

DRAFT MINUTES
DBVI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
VA Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Headquarters Building
397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, VA 23227

September 13, 2014

SRC Attendees

John Bailey, Fairfax, Chairman SRC, represents Business, Labor and Industry; Rebecca Bridges, Vice-Chair, SRC, represents Business, Labor and Industry, (by telephone); Melanie Brunson, Vienna, Past Chair, represents Consumer Advocacy Groups; Nichole Drummond, Springfield, represents Virginia's Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center; Rick Gonzalez, Springfield, represents VA Workforce Council; Ray Hopkins, Richmond, Commissioner, DBVI, Ex-Officio Member; Elizabeth Horn, Fairfax, represents the federally mandated Client Assistance Program (CAP); Ken Jessup, Virginia Beach, represents State Independent Living Council and Judy Swystun, Hampton Roads, represents Community Rehabilitation Programs.

Members Absent

Richard Holley, Hallwood, represents National Federation of the Blind and Disability Advocacy Groups, Ann Olliff, Richmond, represents current or former recipients of services and Valerie Walker, Newport News, represents Business, Labor and Industry.

Members of the Public

Wanda Council, Newport News, VA, represents the Virginia Department of Education, Isaac Crisp, VR Counselor, Richmond Regional Office, DBVI.

DBVI Staff to the SRC

Susan Davis Payne, VR Director, Staff Liaison to SRC and Ramona L. Miller, Administrative Assistant for Services, SRC.

Welcome and Call to Order

Chairman Bailey welcomed all in attendance.

Introductions and Welcome to New SRC members

The attendees introduced themselves and Chairman Bailey welcomed new member, Nichole Drummond, representing the VA Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center.

Adoption of Agenda - Action Item

Agenda modified to correct the name of the Employment Workgroup and to correct the acronyms of the

November 2014 meetings of CSAVR and NCSAB.

Melanie Brunson then moved to approve the modified agenda. Judy Swystun second. Agenda approved as modified.

Approval of June 14, 2014 Meeting Minutes - Action Item

Judy Swystun moved and Melanie Brunson seconded to accept the June Minutes as written. The June Meeting Minutes were approved.

Comments from the Public

There were no comments from the public.

Commissioner's Report – Raymond E Hopkins

The Commissioner addressed pending budget reductions that may impact DBVI's services as well as that of other state agencies. In June 2014, the General Assembly adjusted appropriations and then passed an appropriations act. The result was an \$800 million dollar shortfall for state agencies, which impacts DBVI's decision-making.

October is National Disability Awareness Month. DBVI has asked each of its regional offices to have at least one program related to disability awareness. Information regarding DBVI activities can be accessed on the agency's Facebook page. On October 11, 2014, the Rehabilitation Center will be hosting its Family, Friends and Beyond Day which is an open house for current and former students, family and friends. The public is also invited to visit the Rehabilitation Center and obtain information. DBVI is hoping to have one of two former associates, either Michael Davis or Doug Powell, to participate on a panel to discuss recreational activities.

Commissioner Hopkins encouraged SRC members to access the DBVI Facebook page to view pictures highlighting the LIFE (Living Independent, Feeling Empowered) Program for high school aged students that are transitioning from school to adult services. He reported that the LIFE help to build confidence, teach independent living skills and also includes a work experience component. Though there were fewer students participating this year, DBVI was very pleased with the group of students who did participate and with the outcome. Activities included dragging boat racing and whitewater rafting. DBVI also receives feedback from employers. This year employers expressed a desire to have more time to spend with the students to allow employers more time to impart the skills they would like them to have.

Following the Commissioner's report, the council discussed ways that the SRC could influence how DBVI will be impacted by budget cuts. The Commissioner explained the concepts of state match (in order to receive federal funds, DBVI must match with state funds in the amounts of 78.5% and 21.3% respectively) and maintenance of effort or MOE (where state agencies are required to keep support of a program, at the same level for two years and if that is not done, the state will lose federal dollars.) The SRC determined that advocating for state support is an area where they can assist. The Council was assured by the Commissioner that they will be kept informed of any issues pertaining to budget cuts that potentially impact DBVI.

The Council also discussed provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act specific to pre-employment services to youth, rehabilitation rates of individual who enter into employment after receiving VR services, and success stories that can be included in the SRC Annual Report for 2014.

Commissioner Hopkins welcomed Nichole Drummond and Isaac Crisp to the Council and expressed appreciation to Rick Gonzalez who is leaving the SRC at the end of his appointment

Deputy Commissioner's Report – Rick L. Mitchell

At the request of the SRC, Commissioner Hopkins reported on the DBVI Marketing Committee. Currently, this committee is not active but the agency has purchased marketing materials including seven exhibits that will depict the kind of activities in which the agency is engaged. He also reported that Virginia Industries for the Blind has a very nice display that catches a lot of attention.

Interaction with Public Radio – This has been put on hold due to budget issues.

DBVI has identified the need for a Public Information Officer but the position has not yet been advertised because of the budget. The position will probably answer to the Deputy Commissioner for Administration, who is intent on promoting the agency through the use of social media.

