

**Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired  
Rehabilitation Council  
401 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, Virginia  
Approved Minutes, Quarterly Meeting  
April 10, 2010**

**Members Present:** William Alley, Marguerite Bardone, Michael Burton, Richard Gonzalez, Claudie Grant, Michael Kasey, Raymond Kenney, Doug Powell

**Members Absent:** Faye Adams, Melanie Brunson, Anna Burns, Catherine Burzio, Frances Daniel, Benjamin Franklin, Richard Holley, Martha Macias, Hortense Macon, Angela Matney, Sherrie Phillips, Karen Trump

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

**Guests Present:** Jesse Burton, driver; Kathy Maybee, PEATC and DRS SRC; Pat Tomlinson, TACE, via teleconference

**Call to Order:** Doug Powell called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

**Adoption of Agenda:** A motion was made by Michael Kasey, seconded by Mike Burton, 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 Bill Alley, seconded by Mike Burton, and passed by unanimous voice vote that the minutes be adopted with a couple of corrections.

Members introduced themselves stating where they lived or which category they represented on the Council.

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

**Commissioner's Report** – Commissioner Hopkins

- Welcomed members and expressed his admiration for two great leaders in the blind community, Seville Allen and Pat Beattie, who passed away since our last quarterly meeting.

## **Budget Update**

- He discussed the proposal made by the Governor to the General Assembly to consolidate State agencies to make them more cost effective. The House or Senate Bills did not include a consolidation for DRS, DBVI, and DDHH. The Commission on Government Reform is conducting a consolidation study on all State agencies with the idea of developing ways of improving efficiencies and opportunities for cost savings. They will present their initial report to the Governor in July and a final report is due in December 2010. He thanked members for the response to the General Assembly regarding the consolidation of DBVI, DDHH, and DRS.
- He discussed the continuing decline in State revenues and how that shortfall impacts DBVI budget explaining how State match funds affect federal funds allotted to the agency. He discussed the Governor's proposed budget cuts for DBVI (\$450,000 for this fiscal year) will cause problems in DBVI meeting the State match.
- He reported that DBVI was able to avoid going on an order of selection so far this year, and it appeared that DBVI would even have funds for carryover into the upcoming year.
- He announced that Bob Berrang, deputy commissioner for enterprises and general manager for the Virginia Industries for the Blind, would be retiring effective June 1. The agency will be currently recruiting to fill that position very soon. He requested members to encourage qualified individuals to apply. He stated that the position was on the federal grade level between a GS 9 and GS 12.
- He announced that the new Secretary of Health and Human Resources (SHHR) was Dr. Bill Hazel. Secretary Hazel and two deputy secretaries visited the Azalea Complex on March 18 and toured the campus. At the agency heads meeting he commented on a couple of items here at DBVI and was very impressed with the low vision department. He reported that this summer all of the SHHR heads will be having one of their monthly meetings at the Azalea Complex.

## **Conference Call for SRC Members' Participation**

Mr. Hopkins addressed the issue of participating in the Council meeting via conference call. After consulting with the Attorney General's office, it was noted that there were certain requirements that have to be met to convene a conference call. A quorum must exist, the Council notice must state that an individual will be participating via conference call, as well as give the location where the caller will be calling from. It was also noted that the location where the conference call is held

must be open to the general public. He stated that he will invite Ishneila Moore, legal counsel to DBVI, to address this issue with the SRC at the next quarterly meeting.

