



OFFICE of the GOVERNOR

JOHN BEL EDWARDS

**State As a Model Employer Task Force
Friday, April 27, 2018**

Attendees:

Bambi Polotzola
Cheryl Schilling
Cindy Rives
Elana Branzaru via phone
Joan Haase
Lisa S. Vosper
Melissa Bayham proxy for Mark Thomas
Ken York proxy for Shannon Joseph
Sue Killam
Tanisha Matthews
Taryn Branson

Guests:

Susan Pellegrin
Rosemary Morales

Staff:

April Dunn
Jolan Jolivette
Kia Sims

Ms. Bambi Polotzola called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. Attendees introduced about themselves and the departments/organizations that they represent.

Ms. Polotzola presented a PowerPoint to help led the meetings discussions. She asked members to identify ways in which they believe will help the task be more productive. Ms. Matthews suggested that members be active participants and regularly attend meetings.

Ms. Polotzola gave a brief background into why this task force was formed and explained the Office of Community Programs, the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs, and Employment First Workgroup. She also explained how transportation is a huge barrier for citizens in general, but especially for those with disabilities.

Discussion of Definition of Disability

There was discussion with the task force on how to define disability. Specifically mentioned are those with "silent disabilities" that aren't as recognizable as those with physical disabilities. Ms. Haase explained that there is no current definition of disability with civil service. Rule 222.8 allows people to go through an alternative hiring process that does not include taking the civil service exam, but it is not often used. It was discussed that there aren't many ways to get information on those that don't have noticeable disabilities, so there needs to be a system to identify those people. It was discussed that it's important to define what disability means in this context, because everyone has a different definitions based on their perspective. It was suggested that we look to see what is already in the civil service rules, stature, constitution, etc. to see what rules are already in place. Ms. Haase pointed out that as of now, candidates who can have normal civil service restrictions waived has to go through LHR under current rules. Ms. Polotzola moved to make the recommendation to civil service to re-evaluate the definitions.

Training

It was discussed that ethics training have made employees aware of unethical practices and suggested that the Task Force recommend a way to train people on disabilities that would encourage people to self-report their disabilities. Suggestion of sensitivity training on those with disabilities was supported.

There was a discussion of different levels of training. The group agreed that the basic level is for everyone and that anyone that's hiring/supervising process should have a more in depth training.

The following were suggested:

- Include training on how to identify ways in which those with disabilities can be hired.
- Shouldn't stereotype people into a special population but just provide an accommodation if the person can do the job.
- Engage the appropriate training authorities, so the recommendation should be to suggest the training.

Self-Disclosure Survey

The Task Force discussed reasons why people don't self-report and ways that the task force could address those issues. The Task Force brought up the point that supervisors don't even know how to ask someone with a disability if they need any accommodations if they don't ask on their own. It was asked if other agencies surveyed for those with disabilities and it was noted that most do not, but there may be an opportunity through a survey through LEO or some other form of technology. It was discussed that employees might feel more comfortable if that survey didn't come from their state agency. Ms. Polotzola pointed out that those with disabilities who are already employed are not the population that the group has been tasked with helping. The goal of the task force is to open the door to those who aren't employed at all. It was suggested that we use Form CC-305 from the Office of Federal Contracts as an example for a survey.

Other Issues

- The Task Force discussed that there are services available but many are being underutilized. It was discussed that access to transportation is difficult for lots of people not just those with disabilities.
- There was a discussion of the importance of internships for those with disabilities to help debunk the stigma around them. It was mentioned that there have been interns with disabilities in the Governor's Office who have become full-time and part-time employees.
- The committee discussed of the SAME report from EARN. Ms. Killam suggested that everyone read through the entire EARN report.

Next Steps

- GODA will begin working on the draft of the survey.
- Talk to civil service about evaluating the hiring rule.
- Agencies should look at strategies/materials regarding employment for individuals with disabilities and there should be a uniform message.
- Two tier disability trainings: 1) hiring managers/supervisors and 2) staff.
- Read through the entire EARN report