METRO REGIONAL QUALITY COUNCIL Meeting Minutes
Friday, February 14th, 2025 from 9-11am ♥

The Regional Quality Councils shall:
1. Support efforts and initiatives that drive overall systems and social change to promote inclusion of people who have disabilities in the state of Minnesota
2. Improve person-centered outcomes in disability services; and
3. Identify or enhance quality of life indicators for people who have disabilities.

Meeting Attendance

Attendees: Mohamed, Lynn, Rod, Cassie, Annelise, Robin, Judi Marie, Yue Wu

Staff Attendees: JoAnn, Sophie, Caption, Kerri

Meeting Overview

1. Introductions

Meet Annelise, program coordinator from Dakota County who is replacing Chelsea.

2. RQC Guidelines

A group of RQC staff and council members including members from the MRQC got together a couple times a month to rewrite the RQC Guidelines and make needed changes. The first draft is complete and ready for review. See attached document.

Changes to Guideline highlights:

- Using people first and identity first language throughout the document
- Addition of "working towards change through actions" to the value section. This addition would explain further actions taken to enact change.
- Within Goals- added links to the RQC statutes and the work plan to promote transparency and make them available to those who wish to read them.
- Being careful using words such as "diversity and inclusions" when applying for grants that receive federal funding especially during the current federal administration. These words have become trigger words which can cause grants to be delayed or denied. Agencies big and small like Hennepin County and Saint Thomas University are redrafting their grant applications.
- Geographic areas- includes which counties partake in each RQC.
- Membership- defined by the contract and includes who is being represented in the council. We encourage people with lived experiences and people from diverse backgrounds to join. We recognize members might have intersecting identities and may overlap with other demographics.
- Meetings and Expectations- soften the language around this since the RQCs isn't a board and can be more flexible to better serve the needs of its members and councils.

- Members are encouraged to partake in workgroup activities and work in teams.
- Members shouldn't speak on behalf of the whole council.
- Council members are the ones who vote either during meetings, virtually or electronically.
- Committees- created to serve a specific function and consist of people appointed by the councils. The MRQC doesn't have any committees yet but other councils do.
- Cochairs- help facilitate meetings and create meeting agendas. Cochairs allow leadership opportunities for members. The MRQC doesn't have cochairs either.

3. Workgroups Updates

- **Culture of Safety Workgroup**

  This workgroup meets separately outside of monthly council meetings. They meet the second Thursday of each month from 1-3pm.

  Their next meeting is **Thursday, March 13th from 1-3pm.**

  Join Zoom Meeting
  https://arcminnesota.zoom.us/j/87931714598?pwd=J3UWuLFrAlr1mSVbNZFGayJ3Gwwnlx.1

  Meeting ID: 879 3171 4598
  Passcode: 116521

- **Staffing (DSPs & PCAs) Shortage Workgroup (Kerri)**

  This workgroup meets separately outside of monthly council meetings. They meet the fourth Thursday of each month from 11am-12:30pm.
  The next meeting is **Thursday, February 27th from 11am-12:30pm.**
  Join Zoom Meeting
  https://arcminnesota.zoom.us/j/87154192462?pwd=aDE2YnBUcVR1S2dvc0NzOUpFWCt5dz09
  Meeting ID: 871 5419 2462
  Passcode: 266371

4. Other Things to Share & Reminders

5. Break Time

Employment Workgroup

Guest Speaker: Jeff Daiker from Scott County

Jeff works as a supervisor of adult disability case management services in Scott County and focuses on waiver coordinated services especially in employment and also acts as a liaison. He has been working in social services for 30 years and 13 years in Scott County.

Scott County Disability Services:

- Promote pwds to be employed.
- Provide age range case management for their internal management team where they separate people into groups according to their age. (17 and older, 17 and younger, and seniors). This allows case managers to become more specialized thus more knowledgeable in the age group they are assigned to serve.
- Hold quarterly meetings inviting many service staff like VSR, providers, and county case managers to give updates, talk about challenges faced, build relationships with one another and form collaborations.

