

**Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
State Rehabilitation Council
Comfort Suites Inn
10601 Telegraph Road
Glen Allen, Virginia
APPROVED Minutes, Quarterly Meeting
June 11, 2011**

Members Present: Doug Powell (Chair of the Rehab Council), Rick Holley (Consumer Advocacy Group – National Federation of the Blind) William Alley (Business and Industry), Angie Matney (Consumer of Vocational Rehabilitation Services), Martha Macias (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, DBVI), Marguerite Bardone (Business and Industries), Debbie Pheiffer (Department of Education), Danny DeBoer (Department of Rehabilitative Services), Rick Gonzalez (former representative of the State Workforce Council), Melanie Brunson (Consumer Advocacy Groups, American Council for the Blind), Catherine Burzio (former representative of PEATC)

Members Absent: Benjamin Franklin, Claudie Grant, and Sherrie Phillips

Staff Present: Ray Hopkins (Commissioner); Bob Burton (Deputy Commissioner for Services); Marcus L. Byrd II (Support Staff), Susan Payne (Vocational Rehabilitation Program Director)

Guests Present: Faye Adams, Pam Holley, Ken Jessup (Representative from the SILC)

Call to Order: Doug Powell called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m. Members introduced themselves and explained their roles with the Council.

Adoption of Agenda: Doug Powell called for a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. It was moved by Marguerite Bardone, seconded by Melanie Brunson, and passed by unanimous voice vote that the agenda be adopted as distributed.

Action on Minutes of the Previous Meeting: Doug Powell called for a motion to approve the March 11, 2011 minutes. A motion was made by Marguerite Bardone, seconded by Rick Gonzalez, and passed by unanimous voice vote that the minutes be adopted as distributed.

Comments from the Public: Doug Powell called for any comments from the public asking once, twice, and a third time, no comments made and therefore declared closed.

Election of Vice-Chair and Executive Committee: Doug Powell called for the election of two positions as developed and accepted during the retreat on 12 March 2011. A plan was developed and accepted at the March meeting to have an executive

committee, which is composed of a chair elect/vice chair and an executive committee member at large. The latter position will be held by the most recent past chair; Doug Powell will assume responsibilities in December 2011.

The Vice-Chair will subsequently become the chair in December 2011. Despite the absence of bi-laws, the election proceeded with three individuals nominated via email. Additionally, nominations were taken from the floor and are as follows: Marguerite Bardone nominated Melanie Brunson, seconded by Rick Holley, moved by Angie Matney that the nomination be closed and she be elected to the position of Vice Chair, seconded by Debbie Pheiffer, and passed by unanimous voice vote.

The Executive Committee Member-At-Large is scheduled to serve until December 2011 and the names of those individuals are as follows: Rick Gonzalez, Marguerite Bardone, Claudie Grant, Melanie Brunson, and Catherine Burzio. Marguerite Bardone asked Chair Powell for clarification pertaining to if someone is serving as a member-at-large and as part of the executive committee, will that negate their ability to serve in workgroup, due to the fact that a workgroup is not open to the public as opposed to a committee which is. Additionally, she explained that the committee will oversee the functions of a workgroup, which raises the possibility of a conflict of interest. Rick Gonzalez responded by stating that during the retreat in March 2011, it was discussed that there would potentially be multiple seats that a person could hold, due to the number of members within the Council. Melanie Brunson responded by explaining that the executive committee would be the entity supervising the work of those workgroups, which essentially is the ultimate issue. Commissioner Hopkins responded by saying that through his experiences he has seen individuals on the executive committee serve in workgroups. Doug Powell closed the discussion by stating it is a fairly common procedure for individuals to serve on an executive committee and also in workgroup, and foresees no issue with an individual serving on both. Nominations from the floor continued, Melanie Brunson's name was removed from the nomination list, due to the fact that she was elected Vice Chair. Doug Powell opened the floor to potential nominees to inquire if they would be interested in serving on the committee and the first being: 1). Marguerite Bardone (she respectfully declined to serve if elected, citing that she could render better services by focusing on the state plan and the annual report 2). Catherine Burzio, accepted 3). Rick Gonzalez, accepted, 4). Claudie Grant, not available for comment. Catherine Burzio was elected with a total of 6 votes as the executive committee member-at-large.

