

**Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Rehabilitation Council
397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, Virginia
Approved Minutes, Quarterly Meeting
June 13, 2009**

Members Present: Faye Adams, William Alley, Marguerite Bardone via conference call, Pat Beattie, Melanie Brunson, Michael Burton, Frances Daniel, Richard Gonzalez, Richard Holley, Michael Kasey, Martha Macias, Hortense Macon, Angela Matney, Marianne Moore, Sherrie Phillips, Doug Powell

Members Absent: – Benjamin Franklin, Raymond Kenney and Robin Metcalf

Staff Present: Ray Hopkins, Commissioner; Bob Burton, Deputy Commissioner for Services; Joan Carneal, Support Staff; Susan Payne, VR Program Director

Guests Present: Ms. Burton, Driver; Ms. Boyd, Driver; Mr. Robert Froehlich and Ms. Maureen McGuire-Kuletz, TACE

Call to Order: Ms. Beattie called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

Adoption of Agenda: A motion was made by Mr. Powell, seconded by Ms. Daniel, and passed by unanimous voice vote that the agenda be adopted as distributed.

Action on Minutes of the Previous Meeting: A motion was made by Mr. Powell, seconded by Ms. Phillips and passed by unanimous voice vote that the minutes be adopted as distributed.

Comments from the Public: There were no comments from the public.

Commissioner's Report – Mr. Hopkins

Budget Update

We are ending SFY 2009 on June 30. We survived the year without any real financial crisis. The concern remains that DBVI may face further budget reductions in 2010.

Economic Stimulus Funds

Funding has been made available to states through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA). However, the Commonwealth has not dispersed funds yet as coding for tracking spending has not been established. It is anticipated that agencies will receive the money by July 1. VR will receive 1.5 million dollars in two parts and funds are to be expended over the next two years. Funding for the IL program is \$866,000. DBVI will serve clientele first, then improve the ability of service providers who actually serve blind and vision impaired individuals. Agencies received a memo from the Governor encouraging them to reduce expenditure by enhancing video conferencing, cutting down on travel expenses and ways to save on energy.

Order of Selection

Categories 2 and 3 opened on June 1. Funds from the stimulus package will be used to serve those individuals who are currently on the waiting list and those who would have been placed on the waiting list if Categories 2 and 3 were closed. Category 1 expenses will be paid using basic grant funds.

Accessibility Policy

Commissioner Hopkins has not yet assigned this activity to staff.

Update on Regional Offices - Mr. Burton

- Bristol has one O&M specialist who will be retiring in August and we have requested permission to fill the position with a part time wage employee
- Roanoke will have one education coordinator retiring at the end of August with 32 years of service and we will be requesting to fill that position.
- Staunton had one VR counselor with 41 years of service retire the end of May and we are currently recruiting for that position.
- Fairfax is currently recruiting for a rehabilitation teacher.
- Richmond has not had any changes since the last meeting.
- Norfolk has hired a new VR counselor, Nikki Jeffords. Nikki was employed as a VR counselor with the Blindness Division of the Arizona RSA from August of 2002 to January of 2007. She received the NFB "Distinguished Service Award" in September of 2005, and she was recognized by the Arizona Council for the Blind for her work on behalf of people who are blind in May of 2006. Nikki also served on the Arizona Governor's Council for the Blind, and she was employed in the private sector prior to becoming a counselor.
- VRCBVI is currently recruiting for two O&M specialists. Linda Price has been hired as the new personal and home management instructor. Rashmi Deshpande has been hired as the new vocational evaluator and comes to us with a Master's in Rehab Counseling from VCU. We should be interviewing for the assistance director of instruction by the end of the month.
- Headquarters accepted applications for the policy planning specialist position left vacant by the retirement of Mr. Granger, and we will be interviewing for that position very soon. The deafblind program director position is still vacant, and we are waiting for budget direction regarding filling that position.
- We have now completed two sessions of our "Investing in Our Workforce" training which included a history of the agency and an overview of services. The next session will be held on June 24 regarding the DBVI Policy Manual.
- The Roanoke office relocation to the Crossroads Mall is planned for July 20; however, after a walk through last Monday, it appears it will not occur that soon.
- Over the past three months, Ms. Lindsey and Mr. Burton have been visiting all of the regional offices to discuss the Center program and solicit comments and suggestions. A workgroup representing the Center and our major service programs has been established to foster better communications between the Center and the field staff.