### **Update on Regional Offices – Bob Burton**

- There have been no changes in the Bristol regional office.
- The Roanoke regional office regional manager, Steve Aukward, announced his retirement effective July 1 with 36 years of State service. One VR counselor, Miles White, announced his retirement effect June 1 with 31 years of State service. One rehabilitation teacher (RT), Debbie Helms, announced her retirement effective June 1 with 30 years of State service. We are currently recruiting for a RT and have requested permission to recruit for a second RT. There are five RT positions in this office, so with Debbie's retirement that leaves us with three vacancies.
- We are currently recruiting for one VR counselor position in the Staunton regional office.
- There have been no changes in the Fairfax regional office.
- The Richmond regional office has filled all three VR counselor positions. The new staff are: Felicia Williams who has worked at VIB for the past eight years and has a MS in Rehabilitation Counseling and her CRC; Rashmi Deshapande who has worked as a Vocational Evaluator at the Center and has a MS in Rehabilitation Counseling and her CRC: and Caren Phipps who has provided evaluations at the Center on a contractual basis and has a MS in Rehabilitation Counseling and is a certified Marriage and Family Therapist, Licensed Professional Counselor, and a certified vocational evaluator. She also has 30 years of experience. One orientation and mobility (O&M) specialist, Ed Bailey, retired on April 1 with 16 years of State service.
- The VRCBVI Braille instructor, Kay Dennis, announced her retirement effective June 1 with 23 years of State service; however, her last day of work was April 9. We are recruiting to fill her position. We are also currently recruiting for a Vocational Evaluator/ VR counselor, and an O&M specialist at the Center. Leonard Recupero assumed the assistant director of instruction position on January 4. Lenny came to VRCBVI from the Department of Health with a background in program management.
- The Norfolk regional office has a new O&M specialist, Jennifer Thurman, with nine years of experience.
- Madhur Gupta began working at headquarters as our VR Compliance and Customer Satisfaction Analyst on March 10, 2010.

## **Standards and Indicators Quarterly Update**

- At the present time we have 53 closures. Same as last year.
- Of the closed cases that received services, the percentage with an employment outcome is currently at 58.2%. The federal minimum standard is 68.9%.
- Of the closed cases with an employment outcome, the percentage that have a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage is 85%. The federal minimum standard is 35.4%.
- Of the closed cases with an employment outcome, the percentage that have a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage and have significant disabilities is 97.8%. The federal minimum standard is 89%.
- Ratio of average state wages to the average wage of closed cases with employment outcome that have wages greater than or equal to minimum wage is .72. The federal minimum standard is 0.59.
- Difference between the percentage of closed cases with employment outcomes that reported their own income as the largest single source of economic support at the time they exit the VR Program and the percent who reported their own income as the largest single source of support at the time they apply for VR services is 60%. The federal minimum standard is 30.4%.
- Ratio of minority service rate to non-minority service rate, we are at 1.135. The federal minimum standard is .80.

## **Update on VRCBVI Renovations**

Renovations have been delayed due to issues with getting construction plans back from the Bureau of Capital Outlay Management. As such, the move of VRCBVI staff to other buildings on the campus scheduled for April will need to be postponed indefinitely. The recreation building was one of the main places to house staff during renovations but it is in need of a roof replacement prior to having staff relocate. There is no firm timetable for the roof replacement so we are on hold until that occurs.

## **VR Program Update – Susan Payne**

### **1. State Plan Update for FY 2011**

- It is due to RSA by June 30, 2010.
- It is a RSA requirement to update the State plan annually, and this is a roadmap that the agency will use to operate business over the next year. This can be a very time consuming project.

- Staff have started gathering information pertaining to specific amendments, including outreach activities, reports of outcomes related to recommendations from the 2006 comprehensive needs assessment, transition activities at the field level and the Center, and development of the 2010 comprehensive needs assessment.
- SRC members interested in assisting in plan development are Marguerite Bardone, Rick Gonzalez, and Claudie Grant.

2. **Updates of VR Outcomes from FFY 10/2009 – 12/31/2009**

There were 962 individuals who received services in the first quarter of FFY 2010. The average hourly wage at application was \$6.32 with the average weekly earnings being \$246.11. The average hourly wage at closure was \$16.69 with the average weekly earnings being \$478.80. The average age of individuals who went to work was 52. The average number of hours worked per week at closure was 27. There were 18 individuals who achieved a successful employment outcome. Of the 18 individuals who accomplished their employment goal, 12 went to work in competitive settings; three were self-employed with an average weekly wage at closure of \$647.17; and three became successful homemakers. The average cost of providing services to individuals who achieved their employment goals was \$15,143.65.

3. **Hearing Office Contracts**

The federal Rehabilitation Act and regulations require DRS to maintain a pool of hearing officers jointly selected by the SRC and the Commissioner. The Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired use the same pool of hearing officers, and their Council may also work with us this year.