Commissioner's Report- Ray Hopkins

Budget Update: With the end of the state fiscal year approaching, Commissioner Hopkins reported that the DBVI is pretty much on track financially for the upcoming fiscal year. The DBVI has funds remaining as the 2012 fiscal year approaches and is focused on ensuring that the Vocational Rehabilitation program can sufficiently remain

financially stable. With another quarter remaining on the federal grant, Commissioner Hopkins explained that the DBVI is far removed from the position it was in a few years ago when adequate funds lacked and the authorization for new services was prohibited due to the aforementioned. The DBVI has also received funds from Social Security Reimbursement, and all indications lead to having funds available to serve individuals with disabilities in the future under order of selection service policy. Stimulus funds or American Recovery Reinvestment Act Funds received, that the DBVI put directly back into case services has also allowed the DBVI and Vocational Rehabilitation program sustain adequate monies as FFY 2012 approaches. Additionally, business development activities, which generally includes sharing of job announcements and openings with DRS and other agencies was also discussed. Commissioner Hopkins touched base on moving toward a greater initiative to maximizing successful employment rates with the use of business development, by disseminating part-time into the field to make contact with employers; specifically the area of focus would be to improve relationships with businesses. The goal would be to ascertain businesses as customers, by developing and sustaining resources. Specifically, to develop a relationship with potential employers, so that we render our services to them by providing qualified personnel from the DBVI, DRS, VBC (?), and veterans to fill vacancies in which they are qualified for. Furthermore, the ultimate goal is to have those potential employers use our agency, whenever they have a vacancy for job placement.

Commissioner Hopkins elaborated on his hopes of the proposal in the Governor's budget submittal for the June 2010 General Assembly secession to add 1 million dollars per year or 2 million for the biennium to general funds for VR services are once again put forth during the 2011 session. The secretary of Health and Human Resources has assured that the previous mentioned funds are still a top priority for him. Additionally, as the budget reductions have taken place, the federal grant has subsequently increased, while percentages the Commonwealth attributes to the VR program has decreased. In essence the Commonwealth contributes 1/3 of the money required to match the federal grant, thus leaving the task of securing funds needed to match the grant very difficult. The use of vendors on the highway has benefited efforts; however with the rise of gas prices, individuals are less inclined to invest. The goal is to encourage the Commonwealth to invest more into the VR program, and hopefully the agenda to assist with the growth of the program is adopted by the General Assembly.

Update on Appointments of New SRC Members: Commissioner Hopkins thanked the council for their patience as they await the appointments of new SRC members. The Governor's office has yet to provide any new information as those anticipated appointments. Prior to the meeting in March 2011, Marguerite Bardone emailed the secretary's office, and was told that they would be in contact with Commissioner Hopkins. The issue has been raised with Jennifer Alger, who serves as the director of appointments in the Office of the Secretary (Commonwealth), to have Secretary Hazel expedite the process. At this point, Commissioner Hopkins ensured that if and when any new developments are available, the Council would be advised.

Rick Gonzalez stated that the federal government recently submitted a RFP to the top five audit companies in the country in an effort to audit the Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies from the federal to the state level. Furthermore, he explained that whoever wins the bid will begin to conduct audits within 90 days, which could potentially have a negative impact.

Commissioner Hopkins further explained that the issue of compliance has been highlighted as a top priority to be addressed. Commissioner Hopkins stated that he has spoken to the Rehabilitation Services Administration, and was told that Commissioner Rutledge would be willing to write a letter asking the governor to take action as mandated by federal regulations.

RSA Monitoring Report Status: Was released earlier this year and a final response was submitted and posted on the RSA website. Discussions have taken place between the DBVI, RSA, and the George Washington University TACE from in regards to aid within the previously mentioned area.

Susan Payne stated that the technical assistance plan has not been finalized; however that it's designed similar to a matrix which indicates what activities DBVI may engage in to address areas they may have recommendations for. RSA drafted the plan and forwarded it to the DBVI, and is currently under review for additions. Within the next week or so, the DBVI should be prepared to forward alterations back to RSA. The technical assistance plan differs from corrective action; alternatively it has to do with recommendations that might hold streamline services or something similar to that effect.

Commissioner Hopkins explained that one of the steps the DBVI is taking is to work with the Virginia Disability Commission by having staff appointed to various committees established by their agency. The committee's are focused on housing and transportation, education and employment, services to people with physical or sensory disabilities. Additionally, one of the steps the commission had previously taken during the last General Assembly, involved actual language being passed to clarify the role of the Virginia Disability Commission; essentially they are now a clearinghouse for legislative and budgetary action pertaining to persons with sensory and physical disabilities. The DBVI has raised some issues with the Virginia Disability Commission, specifically for them to consider and take action on the inclusion for special education for students that are blind or visually impaired and the standards of quality. Senator Miller who is a dedicated advocate was disappointed that she was unaware of the issue and seems keenly interested that it is addressed accordingly during the next General Assembly. Furthermore, Senator Miller encouraged that as elections begin to take shape for the House of Delegate seats that the public ask them "on the record" to explain in what capacity are they willing to support services provided to individuals with disabilities.

