

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

Members Present: Doug Powell (Chair of the Rehab Council), Melanie Brunson (Vice Chair, represents Consumer Advocacy Groups/American Council of the Blind, Valerie Walker(newly appointed member and representative of a Community Rehabilitation Program), Michael G. Davis (newly appointed member and representative of the Business, Industry, and Labor), Rick Holley (Consumer Advocacy Group – National Federation of the Blind), William Alley (Business and Industry), Martha Macias (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, DBVI), Marguerite Bardone (Business and Industries), Debbie Pheiffer (Department of Education), Claudie Grant, Jr. (Defense Commissary Agency at Fort Lee, Virginia), Jim Taylor (Former employee of the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired).

Members Absent: Angie Matney (Former recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services)

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

Call to Order: Doug Powell called the meeting to order at 10:00 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 June 11, 2011 minutes. A motion was made by Marguerite Bardone, seconded by Melanie Brunson who also presented suggestions for corrections for council consideration. The first being the agency that Melanie Brunson represents, which is correctly pronounced as the American Council "of" the Blind as opposed to "for" the Blind. The second correction being a typing error, in which Marguerite Bardone's last name was confused with Melanie Brunson's. Lastly, in regards to nominations that were held during the June 2011 meeting, the minutes provided too much detail in terms of a comment Rick Holley mentioned about Marguerite Bardone's potential votes. The members agreed that even though the comment included in the minutes was nice, it should be left out because it could potentially confuse other readers. Furthermore,

Doug Powell brought to the attention of the group that in a portion of the minutes the word "suit" was misspelled. Bob Burton also presented a correction to the Regional Office report, in which a job vacancy was reported incorrectly. Doug Powell called for a motion to adopt the changes presented and which was passed by unanimous voice vote.

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.

Commissioner's Report from Ray Hopkins, presented by Susan Davis Payne:

Commissioner Hopkins sent his regards and regrets that he was unable to attend the meeting. Additionally, he sent his welcome to new SRC members and congratulations to Claudie Grant, Jr. on his upcoming retirement from DECA (Defense Commissary Agency).

Legislative Updates: DBVI has not requested any new legislation this year. The primary focus is on trying to get special education for blind and vision impaired students included in the standards of quality (SOQ). Commissioner Hopkins has sent information to Secretary Hazel and his office raising the possibility of convening a meeting with the Secretary of Education, Dr. Wright, and whomever she chooses to participate in order to discuss the standards of quality (SOQ). This issue has already been presented to the Disability of Commission as an item of concern; however the Commission has chosen not to include it into the 2013 slate of concerns.

Debbie Pheiffer: explained that one of the issues associated with the SOQ was the amount of money needed and with the vast amounts of budget cuts, it was proposed to postpone discussions. Additionally, she elaborated that all other disability groups have a caseload established for teachers, for example the teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing have a caseload established in which they use a formula for part-time and full-time employees. In regards to the Department for the Blind and Vision and Impaired, there is a lack of caseload because they are excluded from the SOQ due to funding issues. Furthermore the SOQ would have to be established via the General Assembly in order for the money to come through the state.

Bob Burton: explained that 20 years ago there were far fewer teachers for the Blind and Vision Impaired employed by local school divisions. In essence, each local school division that had teachers for the Blind and Vision Impaired was able to get roughly 7 or 8 thousand dollars towards that individual salary. Presently, with the same amount of money and with an increase in the number of teachers for the Blind and Vision impaired, the amount of money available has dropped to 3 to 4 thousand which lessens the incentives that much more for the school divisions.

A proposal has been made to consolidate the Virginia Department of Aging and Adult Protective Services with DRS and that has been presented to the Governor's commission of reform. The Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired is not associated with that recommendation. The specifics of the recommendation have not been presented, rather just the proposal itself.

