

**Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired  
Rehabilitation Council  
397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, Virginia  
Approved Minutes, Quarterly Meeting  
June 9, 2007**

**Members Present:** Faye Adams, Patricia Beattie, Mary Chappell, Christine Cutchins, Frances Daniel, Marianne Moore, Doug Powell, Mary Powell, Nancy Quisenberry, Fred Schroeder, Celestine Walker (via teleconference)

**Members Absent:** Pierre Ames, Chancy Fleet, Michael Kasey, Hortense Macon, Guillermo Meneses, Robin Metcalf, Jay Overbey, Sherri Phillips, Dave Thompson

**Staff Present:** Joe Bowman, Commissioner; Bob Burton, Deputy Commissioner for Service; Joan Carneal, SRC Staff Support; Susan Payne, VR Program Director; Glen Slonneger, ES Program Director; Jim Taylor, Chief Deputy Commissioner

**Guests Present:** Driver for Ms. Chappell; Ms. Benbow, driver; Mr. Cutchins, driver; Roy Ward, DRS SRC representative

**Call to Order:** Council Chairperson Ms. Beattie called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

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

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

**Subcommittee Reports:**

**Transportation** – Ms. Cutchins gave the following report:

- The Statewide Transportation Planning and Metropolitan Transportation Planning Report Section 450.316 (Interested Parties, Participation, and Consultation) was forwarded to members prior to the meeting.

- When three sources of funding were made available for transportation, the Planning District Councils held meetings around the State with the key question being how to make the best use of the money. Each of the councils wanted input from non-profit organizations, agencies, providers, consumers, etc.
- One funding source is called the New Freedom Initiative which deals with new forms of alternative transportation, such as accessible taxis for cities that don't have any volunteers, churches that have vans, etc.
- Some of the questions that were asked pertaining to the volunteers and church vans were:
  - who will oversee and maintain the databases of volunteers?
  - will there be a call center?
  - will there be a gas allotment for the volunteer?
- Some suggestions for the other funding were made on how to improve mainline bus service, such as GPS systems, audio announcements, better sensitivity training for the drivers and accessible shelters.
- Consumers who use paratransit want some of the funding to go beyond ADA. For example, go beyond three-fourths miles, seven days a week service, no time restriction, etc.
- The question will be what happens to the programs after the funding runs out, if there is no future funding.
- These were some ideas and suggestions that came out of the meeting on March 29 in the Hampton Roads area.

**Transition:** Ms. Moore gave the following report:

**From John Eisenburg:** The slow down in making print materials accessible to print disabled students has been caused by a conflict between state law and the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) contract. Virginia's state constitution does not allow for state employees to indemnify against potential copyright infringement. This is in Virginia's State Constitution. Virginia is in contact with Assistant Sec. Hager's office regarding the issue. Virginia is not the only state with this issue. A similar situation occurred with Indicator #13 and a contract between University of Oregon, a computer company, and the states. It was resolved, and the company deleted the offending paragraph. In the meantime Virginia will move forward.

Virginia will move forward with a plan to dismantle books, scan them, and tag pictures and graphics. DBVI will continue to handle all Braille requests and GMU will handle all other formats.

This is only K-12.

Mr. Slonneger stated that the agreements with the school divisions have not been signed for the upcoming year, and DBVI will be processing requests for text as usual.

Mr. Bowman stated that it will take years for the NIMAC to be implemented and even then it will only produce new text beginning with the year 2006. No revisions will be made available.

**A suggestion:**

Review VDOE, VDRS, VBPD, VDH, VDSS transition activities to consider ways the activities are duplicated. Consider whether the duplication is necessary. How can the activities be more inclusive?

**Commissioner's Report:**

- Thanked members for taking their time on a Saturday to attend the meeting and also for the valuable input the Council has given the agency regarding the VR program.
- Thanked Ms. Moore for her report regarding the NIMAC contract as he had it on his report to inform members.
- On the State level, this is the year the Governor of Virginia prepares his biennial budget that will be presented to the General Assembly in January. The agency will be preparing our budget over the summer for a multiple review process. Reminded members that last year's budget had awarded funding for seven new rehabilitation teaching positions to address the needs for the senior population with vision loss. Requested members to contact him if they had any ideas/suggestions pertaining to the agency's budget. The agency will also be preparing its strategic plan.
- On the National level, the House of Appropriations Legislative Branch subcommittee had voted to significantly under fund the talking book program, specifically to not fund the transition from an analog-based to a digital technology-based system. There are approximately 9,300 blind individuals who use this service in Virginia and will be effective by this action. In response to Mr.