We hire hearing officers via State Contract and select them through an invitation for bid (IFB) process. The current contract expires October 1, and we will need to begin the new IFB process this spring. The role on the hearings subcommittee of the State Rehabilitation Council will be to evaluate the qualifications of the bidders (including their hearing report writing sample) and make a recommendation of which bidders to accept, report your recommendation to the full Council at the regular quarterly meeting, and the full Council will vote at that meeting on which bidders to recommend to the Commissioner. The time involved in the evaluation will depend on the number of bidders.

We will award up to three (3) contracts, as we have in the past (because three is sufficient number to maintain a pool of hearing officers and the volume does not justify more than three).

The contract will be for one year and will permit four renewal periods (the maximum allowed).

Susan Payne inquired if any of the members would like to serve as a SRC representative in the hearing office process. Doug Powell stated that Melanie Brunson has expressed an interest and possibly Angie Matney may be interested. Raymond Kenney volunteered to assist. Susan Payne will contact Mary Lutkenhaus with DRS that DBVI SRC is interested in assisting with this process. Baseline information on requirements will be forwarded to SRC members.

#### **4. Orientation Meeting for New Members**

Doug Powell and Susan Payne revamped the orientation for this year into a two-day program with assistance from TACE. Day one was held on April 9 which Claudie Grant and Raymond Kenney attended. It consisted of an overview of rehabilitation for blind, deafblind, and vision impaired individuals; what resources are available, an overview of DBVI services, overview of the VR program; visit to the Rehab Center and lunch at the Center cafeteria, SRC roles and functions were discussed, and there was an introduction of the eRehab site. The second day will include overviews of the Randolph-Sheppard program; Virginia Industries for the Blind, Richmond plant; and the Library and Resource Center. Kathy Maybee stated that she and Danny DeBoer would be interested in attending a portion of the new orientation training. Susan Payne stated that with other new members having scheduling conflicts with the April 9 meeting, there may be a need to conduct an additional day-one training. Susan stated that, at the very least, she would forward all training materials to Kathy Maybee and Danny DeBoer.

#### **5. Success Stories**

Due to a death in Martha Macias' family, she was unable to attend this meeting. Susan Payne will send out a success story to SRC members via email.

## 6. **2010 Transition Forum**

The forum was held from March 15 – 17 in Roanoke with close to 1,000 participants. Ray Hopkins welcomed participants along with the commissioners of DOE and DRS; Glen Slonneger served on the logistical committee, Susan Payne served on the marketing committee, Karen Stevens served on the hospitality committee, and Meg Walker served on the accommodations committee. Agency staff from the Staunton, Richmond, and Roanoke regional offices participated. DBVI was involved in four presentations which included Jim Fleming and a panel of students demonstrating assistive technology used in secondary and post-secondary settings; Marge Owens conducted a hands-on session on low vision aids; Kim Jennings and Sara Mateyka conducted DBVI outreach activities for students who turned age 14; and Peggy Fields held an assistive technology fair as part of her participation on the Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS). DBVI co-conducted a public meeting with DRS during the meeting.

## **Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CSNA)**

DBVI will be conducting the federally required CNSA over a three-year period. The last one was completed in 2006. This is a data-driven process and is a very different strategy for past assessments. Madhur Gupta and a consultant will be gathering and analyzing state and national disability, Ann Lynn Banton will be gathering AWARE data, and TACE will be providing technical assistance. Susan Payne has been working with Doug Powell and Pat Tomlinson (TACE consultant) to review the RSA guidance for the CNSA.

During the first year, the following topics will be addressed:

- Developing a State Profile of known data identifying individuals who we currently serve, those that we don't serve or those that are underserved. It is something like defining the universe.
- Finalize new assessment activities within timelines.
- Finalize analysis of data.
- Incorporate public comment.
- Incorporate a leadership focus group from various advocacy groups to be "key informant groups."
- Finalize development of action strategies.
- Inform State plan goals, priorities, and strategies.
- Complete Attachment 4.11(a) of the State plan.
- Develop State plan based on data analysis.

During the second year, the following topics will be addressed:

- Develop and implement surveys, conduct focus groups, define issues, goals, and strategies.
- Incorporate activities into State plan.