- Conduct monthly surveys using survey monkey to ask questions to employment providers. Surveys include questions asking about the services provided, staff availability and waiting list status. The responses they receive help case managers know more about providers, their services and staff.
- Share info and promote the Employer Reimbursement Accommodation Fund.
- Provide job coaching services from SILS-ES (Semi-Independent Living-Employment Support) funds resulting in the creation of the SILS-ES. Providers are reimbursed $52/hour to provide employment coaching services. The SILS-ES budget is 85% state funded and 15% county funded.

Topics of Discussion and Responses:

- **15 minute billing code**
  A 15 minute billing code is used by providers to bill employment support job coaching services under waiver services. This code impacts provider's abilities to find staff to preform job coaching services. Many providers can't find staff who have similar schedules as the consumers they serve. Many consumers don't work 40/hour week jobs. They tend to work jobs that have unpredictable, infrequent and inconsistent schedules.
  Suggestions: Propose an idea to change the 15 minute billing code to a daily billing code that is tiered depending on a consumer's employment service needs and hours
- **Providers need more hands on support**
  Hennepin County has a lot of providers interested in providing adult day services but not employment services due to the lack of knowledge and experience working in employment services .Providers expressed they need more training on how to provide culturally specific services and also the different levels of employment services and customized employment services available. Employment services are in high demand but there aren't enough staff to provide the services.
  Suggestions: How about offering mentorships to providers and staff so they can learn from more experienced staff workers?
  Responses: Jeff isn't knowledgeable about mentorship opportunities for staff workers because Scott County currently doesn't have mentors to train staff yet. They have challenges attracting staff as well.
- **More training, education, and career advancement for DSPs**
  There are many opportunities for college students to be trained and educated in mental health, but not many for DSPs to get further training and education working with pwds. There are no robust curriculums or college degrees offered to become knowledgeable about working with people, especially people with developmental disabilities.
  Suggestions: Create training and educational opportunities for people to major in fields working with pwds equal to those in mental health allowing more DSPs to become educated. Learning institutions could offer college level courses or trainings to help students develop the skills needed to provide better services for pwds. It could be aimed towards staff members and service providers.
  Responses: Employment is important for pwds to partake in. But in order to encourage employment, we need providers to provide employment services and right now there aren't enough providers who know how to provide job coaching services. If there aren't enough employment service providers, then all other employment related services can't function properly.

- **Barriers to accessing employment supports outside of staffing shortages**
  Perhaps there isn't enough understanding of the types of supports there are, or how benefits and employment interact? There is an ongoing misconception about how working can cause people to lose their benefits. Also, the lack of knowing which employers hire pwds, or the kinds of supports employers can access.
  Responses: Jeff can talk to Scott County career counselors to find out more about existing barriers. Perhaps there isn't clear understanding about the types and levels of supports and services that exist like E1MN and waivered services. Internal case managers especially the older ones have more opportunities to gain knowledge whereas contracted managers who are usually younger don't. The older ones know more about the services that are available. The issue is providers don't have enough staff. Asking them why they don't have enough and getting an answer is difficult. It probably comes down to the fact providing employment services is usually a part-time service that has inconsistent working hours for both consumers and staff.
  Suggestions: It was suggested connecting with Andrea Z, John Wagner and Hennepin County. They have been conducting discussions about this and are developing a plan to address them.
  Responses: Hennepin County received a grant to encourage more pwds to become employed. However they need more employment service providers especially those who really know what they're doing. It's not just about finding pwds employment, it's about all the things that go with it like job coaches and transportation. Job coaching is hard to do. Unlike working in home services, not everyone who provides day services can provide job coaching services. Sometime parents can step in as PCAs in emergencies, but job coaching requires a different skill set.
  Suggestions: One idea is to offer daily rate financial incentives to encourage more providers to train more staff to do job coaching and increase the 15 minute rate. Another idea is to train day staff workers to also provide job coaching services. Instead of having multiple staff providing different services, have 1 staff providing both day and job coaching services. The job coaching services could be built into the day staff schedules.
- **Attracting more people to work in employment services**
  We need to come up with a solution to the job coaching issue if we want to see more pwds competitively employed in integrated settings. There's a lot of moving parts needing to be worked out. There needs to be transportation to get pwds to their jobs and job coaches to help them while working.
  Responses: There is waiver money to provide such services like transportation and job coaching if counties can get pwds on waiver services and case managers know waiver services can pay for such services. But having enough staff to provide such services is the hard part. Money doesn't seem to be the barrier, it's the way services are billed.
  Suggestions: It was suggested conducting focus groups to ask local employers what they think about having some of their employees become job coaches for other employees who need extra assistance. Hennepin County used to pay co-workers to help other co-workers. It was known as providing natural supports. But the co-worker tasked with helping their fellow coworker needs job coaches to set things up and provide ongoing support when needed. Even if the coworker can become a job coach, the actual job coach is needed to do tasks the coworker can't do. This can work well for some pwds but not all. There needs to be different options for different needs.
  Responses: Dakota County's Megan Sillinger might have more insight about this because they run a lot of initiatives. In the past they formed workgroups to tackle