Ward's question, Mr. Bowman stated that there are other disabled individuals using this service but out of the 9,300 but the majority are blind and visually impaired users. The Library of Congress needs funding to transition the program from an analog-based format to a digital technology-based format. The Appropriations Committee will be meeting on this coming Tuesday. He encouraged members to contact their members of the Appropriations Committee for Virginia (Jim Moran, Frank Wolf and Virgil Goode) and give your opinions regarding this issue. MOTION: Mr. Schroeder made the motion that the Council express the support for the Library of Congress plans to transition the talking book program from analog-based to digital technology-based format with a letter and/or empowering our chairperson to make contacts to members of Congress and speak on behalf of this Council to support funding for that proposal. Mr. Powell seconded the motion. Mr. Powell amended the motion by requesting Mr. Schroeder to draft a letter/response for Ms. Beattie. Mr. Schroeder agreed to draft something for Ms. Beattie and will forward it to her on June 10. Mr. Powell also suggested that he and Ms. Beattie contact other SRCs and get support for this program as well. It was moved and passed as amended to support the project.

- GAO study regarding the Randolph Sheppard program regarding military dining contracts is in jeopardy. GAO is conducting a survey which was an onsite visit at Fort Lee and also requested blind manager salaries. There was an issue of vendor confidentiality issues. That has been resolved and the information will be provided to GAO to complete their study. He stated that he was optimistic about the outcome but concerned. Mr. Schroeder added that it was like stated in the Bible "the lion and the lamb lying down together but the lamb isn't going to get a lot of sleep."
- The reauthorization of the WIA has not had any movement.
- Bids are in for the renovation of dorm rooms at the Center but they exceeded the funds available. We have a strategy that we think will work. There is a special meeting scheduled for the DBVI Board later in June to consider the possibility of using Endowment Funds for the funds over the allowed amount. He is optimistic that they will approve the request. He will inform the Council once he has all the details.
- Psychological services have been changed at the Center. A contract with an onsite psychologist came up for renewal and the agency

chose to develop a new procedure. Staff at the Center will now evaluate the student and if this service is needed, it will be provided through community-based centers on an individual basis.

- VSBD in Hampton and Staunton are holding public meetings regarding the consolidation of those two schools on June 18 in Hampton and June 19 in Staunton. Mr. Slonneger reported that there were approximately 27 blind students in Staunton and approximately seven in Hampton. In response to Mr. Ward's question, Mr. Bowman stated that the deaf community was more concerned about the consolidation than the blind community.

### **DBVI Transition Services (Coordination between VR and ES Programs):**

Ms. Payne and Mr. Slonneger gave the following report:

- Copies of the Child/Parents Rights (i.e., Free and Appropriate Education, Consent for Services, Assessments, Change in Services, Records, Confidentiality, and Disagreements) were distributed at the time of registration. This document will be forwarded to members electronically next week per the request of Mr. Powell.
- The agency serves approximately 2,000 students each year, with that number inching up every year. For the month of May, there was a total of 2,091 students from birth to age 22 of which 769 are age 14 or above. There are six education coordinators across the State with the caseload ranging from 139 students in Bristol to 505 students in Fairfax with a wide variance in responsibilities.
- The current process is that when a student reaches the age of 14 and have a visual acuity of less than 20/100 in the better eye with correction or a field restriction of less than 30 degrees in the better eye, notification is sent to the VR counselor from the education coordinator within one month of the student's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. The education coordinator and the VR counselor review the student's case and determine if the student meets the eligibility criteria for VR services. The VR counselor makes that determination. If the student is not eligible, the student is referred to DRS at the age of 16.
- Mr. Slonneger and Ms. Payne have been reviewing this process, which has multiple layers (from the teacher to the education coordinator to the VR counselor to the student), to see if there is some way to make it less complicated. It is in the early stages of development but they would like to see the parents and students getting in direct contact with the VR counselor by receiving a brief

letter explaining that the student may be eligible for VR services and that a VR counselor would be contacting them with a specified time frame. This would give the parent and student direct contact with the VR counselor and the relationship could start to begin at that point. The letter would go beyond the information provided in the agency brochure as suggested by Mr. Powell. Mr. Adams suggested that it be stated so that every student and parent did not get the opinion that all individuals need the full array of services offered by the agency. Ms. Payne stated that the intent would be to help the parents/students become more knowledgeable about what we do and what is available to help them make better informed choices.

