



Supporting the Development and Retention of a World Class Workforce

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director

Robert Weil, Chair

**OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES, APRIL 24, 2020
WDB Office, 1111 Marlkress Road, Cherry Hill**

ATTENDANCE

Member	17-May-19	13-Jun-19	11-Jul-19	20-Sept-19	18-Oct-19	14-Nov-19	12-Dec-19	10-Jan-20	14-Feb-20	13-Mar-20	24-Apr-20
DeBaere, Gregg T., CHAIR											
Austin, Keith											
Cirii, Frank											
Connors, Kristi											
Deitz, Jeff											
Jones-Benjamin, Michaela											
Maguire, Laurie											
McFarland, Salama											
Regensburger, Robert											
Sinclair, Nidia											
Weil, Bob											
Swartz, Jeffrey S.											
Williams, Leslie J											
Varallo, Kathleen											

WELCOME

Gregg DeBaere, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:05am. He participated by phone. Jeffrey Swartz, Executive Director, introduced attendees to the meeting. Nidia Sinclair, Director Resource Center, also participated by phone. Jeff welcomed Michaela Benjamin Jones, Board of Social Services, sitting in for Salama McFarland, Case Management Administrator, Board of Social Services, (BSS)

ONE – STOP & WDB CERTIFICATION

Gregg asked for confirmation that there has been no feedback from the state regarding the One-Stop Certification or Local Plan Update documents. Leslie Williams, Comptroller, WDB, confirmed. He asked Leslie to review the status of the Partner Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA). Leslie said both documents and their attachments have been sent out to the partners for review and signature. She also made a courtesy call to all the partners to let them know about the email, offered to answer questions and reviewed the deadline for returning the signature page. She said the State will be signing for certain partners such as DVRS, Employment Services, and the Commission for the Blind. She said a resolution request has been sent to the County Board of Freeholders for review and signature by the local Chief Elected Official at their next meeting on Thursday, March 19th. Gregg asked if there was any indication that any agency had an issue with the timeline. Leslie said all partners she spoke with did not have a problem yet. Gregg asked if the WDB was aware of the status in other counties. Leslie said Camden County is on track to meet the State's deadline for submission on March 31st. Other counties have expressed some concerns with getting partner signatures and freeholder approval. Gregg asked if there has been any notice about a possible extension of the deadline.

Leslie said she attended a technical conference on Tuesday, March 3rd at the LWD office in Trenton. Attendees were told there would not be an extension past March 31, 2020. All documents, from all counties, are expected to be submitted on time even if they are missing some signature pages. Gregg asked Leslie about the training. Leslie said it went well overall. It did cause us to make some modifications to the IFA and operating budget because of new templates they introduced at the training. Most all questions were answered. Gregg asked Jeff and Leslie to extend thanks to the Barbara Pape, Senior Accountant and the One-Stop fiscal department. He said this re-do of the IFA caused them lots of extra work.

Gregg asked when the State Combined Plan public comment period ended. Jeff said the New Jersey Combined State Plan for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, 2020 was released for public comment. All comments had to be submitted in writing to the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) by 11:59 pm on Sunday, March 8, 2020. <https://www.nj.gov/njsetc/planning/unified/documents/NJ%20Combined%20State%20Plan%20for%20WIOA%202020%20Draft%20for%20Public%20Comment.pdf>.

Gregg asked if there are certain groups that make it a point to write public comments about the State Plan. Jeff said he wasn't sure about that but the WDB Directors participated in a focus group and many their suggestions were incorporated into the plan. The majority of what was written into the State Plan was given by the SETC. Gregg suggested that the Operations Committee review the state plan at their earliest convenience. He said it won't be long now before the local areas will be receiving guidance about completing a new local and regional plan.

- **ONE-STOP AND YOUTH ONE-STOP (YOS) UPDATES**

Nidia Sinclair, Director, Career Center, reported the official opening/ ribbon cutting of the new location will be re-scheduled to a date later this spring.

Keith Austin, Director, Unemployment Insurance (UI), reported that a system is being worked out to address concerns regarding the unemployment call center shutting down. He is aware that a majority of customers coming into the One-Stop are those with UI concerns. The volume of UI customers statewide usually increases during the first quarter of the year due to seasonal layoffs. Statewide staff are running at 2/3 of capacity so the call centers are bound to get overloaded. Things have calmed down so the call-centers are now open a good portion of the day. Jeff said he spoke to Paul Yuen at the state regarding these concerns. Since UI calls are a recurring concern, and January & February are high volume months, he suggested that the State bring on extra temporary help. Gregg said he did not want to lose sight of special times when UI claims are higher especially now during this Corona (COVID-19) concern. UI claims could spike during this time. The Committee discussed the rising concerns about possible lay-offs due to the virus. Keith said he would update the committee with any new developments.