SRC Appointments: Jim Taylor succeeds Mike Burton, Mike Davis succeeds Benjamin Franklin, Valarie Walker succeeds Frances Daniel, and Marguerite Bardone succeeds herself. DBVI has submitted resumes on behalf of Debra Ruh, Catherine Burzio, Rick Gonzalez, and John Bailey (who was then appointed to the DBVI Board). Ken Jessup submitted his own application for the SILC seat. The Council is currently awaiting the second round of appointments. The Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office is prioritizing appointments that were not completed last year (2010) then will proceed with appointments for 2011.

Budget Updates: As DBVI wraps up the federal fiscal year, the agency will have a moderate amount of carry-over. DBVI has requested 1,000,000 in re-allotment from RSA. By DBVI's accounting, stimulus funds have been obligated and will expend. There will be no further Stimulus funds available for upcoming years and the challenge will be continuing to serve all eligible individuals. The federal basic VR grant has been increasing over the last several years until 2011 when it remained stable from 2010. There is speculation that this grant will probably decrease in the future. The In-Service Training grant and other discretionary grants experienced a decrease in funds for 2012. Specifically, in terms of the In Service Training grant, the DBVI experienced a decrease of about \$1,000 dollars for the entire year.

Bob Burton: Explained that evidence suggested that in 2011 many states could not match the federal grant, and as a result a very large sum of funds was returned, roughly 160 million dollars. As a result, states asking for re-allotment have not added up to 160 million dollars, thus if the money is not re-allotted it's returned to the Department of Treasury.

DBVI/DRS Interagency Agreement: DBVI has not amended the DBV/DRS Interagency agreement related to services but initial discussions have begun regarding potential redistribution of the federal grant so that a larger amount would go to DRS and a lesser amount to DBVI. Currently the agreement specifies 87% to DRS, 13% to DBVI. Additionally, DBVI's back office functions are performed by DRS staff Subsequent consolidations of those functions several years ago. Back office functions are addressed in a separate administrative interagency agreement. A complete redistribution of funds could potentially close the DBVI's doors.

Melanie Brunson: Moved for a motion that the SRC Executive Committee develop a letter in support of the current manner in which funds are dispersed between the DBVI

and DRS to the Department of Health and Human Services. Additionally the letter would be shared between the council members and then forwarded to the legislation members for consideration and or approval. The motion was seconded by Bill Alley.

Marguerite Bardone: Expressed some concerned about the method in which the SRC Executive Committee should approach this situation as opposed to submitting a letter. Furthermore, she mentioned that communication needs to be targeted in order to be fully effective, specifically by getting the media involved in the process.

Bob Burton: Mentioned that in the past, DBVI and DRS have experienced budgetary issues more often than not from a state prospective as opposed to a federal. The federal budget has grown over the years on a fairly regular and steady basis. In terms of state funds, DBVI is receiving far fewer funds in 2011 than it did in 1991.

Government Reform Commission: Governor McDonnell has indicated that this is an ongoing process and there will be recommendations regarding state personnel. There have been no direct recommendations to consolidate DBVI into another agency.

BEP Personnel Changes: Dave Kennedy has retired. Richard Sorey has assumed responsibilities for the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). The Vending Facility Vendors Council, which is the committee of elected representatives of licensed managers, will be working with DBVI to conduct a top down review of the BEP and initiate program changes by September 30th, 2012. Federal law requires that the BEP have a process where program participants elect representatives from amongst their midst to participate with the agency in major administrative decisions.

Regional Office Update- Bob Burton: Bob Burton reported on current job vacancies and vacancies filled. In the Bristol office, recruitment is ongoing for a new job development specialist. In the Roanoke office, a new orientation and mobility specialist will begin on 10 October 2011. In the Staunton office, recruitment efforts are ongoing for a new job development and placement specialist. In Fairfax, a new orientation and mobility specialist will began in July 2011. In the Richmond office, an orientation and mobility specialist is transferring from the VRCBVI. In the Norfolk office, recruiting efforts to fill the orientation and mobility position are ongoing. VRCBVI is currently recruiting for an Assistant Director for Instruction, (2) orientation and mobility positions, and (1) vocational rehabilitation counselor. Lastly, David Kennedy has retired as the Program Director for the Business Enterprise Program Manager and has been replaced by Mr. Richard Sorey.