During the third year, the following topics will be addressed:

- Begin to update on progress.
- Corporate the information into State plan.

Doug Powell volunteered to work with the agency on this project. It will be a reviewing, analyzing, and advising activity for SRC members. If anyone wants to volunteer later, please contact Susan via email. Commissioner Hopkins stated that we may be working along with DRS as they are performing the same type of project.

### **Proposed Federal Regulations**

After a very extensive time-consuming project developing proposed VR State regulations regarding provision of vocational rehabilitation for DBVI conducted by Susan Payne, the General Attorney's Office has approved the proposed regulations; they are ready to go out for public comments. These regulations consist of how the State is going to implement the Federal regulations.

### **Two VR comments to be raised at this meeting and addressed at the next regular quarterly meeting made by Michael Kasey**

Michael Kasey addressed an accessibility issue where a recent intake interview in which the client was offered only one form of media and it was not their preferred media and the client just signed the document and walked away from the interview. That is not where the agency should be going with accessibility. Susan Payne inquired if the client actually requested a different form of media even though it should have been offered at the time of the interview. Michael Kasey stated that the client did request the preferred media and was told that it was not available. Susan Payne requested that Michael contact her after the meeting in order for her to investigate this compliant.

Michael Kasey also addressed the issue of what are the required or standard expectations of VR clients who are seeking employment. He stated that his understanding was that the case was opened to go back to work, what are the expectations of that client and does the agency require them to show evidence that they are looking for a job. Susan Payne stated that there is not an official standard



required expectation and that all cases were individualized according to the client's capabilities. Rick Gonzalez stated that each region for the One-Stop has that requirement.

Michael Kasey commented that to his knowledge the last three VR counselor positions were not advertised to the blind community/organizations. He stated that this was Jim Taylor's responsibility before he retired and that it may have just been an oversight. He reported that since that time, the problem seems to have been corrected. Susan Payne stated that it was her responsibility now and that those listings had been sent to the "List Serve Groups" and posted to the Newline website. He also discussed self-supportive benefits from Social Security benefits.

### **Subcommittee Reports:**

**Transportation** – Doug Powell stated that we need a new committee because transportation is a vital issue for blind and visually impaired citizens and the Department of Transportation needs a constant reminder of pedestrian issues. Bill Alley volunteered to serve on this subcommittee.

**Transition** – No report.

### **Coordination with DRS SRC**

Michael Kasey stated that this position was shared between himself, Melanie Brunson, and Raymond Kenney. He stated that he had attended the DRS SRC January meeting held in Richmond. Melanie Brunson had attended the March meeting held in Roanoke. He inquired if Raymond Kenney would be attending the next DRS SRC quarterly meeting. Joan Carneal will send Raymond Kenney the date and location for the next meeting. Kathy Maybee stated that it could be found on the DRS website as well. Kathy Maybee stated that DRS SRC does the same thing and she and Danny DeBoer shared that responsibility for the DRS SRC. Michael Kasey stated that the DRS SRC has different types of committees who meet prior to their regular quarterly meeting.

Melanie Brunson was unable to participate via teleconference but sent the below report to be included in the minutes.

- DRS SRC decided to send copies of their Annual Report to all of the members of the Virginia legislature and then to ask for meetings with those who have SRC members from their districts to discuss it.

- DRS SRC has an External Affairs Committee and one of its tasks is to locate and recommend people for participation in the SRC and inquired if this Council should consider formally getting more involved in this.
- She will share findings about what other SRCS do regarding governing documents. Essentially, there is a wide range of structures, from fairly detailed bylaws to very informal operating structures.

### **Pilot Mentoring Program – Doug Powell**

Rich Sorey, Norfolk regional manager, took the initiative to try to institute the project. They had plenty of applicants for mentors but they are having trouble finding mentees who are willing to make a year-long commitment. Doug Powell requested members to send him any suggestions for improving the program or trying to get the program moving by email. Marguerite Bardone and several members believe that their may be an age barrier to this project with older mentors training younger mentees. They simply do not relate to one another.

