

**GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL  
EDUCATION**

**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**

**Videoconference Host:**

Governor's Council  
550 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 1220  
Anchorage, Alaska

**Meeting Date**

Thursday, November 10, 2022  
11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

**Attendees:**

Nona Safra – Chair  
Ken Hamrick  
Charlene Tautfest  
Director Duane Mayes  
Jena Crafton  
Anna Attla

**Absent:**

Fred Villa  
Lyle Downing

**Guests:**

Kelly Roberson  
Kate Sheehan  
Dave Berube  
Jimael Johnson

**Staff:**

Patrick Reinhart  
Jamie Kokoszka  
Lanny Mommsen  
Michael Stevenson  
Rich Saville

**Prepared by:** Sheila Garrant, Peninsula Reporting

**CALL TO ORDER – 11:00 a.m.**  
**ROLL CALL – Quorum established**

**WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR**

Nona Safra welcomed attendees to the meeting and opened the floor for introductions. Patrick Reinhart introduced the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education staff. Dave Berube, with the Disability Law Center of Alaska (DLC) Ticket to Work Program, and Kelly Roberson, the State of Alaska EEO Program manager, introduced themselves.

Jamie Kokoszka shared that Empower Hour is scheduled for November 17, 2022 from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Patrick Reinhart reminded committee members of the Council meeting on November 14<sup>th</sup> from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. He asked Council members to let staff know if they plan to attend in person or virtually.

Patrick Reinhart reported that he will be in Anchorage next week to attend the quarterly Trust meeting and interviews for the two vacant seats on the Board of Trustees. Jena Crafton was assigned by Heidi Lieb-Williams to represent the Governor's Council.

Nona Safra shared that on her Facebook feed was an announcement from two years ago about the final version of Empowerment Through Employment, an Employment Resource Guide for Alaskans with Disabilities. That inspired her for the day.

Anna Attla shared that she will be on vacation in Austin, Texas mid-December to the beginning of January.

Jena Crafton shared that it's her brother's and Maggie Winston's birthdays today.

Jamie Kokoszka shared that Jena Crafton spent the day volunteering at the Council office. She noted that other volunteers are scheduled to work at the Council in the upcoming weeks.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA and MINUTES**

Director Duane Mayes **MOVED** to approve the meeting agenda as presented, **SECONDED** by Charlene Taufest. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

Charlene Taufest **MOVED** to approve the September 8, 2022 meeting minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by Ken Hamrick. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

## Alaska Work Matters Task Force (AWMTF) Update

Patrick Reinhart directed the members' attention to the Alaska Work Matters Task Force Report included in the meeting packet. He stated that the task force completed their work and developed recommendations to improve the work opportunities for people with disabilities. Director Duane Mayes and Patrick met with the leadership of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), Commissioner Ledbetter, to present the report. They also presented the report at the IL Conference. Presentations are scheduled for the Trust, Commissioner Crum, the new Deputy Commissioner Emily Ricci, and Director Tony Newman with SDS. Director Mayes will be looking for opportunities to present to other groups.

Patrick Reinhart reported that the AWMTF developed an ad hoc committee that will look at the objectives regularly and work towards moving the recommendations forward.

### Section 1 Recommendation: State as a Model Employer

Kate Sheehan, director at the Division of Personnel, and Kelly Roberson, State EEO Manager, joined the meeting to share the following information related to the State as a Model Employer recommendation from the AWMTF report:

Section 1: Making the State A Model Employer (SAME) for individuals with disabilities, including DVR Provisional Hire.

- Recommendations:
  - Set utilization goals for State hiring
    - Consideration: Data
      - Define parameters for the data collection
      - Working with AMHTA to see if they are pulling specific data on individuals with disabilities in the state who are of employment age to find threshold
    - Consideration: Threshold
      - Under Affirmative Action planning, the federal government has a 12 percent utilization threshold for individual agencies and 2 percent of the workforce with targeted disabilities. When there is more specific data on statewide individuals with disabilities, those determinations can be made.
    - Consideration: Legislative action and policy pieces involved
      - There are regulations around underutilization, and regulatory process will have to be gone through.
  - Increase awareness and utilization of the existing Provisional Hire Program
    - The current standard operating procedure (SOP) for provisional hire is outdated. Over the last three to six months in the EEO program, they have been working hard to update the SOP for the Provisional Hire Program. At this stage, they expect to determine points of contact for reviewing the updated SOP.