Renovation of VRCBVI

Architects will be presenting their initial schematics of their ideas for the renovation of the administration and activities building at the Center. Ms. Lindsey, Mr. Hopkins, Ms. McCarthy and Mr. Burton met to discuss how they will be able to relocate all of the instructional areas and offices during the renovation project. We will be primarily using space in various buildings throughout the campus.

Older Blind Grant Stimulus Funds

The agency received an additional \$866,000 in ARRA funds that can be used for customers eligible for the Older Blind Grant program. The funds must be obligated within the next two years. In order to spend these funds we have initiated the following changes: lifted restrictions on who is eligible for cost services (no longer have to be legally blind but simply visually impaired) and loosened the financial eligibility for cost services. One area that we have historically not been able to provide for our older blind customers relates to the provision of assistive technology. With the addition of the stimulus funds we will be focusing on placing computer work stations with assistive technology in the homes of customers who have been determined to be able to benefit from this equipment in terms of maintaining their personal independence.

Standards and Indicators Quarterly Update – No report available.

Status of Staff Vacancies, Hiring - This report was included in the Regional Offices Update.

VR Program Updates – Susan Payne

1. 2009 Annual Report

SRC Annual Report committee met on Monday, March 23, 2009. The committee developed several ideas including:

- Leaning down the report;
- Getting rid of excessive text and unnecessary components;
- Developing a Table of Contents;
- Using a banner on every page with only one page per topic area;
- Adding human interest element, using quotes from students and adults who have or are receiving services;
- Preparing the report in Word format; and
- Using a bullet format.

1. 2009 State Plan Update

- Due July 1, 2009;
- Developed with the assistance of the SRC State plan committee;
- Incorporates committee edits and suggestions coordinated via email;
- Ready to submit next week; and
- New online submission process requiring submission of the entire preprint, including certification pages and all corresponding attachments regardless of whether they have been previously received by RSA, which comprises the State plan and Supplement for 2010.

- A motion was made by Mr. Powell to endorse the State plan with the few minor edits being submitted to Ms. Payne by Tuesday of next week. Ms. Beattie seconded the motion. It was passed by unanimous vote to submit the State plan as edited to RSA. Ms. Beattie thanked the committee for all their help in preparing the State plan.

2. VR Program updates 10/1/08 - 5/30/09

- Total successfully employed 91;
- Weekly Wage at application \$198.01;
- Weekly Wage at closure \$400; and
- Average cost of services \$10,865.17.

Ms. Matney inquired if it was possible to obtain a median and ranges report through AWARE. Ms. Matney volunteered to assist in recommending language that might be more helpful or to more accurately reflect actual services/progress.

Pilot Mentoring Program – Reported on later by Mr. Powell.

Lunch – There was a short break for members to set up for lunch at 12:05 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 12:20 p.m.

Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE) – Robert Froehlick and Maureen McGuire-Kuletz

