

ABI Consortium Meeting, 7/07/2020

- Welcome and Housekeeping.
- Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS).
 - Derick Serra, Program Technical Assistance Branch, Office of Field Services at DORS, gave a brief overview of DORS. DORS serves individuals with disabilities to provide services to help them regain or maintain employment. Visit <https://dors.maryland.gov/consumers/Pages/about.aspx> for more information.
 - ABI Counselors:
 - ABI Counselors introduced themselves and shared their office location. For a complete list visit: <https://dors.maryland.gov/consumers/specialized/Pages/ABI.aspx>
 - Counselor comments and updates – Sam Miller, Carroll County:
 - The brain injury case list in Carroll County has declined significantly. The decline may be due to a decrease in vendors who are specifically trained to work with brain injury and are no longer making or accepting referrals.
 - Since the onset of COVID-19 only 1 consumer is still receiving services. The other 6 consumers are having difficulty manipulating technology, prefer not to receive services virtually, or have no one to support them during virtual services.
 - Working with a younger consumer to provide drum lessons virtually.
 - Office openings:
 - All DORS field offices remain closed to the public. DORS staff are going to the office on a sporadic basis, as well as working remotely to answer phones and accept intakes. Plans are being made to return to work in shifts, but no date has been determined. Offices are being fitted to provide more social distancing protection.
 - DORS Funding issues:
 - No updates at this time on the budget that went into effect 7/1/20. It is likely that open positions will not be filled.
 - Category II (for consumers with significant disabilities) will be closed indefinitely. Consumers who fall into Category II have the right to appeal to be eligible for Category I.
 - In person service provision:
 - DORS will support funding for in person services beginning 7/6/20. For more information visit - <https://dors.maryland.gov/crps/Pages/CRPs.aspx>
 - DORS Portals:
 - New vendor portal is a web-based portal that vendors can use to submit invoices and reports - <https://dors.maryland.gov/crps/Pages/CRPs.aspx>
 - Updated portals are coming soon. A webinar will be held on 7/16 to review the upgrades.
 - MD Rehabilitation Conference:
 - Conference has been postponed and will now be held November 2021.
 - Maryland Rehabilitation Association 1-hour Trainings:
 - Will host a lunchtime learning series of 1-hour webinars free of charge. <http://marylandrehabassociation.org/event>
 - Q&A/Comments:

- The Brain Injury Association of Virginia has created two tip sheets, one for people living with brain injury and another for supporters. They were created to specifically for virtual BI support group meetings, but the content can be applied to other virtual meetings.
- Brain Injury Association of Maryland.
 - Introduction:
 - Catherine Mello gave an overview of the Brain Injury Association of Maryland. For more information visit www.biamd.org or call 410-448-2924
 - BIAMD is an information and assistance organization and welcomes referrals from DORS
 - Updates:
 - “Check in Chats” have been held every Friday at noon for those who are in need of social interaction.
 - #5 Thoughts Friday is a weekly blog that shares a variety of topics relating to brain injury, articles written by staff, interviews, etc. To sign up for #5 Thoughts Friday visit [here](#)
 - BIAMD has recently conducted educational webinars, including BI 101, Stages of Change and Harm Reduction, and Developing One Page Profiles for COVID-19 Health Care Settings
 - Blue Crabs for Brain Injury and the Scarecrow Classic 5K typically take place in late summer and fall. Other options are being reviewed by the Board
 - Trends:
 - BIAMD has seen a change in information and assistance calls. In March and April calls were received regarding vocational goals. However, in recent weeks there have been no calls concerning employment. Several reasons may be a factor; earn more money while on unemployment benefits, concerns about getting sick, the job market is poor.
 - Brain Injury Waiver updates:
 - BIAMD provides transitional case management to assist in accessing the Brain Injury Waiver and administrative case management to oversees services. One of the services available through the waiver is Supported Employment. For a Brain Injury Waiver fact sheet click [here](#)
 - Flexibility related virtual service provision. Appendix K allows for emergency procedures to go into place so Brain Injury Waiver services can be provided remotely, and day rehabilitation services do not have to be on site.
 - Other BHA TBI projects:
 - Stasia Edmonston is the Project Coordinator for the TBI Partner Grant. The focus of this grant cycle is Person Centered Training and Practices and the connection between opioid use disorder and ABI. Overdose Fatality Review Teams have noticed a trend of people who have overdosed and TBI. Products have been developed to assist Overdose Fatality Review Teams identify TBI in a person’s history. Two part time, subject matter experts have been hired to help disseminate this information, Martin Kerrigan and Laura Bartolomei-Hill. For more information contact Stasia at anastasia.edmonston@maryland.gov
 - Q&A:
 - How many calls does BIAMD receive regarding vocational re-entry? BIAMD does not track that information, however, it is noted that more calls have been received from

family members looking for day programs rather than employment since the onset of COVID-19.

- Community Partners

- Head Injury Rehabilitation and Referral Services, Inc.:
 - HIRRS has been doing virtual day program and pre-appointment groups. Employment specialists are doing individual virtual meetings. Motivation to participate virtually has been the biggest challenge. Most clients are not currently working.
- Mary T. Maryland:
 - All day programs and supported employment services have stopped. Individual Support Services are still running. Mary T. has just entered Phase One, that allows limited visitation for family members. More support from management is being offered to engage clients in virtual activities. Boredom is a big concern.
- RETURN! LifeBridge Health:
 - Return to Work program is up and running as of last week. Currently working on a general referral form to submit to DORS. Counselors are in the process of being approved for telehealth services for job development and job coaching. Program is open to new referrals.
- Dr. Mark Sementilli:
 - Community and clinic-based neuropsychologist offering telehealth therapy services with private and remed clients. Looking into remote psychological assessments, but there are challenges with HIPAA, etc.

- Discussion/Chat

- HIRRS is focusing on long term needs and what the future job market will look like if COVID continues. Emphasis is on retaining communication skills and job readiness. Staff engagement is a difficulty. Surveys have been sent out every 2 -3 weeks to consumers in residential programs and in the community to determine their needs, interests, and wants.
- Autoimmunity prevalence with brain injury, special concern with promoting awareness that compromised immune conditions are a serious risk.
- Treatment and Learning Center has been working with individuals one on one preparing for applications and interviews. Technology is a barrier. Family training and support is important.
- Community mapping will need to be reestablished.

- Resources Shared

- The RISE program is available through DORS
- The National Association of State Head Injury Administrators will be holding its annual conference in a virtual format. If interested in checking out the conference, which will be held in September, go to: <https://my-nashia.weebly.com/> CEUS will be offered including CRCs
- The BI waiver has very specific technical, medical, and financial criteria that someone has to qualify for. We wanted to open this conversation between DORS and the BI Waiver providers to see how DORS can assist individuals who are interested in re-entering vocational services and employment that are associated with this program
- The Centers for Independent Living may be able to assist with independent living skills. <http://www.msilc.org/map.html>

- Plans for Future Meetings

- Include a survey link in the notes for suggestions of training topics for future ABI Consortiums.