Nidia reported that staff are continuing to cross train for the front desk and public access area. She said Youth One-Stop staff, Information Management and WDB staff had a follow up meeting about the Youth Work Experience program at the One-Stop on March 5th. She said Jeff will be able to fill in more of the details of that meeting. There were some technical questions that Jeff was going to follow up with to get further guidance.

Nidia also reported the One-Stop has a confirmed schedule for the shuttle service being provided for customers by the county and SJTA. The schedule can be given to customers at the Board of Social services. Gregg asked if there is still a decline of shuttle usage. Kristi Connors, Manager, Employment Services, LWD, said now that we have a printed schedule, there may be an increase. Jeff reported that he spoke to the Director of SJTA and he approved a recording to be aired when the high-speed train, stops at the Woodcrest Station. The recording announces the Woodcrest Station and the Camden County One-Stop Career Center.

Nidia reported that the Youth One-Stop is continuing to pull youth from the adult Tuesday and Thursday orientation. The youth are taken from the lobby area into the youth area. They are given more information by the youth counselors and then scheduled for an appointment to return. Gregg asked about probation outreach. Nidia said counselors are continuing what they have been doing and getting no response from this outreach. Nidia has had communication with Sara Barbella, Vicinage Assistant, Chief Probation Officer, Camden Adult/Juvenile Reporting Division, and she attended the Youth Investment Council (YIC) meeting on Wednesday, February 26th. She is looking at ways we can connect differently and was pleased to participate in that meeting. She has a better understanding of the needs. Hopefully, something will come out of that. Gregg asked about the Youth Mentorship program involving students attending Rowan College of South Jersey. Nidia said it was discussed at the YIC meeting. The program will have to start over next year because the spring semester has already started. Dr. Hill, former Youth Manager, had been trying to communicate and complete the MOU process. As per Rowan's request, she corrected the paperwork, sent it in and did not receive any response. Nidia said she is considering another mentoring program based in Camden City. She will be speaking with Frank first about it and then may contact this group to see if they will partner with the YOS to provide some support services. She will get back to the committee with more information.

Gregg asked if there were any youth placed into work experience. Nidia reported that there are some youth now attending the learning link who are working on their GED. There are two youth ready for 20 hours per week of work experience, but they must be matched with their career interest. One youth is attending driving school. It was thought that some work experience could be negotiated with the training vendor. Details of responsibilities between the YOS and the WDB are still being defined. Jeff said he has a call in to the state for further technical assistance. Gregg said the challenges need to be identified and addressed. Jeff said the law loosely states the WDB can run the program but there are some concerns because the criteria is much different from the Summer Youth Work Experience. In the case of the Youth Work Experience program, youth must be participating in ongoing training as part of the program as well as assessment and career planning and an individual service plan. Leslie said we did come up with an answer to one challenge and that is youth can be paid with a gift card. The gift cards may be awarded for completion of an education and training component. Leslie said going forward, it may make more sense to contract a vendor qualified to complete this process. In the meantime, the goal is to provide work experience for 8-10 youth before the end of the program year, June 30, 2020. The Committee discussed the concerns and benefits of hiring an outside vendor to complete the functions of the youth work experience program. Jeff said he will report his findings once he has received further clarification from the state.

- LEARNING LINK UPDATE

Nidia reported that the Learning Link and the CASAS test are doing very well. As a matter of fact, she said information has been sent to us regarding the Learning Link. The State discovered the differences in tests results. They sent a message that the state board of education has adapted a new passing score for each sub-test so there will be some additional participants who actually passed their High Set test and will be receiving their high school diploma or GED based on new changes in scoring. She requested a list of participants that met the score from the Information System office. We cannot get the personal changed information, but the participants will. The One-Stop will be sending out an email to these participants asking them to send us a copy or record of their GED. The Department of Education contacts the participant with their change in status and sends them their diploma. Gregg asked if the state indicated they were going to review the CASAS test concerns. Nidia said she has not heard anything regarding further CASAS review.

