

**Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired  
Rehabilitation Council  
397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, Virginia  
DRAFT Minutes, Quarterly Meeting  
March 1, 2008**

**Members Present:** Faye Adams, Marguerite Bardone, Ms. Beattie (via teleconference), Melanie Brunson, Michael Burton, Frances Daniel, Benjamin Franklin, Michael Kasey, Hortense Macon, Angela Matney, Sherri Phillips, Doug Powell, Fred Schroeder

**Members Absent:** Mary Chappell, Guillermo Meneses, Robin Metcalf, Marianne Moore, Jay Overbey, Nancy Quisenberry, Celestine Walker

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

**Guests Present:** Ms. Anise and Mr. Baton, students from Randolph Macon College; Ms. Benbow, Driver; Ms. Brown, VADB; Ms. Burton, Driver; Ms. Champ, VADB; Mr. Ward, DRS SRC Liaison

**Call to Order:** In Ms. Beattie's absence, Acting Chairperson Mr. Powell called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

A motion was made by Ms. Brunson to allow Ms. Beattie who had been hospitalized to participate via teleconference, it was seconded and passed by unanimous vote that she be allowed to join the meeting via phone. In response to Mr. Kasey's question regarding voting and other participation by phone, etc., Mr. Taylor stated that change in the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) July 1, 2007 allows for a member to participate by phone if majority of the members assembled at the meeting site voted to allow the individual to participate by phone. Mr. Taylor also said FOIA would not permit a member to participate by phone more than one quarterly meeting per calendar year.

**Adoption of Agenda:** A motion was made by Ms. Daniel, seconded by Ms. Phillips, 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. Schroeder, seconded by Ms. Matney, and passed by unanimous voice vote that the minutes be adopted as corrected. Mr. Powell requested that the reference to physical equipment at the Center be referred to as fitness equipment.

**Comments from the Public:** No comments received.

**Commissioner's Report** – In Mr. Bowman's absence, Mr. Burton gave the following report:

- Thanked members on behalf of the commissioner for taking their time out on a Saturday to attend the meeting.
- Discussed HJR80, a bill recommending consolidation of DBVI, DDHH, and DRS, which was introduced to the General Assembly by Delegate Robert Marshall. The bill was left in the Rules Committee. Thanked everyone for their advocacy to stop the bill. Reported that the DBVI Board had submitted a letter to the Rules Committee opposing the bill. Mr. Kasey reported that he had spoken with Senator Marshall and was assured that HJR80 would not move forward.
- **State Budget – Revenue Shortfall:** To help meet the Commonwealth's budget challenge state agencies have been requested to reduce their state general fund budgets by .5% for FY 08; this is in addition to the 5% general fund budget reduction implemented in October 2007. State agencies have also been asked to reduce state general fund budgets by 3% for each year of the 2009 - 2010 biennium. We have been working hard to develop our reduction plans that minimizes the impact on direct services to our consumers. The .5% reduction plan for FY 08 was submitted February 25, 2008. The 3% reduction plan for 2008 - 2010 is due to the Secretary of Health and Human Resources on March 17, 2008.
- Reauthorization of WIA, including Title IV – VR will most likely not occur this year.
- Workforce activities – DBVI is a mandated partner. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) among all partners is being reviewed, along with another one that addresses local partners (One-Stop Centers). DBVI will still provide specialized services and consumers may also access One-Stop Center services.
- VA-AIM (Virginia Accessible Instructional Material) - DBVI will no longer produce large print textbooks but will concentrate on Braille textbooks beginning July 1. George Mason University will be producing large print for

use by students in Virginia schools. Ms. Payne reported that this will not have any affect on the availability of large print documents requested by other DBVI consumers.

### **Subcommittee Reports:**

**Transportation** – Mr. Ames was not at the meeting to give an official report. Mr. Taylor discussed the Transportation Council meeting held on January 10, including public meetings being held around the Commonwealth, and development of coordinated transportation plans. With these coordinated efforts, he stated that transportation should improve over time. He will send any future dates for public hearings to members as he receives them. He encouraged members to attend these meetings in their area.

**Transition** – Ms. Moore was not at the meeting to give the official report. Ms. Payne announced there would be a Transition Forum held in Roanoke on March 17 – 19. Mr. Slonneger has been actively participating on the planning committee. There are two panel-based programs planned: 1) assistive technology with education and hands-on participation; and 2) focus on the transition program that was conducted at the Center last summer (Real Work/Real Money). Mr. Slonneger and Ms. Payne will attend that forum. The Transition program at the Center this year will be conducted for one weekend instead of the one-month program due to renovation of the dorm. She discussed the Summer Work program, which is held every summer.

**Consumer Satisfaction Surveys** – Ms. Payne stated that the committee had met several times via conference call and email revising the survey. She read the questions that had been rewritten for clarification purposes. The new survey will be sent to all members and will become effective July 1. If any member has suggestions/changes, please send them to her. Mr. Taylor stated that during our June meeting if anyone had suggestions to change this instrument, we would still have time to make those changes before the July 1 implementation.

### **Information for New Consumers – Mr. Powell**

- We are just beginning to work on this information and he invited members who would like to join the subcommittee to contact him.
- Reviewing how the information is provided by counselors to new consumers.
- Concerned about assistive technology and other services that are not being presented to newly blinded consumers.

- Two major issues identified at this time: 1) there is a broad range of introductory practices among offices and VR counselors on how consumers are oriented. This includes information on topics such as CAP, rights and responsibilities, explanation of services and community resources. A possible remedy would be to give in-service training to VR counselors and to develop a new document outlining more extensive information on possible services or perhaps both; and 2) current software STARBASE is antiquated – does not allow for electronic transfer of paperwork, such as the IPE. AWARE, the new caseload management system, will provide electronic formats that will be accessible for consumers.
- Ms. Phillips and Ms. Matney volunteered to work on this subcommittee.

**Coordination with DRS SRC** – Ms. Metcalf was not at the meeting to give an official report. In an email to Mr. Taylor, Ms. Metcalf shared the DRS Annual Report and stated that DRS was not in favor of HJR80. The next DRS SRC meeting will be held in Roanoke in mid-March at the Transition Forum where Ms. Metcalf will be a speaker.

#### **Update on Regional Offices - Mr. Burton**

- Discussed the impact the budget had on hiring of new staff. VR positions generally are not a problem as they are fully funded with federal dollars. The state budget for 2008 – 2010 is 6.8 million dollars in General Funds. The rehabilitation teachers' (RT) and orientation and mobility (O&M) specialists' salaries are 80% state funded and 20% federal funded.
- The Bristol regional office is fully staffed.
- The Roanoke regional office has one RT position which is currently being recruited. At this time, we are required to get approval to recruit and also approval to make an offer once a qualified applicant has been selected.
- The Staunton regional office is fully staffed.
- The Fairfax regional office has interviewed for a vocational rehabilitation counselor. We have received approval to hire that individual.
- The Richmond regional office is fully staffed; however, there are two rehabilitation teachers out on short-term disability leaving that office with only three teachers at this time.
- The Norfolk regional office has hired Eddie Theiszen-Culp as a VR counselor. He will graduate from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock with a Master's degree in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling. There is one

applicant for an O&M position and we are waiting for a resolution to the budget situation to end before hiring.

- Interviews were held with applicants nationwide for the deafblind program director position, but with the budget restraints, we are unable to fill it at this time. The individual who was selected has been contacted and is willing to wait for the budget situation to resolve.
- VRCBVI has two VR counselor positions open. Ms. Lindsey has held a second interview for one of those positions, and the approval request for hiring will be submitted to the Secretary of HHR. There are two O&M positions open and we are recruiting for those. We will also be recruiting for a Vocational Evaluator as well as for the assistant director of instruction, which became vacant when Ms. Kinder retired as of January 1.
- The Staunton regional office is housed in an old VSDB dorm and must move due to the consolidation of the two schools for the Deaf and Blind. The agency is checking into space at the Virginia Employment Commission office located in Fishersville which is not far from the old location.
- The Division of Real Estate Services is in the process of negotiating a contract that will include space for the Roanoke regional office along with other state agencies. Once signed we are looking at a seven to nine month timeframe before the move can take place.
- AWARE, the new caseload management program, is moving forward. The pilot program will begin in April in the Roanoke regional office and VRCBVI. We will go to full production on October 1. This has taken four years to develop.