Standards and Indicators Quarterly Update: The Rehabilitation Services Administration uses the standards and indicators quarterly update report to evaluate the vocational rehabilitation program. This report covers three quarters of federal fiscal year 2011. At the end of June 2011, 3rd quarter of the federal fiscal year DBVI had 98 successful

placements and closures as opposed to 77 the previous year. Of all closed cases of individuals who had received service, the ratio with an employment outcome was 54 percent, which was an improvement over the previous year which was 42.3 percent. Of the closed cases in which the percentage has a wage greater than or equal to minimal wage, the percentage was 88.8, as opposed to 90.9 percent the previous year. Of those individuals who were successful closures that have a significant disability, 100 percent of DBVI's 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 .83 as opposed to the previous year which was .67 and higher than federal minimum standard of .59.

The next standards and indicators quarterly update is comparing individuals who had wages as their primary source of support at application versus those whom had wages as their primary source of support at closure. Currently DBVI stands at 56.3 percent as opposed to last year's 55.7 and well above the federal minimum of 30.4. Lastly the ratio of minority service rate, DBVI currently rank at .765 and the federal minimum rate is .80.

Update on DBVI Renovations: The renovations are currently on schedule to be completed by February 2012.

VR Director Report/VR Program Update – Susan Davis Payne

VR Outcomes – FFY 10/1/2010 through 8/31/2011

Successful employment outcomes – between 137 - 158

Average age of those employed – 46

Average cost of services - \$9,667.82

Average hourly wage at application - \$8.54

Average hourly wage at closure - \$15.18

Public Meeting Schedule: Federal regulations require that DBVI seek input from agency stakeholders to develop the State Plan and to assist with developing vocational rehabilitation (VR) policy and procedure. Specific types of comments address State Plan requirements including:

- Transition services for students with visual disabilities to help facilitate transition from high school to post-secondary training programs and/or work;
- Skills DBVI VR staff should possess to provide quality VR services to consumers;
- New initiatives that might improve vocational training or employment opportunities for blind consumers;
- Recommendations for improvements to supported employment services;
- Order of Selection when sufficient funds are not available to serve all eligible consumers of VR services;
- Defining "persons with the most significant disabilities" when Order of Selection is implemented; and
- Improving and/or expanding services specifically to minorities and underserved or unserved populations of consumers.

Four Meetings are scheduled for the fall 2011 and spring 2012.

- October 19th at 7:00 pm at the Lion's Club in Roanoke in conjunction with RAVE (consumer group) – Debby Pfeiffer will attend on behalf of the council.

- November 4th at 5:00 pm in Virginia Beach in conjunction with the NFB State Convention - Rick Holley and John Bailey are scheduled to represent the board.
- November 19th (time to be determined) in Annandale in conjunction with the Old Dominion Council- Doug Powell intends on representing the council at this event.
- March 12th (exact date to be determined) in Roanoke in conjunction with DRS at the Virginia Transition Forum.

Hearing Office Contracts: Are up for renewal; currently there are only two hearing officers. The Department of Rehabilitative Services State Rehabilitation Council has already approved, DBVI needs to approve. DBVI has had no VR requests for fair hearing officers, where as DRS had seven. Both have fulfilled their contractual duties. The SRC voted to renew the hearing officer contracts, which was moved by Marguerite Bardone, seconded by Melanie Brunson, and unanimously passed by voice vote.

VR Partnership Activities

Development of 2012 Annual Report: DBVI SRC Annual report is due to the Governor and RSA by December 2011. SRC Volunteers are needed to assist with preparation of the Annual Report. DBVI will submit on behalf of the SRC. Marguerite Bardone, Jim Taylor, Doug Powell, Melanie Brunson, Michael Davis have volunteered to work on the Annual Report.

