

Task Force on Eliminating Subminimum Wages Meeting summary for March 12, 2024 (virtual session)

- Participants listed below.
- Go to the [task force webpage](#) and select the meetings tab to review the formal meeting agenda, presentation slides, and any other relevant documents from the meeting, once posted.

Main meeting topic

The task force heard an update on Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) activities related to task force recommendations. The task force also heard a presentation from the Minnesota Transformation Initiative (MTI) about their activities.

Key agenda items

- Update from DHS
- Presentation from MTI
- Closure activity

Update from DHS

New hire, Kristy Howe, was introduced. She started January 10, 2024, as the new Employment First coordinator. Kristy gave a brief introduction.

Case management training

Cole Sorensen was excited to announce the launch of the newly required, State Employment Leadership Network training for case managers. The course is designed for case managers and those in similar roles responsible for advising, assisting, and advocating for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) seeking employment. Cole reported that as of March 6, 2024, 341 people have enrolled thus far, and of those 121 have completed.

Benefits planning/work incentives

Beth Grube displayed the Disability Hub MN - Agency strategies webpage for the group to see the tools available. She briefly explained the different modules (9) and levels of engagement. Beth spoke to the goal of making benefits planning part of the culture.

Beth discussed Medical Assistant for Employed People with Disabilities (MA-EPD) focus groups. Qualifying participants had earnings less than \$1,000/month. Of the twenty (20) qualified participants, thirteen (13) were interviewed with the primary goal of finding out why of finding out why they have lower earnings, and if there are program or policy issues limiting their ability to work. Are they working as much as they want to? A lot was learned with a few key points being confusion (more clarity needs to be provided on finding and application/reporting process) and flexible (customized) employment. DHS continues to work on MA-EPD communication strategies.

Beth spoke to the MA-EPD 2024 legislative bill regarding eligibility review. This bill prevents people from getting removed from the MA-EPD program due to the inability to pay monthly premiums. She discussed the six (6) and twelve (12) month review process and premium modifications.

Currently, if you miss a couple payments you are removed from the program and lose health care benefits.

Jillian Nelson added that the intent of the bill is so people do not have to make a choice in paying necessary life expenses and their MA-EPD premium. Also adding that this bill has good support in the House and Senate.

Presentation from MTI

Danielle Mahoehney, with the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration, presented a 2-year overview of the work being done through MTI. MTI is a funding by Minnesota DHS to reduce the number of people with disability receiving subminimum wages and to expand statewide capacity for competitive, integrated employment by providing support to employment providers. MTI provides peer-mentoring strategies for job seekers with disabilities and for organizations, along with progress and quality assessment.

Danielle spoke of statewide training offerings, engagement with lead agencies, and peer mentoring programs MTI has implemented, some being as the result of lessons learned.

Danielle discussed individual outcomes that have been tracked outcomes throughout imitative.

- People receiving subminimum wage:
- 967 at start of the project (spring 2022)
- 143 as of December 2023
- People in competitive, integrated employment:
- 44 people who were currently receiving subminimum wage
- Average hours worked in two-week period: 25
- Average income earned in two-week period: \$323.23

The other 800 people are in a myriad of situations; some have transitioned into group employment or other day supports, with not a lot of other data. Danielle added that there is a big range of providers with size (number of people it is supporting), geography, and services. With some providers starting from scratch. Larissa Beck called questions on continuing to track data and stated that it would be interesting to see how the resources helped those agencies with support vs those who did not.

Lesli Kerkhoff stated that providers that have not ended will be tracked through August of this year.

Danielle talked about lessons learned:

- Need to focus on what is being built, not what is "going away"
- Transformation requires courageous and actionable leadership
- Building partnerships across key stakeholders is absolutely critical

What is next for MTI? Danielle stated that funding has been extended and they are in the process of planning for the next couple of years. Items and services that will continue and expand include:

- Provider technical assistant
- Statewide training – new cohort starting soon
- Lead agency support
- Resources development and dissemination – new monthly newsletter, sign up to receive it
- Planning and guidance about policy and outcome data collection

Questions:

Andrea Zuber recognized the work that has been done and the power of the work done.

Danielle stated that partnerships have been key in supporting this work and they look to create even more.

Jon Alexander commented on the importance of finding the complete data [tracking] of the total 900+ people at the start of the project. He stated it is critical to have the information to get a handle on what people are doing, otherwise people may assume they are sitting at home.

Larissa Beck called questions on changes that providers are making and inquired on the financial aspects. Danielle answered stating that plans created with eight (8) of the included a financial as part of their plans.

The group thanked Danielle for her time, work, and presentation.

Closure activity

Members were directed to Padlet with three questions:

- What do you appreciate most about your experience on the task force?
- What did you learn for working on the task force that will stay with you?
- What if any do you plan to do to carry this work forward into the future?

Members were given time add comments to Padlet. This being the last taskforce meeting members shared their appreciation for this work and collaboration of this taskforce, and how it has impacted legislative recommendations. The taskforce chairs and MAD support team was recognized for their work.

Closing

Jillian Nelson closed with a brief background of the subminimum wage movement and how the taskforce was formed. How there were many struggles, including a pandemic. She expressed her heartfelt gratitude, stating that this group has exceed all expectations and thank you!

Task force participants

Task force members:

- Alex (Jon) Alexander
- Larissa Beck
- Amanda Jensen-Stahl
- Alex Junge
- Michelle Kamenov
- Kirk Langsjoen
- Debbie Luther
- Heidi Maghan
- Jillian Nelson
- Lori Schluttenhofer
- Andrea Zuber
- Brittanie Hernandez-Wilson

Others:

- Jessica Burke (Management Analysis and Development [MAD])
- Danielle Schweitzer (MAD)
- Lesli Kerkhoff (DHS)
- Beth Grube (DHS)
- Cole Sorenson (DHS)
- Kristy Howe (DHS)
- Danielle Mahoehney (University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration)