

**Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired  
Rehabilitation Council  
397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, Virginia  
DRAFT Minutes, Quarterly Meeting  
September 18, 2010**

**Members Present:** Faye Adams, Melanie Brunson, Benjamin Franklin, Richard Gonzalez, Richard Holley, Michael Kasey, Martha Macias, Angela Matney, Doug Powell

**Members Absent:** William Alley, Marguerite Bardone, Anna Burns, Michael Burton, Catherine Burzio, Frances Daniel, Claudie Grant, Raymond Kenney, Hortense Macon, Sherrie Phillips

**Staff Present:** Joan Carneal, Support Staff; Susan Payne, VR Program Director

**Guests Present:** Carolyn Alicandro, Driver; Pam Holley, Driver; Ken Jessup; Mattison Payne; Chuck Pettke

**Call to Order:** Doug Powell called the meeting to order at 10:13 a.m.

**Adoption of Agenda:** Doug Powell called for a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. A motion made by Melanie Brunson, seconded by Angie Matney, and passed by unanimous voice vote that the agenda be adopted as presented.

**Action on Minutes of the Previous Meeting:** Doug Powell called for a motion to approve the June 12 minutes. A motion was made by Angie Matney, seconded by Rick Gonzalez, and passed by unanimous voice vote that the minutes be adopted as distributed.

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

**Commissioner's Report** – In Commissioner Hopkins absence, Susan Payne gave a brief report. Commissioner Hopkins has submitted a more detailed report to be included in the minutes.

**Legislative Updates**

The attention of Executive Branch agencies has already turned to the next session of the General Assembly and the legislative process. DBVI is not requesting any new legislation this session.

Governor McDonnell has indicated that he plans to call the General Assembly into a special session in November to address government reform with the intent to have the legislature address recommendations from the Commission on Government Reform.

At the federal level, it appears that reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act and the larger Workforce Investment Act will again be delayed until the next Congress is convened. Other legislation, such as Javitts Wayner O'Day modernization also appears to be delayed.

### **SRC Appointments**

DBVI has two vacancies in the business, industry and labor category (Frances Daniel who is not eligible for reappointment and Marguerite Bardone who is eligible for reappointment), and four vacancies in the current or former applicants for or recipients of vocational rehabilitation services (Michael Kasey who is not eligible for reappointment, Benjamin Franklin, Angie Matney, and Michael Burton who are eligible for reappointment). The representative of the State educational agency responsible for the public education of students with disabilities who are eligible to receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is vacant due to Karen Trump resigning from DOE.

There are new guidelines for registering for SRC nominations. All persons wishing to serve on the SRC are advised to submit an application to the Secretary of the Commonwealth via their website: [www.commonwealth.virginia.gov](http://www.commonwealth.virginia.gov). Susan Payne requested members to send their résumés to her to forward to the Secretary of the Commonwealth since the website is not user friendly for sighted or JAWS users.

After discussion, Michael Kasey made a motion that the SRC send a letter to the Governor addressing the accessibility issues of the website. Angie Matney amended the motion by adding a concern regarding the website design. Michael Kasey accepted the amendment, and it was seconded, and passed by unanimous vote that a letter be sent to the Governor from the SRC members. Doug Powell and Melanie Brunson will prepare a letter to the Governor on behalf of the SRC. Susan Payne will email the appropriate contact information for the letter to Doug Powell regarding the name, USPS address, email address, and phone number. Susan Payne suggested that members follow up with individual letters as concerned citizens and encouraged them to contact their consumer organization to submit a letter to the Governor as well.

## **Budget Updates**

DBVI is carrying over federal VR and Independent Living (IL) funds from FFY 2010 into FFY 2011. DBVI applied for \$500,000 in reallocated VR funds which we received. This brings the total award for FFY 2010 to approximately 9.1 million dollars. RSA has notified state agencies that more than 15 million dollars are still available for reallocation, and they are encouraging agencies to consider applying for those funds. If the funds are not used by VR agencies, the money will go back into the treasury. This would be the first time that agencies haven't used all available funds. This is probably due to the lack of state-match dollars and the stimulus funds are affecting states' abilities to utilize the funds. DBVI can not seek additional grant funds without assuring that state-match dollars are available and that it can handle the impact to its maintenance of effort requirement.

DBVI will be requesting the General Assembly to address the lack of state funding to match the federal grant. The Department for Rehabilitation Services is facing the same issue.

## **DRS/DRS Interagency Agreement**

DBVI has three cooperative agreements with DRS; administrative support, VR services, and IL services. The cooperative agreement for VR and IL services specify how the agencies will cooperate regarding the provision of services and the distribution of funds.

## **NCSAB and BEA**

Melanie Brunson reported that five years ago a group was developed called the Blind Entrepreneurial Alliance (BEA) who hired a lobbyist to express the value of the Randolph Sheppard program because RSA was undermining that program. The BEA has dissolved but the steering committee members will keep in touch on an informal basis should the need to reorganize arise again.

Susan Payne, on behalf of Bob Burton, gave the following reports:

## **Update on Regional Offices and VRCBVI**

- The Bristol and Norfolk regional offices have not had any changes since the last meeting.
- The Roanoke regional office has one regional manager position vacant and the deadline for recruiting was extended due to the lack of qualified applicants. Three rehabilitation teachers have been hired since our last meeting. One individual was hired as a rehabilitation teacher effective July 12 with 30 years of experience, has a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation

Teaching, and a Masters Degree in Orientation & Mobility. Another will start employment on September 27 and holds a Master's Degree in Mass Communications from Brooklyn College. The other teacher will start employment on October 25 and has a Master's Degree in Blind Rehabilitation Teaching and Orientation and Mobility from Western Michigan University. She is one of fifteen blind rehabilitation professionals in the United States that holds triple ACVREP certification. Dr. Mitchell, Bristol regional manager, will serve as the Roanoke interim regional manager. A VR counselor began on September 13 who has a Ph.D in Counselor Education and Supervision from Ohio University. She also has a Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling from Winston-Salem State University and is a certified VR counselor. This VR counselor will have a transition caseload, making two for the agency. The other transition VR counselor is employed in the Richmond regional office.

- The Staunton regional office hired a VR counselor who transferred from the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center and has experience in working with individuals who are blind and vision impaired. She is proficient in American Sign Language and is a Certified VR counselor.
- The Fairfax regional office has a new VR counselor who has 15 years of experience and has been working for the past four years with the Ohio Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired. He also worked for DRS prior to moving to Ohio, and he started August 2.
- The Richmond regional office has a new rehabilitation teacher who began on June 10th. She is a former DBVI consumer and is totally blind.
- The VRCBVI made an offer to a VR evaluator/counselor who declined the offer, and we will be recruiting again for that position. We also have three O&M specialist positions vacant, and we are actively recruiting for those positions. Mr. Burton is considering hiring a wage employee to fill in for one of the O&M specialist positions on a temporary basis. A new Braille instructor started on August 10 who received her Master's Degree in Special Education/Visual Impairments from the University of Louisville and has a Ph.D in comparative literature from the University of Arkansas. She has also worked for the past ten years as the Braille instructor at the Charles McDowell Rehabilitation Center for the Blind in Louisville, KY. She has also served as an adjunct Braille instructor at the University of Louisville in its special education department.

### **Standards and Indicators Quarterly Report 10/01/2009 – 06/30/2010**

- Total closed cases for this reporting period is 343.
- Of the closed cases that received services, the percentage with an employment outcome is currently at 42.3%. 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, we are at 90.9%. 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, we are at 100%. 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, we are at 0.67%. The federal minimum standard is 0.59%.
- Difference between the percentage of closed cases with employment outcomes that have a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage that are self supported at application and the percentage of closed cases with employment outcomes that have a wage greater than or equal to the minimum wage that are self supported at closure, we are at 55.7%. The federal minimum standard is 30.4%.
- Ratio of minority service rate to non-minority service rate, we are at 0.915%. The federal minimum standard is .80%. Rick Gonzalez requested the breakdown of what makes up a minority. Susan Payne stated that she would contact the regional managers to find out specific outreach activities and will report that information at the December meeting.

### **Update on VRCBVI Renovations**

The roof replacement for the recreation building and the dining hall has been postponed until renovations have been completed on the AA building. The Center is in the process of relocating staff to other locations on the complex.

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

#### **VR on VR Outcomes**

DBVI had 76 individuals who achieved employment outcomes during the first three quarters of FFY 2010. Thirty-seven of those individuals are working more than 35 hours weekly. The average hourly wage at application was \$7.58 with the average weekly earnings being \$381.71. The average hourly wage at closure was \$12.79 with the average weekly earnings being \$421.99. The average age of individuals who went to work was 47. The average number of hours worked per week at closure was 30. Of the 76 individuals who accomplished their employment goal, 61 went to work in competitive settings; eight were self-employed; five were homemakers; and two were licensed vendors through the Business Enterprise program. The average cost of services to individuals who achieved their employment goal was \$9,340.43.

As of September 17 DBVI had 128 successful employment outcomes. The average

hourly wage at application was \$9.05. The average hourly wage at closure was \$14.68. There were 14 self-employed; eight were homemakers; and four were licensed vendors through the Business Enterprise program.

### **Consumer Satisfaction Survey**

- There were 329 recipients; 120 responses for overall response rate of 36.5%.
- Surmise is due to recession, shortages in VRCBVI staff, surveys were conducted in a significantly compressed period of time due to the vacancy of the position and a need for a new staff member to become familiar with DBVI services.
- The key areas of positive highlights was that most consumers surveyed were satisfied with low vision services and eye surgery/medical treatments that they received.
- The key area of concern was unemployment, i.e. transportation, more technical support, and communication with their VR counselor.
- Due to the position being vacant for a little over a year, satisfaction surveys fell behind schedule. At the present time, DBVI is back on schedule with monthly satisfaction surveys.
- The new Survey Results Report is much more extensive, including graphic charts, tables, and narratives. While graphic charts and tables are not JAWS friendly the narratives explain results in great detail.

### **Public Meeting Schedule**

- There are two public meetings scheduled as of this meeting. One is in conjunction with the National Federation for the Blind's State meeting on November 12 from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in Fairfax. The second meeting is being held at the Voice of the Blue Ridge in Roanoke on December 9 with two meetings; one at 2:30 p.m. and the other at 7:00 p.m.
- There will be a public meeting held in conjunction with DRS at the 2011 Transition Forum to be held at the Norfolk Marriott Waterside on March 14 - 16.
- DBVI is seeking suggestions regarding other locations that will provide maximum opportunity for stakeholders to participate. Melanie Brunson reported that the ACB general membership meeting was scheduled for November 20 and that may be an option. Susan Payne will contact Melanie Brunson regarding the possibility of scheduling a public meeting at that time.
- Doug Powell will send out a request for members to volunteer to attend public meetings that are scheduled near their home community.

### **Hearing Officer Contracts Update**

Doug Powell declared that the meeting would now convene in an Executive Session and was closed to the public. Melanie Brunson and Angie Matney briefed the Council on the process of reviewing the bids for the Hearing Officers' contracts. They discussed the qualifications of the bidders and the recommendations of the subcommittee. After discussion, Melanie Brunson called for a motion that the SRC award a contract to Barbara Byers, CRC, and Lt. Col. Regina Kane, Esq., it was seconded by Angie Matney, and passed by unanimous vote. The executive session was closed and the meeting was re-opened to the public.

### **SRC – VR Partnership Activities – Susan Payne**

#### **Development of 2010 Annual Report**

Susan Payne stated that it is time to begin development of the Annual Report. Doug Powell, Angie Matney volunteered to serve on this committee. Susan Payne will contact Marguerite Bardone to see if she is willing to serve on this committee as she was very instrumental in the preparation of the 2009 Annual Report.

#### **State Plan Update**

The agency has not heard if the State plan has been approved as of this date. DBVI will share that information with Council members once it has been received.

#### **Comprehensive Needs Assessment Outcomes**

DBVI and DRS will collaborate in developing the 2011 comprehensive needs assessment. Selected members from DBVI and DRS met on September 7 to focus on establishing a general timeframe of activities to be accomplished in order for DBVI and DRS to complete the federally mandated assessment. The group determined that there are several areas where collaboration between the two agencies can occur while each agency proceeds with CSNA activities that are specific to the needs of each agency. Areas of potential collaboration include development of survey(s), compilation of survey results, scheduling and conducting public meetings and focus groups, and a review of literature related to the needs of individuals who have disabilities.

Since the CSNA is a critical component of the State plan for both agencies, a timeline was established to guide the development and implementation of the CSNA.

Rick Gonzalez stated that there are two groups of individuals that employers are afraid to hire, and they are blind individuals and ex-offenders. He requested that this issue be addressed in the comprehensive needs assessment. Doug Powell suggested

that success stories be included in the assessment.

Melanie Brunson, Rick Gonzalez and Doug Powell volunteered to assist with the development of the CSNA.

### **Success Stories**

This 55-year-old man was referred to VR for services in May of 2009. During the initial interview it was learned that although he has been legally blind for many years as a result of juvenile macular degeneration, he worked in middle management at a local ship yard, and he most recently owned his own business outfitting boats with equipment for wake boarding, etc. He reported that the economy and his health led to his decision to close his business. He reported that he experienced a massive heart attack with a 100% blockage, which nearly killed him. He also reported he has psoriatic arthritis, which has been debilitating.

DBVI began exploring vocational options and considered contracts management among other things. In meetings with him, he talked a lot about his heart attack and what a wake-up call it was for him to change his way of life. He demonstrated a great deal of passion for eating healthy and exercise.

DBVI developed an IPE with “Personal Trainer” as the goal and he explored his options for completing certification programs. He interviewed an array of professionals working in the field, including those working in rehabilitation centers, health clubs, and in private practice. He discovered that the National Academy of Sports Medicine offered a reputable training program and DBVI sponsored his participation. In addition, DBVI provided low vision aids, a laptop computer and a portable video magnifier. DBVI also sponsored his participation in a National Sports Medicine Conference.

He began volunteering at the YMCA in hopes of gaining their respect and a position. There were some technology concerns, but he took time to prove himself and was ultimately hired. He has since been promoted and reports he is happy and healthy and once again contributing to the community.

### **SRC Updates from the Chair – Doug Powell**

#### **SRC Cycle of Annual Activities**

Susan Payne will develop a matrix consisting of timetables for specific activities for SRC participation, i.e. State plan development, public meetings, Annual Report, etc. The two major projects are in the first quarter beginning the development of the State



plan and in the second and third quarters, scheduling public meetings and development of the State plan. The SRC is charged with reviewing, analyzing, and advising DBVI with policies and procedures. Susan Payne reported that the VR Policies and Procedures Manual is being revised and she would share information with the SRC which required their input.

Susan Payne stated that 16 staff members had attended the National Employment Conference held in Northern Virginia earlier in the week. Martha Macias reported that she had attended two very informative sessions at the conference and will share the names of those presenters to Susan Payne in the event she decided to contact them to make presentations to all VR staff during their fall meeting.

### **SRC Participation in Public Meetings – Action Item**

Doug Powell stated that since the SRC is one of the citizen input mechanisms of the Rehabilitation Act, and since public meetings is another, it seems appropriate to have at least one SRC representative at each of the public meetings around the State. Susan Payne will be sending a tentative schedule for these public meetings to Council members. Doug Powell encouraged SRC members to attend at least one of those meeting to represent the Council. Doug Powell will be soliciting for SRC volunteers to attend specific meetings once the schedule has been completed.

### **SRC Committee Structure**

Doug Powell stated that as the SRC continues to evolve as a body; there are a couple of issues that to need to be addressed. Committee effectiveness is one of those areas that need to be strengthened. Committees do not seem to be making any major accomplishments, and this seems to be because committees have not set specific goals to keep them working and accountable.

### **Annual Goal Setting**

Doug Powell discussed preparing for growth in SRC outreach activities and provide for continuity.

### **SRC Retreat**

Doug Powell discussed the possibility of a holding a retreat to accomplish the items above. The DRS SRC already does this for their annual goal setting and perhaps DBVI SRC could learn from their experience to move forward. After much discussion and lack of attendance at this meeting, Doug Powell will send an email to the full Council surveying their preference in holding a SRC retreat consisting of two choices: 1) holding the meeting on a Friday sometime in January or February; and 2) holding the meeting the Friday before the 2011 March regular quarterly meeting.

Doug Powell will share the results of the survey with the full Council. After the initial retreat, the SRC hopes to schedule a retreat annually to be held the Friday before the September regular quarterly meeting. Rick Gonzalez, Melanie Brunson, Doug Powell, and Ben Franklin volunteered to serve on the retreat committee. Susan Payne will request the assistance of the Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) staff. Susan Payne also discussed using a publication issued by the 36<sup>th</sup> Institute of Rehabilitation that covers VR SRC partnerships and would be a valuable instrument to guide the SRC on all issues. Rick Gonzalez suggested that the retreat be conducted in developing by-laws, strategic planning for outcomes, and to facilitate the SRC in becoming very effective. Doug Powell suggested using the morning to establish committees and the afternoon to set specific goals.

### **SRC By-Laws**

Doug Powell suggested that the Council codify certain rules in order to have individuals nominated for terms when they expire and for representing the chair when he is unavailable to fulfill an obligation for the Council. He expressed a concern that he believes it is time to develop specific by-laws. There are other SRCs that already have by-laws; therefore, the Council would not have to reinvent the process, but could appoint a committee to work on formulating these by-laws. The Council agreed to pursue developing by-law. This will be an activity to be addressed during the SRC retreat.

### **Interaction with Business**

The Council put appropriate attention on the consumer satisfaction survey with DBVI services; however, from anecdotal evidence, consumers still have trouble finding and staying in high quality jobs. The SRC has not put much attention on those who hire DBVI consumers, and are we doing a good job of preparing people for work, and can we leverage satisfied employers to widen the work opportunities for future clients? This issue will be addressed in the comprehensive needs assessment.

### **Regional SRC Learning Community – November 19, from 10:30 – 4:00**

In conjunction with the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) meeting last March, representatives from several SRCs in this RSA region met for lunch at the suggestion of the TACE representatives in the region. It was decided that having periodic regional meetings to share issues, concerns, and best practices would be beneficial. There is consideration of combining conference calls with two face-to-face meetings annually. The spring meeting of the Coalition of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) in Bethesda is a natural gathering point for one meeting. Since

the two vocational rehabilitation groups hold their fall meeting in the West, it was decided to meet somewhere in the D.C. Metro area on November 19 from 10:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. At the present time, the SRC chair and another Council member are invited as representatives to these meetings. The VR director/SRC liaison and commissioners are also invited. Another reason to set up more officers, other than the chair, is so that the second representative could provide continuity to this body as the SRC moves forward. Melanie Brunson volunteered to represent the DBVI SRC at this meeting.

### **Subcommittee Reports:**

**Transportation** – No report this meeting.

**Transition** – No report this meeting.

### **Coordination with DRS SRC** – Doug Powell

Doug Powell attended the last quarterly DRS SRC quarterly meeting on August 9 held in Richmond. Please refer to the DRS website at [www.va-src.org](http://www.va-src.org) for more details.

### **Informed Choice** – Susan Payne

There has been no activity regarding this issue.

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

No comments.

**Adjournment:** There being no other business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Saturday, December 11, 2010, at 10:00 a.m. The location will be determined at a later date due to renovations at the Center.