Maine Statewide Independent Living Council

Minutes

May 26, 2021

Members Present: Cheryl Peabody (Chair), Person with a Disability; Darcy Gentle (Vice Chair), Wabanaki VR Program Director; Diane Frigon, Regional Manager, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI); Samantha Fenderson, Assistant Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR); Jessica Cyr, Person with a Disability; Stephanie Desrocher, Program Manager, Benefit Counseling Services, Maine Medical Center (BCS-MMC).

Members of Public Present: Julia Endicott, Disability Rights Maine (DRME); Julie Hovey, Independent Living Specialist, Alpha One; Karen Mason, Associate Director, Office on Aging and Disability Services (OADS).

Members Absent: Lee Glynn, Person with a Disability; Trish Thorsen, Long Term Care Ombudsmen Program (LTCOP); Tom Newman, Executive Director, Alpha One.

Acceptance of Minutes: Correction to the April minutes: Stephanie and Tom were present initially but due to technical difficulties, they were not able to stay for the entire meeting. The minutes were accepted with this correction.

Financial Updates: Everyone received the financial report. There were no questions regarding the report. The Council is moving toward having all the financial information on the OneDrive. Time was given to discuss the bank account. Maine SILC needs to take the former Executive Director (Beth Mogan) off the account. The Council agreed that someone would be added as a temporary signer until the new Executive Director is in place. Stephanie agreed to be the temporary signer. The Council approved removing Beth and adding Stephanie to the bank account (on a temporary basis).

SPIL Updates: A question was asked about Goal 1.3 which deals with providing education and advocacy materials to Maine communities. Membership tools can be used in educational and advocacy goals. As Maine SILC builds membership, they can prepare brochures to give in Maine communities on specific topics, such as: vaccination information or economic self-sufficiency information.

Bylaws: It was noted that the Maine SILC bylaws state that a person must be a Council member for a year before holding an officer position. The Council agreed that an amendment would be made to say that any appointed member who has been participating in Maine SILC activities for one year will be able to fill an officer position. This is being done due to low Council membership.

Committee Updates: Commities have not met largely due to waiting to get the new Executive Director in place.

Activity Table Updates: Cheryl reminded Council members of the importance of completing the Activity Tables for each month.

NCIL Conference: Cheryl reported that the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) conference will be virtual again this year. Agendas and registration were not available as of May 21st. Cheryl also asked that anyone who is interested in participating in the virtual conference to tell her know ASAP so she can register people.

Annual Training: Council members agreed that the annual training will be held on September 22. It will be a hybrid – in-person, as well as, via videoconferencing. Some suggested topics were: transportation issues, member recruitment and NCIL summary updates. Council members will check the Survey Monkey results from last year to determine specific transportation issues.

General Updates:

Julia shared that there is a workforce transportation pilot in Aroostook County.

Karen shared some information regarding the American Rescue Plan grant. This grant is for Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS). It revolves around keeping people in their communities. The grant would be for $75,000,000 and can be used through March of 2024. Proposals must be submitted to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services by mid-June.

Stephanie shared that MaineCare is starting to close services to some individuals incorrectly. She said system changes are needed so agencies are communicating with each other better. She reported a few cases where the individual was on HCBS waivers but where closed despite this due to poor communication between agencies.

Stephanie shared the Benefits Counseling Servies will soon have new application packets. She will share this with the Council as soon as the packet is up and running.

Stephanie shared that there will be Benefits Navigation Training offered in June and August. BCS-MMC will also be offering some webinars.

Stephanie shared the Federal grant for BCS-MMC wil up at the end of June. Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont Community Work Incentive Counselors (CWIC) will be working as a team. BCS-MMC should hear about the grant by the end of June.

DBVI SUMMER PROGRAMS 2021

\* Life Camp –a program for five high school students. The focus is on job exploration and will include tours of different job sites. Focus on skill building activities that increase confidence and independence in all areas of their lives.

\* College Prep – This year the program will be three weeks in length, from July 6, 2021 — July 23,2021.  Utilizing a ‘pod,’ our core group of students who are all blind or visually impaired will live in housing on or near the University of Maine campus. A full-time resident director (RD) will be on site and resident assistants (RA’s) who are also blind or visually impaired will be available as mentors.

Students will be able to select from two different courses to take for credit or audit, utilizing the UMaine Aspirations program for current high school students.  Staff will be working with you in areas that will help you both experience college life and assist you in mapping out your college goals and plans more clearly and comprehensively. This program’s primary focus will be to work with students to learn and practice blindness rehabilitation skills necessary to be successful in a college setting including orientation and mobility, assistive technology, accessing academic and community resources, and career exploration. Most importantly, students will be sharing this experience with other students who are also visually impaired.

\* No Barriers – 3 day experiential training for students who are blind and visually impaired.  Led by ASPIRE, a non-profit organization in Michigan, which will provide an educational experience empowering students to overcome barriers and ultimately share that light with others.  Sessions include group discussions, physical challenge activities to build trust and confidence and skills that build independence.

Sam shared that DVR has completed two “Employer Spotlights” where Apprenticeships are highlighted. Employers share hiring practices, various jobs, soft skills and growth opportunities in the company.

DVR is also offering the Step Up program which is a college prep program for individuals on the autism spectrum. Summer employment is a large focus right now which includes paid work experiences, job tours, informational interviews. There have been several webinars over the last couple of months for VR Transition clients to hear about Gaming, Fashion Designing and Agriculture.

Sam reports there are several RCII vacancies. All job postings are on Maine.gov, please share.

Julie shared that Alpha One has submitted a proposal to the Administration on Community Living (ACL) for a grant so they can use some Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds to educate the public on getting the COVID vaccination.

Alpha One hired two new Independent Living Specialists.

The WVR program converses with Janet May and discusses how the WVR program can refer clients to the Step-up program. We are also discussing the needs of the Native transition youth and possibly designing something for Native youth.

WVR is scheduled to outreach to all of the tribal communities and attend all health fairs.

WVR is slowly going back to face-to-face meetings, although still doing virtual meetings if necessary.

WVR is collaborating with another tribal program to provide diversity training and other necessary pieces of training to help our community and collaborating agencies.

The next meeting is June 23 from 10:00 – 12:00.

Meeting adjourned at 11:58a.m.