- COOPER HOSPITAL – MEDICAL CODING INITIATIVE (CMCI)

A consortium including Cooper University Healthcare, Camden County College, Hopeworks, the Camden County One-Stop and the Camden County Workforce Development Board have organized to create a certificate program in Medical Coding offered by Camden County College and approved by the American Health Information Management Association as an appropriate training platform, with the addition of certain life skills training provided by Hopeworks. Hopeworks will qualify participants for the positions and the career ladders will be identified by Cooper. This will further enable the participants to advance academically towards securing associate and baccalaureate degrees.

Jeff reported that Lou Bezich, Senior Vice President, Strategic Alliances, is moving forward with an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program that would be designed in a similar way as the medical coding program. Jeff said he attended a conference call on February 17th about the program. Hopeworks is taking the lead on support materials and screening candidates for the program. Camden County College will also be participating by providing the EMT course at the Camden City Campus. Gregg asked if the College trimmed the cost of the training. Jeff said he wasn't sure but Hopeworks did not seem to have a problem with the costs. Participants will receive an industry recognized EMT credential as well as options for continuing education.

- BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES UPDATE

It is the mission of the Camden County Board of Social Services to provide timely, efficient, cost-effective delivery of social, medical and economic programs in a compassionate and financially responsible manner. The Camden County Board of Social Services is accessible to disabled persons. (Follow the link for more information. <http://www.camdencounty.com/service/social-services/>)

Michaela Benjamin Jones, Board of Social Services, reported for Salama McFarland, Case Management Administrator, Board of Social Services, (BSS). She said most of her reporting will be to confirm Salama's notes from last month's meeting. She confirmed that SNAP customers did receive a slight increase of benefits loaded on to their card as a utilities allowance.

(The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the largest federal nutrition assistance program. SNAP provides benefits to eligible low-income individuals and families via an Electronic Benefits Transfer card. This card can be used like a debit card to purchase eligible food in authorized retail food stores. The SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) Program helps SNAP participants gain skills, training, or work experience to increase their ability to obtain regular employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency.)

Michaela said, as of right now, the waiver for ABAWD will end as of April 1st, 2020. Customers are being assessed to determine whether they have any further barriers to attending the mandatory minimum 20 hours per week work activity. If there are no barriers, customers will be referred to a work activity as a requirement for maintaining benefits. Once they are referred, the One-Stop will take over case management from there on out. Gregg asked Kristi about numbers of customers referred to work activities. Kristi said that 27 customers were referred, and of that number, 4 were SNAP recipients. Michaela said her office has been conducting two days of calling each week to determine who will be referred to the One-Stop. All agreed the numbers may increase after next month. Kristi said it is likely more customers will show up once the letter of requirement is issued in April. Nidia said the referral will create a shift for the Resource Center because, according to what she is understanding, her staff will then be the case managers for that population. It will require having a case manager dedicated to serving these customers. If what is projected will increase referrals significantly, it will create some challenges because it has not been done in many years. Gregg suggested making Jim Rhodes, Deputy County Administrator, aware of the coming situation, since he provides oversight to both the Board of Social Services and the One-Stop. There may be a need for additional measures or shifts in programming or additional staff. Nidia said she will be meeting with him on Tuesday of next week. She said there are some measures set up but because she does not know what to expect, there may be a need for additional staff.

Kristi said there are two different schools of thought on work activities, so if a SNAP recipient is working 10 hours, part-time, they are still getting scheduled for G-jobs and they must get up to 30 hours. She said if they work at least ten hours and must participate up to 20 hours in a work activity, that may be almost impossible to do. If the customer is working part-time it might make more sense to refer them to an additional 20 hours of work as a CWEP and a lot less intensive work on the part of the case management. Kristi said more computers may be added to classroom 5 for self-study. Nidia said that five computers have been added in that classroom. Nidia also said that they are considering releasing a request for proposal (RFP) to hire a vendor to provide work activities. This is done in other counties. Nidia said she is organizing a meeting for some time next week with Board and One-Stop staff so some plans can be further developed for the increase in referrals. Gregg said we will have to see how it goes and adjust accordingly. He was happy to hear that One-Stop management was on top of the situation and preparing.

- **DVRS UPDATES & PROJECT SEARCH – JEFFERSON/KENNEDY HOSPITAL**

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services provides counseling, training, education, transportation, job placement, assistive technology and other support services to people with disabilities. (Follow the link for more information) <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/dvrs>

Jeff Dietz reported that Karen Carrol has been appointed the new State Director of the Division Vocational Rehabilitation Services. She had agreed to speak at the next WDB Quarterly Board of

Trustees meeting on March 25th. He is hoping she can be re-scheduled for the September Quarterly meeting.