2012 State Plan Update: The State Plan was submitted on June 28, 2011. According to the RSA website, the plan has been approved.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment: No further progress on the CSNA this quarter. DBVI is currently discussing contracting with another entity to assist with completion of year two activities. Year one work is complete and included a year of internal and external demographics relating to individuals who are blind, visually impaired, or deaf blind. Year two work included satisfaction surveys of consumers, business, community rehabilitation providers and interested stakeholders including consumer advocacy groups. Year three will be analysis of data gathered in years one and two.

Updates from Chair Doug Powell

Executive Committee Meeting Report: The committee conducted a meeting on 3 August 2011 to start deciding how to affectively work together and parcel out responsibilities. Discussions were centralized on what was actually needed, and there were a few issues deemed necessary to specifically focus on:

- The Executive Committee will meet monthly, mostly by phone
- As Workgroups get active, an Executive Committee member will be assigned as liaison to that workgroup, but not as Chair of the workgroup
- The Committee like to see many of the reports from the DBVI staff and SRC workgroups written up and distributed with the agenda at least a week before the SRC meeting so Council members have time to read and synthesize the information before the meeting and use Council meeting time to bring questions rather than get the information for the first time
- If the SRC get this business portion streamlined, there will be more time to get updates about current initiatives within and around VR such as: what are the Job Placement people doing who were hired with DBVI Board funds? What is the newest on BEP, status of special projects in DBVI or the Council, etc?

DBVI Public Meetings: Every year, the SRC is mandated to determine whether the VR agency is meeting the needs of consumers and citizens by holding public meetings. This is a joint responsibility of the SRC and VR staff. In the past, Susan Payne and before her Jim Taylor has coordinated most of the planning and attended these meetings. Mr. Powell feels that there is a difference in terms of the approach to the meeting from the start if an SRC member calls the meeting to order, explains the reason for the meeting (and the SRC responsibility in it), and introduces the VR staff representative attending.

DBVI-SRC Annual Report: The DBVI/SRC is responsible for submitting an Annual Report to the Governor and to the Rehabilitation Services Administration by 31 December 2011. Doug Powell has made efforts to confirm that there were enough volunteers assist with completing this task to include assistance with writing/editing, interviewing or editing success stories, etc.

NCSRC: The DBVI SRC voted, some time ago, to join the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils. DBVI is one of few blind agency SRC members. Many (but certainly not close to all) SRCs around the country have paid staff responsible to the SRC. In the past, many SRC members have provided representation to the NCSRC staff. And about half of the Steering Committee is made up of SRC staff. Recently, suggestions were made to the organization when requested about concerns as the Workforce Investment Act is reviewed for re-authorization. Some recommendations were ignored, and in their place, a suggestion was made to the Senate Committee that in the Rehabilitation Act portion, paid SRC staff should be mandatory for every SRC in every state. This is not the first time that suggestions to strengthen VR services for the blind and visually impaired consumers have been overlooked. Melanie Brunson has suggested contacting other blindness SRC's who meet in a less formal, but parallel network to see if we can suggest changes to NCSRC that would be a prerequisite for more blindness SRCs joining the organization.

Interaction with Business: Over the last couple of years, a dedicated effort has been made to encourage the SRC to assist the Vocational Rehabilitation program in creating more jobs for blind and visually impaired citizens, and making sure that VR services are adequately preparing consumers for those jobs. Potentially, the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (of which the State Rehabilitation Council is a partner of) is asking and getting useful answers to the questions posed above, but Mr. Powell has always want to see if there is anything coming up that we can contribute our services to.

Upcoming meetings: CSAVR/NCSAB/NCSRC, October 23-27 Melanie Brunson will represent the DBVI at the State Rehabilitation Council. The Region III SRC Learning Community, November 9 in Richmond, Virginia will have SRC representation from Melanie Brunson, Susan Payne, and Doug Powell. Doug Powell will represent the DBVI SRC at the DRS SRC retreat and meeting in Norfolk, VA in November.

Adjournment: There being no other business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m. There will be a new member orientation that will be held on December 9, 2011 to welcome newly appointed members to the council. The next regular quarterly meeting will be held at a location yet to be determined, on Saturday, December 10, 2011, at 10:00 a.m.