Regarding the Virginia Industries for the Blind (VIB), Commissioner Hopkins reported the agency is putting more effort into selling products and services to the private sector in addition to the governmental. VIB will be producing LED light fixtures for LG Electronics and will be primary producer for the governmental market. DBVI has been approached to do business with an association in the U.S. called Korean Businesses as well as by 3M in a partnering effort.

Commissioner Hopkins explained that there is a provision for VIB to be recognized under the small women-owned minority (SWaM) program.

The VR Program Update – Susan Payne

Ms. Payne shared information about the different types of employment individuals obtain or maintain after they have received vocational rehabilitation services.

Ms. Payne cited a report where DBVI had closed cases where the individuals were a barber, janitor, librarian, office support worker, machine operator (excavating/loading machines) biological technician, marketing managers, government service executives, nurse's aides, homemakers, and stock clerks. In some cases, the individuals saw an increase in pay and at times, the individual may have taken a job, not with less skills, but with less pay.

DBVI/DARS Liaison Report – Ken Jessup

The last DARS meeting was held in early August, at the Fishersville Rehabilitation Center and included a tour of the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center.

Employment Workgroup Report – Rebecca Bridges (via telephone)

Rebecca Bridges reported that the Employment Workgroup met to do some brain storming and to determine what goals they wanted to develop.

In response to the Employment Workgroups question about how they might assist DBVI, Commissioner Hopkins suggested that the SRC could participate in a technology related event that DBVI is planning. The

agency will keep the SRC informed about the planning.

Appointments and Elections – John Bailey

1) **SRC elections for Chair and Vice Chair – Action Item – John Bailey**

Chair - The floor was open for nominations. There were none. It was moved by Melanie Brunson and second by Judy Swystun that John Bailey serve as Chair by acclamation. All were in favor. **Vice-Chair** – The floor was open for nominations. There were none. It was moved by Melanie Brunson and second by Judy Swystun that Rebecca Bridges serves as Vice-Chair by acclamation. All were in favor.

2) **Select an SRC member to represent the Council on the Virginia Assistive Technology Systems (VATS) Council – Action Item**

Elizabeth Horn agreed to represent SRC on the VATS Council.

3) **Selection of representative(s) for CSAVR, and NCSAB, November 2014 – Action Item**

Judy Swystun moved that John Bailey be appointed to attend the meetings and represent SRC. It was second by Melanie Brunson. All were in favor.

Working Lunch - Susan Payne

1) **Discussion of upcoming Annual Report and Requirements – Susan Payne** - The Annual Report is a deliverable from the SRC that reports on the state of the VR Program at DBVI in any given year. It is submitted to the Governor's office and Secretary of Rehabilitation Administration and the Department of Education. The report includes information regarding wages and job opportunities. A strong component of the report has been the success stories, in the individuals own words. Included also are results of the Summer Transition Program, staff development and what we have done in the last fiscal year to meet the mission of the agency and the goal of the VR program. In general the agency provides information and the SRC develops the report in whichever format they choose Ms. Payne assists with editing and submits the report, on behalf of the Council to the Governor and the Secretary by the end of December.

2) **Creation of Annual Report Committee – Action Item – Susan Payne-** Judy Swystun and John Bailey volunteered to serve on the Committee. Ms. Payne mentioned that she will be able to provide reports and statistics by mid-October. The federal fiscal year ends mid-September.

3) **Acknowledgement of contribution of departing SRC members – John Bailey** – Chairman Bailey recognized the service of Rick Holley who is not here today, and a special thanks and gratitude to Melanie Brunson, for, not only her presence but also her experience and detailed knowledge. Ms. Brunson thanked the Chairman for his kind words and offered her assistance if needed. The Chairman also recognized and thanked Rick Gonzalez for his service to the Council. Mr. Gonzalez expressed his appreciation to the Chairman and the Council for its dedication and willingness to listen to him, and to move forward toward the goal despite problems or issues that may arise. He wished the Council continued success.

Old Business and New Business

New Business – Public Comment: Ms. Payne mentioned that she has two meetings; one on October 15, 2014 in Roanoke, VA at 7:00 pm and the other on November 7, 2014 in Norfolk, VA at 5:00 pm in conjunction with the National Federation of the Blind Meeting. The public announcement of the public meetings will be coming out in the next two or three weeks.

Ms. Payne mentioned another issue of concern. She relates, while the SRC has had new members appointed to the Council recently, there is a gap in membership in the area of individuals who are current or former recipients of services. There is only one person on the Council who holds that seat, currently and three vacant seats in that category. Council members are encouraged assist with recruitment.

Date for Next Meeting – December 13, 2014

The Chairman stated that members who are unable to attend meetings may use the newly developed proxy forms; this guarantees that the council will have a quorum for voting.

The Chairman asked for any additional comments. There were none. Mr. Bailey then asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Melanie Brunson moved and it was second that the meeting be adjourned. Motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 12:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ramona L. Miller
Administrative Assistant for Services, DBVI, SRC