Questions for Commissioner Hopkins:

Ken Jessup inquired about vendor monies and it being used to secure federal money for matching purposes. How does it affect the Randolph Sheppard monies in terms of retirement?

Commissioner Hopkins responded by explaining that it has no effect at all. The bulk of the highway monies are used to pay for insurance, and are not an allowable expense. Any monies earned would be considered for management services, and to buy equipment for facilities.

Ken Jessup inquired about the Governor's plan for highway vending monies pertaining to the world-wide privatization movement taking place.

Commissioner Hopkins responded by explaining that the Governor executed a campaign promise by re-opening at the time 19 closed rest area stops. The governor promised to act on the closed rest stops within 90 days, which he did. Fifteen of the nineteen rest areas are managed via the DBVI program, and their closing had an adverse effect on the agency. The Governor's intent was to make those rest areas more self supporting in an effort to avoid closures in the future. The plan also includes sponsorship advertising and mending, with the Virginia Department of Transportation whom has guaranteed that our revenues will not suffer as a result of any issues they may have.

Martha Macias inquired about vendors having adequate facility opportunities and the ability to develop banking programs in Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Norfolk, and that any efforts to address those issues have virtually been non-existent.

Commissioner Hopkins responded by explaining that the DBVI has quite a few facilities in the areas of Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, and Norfolk. Additionally, he stated that developing facilities requires a collective effort from both state and federal agencies. In closing, the Commissioner explained, that many significant changes are on the horizon in order to help this program grow and develop. Commissioner Hopkins also reported that Dave Kennedy is retiring on or about the 1st of September. The DBVI is making changes to the manner in which the program is administered. RRTC at Mississippi State University will conduct the review. By 1 October 2012 the Commissioner anticipates having a blueprint as to the new direction the Randolph Sheppard program will go.

Danny DeBoer inquired about how much revenue would be used to sponsor the Randolph Sheppard vending facility, program.

Commissioner Hopkins responded by explaining that the Randolph Sheppard vending facility program and Business Enterprise Program are authorized by federal law. The Randolph Sheppard Act gives blind individuals authorization to operate vending facilities on federal property. The DBVI is designated as the vocational rehabilitation

agency for Virginia to train and license individuals who are blind to operate businesses on federal property. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act was enacted to give priority to state license agency authority to operate vending facilities along state highways, and in Virginia we conduct those activities via third party contractors and revenues which are essentially returned to support operations. In essence the Code of Virginia requires the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to use funds generated from those programs to pay for health insurance for participants in the program. The amount of revenue is generated by the amount of support individuals give to those vending facilities along the highway and goes directly into the program. The projected amount for this fiscal year is about \$900,000 dollars or so.

Regional Office Update- Bob Burton: Bob Burton reported on job vacancies the DBVI currently have, and vacancies filled. In the Bristol office, a new Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor began on 1 May 2011. Ironically, the individual appointed was retired from the Richmond office and decided return to her home town and joined the Bristol office as a counselor. In the Roanoke office, the DBVI is currently recruiting for an orientation and mobility specialist and a rehabilitation teacher. A new rehabilitation teacher began in the Roanoke office on 25 May 2011. The Staunton and Norfolk offices are currently fully staffed. In Fairfax, information was submitted that an orientation and mobility position was offered and there is every indication that the individual will accept. In the Richmond office, we are currently recruiting for an orientation and mobility specialist. At the rehabilitation center, Melanie Roane submitted information that they have filled an orientation and mobility specialist position and the selectee is scheduled to begin on 1 July 2011. The PILOT program received some funding from the DBVI board to bring along some part-time job development/placement positions to assist our counselors with locating appropriate job placement opportunities. Since the 12 March 2011 meeting those positions have been filled in Roanoke, Fairfax, and Norfolk offices. The response has been positive thus far, and as a result the previous mentioned offices have had some successful placements. The Staunton and Richmond offices are scheduled to follow suit in the near future. The only office that does not have someone in place currently is Bristol, and they are currently placing a posting to fill the position. Based upon the success of the PILOT this year the board will make a decision as to either continue or close the program.