The George Washington University Mid-Atlantic Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center collaborates with the State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies, community rehabilitation providers and agency partners to promote effective and efficient VR service delivery systems and improvements in the quality and quantity of employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities. They serve public VR agencies, community rehabilitation providers, SRCs, SILCs, CILs, and other employment rehabilitation partners. They provide technical assistance and continuing education to Mid-Atlantic State-Federal VR agencies and their community partners through structured and facilitated learning opportunities. Ms. McGuire-Kuletz provided a history of TACE, along with giving locations of the centers in the ten regions. Mr. Froehlich is the main liaison between GWU and DBVI/SRC. They will be working with state agencies and community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) determining the level of training provided to the CRPs. The goal is increasing and improving the quality and quantity of employment. They can provide training and resources. They can coordinate on regional basis SRCs to facilitate networking. National and regional experts can be funded to provide consultation and training. They provide continuing education courses for certified VR counselors. Mr. Kasey stated that there is an emerging desire for certification for people to teach braille. Ms. McGuire-Kuletz stated they could help facilitate but would not necessarily provide continuing education. Specific ways identified through discussion that TACE might be able to assist the Council are: 1) guidance regarding the comprehensive needs assessment; 2) preparing for the RSA monitoring onsite visit; and 3) orientation training for new members. Mr. Froehlich encouraged members to visit their new fully accessible website at www.gwcre.org. He encouraged members to send in feedback on accessibility of the new website.

Subcommittee Reports:

Transportation – No report available.

Transition – Ms. Moore

DOE received a letter from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) stating that they met requirements regarding the Annual Performance Report and State Performance Plan. This report provides information about progress and slippage on twenty performance indicators. “Meets Requirements” is the highest designation provided by OSEP.

In March John Eisenberg was named director of Instructional Support and Related Services, a unit in the office of Special Education and Students Services. Debbie Pfiesser and Karen Trump are technical assistants in this new unit. Assistive technology services and Alternate Instructional Material – Virginia (AIM-VA) fall under John’s responsibilities. There were 4,222 orders in 2008 and 1,700 book orders since March, 2009. There are 148 digital managers registered. One thousand ninety-one books have been scanned, and there are 950 large print books in circulation. There are 919 books accessible through PDF. There are 76 DAISY/NIMAS available. There are multiple training web casts for users. With Read Outloud (text to speech), all divisions have unlimited site license to include home usage. Karen Trump is working on vision impaired guidelines. The deafblind project is funded for another five years.

Effective July 1, supervision of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind will transfer from VDOE to a Board of Visitors (HB 2353).

Added another assessment alternative called the VMAST (2%).

The Transition Forum 2009 we had 1,033 individuals attend. There was more youth participation this year than in the past. The Parent Summit turned out well. We are now planning for Transition Forum 2010. We are collecting data on the contents of the Transition IEP using the Virginia Transition Requirements Checklist which is online. We are collecting post-secondary data through September 30 which is online. The Transition IEP Template will be on the website in July. We are in the development stage of a Transition Slide Guide which will be a tool for parents on transition planning.

Ms. Beattie requests that Ms. Moore provide data regarding students whose primary disability is blindness. Mr. Holley requested that she provide graduation data to the SRC.

DBVI Transition Summer Programs - Ms. Payne

In 2009 VRCBVI will provide a College Assessment two-week program, Transition from School-to-Work four-week program and a GOAL weekend.

GOAL –(Gain independence, Opportunity exploration, Achieve success, Learn skills) - The program runs from 1:00 p.m. on Friday to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday and includes sessions for students, sessions for parents, and combined sessions on: The Role of DBVI; VRCBVI Services:

Communication Skills, Orientation and Mobility, Personal and Home Management Skills, Recreation, Vocational Exploration; sessions on SSI/SSDI, Dog Guides, Attitudes About Blindness, the Client Assistance Program; and networking opportunities.

Coordination with DRS SRC – Mr. DeBoer gave a report in Ms. Metcalf’s absence.

- The SRC presented five DRS employees with the 2009 SRC Roy J. Ward Employee Leadership Recognition Award.
- Commissioner Rothrock sends the weekly VR success stories to the SRC, and it is very much appreciated to hear all the wonderful returns for work of staff from DRS.
- On June 24, 2009, WWRC will have a Grand Opening of the newly renovated Medical Rehabilitation Residential Facility that will be named Rothrock Hall in honor of Commissioner Rothrock and his many years of service to WWRC. Invitations will be sent to SRC members.
- The DRS SRC also worked very closely with DRS staff this year in preparing their State plan.
- Discussed ongoing activities of the internal and external committees of the DRS SRC.