- Ms. Beattie thanked Mr. Slonneger for coming and sharing his information regarding the intra-agency portion, but there is a lot more we do on transition than discussed today. Mr. Slonneger stated he would be pleased to come back again to cover the remainder services provided by the Education Services program.

**Matters of Public Comment:** There were no public comments.

**Update for the Regional Offices:** Mr. Burton gave the following report:

- The agency has been recruiting for several positions during the past three months.
- In Bristol, the interviews for the vacant O & M position have been conducted and they are ready to make an offer to an individual who has over 30 years of experience and worked for VRCBVI in the early seventies.
- In Roanoke, we have a new O&M instructor from Missouri who is scheduled to begin July 2.
- In Staunton, we have a rehabilitation teacher's position which has been open since February.
- In Fairfax, the manager is conducting second interviews for a VR counselor position and very hopeful to find someone as he has been maintaining that caseload since the vacancy occurred in October of 2006. The manager has achieved the most successful 26 closures for the Fairfax office this calendar year.
- In Richmond, we have a VR counselor (transition caseload) position vacant due to the individual leaving to go to the Veterans Administration Services, which has taken two or three of our employees over the past couple of years due to higher pay scales.

- In Norfolk, they are in the process of interviewing for a new VR counselor next week.
- At the Center, we have one VR counselor (Armond Leake) and one O&M instructor (Nancy Prussing) open. Recruiting for those positions will begin very soon.
- There are seven new rehabilitation teacher positions across the State which we will be recruiting for in the very near future as they go into effect July 1.
- Relocation of the Norfolk and the Roanoke offices have become very complicated attempting to abide by the Governor's initiative to consolidate multiple State agencies under one roof as much as possible such as the One-Stop Center initiatives. It is not a simple matter of finding a location for just the DBVI office and leasing it as in the past but finding a property on which all agencies can agree. Access to public transportation is another issue that must always be considered. Relocating is quite a problem with all the obstacles.
- The AWARE system is in the testing stage now and we are scheduled to go online in October of 2008. We will be doing a pilot program in our Roanoke office probably in April 2008.

**Comprehensive Needs Assessment:** Mr. Taylor gave the following report:

- This report was forwarded to members prior to the meeting for their review.
- Council members are the first to review the draft report and it will be distributed to the field staff and other appropriate individuals early next week.
- This assessment was prepared by MSU and is a requirement by RSA.
- It is a joint effort by the agency and the SRC.
- Announced that he has a very limited number of print copies, but if anyone would like one, please let Ms. Carneal know. The print copy is the same as what you received electronically prior to the meeting.
- We will start working on some of the issues that were raised in the report.
- MSU received an overall 27% response rate from successful closures, the unsuccessful closures, the transition students, and DBVI staff.
- Out of the 13 general recommendations, seven were employment related. This is a document that will be used for several years. The

Another major issue was transportation as we all are aware of already. This would be an excellent opportunity to work together to help improve these services.

- Ms. Beattie requested members to look ahead and address issues for expansion and innovation section of the State plan and get them to Ms. Payne or Mr. Taylor soon as it is due to RSA by July 1.
- Ms. Beattie also suggested that the agency consider making CDs of the needs assessment report for Council information which could be used as a resource document.

**Program Update:** Ms. Payne gave the following report:

**State Plan for FY 2008:**

- Suggestions were received from the Transition subcommittee, and they will be addressed in the State plan, especially the training in regards to IDEA 2004 training, which will be incorporated into the CSPD.
- DBVI will continue to sponsor a Summer Work program for high school students. In the summer of 2007, students participating in the Summer Transition program at VRCBVI will have an opportunity to experience the Summer Work program.
- Requested input from members as the attachments were mailed out prior to the meeting for members to be prepared for discussion.
- Information gathered from public meetings, SRC, and the time-to-time comments received from consumers are incorporated into the development of the State plan.
- Requested members to send any ideas/suggestions that they may have after the meeting to her via email or phone but to keep in mind the plan is due at RSA by July 1.
- Mr. Taylor stated that members should keep in mind that funds are available in the expansion and innovation section of the State plan to support new innovative ideas made by the Council.
- Mr. Schroeder commented that he commends the agency on how well the plan was developed and how the agency does take the public comments very seriously.

