

GEORGIA MOUNTAINS ONE-STOP PARTNERS MEETING

Minutes

The Georgia Mountains One-Stop Partners met on Tuesday, September 25, 2018 at 11:00 a.m. The meeting was held at the One-Stop Center, 1856 Thompson Bridge Rd. Gainesville, GA. The following were present:

John Phillips, WorkSource Georgia Mountains
Heather Feldman, Georgia Mountains Regional Commission
Whitney Williams, WorkSource Georgia Mountains
Mark Winters, Georgia Department of Labor
Lupita Smith, Georgia Department of Labor
Shannon Cole, Lanier Technical College
Jim Watson, Lanier Technical College
Jessica Williams, WorkSource Georgia Mountains
Jimmy DeFoor, Vocational Rehabilitation (retired)
Deborah Morris, Vocational Rehabilitation
Stephanie Ponce, Georgia Department of Labor
Mary Margaret Garrett, Georgia Mountains Regional Commission
Benjie Hopkins, Hopkins Associates
Marsha Hopkins, Hopkins Associates

Welcome and Introductions

Benjie Hopkins, Operator for the Georgia Mountains One-Stop Center, welcomed everyone, and had each person give a brief introduction. A special welcome was extended to Stephanie Ponce, new Georgia Department of Labor District 2 Coordinator.

Minutes from the July 31, 2018 meeting were emailed previously. Posted at: www.onestopworkgamtns.org

Announcements

Debbie Morris reported that she was representing Vocational Rehabilitation since Laura Gall has taken a different position at the Athens GVRA office.

John Phillips noted that new positions are being filled for the WorkSource staff. He also mentioned a recent meeting between WorkSource Georgia Mountains, staff from the Greater Hall Chamber, and local businesses concerning apprenticeships. About 20 businesses indicated an interest in establishing these. This effort will first be based in Hall County, but it can be expanded to the Toccoa and Lavonia areas and beyond. Economic Development and ARC (Appalachian Regional Commission) may also play a part.

A new video, produced by the Greater Hall Chamber, promotes work-based learning for manufacturing jobs. A copy of the video was reviewed by the group. <https://www.ghcc.com/education/workforce-development/>

Mark Winters announced an upcoming Job Fair sponsored by GDOL and the Greater Hall Chamber. It will be held on Saturday, October 13th at the Gainesville Civic Center. Many local businesses will be represented.

Jessica Williams reported there are currently two open positions in the youth program, and she is working to fill them soon. Also, WorkSource Georgia Mountains is partnering with transition counselors to reach additional youth.

Shannon Cole mentioned an Open House at Lanier Technical College to be held on October 19th. He also stated that Brenda Thomas has retired due to health issues.

Jim Watson is working on a grant involving internships.

On October 24th, Georgia Labor Commissioner Mark Butler will hold a Region 2 Business Summit.

The most recent report for Unemployment in Georgia is 3.8%. In the Georgia Mountains Region, it is 3.4%. MOUs, (Memoranda of Understanding) for all partners will be updated soon.

Focus Topic: Vocational Rehabilitation

Benjie introduced Jimmy DeFoor as the first Chairman Emeritus of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board. Jimmy was the Board's first chairman, serving in that position from the Board's inception in 2012. He was instrumental in the drafting of the legislation that created the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA), which today has around 1,400 employees whose mission is to promote career and living independence for individuals with disabilities. Jimmy served as past president of the Georgia Rehabilitation Association. He retired from Vocational Rehabilitation in 2002, having served for 34 years. Jimmy gave a summary of the development of Vocational Rehabilitation, noting that it is one of the oldest programs in the federal system. Two pieces of federal legislation were enacted, one in 1919 and one in 1920, to help veterans from World War I. Many civilians also benefitted from this legislation. Senator Hoke Smith from Georgia played a crucial role in these. In 1966, Vocational Rehabilitation counselors operated through the Model Cities Program. In 1973, legislation was passed in Georgia to provide CRCs – Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. These individuals must be trained, tested, and certified. Sean Casey serves as Executive Director of GVRA. Vocational Rehabilitation is one of several programs of GVRA.

GVRA Programs include:

1. Disability Adjudication – located in Stone Mountain. Determine Social Security Disability under medically based qualifications – federally funded, but employees are under State GVRA.
2. Programs and rehabilitation facilities at Warm Springs and Cave Springs – centers for significant disabilities and for deaf and other disabilities.
3. Business Enterprise Program – for persons with visual limitations – i.e. Vendors at federal buildings; food service program at Fort Benning; Georgia Industries for the Blind at Bainbridge and Griffin – manufacture products such as yellow safety vests, tee shirts, office supplies, etc.
4. Vocational Rehabilitation Program – for individuals in need of and interested in employment. Eligibility for the program is medically determined.

Jimmy introduced Debbie Morris, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in Gainesville. She continued the presentation. Debbie noted that under the Individuals with Disabilities Act, counselors receive referrals from the secondary school systems for individuals who may need assistance with transition from the school setting. Most clients are age 14 and over. Referrals are also received from colleges and technical schools. Walk-in and phone referrals are also accepted. Applications are taken to determine eligibility. E-3 is a transitional program – Explore, Engage, Employ. A pilot program is in place at Gainesville High School with a counselor on site to offer services four days a week. Counselors also work with adults with disabilities. Medical and psychological consultants are used to determine eligibility for SSDI – Social Security Disability Insurance. Criteria for SSDI is permanent and total disability. A re-determination of eligibility is sometimes conducted. Warm Springs is a new residential facility offering a broad range of vocational training for individuals with disabilities. Programs include: simulators for heavy equipment operation; computer programming, CNA training, robotics; drivers licensing; horticulture training; and help with reading. For contact information: <https://gvs.georgia.gov/>

Partner Information

Benjie distributed an article from the GDOL website titled “Four Steps to a New Career”. This piece describes several tools available to job seekers in Georgia. <https://dol.georgia.gov/documents/four-steps-new-career>
He also provided a handout from GCDD (Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities) titled People First Language: A Guide for Writing and Speaking About People Who Live with Disabilities. <https://gcdd.org/news-a-media/people-first-language.html>

Date for Next Meeting

The date for the next One-Stop Partners Meeting was set for Tuesday, November 27, 2018 at 11:00 a.m.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:00 p.m.