### **Informed Choice – Susan Payne**

Susan Payne commented that a committee-based structure was in place to address updating the entire VR Policies and Procedures Manual of which the chapter pertaining to informed choice is included. She requested a Council member to volunteer to work on this committee. Doug Powell and Michael Kasey volunteered to work on this committee. Susan Payne will contact Claudie Grant for further discussion on this subject next week.

### **VATS Council Report – Doug Powell**

Doug Powell attended a meeting by via conference call on March 10. They are experiencing many of the same issues as the SRC, such as outreach activities (making use of newsletters), trying to make the most of their resources (recycling equipment), filling all of the slots on their advisory Council, and keeping more precise records for their reporting requirements, etc. They participated in the 2010 Transition Forum held in Roanoke and fulfilled some of their mandated requirements to have exposure to the public. They are developing a report on assistive technology in transition regarding how to most effectively serve their clients and address budget issues, etc. They are working on an assistive technology short-term loan program so customers can try out different equipment and choose the best one for their use. He stated that Melanie Brunson has expressed an interest in participating on that Council. She would like to have another member to share the position if she is unable to attend. VATS meetings are held in the Richmond

area. If anyone is interested in partnering with her, please send Doug an email to that effect.

### **Job Outreach – Doug Powell**

Doug Powell inquired as to how the Council could better utilize members representing the business/industry on the Council to leverage better job opportunities for DBVI clients and what types of networking and outreach activities can be developed. Doug Powell, Rick Gonzalez, Claudie Grant, and Michael Kasey volunteered to work on this committee. Rick Gonzalez stated that the State Workforce Council has had conversations with VEC about developing a “dog and pony” show to reach out to businesses. The DBVI SRC could be included in that outreach. Doug Powell stated that we need to do more marketing to business to indicate that we understand the needs of the business. Rick Gonzalez stated that VEC is a wonderful avenue for jobs that are already available.

### **Working Lunch with SRC Member and Member Organization Update**

Doug Powell announced that the next SRC Network conference call was scheduled at 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 13. If anyone is interested in participating, please let him know so he can provide contact information. He also announced that the CSAVR – National Collation of SRCs was scheduled for Sunday, April 18 in Bethesda, MD in which he will be attending

Rick Gonzalez noted that the State Workforce Council does not receive enough public comments. Oversight of the WIC teams has shifted from the Office of the Governor to the community college system. He encouraged the DBVI SRC to make a formal or general comment at the public meeting. Susan Payne will follow-up with Rick Gonzalez about public comment to the State Workforce Council and share this information with Council members. He suggested that the Council may want to make public comments about program availability for people with disabilities.

Kathy Maybee who works with PEATC explained work related to “No Child Left Behind” Grant. Her work focus is on working with students who are incarcerated. She discussed the importance of GEDs and some requirements involved in obtaining a certificate.

Michael Kasey discussed the continuing outreach activities by the NFB chapter in Fredericksburg. They have partnered with the Disability Resource Office at Mary

Washington to provide information regarding the NFB and technology. The main purpose of the outreach was to meet and greet students on admissions day.

Bill Alley acknowledged VRCBVI students who participated in the Ukrop's 10-K marathon. The Volunteer Council at VRCBVI is providing funds for 14 students to attend a rock climbing activity. He announced that July 27 is VRCBVI night at the Squirrels game. He inquired if DBVI was now receiving funds from the reopening of the rest areas on interstate highways. Susan Payne stated that DBVI were receiving funds from the Randolph Sheppard program from that activity.

Raymond Kenney stated that he was still very busy with volunteer work and also stated that he was glad to be a part of the SRC.

Marguerite Bardone discussed communication access for people with disabilities and was happy that now there is closed captioning for individuals who are deafblind. She stated that HDTV can cause some problems for individuals using captions and reminded members to check the menu option for captioning before reporting a problem. She announced that there is an increase in captioning in Spanish in the areas of education and sports activities. She stated that also she is seeing an increase in captioning for blind children and other children with disabilities.

The Braille resource list of vendors will be sent to members to share with appropriate individuals.

**Adjournment:** There being no other business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 1:25 p.m. The next meeting will be held at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired, Assembly Room, 401 Azalea Avenue, on Saturday, June 12, 2010, at 10:00 a.m. Day two of the orientation training for new members will be held on Friday, June 11.