**Update on VR Outcomes for FY 2007:**

- Mr. Burton reported that in regards to successful Status 26 closures, we are currently 22 ahead of last year. He also stated



that in Status 22 (employed), we are even with last year's total. We are hopeful that we will exceed the 182 total of successful closures from last year.

- Ms. Payne reviewed the different types of jobs obtained from consumers along with the average weekly earnings, average age, cost of services, etc. and will forward these reports to members next week for a closer review.

#### **Satisfaction Surveys for SFY 2008:**

- The 2008 surveys will begin on July 1 through June 30, 2008.
- The survey was forwarded to members for their review prior to the meeting.
- Ms. Beattie expressed concern regarding the terminology of "provider" and "vendor" as these could be confusing to the consumer and suggested perhaps conducting surveys by phone exclusively. Perhaps there could be examples used to clarify the reference.
- Ms. Adams inquired if the agency had received any request for surveys in Braille and wondered how a consumer would respond with this type of format. Ms. Cutchins explained that she had responded to Braille surveys in the past by using a tape recorder for the answers and mailing it in. Staff could not recall having any request for Braille surveys. Mr. Powell suggested that the agency call each consumer to see which media they would prefer when receiving the survey.
- Ms. Payne requested members to send any additional suggestions to her via email or contact her by phone.

#### **Public Meetings for Fall 2007:**

- Meetings will be scheduled as they have been in the past in conjunction with consumer organization conference.
- There will be five scheduled which will be in Bristol via teleconference, Fairfax, Norfolk, Richmond, and Roanoke.
- The schedule will be forwarded to members and organizational groups as soon as they have been scheduled.
- Comments from the public are taken into consideration when preparing the State plan each year. The agency will be taking additional comments from students at the Center this year.

### **VR Regulations from the Administrative Code of Virginia:**

- They have been to public hearing one time.
- They have come back to us from the Attorney General's (AG) office with notes to make them more user friendly to the reader.
- We have completed that process.
- There was one section regarding confidentiality that has not been finalized.
- Hope to have them back for public comment and the AG's review again by the end of the summer.
- The Council will receive information regarding that when it is in place.

### **Summer Work Programs:**

- This program runs from July 29 through August 10 where transition students have the opportunity to work real jobs and earn real money. VR counselors help students find jobs and they earn money either from employers or by a DBVI stipend. Some students find jobs on their own.
- Students at the Center are now working the last two weeks of their program in order to use the skills they have learned. It is for two to four hours a day, four days a week. Some of these students have never had a work experience before in their lives. It has been a very successful project.
- Other summer programs at the Center are the College Prep and Computer Assessment sessions.

**Lunch:** The Council took a 10 minute break for lunch

### **SRC Activities with RSA, CSAVR, and NCSAB:**

- Ms. Beattie stated that she attended the conference in Bethesda, Maryland from April 22 through 25.
- The first part of the meeting is the CSAVR conference from Monday morning through Wednesday at noon and then the remainder of the week is the NCSAB conference.
- The CSAVR's position papers supported the ideas of a separate agency for the blind from the general agency. They also support the Randolph Sheppard program.

