

**MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board, Inc.
Youth Council Meeting, October 14, 2021
Zoom Meeting**

Voting Members Present:

Cleveland Burton - Chair	Haydee Lamberty-Rodriguez	Amy Scribner
Jennifer Connolly	Malany Mendoza	Pamela Westmoreland
Others Present:		
Jane Alinovi	John Gowan	Jeannine Pavlak
Aliza Ansell	Candace Griffith	Nicole Power
Kara Blanchard	Adam Hartwell	Walter Rice
Peter Blain	Jenary Merced	Margaret Tantillo
Kevin Bias	Maria Montero	Kristen Wing
Carrie Chevalier	Zena Murray	Andrea Wolfe
Gloria Crespo	Maggie Nugent	Carla Wood
Yaritza Cruz-Baez	Bianca Ortiz	Shannon Yaremchak
Phylis Gedeon		
MH Staff Present:		
Christine Abramowitz	Mike Chechette	
Katrina Bruce	Peta-Gaye Porter	

Meeting Materials

Mailed Out: Agenda, Minutes of the June 24, 2021 meeting
Screen Shared: ASVAB Program Career Exploration Platform

MINUTES OF MEETING

I. Welcome, Approval of Minutes

Youth Council Chair Cleveland Burton called the Zoom meeting to order at about 8:35 a.m. and roll call introductions were made. Cleveland then opened the meeting by thanking the Youth Council for their continued commitment and leadership on youth issues for the region. He then asked for a vote to approve the minutes from the last Youth Council meeting, which were sent out with the agenda.

- **Action Taken:** A motion to approve the minutes of the June 24th meeting was made, seconded and approved.

II. Program Updates

A. WIOA Youth FY22

Michael Chechette opened with a recap of the various challenges that COVID-19 has placed on our youth delivery systems, as outlined in prior meetings, but emphasized our WIOA programming adaptability to move forward. He also noted and called out new staff and welcomed them. He noted that we served about 100 youth over the summer, about 30% or so in-person. He then highlighted the struggles reported to him by vendors across the board as youth return to school or in-person out of school programming, including attendance and other issues. Enrollment in programs is down, not only for us but statewide as young people adapt to their recent realities.

B. Connecting Activities/School to Career, YouthWorks

Christine Abramowitz reported out as follows:

- **Connecting Activities/School to Career** is typically slow over the summer so partners are now ramping up to work with their student populations now that school is back in session and is in-person.
- **CommCorp YouthWorks Year-Round and Summer Programs** - Year Round is ramping up with less funding than in the past and Summer closed without meeting the plan to serve over 700 youth, but given the continuing circumstances a great showing of serving more than 500 youth, more than last summer. So we are pleased with our outcomes.

III. ASVAB Career Exploration Program

Dr. Carla Wood, Education Service Specialist, Springfield Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) at Westover Joint Air Reserve Base, was introduced by Cleveland as he had met with her about her program and invited her to present at this Youth Council meeting.

She began with a bit on her background which included time spent in higher education where she saw a cognitive dissonance in in-coming students who had unrealistic goals that were a mismatch to their interests and/or abilities so that they often became discouraged with their educational paths and often did not succeed. Thus was the seed to develop a career exploration platform called the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (asvaprogram.com) that she emphasized is NOT an armed services recruitment tool (although it used for those who are looking to enlist); but a student-friendly assessment tool based on proven research.

She screen shared the platform and many had questions during her presentation. A summary of the discussion points are as follows:

- The platform allows a person to assess their possibilities base on interest codes and strengths that can be viewed in their entirety or as compared to typical gender-specific groupings;
- It includes an academic assessment normed to 10th grade equivalency;
- Those results can then feed a step to research career occupations that match interest/strengths based on Occu-Find and O-Net databases) and you can save up to 10 possibilities and then compare detailed information about each, i.e., education requirements, salaries, licensure and certification requirements along with programs available from the USDOL Career One-Stop web site and
- Result in a portfolio that is downloadable with future goals outlined and which can also contain the individual's work experience.

Lastly it is a FREE resource that only requires an account to be set-up to access it. Everyone thanked her for the information and presentation.

IV. Dress for Success Western MA

Christine introduced Margaret Tantillo, Executive Director for Dress for Success Western MA. Margaret began summarizing DFSWM's mission as helping women (primarily) to gain economic independence and they see their services as augmenting other programs as an added resource to supplement their own programming.

She outlined those services as follows:

- 1) What they are most known for and that is providing clothes that haven't donated to assist with proper attire for interviews and work, which is based at the Eastfield Mall, staffed by volunteers, and now allows for "touchless" fitting options for pick-up or delivery;
- 2) A workforce development program being offered right now in a virtual mode on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9:30am-12:30pm to for additional work readiness support to help women get their foot in the door and stay there;
- 3) Their "Margaret Fitzgerald Mentor" matching program for those that have completed other programming and are entering employment;
- 4) Professional development opportunities focused on entry-level workers to help them move up; and
- 5) Digital Literacy 1:1 assistance staffed by volunteers.

After thanking her for this information both Haydee Lamberty-Rodriguez from Springfield Public Schools and Jeannine Pavlak from NEBA, attested to the success they have had in working with DFSWM.

V. Discussion: Return to In-Person Services Sharing \ Other Announcements

The return to in-person status and sharing by folks had two very similar themes:

- We're back, but it is different and
- Concern for social-emotional impact that COVID had on our young people as they emerged from isolation back into in-person engagement.

Other announcements:

- MassHire Career Centers are open by appointment and Phylis Gedeon announced new "Exploring Health Careers" workshop opportunities in partnership with MHHCWB Director of Healthcare Workforce Initiatives, Peter-Gaye Porter;
- Jeannine announced that the program operated in partnership MAMep that serves individuals with disabilities up to age 27 just finished their first cohort of trainees for manufacturing occupations and are looking to start a 2nd cohort – also they are developing a new program that will be for IT Help Desk jobs;
- Jennifer Connolly announced that JA continues to offer many virtual services but the annual stock market challenge will be in-person, albeit smaller, on November 12th.

The meeting adjourned at about 10:00 a.m. and Cleveland encouraged all to stay safe, be well and have a great summer.