Career Technology and Workforce Development

Meeting Minutes

February 27, 2025
9am-10am

Virtual Meeting

Attendees: Adam Cummings, Ainsley Moench, Anne Bocchini Pack, Danielle Cox, Diana Bailey, John Griffin, Renee Yarbough-Williams, Stephen Steurer

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I. Welcome

Diana Bailey welcomed everyone.

The January 30th meeting minutes were approved.

II. Discussion on data request to the Department of Labor

Dr. Steurer said that some of the data requested is still being formatted.

The first data question asked about how many incarcerated students obtained a GED with a college-ready score. Dr. Steurer indicated that he thought there would be more GEDs obtained with a college-ready score. Danielle Cox provided the context that while a score of 165 is needed to obtain a college-ready score, 145 is required to pass. Prior to 2014, scores were higher, but the new test is rigorous and must be done on a computer. Many of the incarcerated individuals do not have technological literacy, so the Department of Labor is discussing buying new computers to help with GED preparation. Danielle suggested that a data visualization should be made to compare how many GEDs were obtained per year in comparison to how many were awarded with a college-ready score.

Dr. Stephen Steurer asked how many people come into prison with a GED or high school diploma. Danielle Cox answered that the data may be misleading, as there is no distinction within the case management system for a high school diploma or GED obtained pre-incarceration and those obtained while inside. Additionally, there may be some issues verifying high school diplomas for those who attended schools that have closed down or used paper records. Dr. Stephen Steurer responded that the rough data indicates that around 50,000 people entered prisons without a high school diploma between 2008 and 2024, and only around 10% of those people obtained a GED while incarcerated.

Adam Cummings said that he has the wait list for MCE programs. The rough data indicates that there are around 264 people on waiting lists per month to be part of an MCE program.

Anne Bocchini Pack asked if there was a way to see how fast the waitlists were moving. Adam Cummings replied that that information is kept by case management, and the Commission could request it.

Dr. Stephen Steurer commented that there is no consensus on who is responsible for academic and occupational waiting lists.

John Griffin agreed and asked whose responsibility it is to collect and manage the data. In his experience, the education department managed their own data pre-Labor takeover, but after staff rollover within the Department, data collection has been left to certain teachers and principals and it is not centralized. The administrative assistant at ECI works part-time at ECI East and ECI West and does not have enough time to manage all of the data.

Diana Bailey asked if the workgroup has all of the data it needs. Dr. Stephen Steurer said he would like to know why the transition certificates have dropped so significantly between 2023 and 2024. John Griffin responded that staffing dropped, so there were not as many classes. Before COVID, Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake ran some job readiness programs.

Diana Bailey asked if the ECI library still has a partial career center. John Griffin answered that there is a career center, but of the three computers there that have access to job searching sites, only one of them works. Diana Bailey asked what institutions still have some form of a career center, especially those that are hooked up to a career one-stop.

Adam Cummings clarified that the Department of Corrections is legally required to track and verify education while incarcerated. Danielle Cox agreed and said that the Department of Corrections is doing so, but verifying education is done in collaboration with the Department of Labor and Department of Education as they have access to previous educational histories. For a while, the CE data that Labor was collecting was not filtering into the case management system; however, this issue has been fixed. Additionally, permission must be granted by the incarcerated individual to look up previous educational history. Some school systems are labor intensive to request records from, and some schools do not have the educational history because they have been shut down or it was lost when paper records were transferred to digital records.

Diana Bailey pointed out that a lot of positions that used to be PIN positions were converted to contractual positions, including the transitional program staff. One recommendation the workgroup may want to make is that contractual positions be converted to PIN positions wherever possible. Danielle Cox added that during the fiscal year 2022, a lot of positions that were previously managed by community colleges moved over to Labor, which had budget issues and had to cut a lot of staff. Around 10 transition positions were filled during 2024.

Dr. Stephen Steurer pointed out that the number of state positions has dropped over time. The peak number of positions was around 2014, and throughout the past ten years, 15-20 positions were lost. Danielle Cox added that the Department of Budget Management often goes to agencies and asks them to cut positions that have not been filled for a long time. When she was the correctional education director at the Department of Labor, she asked to not have any positions taken away.

Ainsley Moench went over the data contained in the Correctional Education Council reports. There were 33 occupational program instructors in 2011 and 45 instructors in 2023. Danielle Cox asked if we could get the number of instructors from 2015 to 2018. Ainsley Moench added that transitional positions went from 22 positions to 9.

Danielle Cox and Diana Bailey discussed the funding that may be shut down due to decisions in the federal government. The occupational training programs run by the Department of Labor are all funded federally through the Perkins act. Dr. Stephen Steurer added that some academic programs receive money from Title I and Adult Education funds.

Adam Cummings asked if incarcerated individuals are required to participate in mandatory education if they do not have a high school diploma or GED. Danielle Cox answered that incarcerated individuals must complete 240 days of education. Occupational and post-secondary instructors will talk to the students in GED classes about what options are available after they complete the GED.

Adam Cummings asked about the COMAR requirement for case management in DPSCS to be responsible for the oversight of educational records. Danielle Cox responded that that is a requirement, and that sharing data between agencies is difficult and does not always result in complete data.

Diana Bailey closed out the meeting by thanking everyone for participating.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50am.