- One interesting thing she has discovered by being on the Legislative Committee was the proposal that CSAVR is making on the amendment to the Rehab Act, even when a state agency is on an order of selection they want them to be able to provide either no cost or low cost services for those individuals who need just a little boost to get going and move them to the head of the line. Mr. Schroeder stated that he had real reservations about that proposal. He believes it has more of an impact on the general agency than the blind but the individuals with the most severely disabled need the services and may be unemployed while the one needing a little boost probably will be employed more than likely.
- The Draft New Strategic Plan for RSA's VR program is broken into three categories: 1) competitive self-sufficient individuals who want to go to work full-time and earning the same as the generic population; 2) non-competitive individuals, as a group, who are on benefits, such as SSDI and they need the Medicare/Medicaid and who work part-time to supplement their wages; and 3) transition populations called youths. This is certainly a new look at what the VR program is and how it will be implemented. We need to look at how we look at the VR program so when RSA comes to conduct the onsite review, we will be ready. There is a Web site for informal comment for those who are interested. Mr. Schroeder has been working with NSCAB on developing its response to the proposal where they want to look at quality of services. This will be helpful for individuals to review as well. Mr. Powell is hoping that the average age for closures as reported by Ms. Payne which was from 43 to 49 will be taken into consideration during future discussion. Mr. Schroeder said we all need to keep a wary eye on these issues. What they are looking at are performance measures and structures that are allowable under current law. This would take legislative change and they are not pushing for any change in this cycle. He quoted Mr. Hager as saying "under the law, they were prohibited from lobbying."
- Ms. Beattie has been participating in meeting of the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils and they have a steering committee who are developing a Strategic plan.
- There will be Web-based training for the chairpersons of SRCs and they will go back to the full Council and conduct a training session for members.
- There will be another orientation training session held on the Friday before the fall meeting.

- Mr. Taylor reported that while the agency had all three categories open currently, we are still on an order of selection. With overseeing the budget, it may be that the agency may have to close a category of the order of selection sometime during 2008.
- Minutes from the most recent teleconference meeting of the National Council of SRCs were sent to member for their review prior to the meeting.
- Ms. Beattie discussed items on the minutes of particular interest to the Council since they had reviewed the minutes prior to the meeting.

### **Result of Vote on Whether to Continue Saturday Meetings:**

The Council discussed the possibility of having future meetings on weekdays. The consensus was that this matter should be voted on by all Council members. Mr. Taylor sent out an e-mail to all members allowing them an opportunity to vote on whether to continue meeting on Saturdays or switch to a weekday. The final vote was nine to two to continue meeting on Saturday.

### **Tabled from Last Meeting Coordination with DRS SRC:**

- This item was tabled for discussion at the March 3 meeting. DRS SRC voted at their March 12 meeting that the two SRCs work together on collaboration, communication, and coordination by sharing meeting minutes, and Mr. Ward was appointed to attend the DBVI SRC meetings and report back to the DRS SRC.
- Mr. Ward announced that it has been 22 years since he retired from DBVI.
- He stated that the DRS SRC meets five times a year (one at WWRC in Fishersville and one in different parts of the State depending on the issues), and the meetings are held on a Monday in January, March, May, August and November. Reported that the January meeting is mainly for the purpose of addressing any issues which pertain to DRS and DBVI which are raised in the General Assembly. He stated that wanted to provide this information since the Council is considering having a representative attend their meetings, and they it would be helpful to know the schedule before accepting the position.
- **MOTION:** Ms. Chappell made a motion that she felt it was vital to the goals of both agencies and would strongly support the idea of a DBVI representative attending the DRS SRC meetings and bring back the collaborative, communication, and coordination of

legislative issues to this body. Mr. Powell seconded the motion with the amendment that financial consideration be given to the representative appointed for this task. Mr. Ward stated that DRS SRC reimbursed him for his participation in the DBVI SRC meetings. Ms. Adams expressed a concern that since this item was tabled last meeting due to a lack of members still present that the issue be tabled again until the September meeting since so few members were still in attendance. The motion was passed that the item be tabled until September, and Mr. Taylor suggested that the item be put on the agenda at the beginning of the meeting so it could be resolved at the next meeting. It was seconded and passed that the item be tabled for the next meeting.

**Opportunity for Members to take a Couple of Minutes to Provide an Update on Organizations Represented or Other Activities of Interest to the Council (Optional):**

- Ms. Adams announced that VOPA has a survey on their Web site for public input and it could be accessed at [www.vopa.state.virginia.va.us](http://www.vopa.state.virginia.va.us) or by calling 800.552.3962. Ms. Beattie inquired as to the deadline and Ms. Adams thought 30 days but was unsure. Ms. Beattie requested Ms. Adams to email Ms. Carneal with the information on Monday and she in turn will forward all the information to members.

**Other Business:** There was no other business brought before the Council.

**Adjournment:** There being no other business to come before the Council, it was seconded, moved, and passed by unanimous voice vote that the meeting be adjourned at 1:10 p.m. The next meeting will be held at the DBVI Headquarters Conference Room I/II, 397 Azalea Avenue, on Saturday, September 15, 2007, at 10:00 a.m.