

# **Greater Raritan One Stop Monthly Leadership Meeting**

## **Minutes**

*Tuesday July 25, 2024*

*10:00AM*

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### ● **Attendance**

Maggie Navatto, Middle Earth  
Danielle Kwan, Manager DVRS  
Aminah Reeves, WFNJ – Supervisor  
Maria Marnell, HCESC  
Richard Peterson, Greater Raritan Employment Services/ OSCC  
Monica Mulligan, Director Greater Raritan One-Stop Career Training Services Center  
Paul Grzella, Director Workforce Development Board  
Fernandel Almonor, Greater Raritan One-Stop Operator  
Isabel Jimenez, NJDOL WFNJ

### ● **Operator Update**

- GRWDB requested customer success stories, due with July data submissions.
- Operator acknowledged system staffing challenges partners are working through and how that affects workflow. **Will be scheduling checks in with department leadership.** It's important for leadership to effectively manage budget cuts and ensure fiscal benchmarks are achieved.

### ● **Employment Services/One-Stop Office Update**

- Poo Lin returns from vacation 8/1/24.
- ES team did not submit June employment preference data or performance data. Operator will follow up with Poo to discuss getting missing info.
- ES has 2 new hires. One went on vacation and came back with COVID. The other is doing well.
- Made progress addressing customer backlog. Only 6 people are waiting for counseling appointments.
- Still looking to fill vacant staff positions.
- Having additional support for RESA clients.
- By mid-August ES team should be caught up on caseloads/backlog.

- Losing Mary Ann in 5 weeks. She's a major factor in supporting office workflow. The replacement in training.

- **Business Services Update**

- Absent (not in attendance)
- No update provided.

- Hunterdon Polytech

- Absent (not in attendance)
- No update provided.

- **Career Training Services Update**

General Update and Successes

- We have paused interviews for the vacant Career Navigator position, as the GRWDB has informed us that the draft budget for the new program year that began 7/1/24 does not include the vacant position. The impact of the provision of services was communicated to the GRWDB back in June and will be discussed further with Paul Grzella next week when we discuss the draft budget and service levels for PY24.
- One Stop Career Training Services Center team members are registered for/attended free virtual training through NJDOL offered by ITSC three dates in July (July 2<sup>nd</sup>, July 16<sup>th</sup> and July 30<sup>th</sup>) that will explore ways to use data to strengthen the provision of services Data Quality: The Foundation for Trustworthy Decisions; Decoding Data: Understanding the Reports You use; and Data Driven Services: Using Reports to Enhance Customer Interactions).
- Members of the One Stop Career Training Services Center staff attended the following additional free trainings in July: Trauma 101 (MHANJ via GSETA); Complexities of Ethical Reasoning (MHANJ Career Connections) and Empowering the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Workforce (NJPRA).

Challenges:

- New: The part-time (5 hours a week) Career Navigator has been working about 30 hours a week in that role as it was thought to be temporary. With the Career Navigator vacancy likely not being funded, this team member will go back to working 5 hours a week, as there are full-time

duties in another division that she must fulfill. This will impact One Stop service levels.

- New: We are currently working without a budget and cannot provide supportive services to customers at this time.
- Carryover: AOSOS continues to have many technical issues that complicate things – NJDOL had indicated we should only be utilizing the new version but recently indicated the new version continues to have technical issues and we may need to use the old version as well. Using AOSOS continues to be a cumbersome task.
- Carryover: The Career Navigator vacancy has created an overload of work for the existing staff. While we used to be able to accommodate up to 20 in weekly training grant orientation, that has now been capped at 10 to give the staff the time they need to effectively schedule and work with both new and existing customers. In addition to the vacancy, we have team members with approved summer vacation time as well as on-going COVID related absences. We are currently scheduling jobseekers for the August 9<sup>th</sup> orientation (only two slots remain) before we start scheduling for the August 16<sup>th</sup> orientation date.
- Carryover Increase in WFNJ referrals due to sanctions being put back into place. This has led to an increase in workload for One Stop Career Training Services Center staff.

#### Supports Requested:

- Carryover: NJDOL released a directory that has some of the information needed to understand who is working in what program areas at NJDOL – but not all.

#### Upcoming Events:

- One Stop Career Training Services Center team members will be helping to staff a Human Services table at the Somerset County 4H Fair August 7<sup>th</sup> – August 9<sup>th</sup> . Information about One Stop services will be displayed on the table.
- Planning is in process for a workshop in collaboration with PSGCNJ for August and other workshops with other partners beginning in September.

