METRO REGIONAL QUALITY COUNCIL MEETING Minutes

Friday, December 8th, 2023

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: Frank, Mohamed, Joe, Robin, Lynn, Cassie and Chris

Guest Presenters: Ray McCoy and Lindsey Hanson

Staff Attendees: JoAnn, Kerri, Sophie, Caption

Meeting Overview

1) Intro and Guest Presenters (45min) @9:05am

- Introductions (Everyone)
- Guest Presenter: Ray McCoy and Lindsey Hanson
  - Ray and Lindsey work for DEED. Ray is the Program Coordinator and Lindsey is the Program Manager for a new initiative called the Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund (ERAF).
  - For More information, click on the website links or use the contact info below.
    Short URL www.mn.gov/deed/eraf
    Long URL www.mn.gov/deed/business/financing-business/eraf/index.jsp
    https://mn.gov/admin/government/disability-services/accommodation-fund/

    Email: eraf.deed@state.mn.us
    Phone: 651-539-2390 (1-833-391-8050)

    Program Coordinator: Ray.McCoy@state.mn.us
    Technician: Darcie.Koecher@state.mn.us
    Supervisor: Lindsey.Hanson@state.mn.us
  - Background Information

    This 2 year pilot reimbursement program started on July 1, 2023 and ends on June 30, 2025. Legislation granted 2 million dollars with 300k allocated to admin cost to reimburse employers for the purchases they make to provide reasonable accommodations to applicants and employees with disabilities. Providing accommodations means greater opportunities for pwds to work and continue to work. The applicants and employees can range from part-time workers to full time workers to migrant workers to self-employed workers and so on. Employers need to apply for the

reimbursements within the fiscal year which is currently July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2025. They also need to earn less than $5 million in gross annual revenue or have less than 500 employees to be eligible. This would exclude government employees (who get accommodations through the Star program) and mega corporations. The program provides consultation services which help determine the best solutions that benefit both the employer and employee. The minimum reimbursement amount employers can get is $250 and the maximum amount is $30k per fiscal year. Once an employer spends over 30k a year, they can no longer be reimbursed.

- Process of Reimbursement Application

  1) Applicants or employees confirm being disabled and needs accommodations in order to apply for jobs or work.
  2) They and their employer arrange a consultation meeting. Employee and employer are educated about what accommodations qualify under the ADA and where they can find and purchase such accommodations and services.
  3) Employers purchase accommodations and make sure to keep all receipts. They can either make a 1 time big purchase (i.e. ramps, computer, etc.) or make smaller ongoing purchases (i.e. software renewals, caption services, interpreters, etc.) depending on the need.
  4) Employers apply for reimbursement of purchases using the program website and make sure to attach proof of purchase. Their application will either be approved or denied. If approved, employers will receive money within 30 days. What is nice about the program is that the money is not linked to any other programs and won't impact people's benefits. If denied, employers are offered alternatives and suggestions on how to increase their eligibility chances. Examples of denials are transportation costs. Employers can't be reimbursed just to buy a car. However, if the employee needs modifications to the car so they can complete required job tasks, they can be provided with car accommodations which in turn the employer can be reimbursed. If denied, employers can also go through an appeals process.

     Quarterly audits are conducted to ensure employers are honest about their reimbursement applications. So far about a dozen employers have applied.

     If the program is successful, legislation can approve to continue funding. It is currently housed under the State Services for the Blind. It is the first of its kind.

- Promoting the Program

  Dr. Mohamed mentioned not many government agencies know about this program and there needs to be increased awareness of workers with disabilities. There should be a greater effort to market and promote the program. Mohamed can connect Ray to other government agencies to promote it. Ray and Lindsey have been making the rounds promoting the program such as attending the State Fair, launching social media pages (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter) and holding in person events. Ray wants to connect with the MRQC and the RQCs to spread the word about the program. What agencies can we promote the program to? Rotary clubs, Chamber of Commerce, ICI, Dept. of Education, VRS, etc.

2. 10 Minute Break

3. Next Year Meetings

- How does the council want to conduct meetings next year?

  The council participants suggested conducting hybrid meetings on a quarterly basis. They would prefer not conducting hybrid meetings during winter months. As we get closer to spring, the council can hold more discussions on how to conduct hybrid meetings.

4. **Direct Care Workforce Shortage meeting (Dr. Mohamed)**

- Dr. Mohamed is one of the founders of this group. It was created about 6-7 years ago. It is made up of many workers from different government agencies such as the MN Council on Disability. Its purpose is to investigate and make recommendations to try and lessen the deficit between demand and supply of workers. Many pwds need PCA and DSP services. However, not enough workers are meeting the demand. PCA workers have very little benefits and stability which makes the job less appealing. Covid 19 made things worse. One idea is to tap into underrepresented peoples such as illegal immigrants to fill the gap. They could fulfill the demand for services. At the same time, they could also work towards a pathway to legal immigration status. They would not only be contributing to society but also be paying taxes.
- Mohamed suggests the council partner and align themselves with other organizations who are involved in similar actions such as this group. Cassie already knows Linda Wolford who is the deputy director. The council should get connected! Lynn is interested in joining

5. **Housing Workgroup Updates (JoAnn and Sophie)**

- Housing videos: The Housing videos are in the editing stage. The first video should be completed sometime at the end of this month. When the videos are complete, the Housing Workgroup will decide who, where and how to distribute the videos.
- Housing website: We are designing and gathering content for the Housing Resources website. A mockup has been created to show what it could potentially look like. Please feel free to express any ideas you have on how to improve the website. Please feel free to email the staff any resources you want to add to the website.

6. **Workgroups (40 min) @10:20am**

- Employment Workgroup

  This workgroup meets directly after the council meeting.

- Culture of Safety/Data Action Group (DAG) Workgroup

  This workgroup meets separately outside of monthly council meetings. They meet the first Thursday of each month from 9-11am. Down below are some links if interested in reading more about waiver rate system.

  - ✓ Legislative Report; Disability Waiver Rate System and Cost Reporting https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-8224-ENG
  - ✓ Department of Human Services January 2023 waiver rate-setting frameworks https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/news-initiatives-reports-workgroups/long-term-services-and-supports/disability-waiver-rates-system/rate-setting-frameworks/
  - ✓ YouTube video on waiver rates Webinar: DWRS Advisory Committee Quarterly Meeting | 9/27/23 - YouTube

The next meeting will be on **Thursday, January 4th, 2023 from 9am-11am.**
Join Zoom Meeting
https://arcminnesota.zoom.us/j/81121977247?pwd=SDBmVW1RQWFlVHBHKy96a1JESElEUT09
Meeting ID: 811 2197 7247
Passcode: 678410

This workgroup would like more providers to join. Please notify staff if you are a provider or know a provider who would be interested in joining.

- Staffing (DSPs & PCAs) Shortage Workgroup (Kerri)
  This workgroup meets separately outside of monthly council meetings. They meet the third Thursday of each month from 11am-12:30pm.
  The next meeting will be on **Thursday, December 14th, 2023 from 12pm-1:30pm**.
  Join Zoom Meeting
  https://arcminnesota.zoom.us/j/87154192462?pwd=aDE2YnBUcVR1S2dvc0NzOUpFWCt5dz09
  Meeting ID: 871 5419 2462
  Passcode: 266371

Other Things to Share & Reminders

- Next council meeting is on **Friday, January 12th, 2024 from 9-11am.** JoAnn will email everyone a new council meeting invite for the 2024 year. The meeting invite will scheduled for the second Friday of each month from 9am-11am.