Jeff D. said counselor training has been completed and the feedback was very positive. He is providing the same training to clerical staff in his office, so they will have a good understanding about new processes and procedures.

Jeff D. reported Jefferson/Kennedy is starting the next step in the evaluation process for the next cohort of students starting in August or September 2020. As of now, there are about 15 participants that are being considered. Jefferson/Kennedy and TD Bank are on board to continue the Project Search training program. Both cohorts will be 15 students. The Reverse Job Fair took place on Monday, March 2, 2020 at Jefferson Cherry Hill Hospital, 2201 Chapel Ave. West, Cherry Hill, NJ 08002. From all indications, it went very well. Gregg asked if there were any new ideas or lessons learned that came as a result of this year's job fair. Jeff D. said it is a very good vehicle for the participants to practice interviewing skills and even their preparation for the job fair provides a good experience in work-readiness skills. It also reverses the role of the employer and student. He said he's waiting for the outcome report that will be reviewed at next month's Project Search meeting. Jeff D. said he will be attending a partner meeting for Project Search. Gregg asked Jeff for his thoughts on TD Bank's level of commitment to the program. Jeff D. said there is a new person assigned to represent the bank's participation in the program. He is anticipating a meeting with her to review the program. Gregg said they are a big organization and he would like to see more hires as a result of the program. The participants are being trained for functions that can be applied to banking. Jeff D. agreed with Gregg's observation. Participants are getting hired by the hotel training site. Two participants were hired last year. The program is intended to create sustainable careers for these individuals. He does not see the success in participants ending up in janitorial or housekeeping positions. It is a very good public relations opportunity for TD Bank that may be underutilized.

Gregg asked if there is a bank conducting financial literacy workshops, at the One-Stop since TD left. Kristi said Stephanie C. Rizzi, Assistant Vice President, Republic Bank, was doing workshops for G-Jobs but she pulled back because there has been little interest. She will do an overview and then offers to meet one-on-one with customers but has gotten very few requests. We are trying to figure out a way to increase interest in that offering. Leslie said that the population may require adapting the program differently to meet their specific needs. Nidia said her conversations with the instructor was that she was trying to help customers who needed help clearing their credit. There may have been one or two customers interested in doing that. The expectation of her employer was to be able to add customers to the bank and that may have been another reason she pulled back. Nidia said she is going to try to get in touch with a former instructor who may be willing to pick up financial literacy instruction again at the One-Stop. Gregg remembered her and said she was very good. He said we may have to decide between credit counseling and financial literacy. They are both very important, but they are two completely different topics and we may have to pick a new bank to teach the workshop.

Kathleen said Jennifer Veneziani, Program Planning and Development Specialist, NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, said at the last BSR meeting that DVRS was moving out of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Jeff D. said the division is moving into the Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI). They have not made a formal announcement yet. A position was posted for another Assistant Commissioner to lead that division. He said DVRS was under that division back in the year 2000. He did not notice any difference. It seems the state is trying to get all disability services back under one umbrella.

- **EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, LWD**

Employment Services provides Camden County with Career and Employer services including Temporary Disability Benefits, Family Leave Insurance, Maternity Leave, Unemployment Insurance, Social Security Disability and Workers Compensation. Services for employers included job candidate screening and recruitment. (Follow the link for more information) <https://www.nj.gov/labor/aboutlwd/>

Kristi Connors, Manager, Employment Services, LWD, reported that she may be getting two employment service trainees, one being a bi-lingual trainee. She said discussions are ongoing about training for the front desk and public access area. It has been difficult relieving staff in order to train them. This month, she will try to get a date set for that training. She will review the customer intake check in system. Her thoughts are to transition to one person at the front desk that is the main receptionist and one person from unemployment. We can identify the strongest staff for the front desk. It will be like walking into any large office lobby. She will be meeting with Directors and Managers to help identify the strongest staff, with the best customer service skills, and have them be the point person for the front desk.

The One-Stop Work-flow Report, generated as a result of the check-in form implemented in January 2020, continues to track important data about the flow of customers into the One-Stop. Customers are directed to computer stations to fill out the brief survey so front desk personnel can understand their needs and direct them to the right service.