Standards and Indicators Quarterly Update: The Rehabilitation Services Administration use the standards and indicators quarterly update report to evaluate the vocational rehabilitation program. This report will take us through March 2011. At the end of March 2011, 2nd quarter of the federal fiscal year we had 52 successful placements and closures as opposed to 50 the previous year. Of all closed cases that received service, the ratio with an employment outcome was 50 percent, which was an improvement over the previous year which was 43.9 percent. Of the closed cases in which the percentage has a wage greater than or equal to minimal wage, the percentage was 92.3, as opposed to 90 percent the previous year. Of those individuals who were successful closures that have a significant disability, 100 percent of our closures have a significant disability which surpasses the minimum percentage of 89 percent. The ratio of wages compared to the overall state average wage is .85 as opposed to the previous year which was .68 and higher than federal minimum standard of .59.

The next standards and indicators quarterly update is comparing individuals whom had wages as their primary source of support at application versus those whom had wages as their primary source of support at closure. Currently we stand at 60.4 percent as opposed to last year's 55.6 and well above the federal minimum of 30.4. Lastly the ratio of minority service rate, we currently rank at .856 and the federal minimum rate is .80. Additionally, by the end of April the DBVI had closed a total of 63 cases successfully. The average weekly wages at application was \$281.00 dollars; the average weekly wages at closure was \$545.00 dollars. This indicates that we had a number of individuals at application that had no wages what so ever. The average hourly wage at closure was \$16.17, and the average cost for total services for those cases averaged about \$9,900 dollars.

Update on DBVI Renovations: The renovations were previously on schedule as planned until an architectural glitch was discovered; however the completion date will hopefully remain the same which is February 2012.

Rick Holley inquired about the consistency of services within the Commonwealth. More specifically, if Northern Virginia received the same kind of services that Southern Virginia does. Additionally, Rick assumed that the overall issue is attributed to not being able to fill positions.

Bob Burton responded by stating that the DBVI's uppermost goal is to provide consistent services state-wide. Furthermore, policy and procedure manuals that are available to all counselors and offices are in place to ensure that everyone is afforded consistent opportunities and services. Overall, we feel that services are equitable state-wide.

Commissioner Hopkins stated that quality assurance is top priority, and that individuals such as Susan Payne, Bob Burton, and other DBVI staff are in place to ensure that goal is achieved.

Doug Powell stated that there are a several mechanisms in place to help address these issues, such as the SRC council meetings and public meetings, which provide platforms to appropriately have them addressed.

Marguerite Bardone stated that the services are adequate; however finding the experts necessary to provide services is the ultimate issue. When a lack of public comment is evident that only enhances the issue. Furthermore, she stated that when you serve individuals you have to know what they need and want.

Danny DeBoer stated that DRS have continuously pondered over this issue as well. In regards to providing addressing access issues, there has been a consistent push to alleviate any and or all failures to reach out to the public in order to fully understand their needs.

CSNA Surveys-VR Program Update- Susan Payne: DBVI is in year two of the three year CSNA. Activities in year two include four surveys designed for the purpose of obtaining input into identifying underserved populations and overall satisfaction with DBVI services. Over 600 surveys were sent to groups including consumers who have received or are receiving services, DBVI staff, Business (employers who have hired DBVI consumers) and other interested stakeholders all in which were indentified via the

AWARE system. DBVI has received responses from approximately 250 individuals from these groups combined. Analysis of the data has not yet been completed. The consumer surveys focused on the satisfaction of surveys of services, the amount of years individuals received services, and ideas for improvement. Additionally, year two plan also strived to address focus groups and targeted informational interviews, but have yet to conduct those activities.

2012 State Plan Development: Attachments have been reviewed and edited by the SRC Writing Workgroup which consisted of Marguerite Bardone, Doug Powell, Melanie Brunson, and Catherine Burzio. With the exception of several discrete statistics that will be added during the week of 13 June 2011, the State Plan is ready for submission. Susan Payne will touch base with Commissioner Hopkins on how to ensure that marketing is included in the State Plan report on activities in 2012. Marketing is agency based not vocationally rehabilitative based.

Melanie Brunson inquired about who was on the registry for visually impaired individuals in Virginia. Additionally, she wanted to know what this information is used for.

Commissioner Hopkins/Susan Payne responded by explaining that the DBVI is required to maintain the registry. Service providers are statutorily mandated per the Code of Virginia to report that information; however there are instances when this is not the case. Furthermore, if an individual is indentified as blind, his or her name is then added to the registry.

Doug Powell inquired about the VRCBVI satisfaction information should be included in the state plan?

Commissioner Hopkins responded by explaining that surveys have been conducted and after speaking with Melanie Roane, she was directed to contact Susan Payne to ensure that the appropriate information is forward internally, i.e..reporting of consumer satisfaction 4.10 and outcome reports on 4.11(e)(3).

Susan Payne responded by explaining that the information may fall under 4.11(d) "strategies and updating".