- Resources have been updated that fit the SOP for hiring managers to utilize.
- The State of Alaska recently implemented Aspire Alaska, an online training platform, and through that platform, they can create targeted training. The hope is that once the SOP is finalized and the resources are available, they will create a training that will be available on Aspire Alaska and be utilized as a part of the hiring manager's curriculum.
- Establish a centralized accommodation fund for State positions
  - Implementing this has some challenges, and it is considered a long-term objective. It would require legislative support and action as it would be an appropriation. Funding will need to be identified and supported legislatively.
  - Most guidance on this subject recommends having a tracking system for a centralized accommodation fund where all accommodations go through the tracking system and are tracked from start to finish. That is another cost that will need consideration.
- Increase State employment for people with the most significant disabilities through support for Personal Care Services
  - This recommendation has some of the same considerations as the previous recommendations with regard to data on the population that would be served and similarly set utilization goals based on the data.
  - Efforts will need to be made to find jobs that are more readily accessible for individuals, including the work involved.
  - Identifying funding and resource support may involve legislative action.
- Ensure that all State of Alaska online platforms are fully accessible
  - Commissioner Paula Vrana with the Department of Administration signed off on the accessibility policy on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022. That policy has been distributed to the departments. There is still some action that will need to be taken in the Governor's Office to ensure everything is in place moving forward.
  - The policy requires that all executive branch agencies comply with the latest version of the web content accessibility guidelines. Those guidelines include specific design standards as to text, color, size, images, contrast, et cetera.
  - The Office of Information Technology is currently working with David Newman and the Division of Personnel and Labor Relations Learning and Development Program, which oversees the Aspire Alaska Program, to put training onto the Aspire Alaska platform. It is anticipated that this will be completed in the next six months.

- Currently, OIT and Learning and Development are working on ways to provide in-person instruction specifically to individuals who have a lot of hands-on with online technology, including publication specialists, IT staff, and other employees who are uploading web content.
- Educate executive and legislative staff about trends and data on employment outcomes
  - It is anticipated that with this kind of data, there will be the need to have conversations about the possibility of self-disclosures for applicants and current employees outside of DVR. Work would be involved, and data building would be required to move this recommendation forward. Self-disclosure is a process, and consideration needs to be made of where those self-disclosures are held.
  - There are mechanisms in place that could be explored, particularly for applicants. Some reporting operations could be implemented, but this will take some time to build out the data to get a full picture statewide for employment.

Patrick Reinhart and Nona Safra thanked Kate Sheehan and Kelly Roberson for the valuable information they provided to the committee.

## **Section 2, Recommendation 7: Building the capacity of the private sector to enhance employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities**

Director Duane Mayes shared the following information related to building the capacity of the private sector to enhance employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities recommendation from the AWMTF report:

Section 2: Building the capacity of the private sector to enhance employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities

- Recommendation 7:
  - Build on the existing BEST teams to increase collaboration between private-sector employers and the State of Alaska
    - DVR has a full-time individual in each region that addresses the demands of the employer community. DVR also has a business consultant specialist who does extensive statewide outreach to the employer community.
    - DVR is working on increasing its presence with the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB). The DVR director sits on the AWIB board, and they have ongoing discussions about establishing a Private Sector Employer (PSE) Subcommittee.
    - Provide resources to private sector employers on how to be disability friendly, promote disclosure by applicants and current employees, and provide accommodation and retention resources for employees with disabilities.

- Regarding developing and implementing a Workforce Diversity Symposium focusing on benefits to businesses, there was an employment thread at the Living, Working, and Playing Towards Independence Conference in September. There are ongoing discussions about creating the symposium, and work will begin to identify a funding source to make it happen.
- Reaching out to business organizations and higher education programs in business and human resources to offer training and resources on disabilities and inclusivity in the workplace continues to be a work in progress.
- DVR continues to work on reaching out to and supporting federal contractors and subcontractors in meeting their utilization goals.

Director Mayes added that much effort is being made for this section, and most of it is a work in progress. He noted that the infrastructure is in place within the division to be able to do the work.

### **Personal Stories Request**

Nona Safra opened the floor to committee members with a story on how the Council's work with employment has positively impacted them or people they know. No stories were shared. Patrick Reinhart noted that Council members are encouraged to share success stories that could be included in the reports to state and federal partners.

### **DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next Employment Committee meeting is scheduled for January 17, 2022 from 11:00 to 12:30 p.m.

### **GOOD OF THE ORDER AND ADJOURNMENT**

Jena Crafton **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Anna Attla. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.