Kristi said she is sending the work-flow report to the WDB every week. Last week, the One-Stop checked in 817 customers. At the height of seasonal layoffs, it was 1242 with 82% in the building seeking information about unemployment claims. Last week was 42% but it is still the highest percentage of customer traffic. She does anticipate an increase in claims due to the COVID-19 response efforts. She expressed concerns about a possible government shut down. At this point, she said it is hard to predict what the volume will be. Schools are already closing which means bus drivers, cafeteria and maintenance workers and that's just the start of things to come. The fact that large gatherings are being limited and there are already 130 staff essentially in one large room puts an automatic safety issue on the building. She sent the Work-flow Reports to the state so they could understand what the impact is at least in our local area. Ours is the only local area currently set up to track the flow of customers into the One-Stop. Hopefully, it will help the state make the right decision about response efforts. The Committee discussed concerns about COVID – 19 response efforts as it relates to the local One-Stop. Nidia said that Frank has been requested by the county to create an implementation plan in case of a shut down. She said he has been in touch with the health department and all other agencies that

would provide guidance and direction. All agreed that the One-Stop and WDB will be in regular communications about state decisions.

Kristi reported that 27 customers were scheduled for G-Jobs, 11 customers showed up, 4 were SNAP and we are down to 4 customers are still attending. She expressed her feeling again that it is more productive to refer customers working part time to a CWEP position as opposed to G-Jobs. It does not make sense to keep them in a G-job workshop. There is a big process that must be developed for the One-Stop to take over the second part of assessment and case management.

- **REGIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Jeff reported Atlantic City Electric (ACE) Training Initiative continuing its second year of training at Camden County College, William G. Rohrer Center in Cherry Hill. The college is still open, and the WISE class is on track to complete this week. The GIE Math class will immediately follow starting next Friday. The next phase of training will be the Line Training. This training is going to be conducted at the Anthony Canale Training Center in Egg Harbor Township, NJ. Kathleen reported that all the contracts, equipment orders and instructor agreements should be processed by the end of March and a firm date will be set to start that training.

The ACE Employer Information Session planned for Friday, April 3, 2020 at Rowan College of South Jersey has been postponed due COVID-19 response efforts.

- **CONSORTIUM & INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP UPDATES**

Jeff reported the Health Care Consortium meetings have been cancelled until further notice due to the demands on the healthcare industry in response to COVID – 19 response efforts.

Jeff reported The South Jersey Industry Regional Partnership, aimed at growing and strengthening the manufacturing sector, did launch on Tuesday, February 25, 2020 at Radwell International, Willingboro, NJ. John Radwell, Vice President, Radwell International, agreed to be the first champion and host that event. He said there were probably about 12 employers in attendance that sat at a large conference table. The workforce and education professionals sat in the outer areas behind the table and basically just listened. Jeff said his takeaway from the program was that it was very well done. Employers are telling us they need skilled workers; they cannot find skilled workers and they rely heavily on the training programs that are available in the local areas so they can fill the jobs that they need. Some of the employers were very upfront about their thoughts on leaving New Jersey. The State has inherent problems with taxes and high costs which makes it difficult to attract good talent from outside of the state. It was a very good session with a lot of good ideas and concerns that were addressed and there will be follow up to issues raised at the launch.

- **BUSINESS SERVICES (BSR)**

Jeff reported that the Business Service Team meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 12, was cancelled. He said Jason Newman, Veterans Services Representative, has been replaced by Ricky O'Hara who filled in for Jason when he was on an extended family leave. Jason did return to work but took another position in another county. Jeff said he attended a US Census

information session and recruitment hosted by Congressman, Donald Norcross on February 14th at 2pm, at the Pennsauken Township Library. (*The county is now offering \$20 per hour to county residents hired for the US Census.*) He also attended a regional BSR meeting at the One-Stop on Friday March 6th. He addressed a group of BSRs and made them more aware of regional WDB initiatives. Jeanne Page-Soncrant, BSR Camden County, also organized a tour of the Cooper MD Anderson Cancer Center in the afternoon. She set it up with Beth Green, WDB member, who works at Cooper.

- QUARTERLY BOARD MEETING

The next WDB Quarterly Board of Trustees meeting scheduled for Wednesday, March 25th at the Camden County College has been cancelled due COVID -19 response efforts. Jeff said all board business will be conducted by an electronic vote.

NEXT MEETING

The next Operations Committee meeting will be scheduled for Friday, April 17th, 10:30 A.M. at the WDB office. Jeff said all WDB meeting scheduled for the month of April will be held by conference call. A notice of that meeting will be sent with dial in information. The Committee discussed and agreed that starting in May, meetings will be moved to Thursdays, for the summer, at a time to be determined.

Submitted by:

Kathleen Varallo

Administrative Assistant