Doug Powell called for a motion to accept the state plan, as edited and additional information to be added.

Melanie Brunson made the motion that the council accepts the State Plan with the addition of the edits from the comments suggested; Marguerite Bardone seconded the motion, and passed by unanimous voice vote.

Success Stories-Susan Payne: JH – former news reporter with Age-Related Macular Degeneration. Article in the March Issue of Fifty Plus. 82 year old woman received VR, AT, RT/IL, and low vision evaluation and aides that assisted with her efforts of returning to writing.

Danny DeBoer spoke about a young man in his late twenties, whom is blind and has never had access to services. Finally through efforts by members of the SRC, the young

man was directed to the DBVI rehabilitation facility here in Richmond, VA. The young man reported how much he has enjoyed being a member of the facility and is finally learning Braille.

Updates from Chair Doug Powell:

Thanks to Danny DeBoer: Doug Powell congratulated Danny DeBoer on his commitment to the SRC as he prepares to leave the council in September 2011.

Transition Forum: The Transition Forum has been in existence for several years, and its purpose is to help individuals understand how the Department of Education and the Department of Rehabilitative Services work together. Currently the DBVI is rigorously pursuing avenues to assist with transition forums. Additionally "I'm Determined" is a program used to help kids learn how to conduct their own individual and education program needs. Essentially, young men and woman are given the opportunity to take control of their own education programs, similar to an IEP.

Debbie Pheiffer stated and reported on the "I'm Determined" program as well as the train the trainer meetings. The training is specifically designed for teachers of the blind and visually impaired. A total of 50 teachers were present, 18 of whom are teachers of the blind and visually impaired. The focus of the two day event is to provide aid to students, but also train other teacher as well. Ultimately, the program has a domino effect, by allowing teachers to train other teachers.

Committees: Doug advised that he would rather wait until the Executive Committee was fully assembled, thus pushing the issue more by the September 2011 meeting before any work is to begin. Additionally, he encourages members of the SRC to send their request through Marcus Byrd as to what workgroups they desire to serve on via email.

Subcommittee Reports:

Transportation- No Report:

Transition- No Report:

Coordination with DRS/SRC: Danny DeBoer explained that DRS and all categories of selection are closed. Currently, there are roughly 1200 consumers in application status, 20,000 in service status. Referrals are continuing and after a determination is made, they will then be placed on a waiting list. Furthermore, they will be referred to other agencies such as workforce centers for assistance. The employer leadership recognition award; named after Roy J. Ward and is a prestigious award given to DRS staff annually. The winners of this year award are Dale Batton, Jane Bennett, Barry Brister, and Emily West. Currently DRS are working on the State Plan, and have approved the attachments regarding Goals, Priorities, and Recommendations. CSNA literature review is completed and staff surveys have come back, which received an

80% return rate. DRS SRC seeking new members; appointments and re-appointments have yet to be made. Categories will not be reopened anytime soon. Standards and indicators for 2011 are as follows: DRS passed 4 of the 6 indicators for employment outcomes and passed standards for minority outcomes as well.

Melanie Brunson stated that the council wrote a letter in support of assistant technology and the grant was accepted. A total of \$50,000 dollars was provided for individuals with sensory disabilities in the Richmond area. No applications have been received as of yet, however Melanie will work with Marcus for follow-up.

Debbie Pheiffer stated that the Department of Education is sponsoring three individuals with a background in vision to go to Utah to work with the Deaf Blind Project and become certified trainers of the in-sight, to assist individuals with various skills in the home who are blind and visually impaired. Once these individuals are trained, they are scheduled to conduct a six day training event in Virginia, for teachers that are blind with additional disabilities or deaf with additional disabilities and visually impaired who've gone through online modules to provide early intervention services to 2 year olds families in their homes. The program is sponsored via DOD and the Deaf Blind Project.

Bill Alley stated that towards the end of this month Richmond City Council was giving the VRCBVI volunteers council an award for the work they have done for blind individuals. Additionally, in July the Flying Squirrels game will be a huge event sponsored by the DBVI-Melody Roane is the point of contact.

Doug Powell stated that the RSA monitoring report explained that the DBVI was penalized for paying stipends to students that attended the summer program. Paying stipends of any kind is strictly prohibited. Melody Roane suggested that gift certificates be given to individuals who work at the center work program (students).

Adjournment: There being no other business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m. The next regular quarterly meeting will be held at the Comfort Suites Inn Conference Room on the first floor, 10601 Telegraph Road, Glen Allen, Virginia 23059; phone 804.262.2000, on Saturday, September 10, 2011, at 10:00 a.m.