DBVI Mentoring Work Group – SRC Representatives – Mr. Powell

Received the following time lines from Ms. Lindsey:

- Advertisement will go through VR counselors, vision teachers, VRCBVI, the Virginia Voice, and the Council members outreach to start June 16, 2009;
- Application deadline will be August 17, 2009; and
- Orientation and start of program will begin between September and November.

New Committee Workforce/VR Collaboration Committee – Mr. Gonzalez, Mr. Kasey and Mr. Burton (will coordinate with the representatives of each regional office who are liaison with their local One-Stop Career Center).

Ms. Gonzalez reported that there are specific amounts in the stimulus funds designated for workforce development. Questioned if DBVI has examined the funds available to workforce Council and Boards? Ms. Hopkins stated that DBVI had not had discussions with the Governor’s Workforce Development Office regarding these funds. Mr. Gonzalez expressed concern that DBVI needs to help identify where the ARRA funds to workforce development should be used. Funds are going to youth employment programs. Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Burton will be meeting with the Governor’s staff soon and will inquire regarding these programs.

Update from CSAVR and NCSAB – Ms. Beattie

Chairperson Ms. Beattie reported that she has agreed to serve on the Steering Committee of the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC). The Steering Committee has been without representation from the blindness community since departure of Jesus Garcia of Florida. The Steering Committee holds bi-monthly conference calls supported by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), U.S. Department of Education. Plans are underway for the next semi-annual NCSRC meeting which will be November 15 in conjunction with the meetings of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). Topics will include promising practices in SRC getting input from the public and implementation of the model statewide comprehensive needs assessment slated to be issued in July by RSA.

Ms. Beattie continues to facilitate bi-monthly teleconferences for representatives of SRC in the blindness field, supported by the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB). Mr. Powell also usually participates.

Ms. Beattie also is an appointee to the Advisory Committee to the Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS). She and Peggy Fields with DBVI are on a committee looking at a potential statewide policy on assistive technology that has been issued to high school students as they may become clients of VR. In preliminary discussions, it has become obvious that in some cases a local school division may take back the assistive technology device, even if it is going to be put on a shelf, because it has no other visually impaired students who could currently use it. But sometimes the technology is out-of-date, and the individual is entitled to current technology from VR. Current policies vary widely among local school divisions.

Strategies to Enhance Competitive Employment Outcomes – Facilitated Discussion – Ms. Payne – This item was moved to be conducted at the next meeting as a first or second item on the agenda.

SRC Member and Member Organization Update

Ms. Phillips announced that she was gainfully employed again in massage therapy.

Ms. Matney announced that she graduated on May 17 from law school and would be gainfully employed with a law firm in Fredericksburg in January.

Ms. Macias reported that NRO was not contracted with Job Scripting.

Ms. Adams invited members to visit the VOPA website and review the new items listed.

Mr. Alley announced that the Volunteer Council at the Center headed up by Ms. Ice has established a clothes closet for students. He encouraged members spread the word and help get donations for the project.

Mr. Gonzalez discussed Skills USA and will send information to Ms. Carneal to share with members later in the month.

Mr. Kasey passed around a Louis Braille Collectors Coin to members. He announced that the NFG convention would be held in Detroit this year.

Ms. Brunson announced that the ACB convention would be begin July 4 in Orlando, Florida.

Mr. Holley discussed opportunities for blind students to attend the NASA Space Camp and will send information to Ms. Carneal to distribute to members. He also requested that a professional from the agency visit the camp and provide accessibility assistance.

Mr. Powell announced that he has completed his first half of the Iron Man Tri-A-Thon.

Other Activities of Interest to the Council – No other comments.

Other Information – None to report.

Adjournment: There being no other business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m. The next meeting will be held at the Library and Resource Center, large conference room, 395 Azalea Avenue, on Saturday, September 19, 2009, at 10:00 a.m.