuing including a workforce grant to do express service between New Bedford and Fall River. Currently the ride is 70+ minutes on regular routes and if they can get an express route it would be 25 minutes cutting the travel time by 35 minutes. Eric outlined how they are working the grant applications in order to get the best possible results in funding. He also discussed Sunday routes and that currently there was only demand response service available. He noted a survey they had conducted and that for the holiday service on July 4th 2,500 people used the service. He felt this was a strong indicator of the need for those that would use it.

J. Oliveira noted that MassHire submitted a letter in support of SERTA and these services and other groups like the Chambers and South Coast Health did also. He thought this would evolve into to a distribution list to for further support between organizations in legislative lobbying.

R. Vitello noted he would love to see an express to BCC and offered to also put in a letter out in support of future services.

E. Rousseau agreed and noted that the New Bedford BCC campus was only 1 ½ block from the terminal. In regard to the workforce not all dollars were allocated from MassDOT and some were federal moneys with challenging strings attached. He also noted the local delegation has been very supportive.

J. Oliveira stated transportation issues should be made global MassHire Workforce Board issue across the state and with Eric as president of the RTA they could be proactive with legislative issues and lobbying for it with all the workforce areas involved. The career center is providing needs assessments. The Economic Development Council has talked about engaging employers in the NB Business Park. There is also a potential for a possible workforce board transportation forum to bring everyone together and have a substantial conversation.

Agenda item/Guest Speaker: Carl Alves, PAACA – “Homeless Population of the Southcoast/New Bedford”

Purpose: How to better assist our populations in need.

Carl discussed the topic of homelessness and it was also noted that he was a MassHire vendor for out-of-school-youths.

Carl noted the Greater New Bedford Homeless Service Providers network (GNBHSPN) was made up of 40 organizations and met monthly to support homelessness. He noted that homelessness had many facets and it was estimated that on any given night 40 to 60 people in the area were unsheltered with another 300 to 400 in shelters or transitional housing and the numbers were increasing. Additionally there is more need for assisted living because the elderly population is growing. Affordable housing is also needed and not attainable for those making only \$15 an hour. Additionally the current administration does not have the appetite to address the issue. New Bedford Housing is doing a great job but can only do so much.

Carl went on to ask “what can we do?” He stated we could be assessable and show them a pathway to earn some money. Once the person can identify that they can do so they can move up. The ability to make money

needs to be lined up with the person's ability and motivation. In some cases it could be a stipend for maintenance or janitorial work.

Every January they conduct a "point in time" count of the homeless in the area with a census-like outreach program.

Other contributing issues include behavioral health, mental health, and addiction.

A success of the GNBHSPN is that in the category of veterans is at a functional zero. This means that every vet in need has the opportunity to receive help. The group is trying to get this status for the homeless family's category as well.

The issue is complex and frustrating. For example at the St. Killian's shelter for youth aged 17-22 there is a constant flow of homeless with gang related, substance abuse, and family issues. It can be very time consuming from a structured stand point. Time needs to be taken to create opportunities to develop relationships.

Other issues include losing jobs to automation. Also SSI is difficult to access. Affordable housing is limited and rents are rising. Another issue is housing for sex offenders.

Currently there is an outreach team that responds to homeless encampments in the area – there are several in New Bedford – the city tries to help but some people are resistant. There are also a number of area organizations and volunteers for area shelters with additional beds activated during cold weather.

Providing work is another challenge. People would work with the right opportunities but a 9 to 5 job doesn't always cut it. Homeless can also be resistant the challenge of how to get a job. Even proof of identification can be an issue.

It is important to highlight success stories and incremental changes make a difference.

J. Oliveira noted Carl's presentation was great and that James Daniel was on the board of the GNBHSPN. He hopes to continue to gain understanding on how this use this partnership to better assist with the issue.

Agenda item/Guest Speaker: Kathleen O'Neil, Hearing Officer (on behalf of Wendy Savary), Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) – "Training Opportunities Program (TOP)/Section 30 for UI Claimants" – How to better assist our populations in need.

Purpose: How to better assist claimants.

In order to file a claim for training the application must be printed out and then the claimant completes part A and the training provider completes parts B or C.

The group had a general discussion about how every step in the process could create issues because understanding the process was difficult, such as the training program selected had to be preapproved and the provider needs to be on the "eligible" list.

Kathleen presented a handout that outlined "how to" for the process and noted sections that were useful as resources in completing applications.

She stated people would want to participate in section 30 because they can receive up to 26 weeks additional unemployment benefits for approved training programs and that they are excused for the work search component of receiving benefits. It was also noted that the DUA or the Career Center's do not pay for the training. Though the career center and training providers can assist with securing financial assistance/aid as needed.

C. Alves asked what the most successful training outcomes were and was noted that some programs had up to 70% placement.

General discussion continued outlining issues such as dislocated workers not understanding the timeline and then coming in to apply last minute. Applications need to be submitted a minimum of 2 weeks before the program that is identified as eligible by Section 30 and then has to be approved in advance of the claimant participating.

K. O'Neil said that new regulations have made it a bit easier to understand.

The TOP program is outlined when claimants apply for unemployment. They are also sent written info and it is reviewed in the RESEA seminar, but people still don't seem to understand the availability and do's and don'ts

J. Oliveira suggested this be made a topic for one of the WBSM/Fun 107 MassHire Monday broadcasts which are done once a month.

Other Items:

J. Oliveira shared a pamphlet from MassHire Brockton highlighting their new "Move Maker" (Mobile Occupational & Vocational Education) vehicle noting he would like to have something similar for our career center.

Next meeting:

Friday, January 17, 2020 10:00 – 11:30 MassHireNB Career Center 618 Acushnet Ave NB

Adjourned at 11:14 am