- **Work First New Jersey Update**

- Sanctions having a positive impact. Getting customers in compliance.
- Some clients have trouble managing necessary paperwork and showing up to scheduled appointments. Issue with WFNJ team being unaware of cases on verge of closure. This has taken a considerable amount of staff time to manage.
- Open Clerk position.
- SNAP is the largest population of referrals. TANF is the second largest.
- Have 1 person working with SNAP, has been out for weeks. There's a service gap. Aminah is covering in the interim.
- Somerset has 35 compliant face to face workshops and 130 virtual.
- Hunterdon has 9 face to face and 21 virtual.
- Had the largest number of referrals this month. 75 TANF and 50 SNAP.
- Transportation and Childcare are still significant issues. The TANF Initiative should help support these challenges.
- Should see an increase in participation rates due to more consistent coding and AOSOS data entry.
- Another current challenge is working through budget cuts.
- OJT providers recently met with WFNJ training group. DVR, Jan (CTS) and Ridewise are also presenting.

- **Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services Update**

- A new supervisor is being trained; it's going well.
- Anticipating a part time intern from Rutgers starting in September.
- Getting better access to electronic signatures for clients.
- Rapid engagement is their current focus.
- The Youth Internship program is slated to restart in October.
- Counselor signing up for GSETA and other events.

- **Middle Earth**

- Experienced recent staffing changes. Working to get new staff up to speed.

Challenges:

- Finding placements that meet client preferences/needs.
- Adequate staffing

- Maria Marnell mentioned WFNJ recently referred a client to Middle Earth and would like to get a status update.

- **GRWDB**

- TANF Initiative RFP is going out Friday. Planning for a tight turn around and planning a full launch sometime in August.
- Summer youth work experience program is about ½ way complete. 84 participants, going well. Only 1 participant dropped out. Thanks to Jeanne, the program is going smoothly.
- Drafting TANF updates for Isabel and updating WFNJ MOU.
- In the process of vendor contract negotiations. Planning to complete by August 15<sup>th</sup>. Operation budget was submitted.
- Operator looking into ensuring partner vendors meet client numbers and spending allocation.
- Getting additional funding to continue literacy initiative for another year, \$159k
- Additional funding for RVCC scholarship program.
- Budget has a 1 percent set aside for training and conference attendance. Money will be going to GSETA. Vendors can access that funding, just reach out to Paul (\$29K).

- **Discussion**

Increasing Customer Enrollment and Quality of Service, Despite Staffing Challenges.

Monica

- Quality of service isn't an issue at CTS. Staff are dedicated to the work. The challenge is keeping staff after 3 years, they tend to look for more lucrative opportunities.
- CTS has a human centered approach. Not about being a processor pushing people through but taking time with every customer.

Paul

- WFNJ Somerset ranks number 2 in state participation rates and Hunterdon among the 3 lowest. We're looking to increase that. He asked Isabel for a DOL perspective, what is the ultimate participation rate goal?

## Isabel

- Our director has been focusing on the rates. She doesn't know the acceptable percentage but will get back to Paul.

## Monica

- The participation rate goal used to be 50%.

## Aminah

- It's important to know the client needs to buy in. Our goal is gainful employment so they can be self-sufficient. Core client issue isn't just getting a job. It's about sufficiently addressing living expenses and employment being a reasonable distance from residence.
- More case management staff would be helpful.
- Many clients need more mental health support.
- Too many TANF customers are concerned about losing housing if gainfully employed.
- Time for other issues to be addressed like affordable housing. Housing is a huge problem.
- Affordable childcare is also a challenge.
- Low staff salaries are also a challenge.

## Monica

Customers working through traumatic experiences is also a challenge. It takes time to achieve progress, might be a barrier to gainful employment. There are mental health services available, it is just that the customers are not always willing to engage.

Richard

Need for more jobs in NJ that pay living wages.

Need for more employers to support child care expenses.

Need for more apprentice programs. Getting people in trades with better potential for livable wage.

Monica

Many staff in this building must work 2 jobs to support themselves. These are people with Bachelors. This gives insight into challenges for our customers.

Indicated that the school systems, specifically high schools, need to work on introducing more diverse career pathways.

The State has poured millions into apprenticeships, and it has not taken off.

Aminah

Supports developing more internships and apprenticeships.

Artificial Intelligence is taking over warehouse jobs and will eventually take over fast food positions. It'll be important for workforce development to get ahead of that.

Richard

Apprenticeship programs can support degrees. Making money while training is the key.

Monica

Indicated that school districts, specifically high schools, need to work with parents to reduce stigma around trades.

Paul

We had a youth apprenticeship event. There are many apprenticeships programs out there.

Richard and Monica

Apprenticeships are hard to find.

Richard

We need better organization and wider access to apprenticeships.

Aminah

There's a need for more customer buy-in, more motivation to achieve gainful employment.

Maria

It's getting buy-in and customers not being able to see themselves successful.

Many clients need the skill set necessary for success. Many don't believe they can have and do better. Welfare can be generational; it can be difficult to break the cycle.

- *Affordable Housing Brainstorm (moved to August meeting)*
  - *Objective: Better understanding of GR affordable housing challenges and all supportive services available. Engaging resource leaders with our customer challenges and collectively brainstorming solutions.*
    - *Would this event be helpful?*
    - *Who should be invited?*
    - *Suggested topics/ challenges to discuss.*

**Next Meetings: Tuesday, August 27 @ 10am in 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room**