workforce shortages and came up with some recommendations. They now have a budget that funds training, mentorship and connection opportunities for DSPs. The goal was to provide DSPs with a greater sense of community and increase their job retention.

- **Would Jeff's idea of changing the 15 minute rate code work?**
  Dakota County meets with employers on a quarterly basis and they talked about tiered emergency response services that are active 24 hours through waiver services and in-home services. Perhaps this could be applied to employment services and provide job coaching services when needed and cover shifts when regular staff aren't available. This would enable more people to access the supports they need in order to reach their employment goals. However, the issue might be at a legislative level and in order enact any changes, we would need to take it up with the government. If not, then maybe try and get DHS to enact changes.
  Responses: it isn't known whether it's a state or federal issue. But to add new services requires an amendment to the federal plan which then has to be approved.
- **Budget cuts to VRS**
  VRS is over budgeted and are having to make drastic cuts. They are closing their 4 priority categories and placing people according to specific needs. Category 1 is still open. But with less people served means they will have to find services elsewhere. Perhaps waiver services could help in the meantime if people get signed up and are found eligible. It is a matter of making sure case managers know about employment services like Employment Find and become familiar with what VRS does so they can take over.
  Suggestions: Perhaps the MRQC could connect with MOHR. Perhaps MOHR knows more about what's going on and have more resources to enact change, especially if it involves the federal government. https://www.mohrmn.org/about-us/mission
  Responses: Working as job coaches might involve overseeing a couple of workers for a few hours a week and driving them to and from different places. The amount of work hours isn't much, the billing is varied and job coaches aren't compensated for driving. It's no wonder people don't want to do it. There are probably other things that are deterring people from working as job coaches also.
- **Ask providers what the barriers are to becoming job coaches**
  It would be advantageous for the MRQC to team up with others to tackle this issue. We might want to get the perspectives of providers and ask them about the barriers they face when trying to provide employment services in particular job coaching. This would give us a better understanding of the actual issues being dealt with and give us more credibility when offering proposals to government entities and legislatures.
- **How case managers and other staff get paid for all the traveling they do?**
  This falls under the federal waiver plan. It is within the 256B statutes that cover the topic of disability waiver rate systems. This could all change when waiver reimagine is implemented because there will no longer exist separate waiver categories like DD and CADI.
- **Updates to Lyft Rides**
  Lyft was in negotiations with DHS to become an enrolled provider. As of early February, they submitted forms to become enrolled. It has 30 days to get approved. If approved, it will increase access to Lyft rides.

Current Employment Project Ideas:

1. **Create Action Alert- support ERAF continuation**
   Add this to employment workgroup page
   The Employment Reimbursement Accommodation Fund pilot program is ending in July 2025. If we want to see it continue, we can take action to show support for its continuation.

Transportation Workgroup

Transportation Project Ideas:

- Create Action Alert: Showing support for continuation of the Free Fare Pilot program.
- Create transportation workgroup page.
- The TCAP presentation meeting is **scheduled for March 14th** which is during our next council meeting.
  Each county has its own coordinator which serve the transportation needs for that county.
  There will be guest TCAP speakers from different counties to tell us what each of them do. There will also be a MNDOT staff who can explain further about the program.
  Please have your questions ready by our March meeting.