#### **VR Program Update - Ms. Payne**

- **State Plan Development for FY 2009**
- Reported that the agency must have an approved State plan in order to receive federal funding, and it is due to RSA by July 1.
- State Plan Development – 19 sections include:
  - Cover Letter
  - Pre-prints (identifies state responsibilities, identifies commissioner as having primary responsibility for ensuring DBVI meets its obligations)
  - Lobbying Certifications
  - Cooperative Agreements with education, state, and private organizations
  - Annual estimates of people served
  - Scope of services

- Goals and priorities of agency
  - Innovation and expansion
- Ms. Payne will send all members the title of amendments in order for them to decide which one they would like to help develop.
- Ms. Bardone, Ms. Matney and Ms. Phillips volunteered to work on the State plan development with Ms. Payne. Ms. Payne will make the first draft and forward them to members for their review and suggestions.
- Mr. Powell informed members that this was the plan that the agency will use to operate business over the next year, emphasized how important the plan is, and encouraged members to provide input into its development.
  
- **VR Outcomes for FY 2008 (10/1 – 1/01)**  
 Current caseload size ranges from a high of 85, to a low of 29 with a total of 962 consumers being served. Number of individuals closed in this reporting period is 40, of which 37 are working in competitive employment, one is self-employed, one is a homemaker, one is receiving supported employment (SE). Weekly earnings at application was \$277. Average weekly earnings for all individuals closed in employment is \$543. Competitive employment is \$565, self-employment is \$625, and SE is \$200. Average age of workers at closure is 41. Average cost of services for all workers is \$8,352. Average hourly wage is \$15.37. Number of referrals during this period is 229 for an average of 13 per VR counselor.
  
- **90-Day IPE Development**  
 Held a conference call with regional managers. Chapter 3 of the VR Policy and Procedures Manual will be revised to include 90-day IPE development by July 1. In regards to other issues of timeliness of services, DBVI is reviewing the length of time from consumer contact with the agency until they actually meet with a VR counselor. Training will be provided to VR counselors. Mr. Powell suggested that this Chapter would be a great place to address the issue of the types of services individuals need to know about before developing their IPE. Ms. Adams stated that the VR manual was not easily accessible on the DBVI Web site.
  
- **Fall 2007 Public Comments and Responses**  
 There were five meetings scheduled last year, but only four were conducted as one meeting had no participants. Participation included over 100 individuals. An additional 20 transition-aged consumers participated in a public comment session at VRCBVI last summer. The total was 46 verbal

comments and one written comment. Highlights included transition services and assistive technology training at the local level. Comments and responses can be found on the agency Web site and also on Newslines.

## **Update – Jim Taylor**

### **Report on New Council Member Orientation - Mr. Taylor**

- Was held on Friday, February 29, from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. with five new members attending.
- Consisted of the following activities:
  - Comments from the commissioner
  - Overview of the VR program
  - Regional offices and overview of other DBVI programs
  - Overview of DBVI assistive technology services and visited the technology lab
  - Tour of VRCBVI and lunch at the cafeteria
  - Overview of VIB
  - Overview of the Randolph-Sheppard program
  - Roles and responsibilities of the SRC
- New members gave positive feedback on the orientation session. Ms. Brunson suggested in order to improve the orientation, it would be helpful to receive materials in advance (history, organizational chart, etc.) in a handbook format as the day covered such a vast amount of information.

### **Update/Discussion SRC Budget and Activities**

Reported that in the Innovation and Expansion section of the State plan developed last year, there were funds identified for any new activities the Council would like to sponsor. Funds not expended will go to case services. Mr. Taylor will contact Ms. Beattie to discuss budget items for FY 2009.

### **Recommendations from FY 2007 Needs Assessment**

- Copies of the 13 recommendations from the final report for the comprehensive needs assessment was forwarded to members for their review prior to the meeting.
- Responses to each recommendation are as follows:
  - Recommendation 1: DBVI would like to develop a mentoring program. We believe this can be best accomplished by a joint initiative involving representatives from DBVI (including VRCBVI), the SRC, and consumer organizations. This committee/work group would be

responsible for identifying the elements of a mentoring program and potential mentors for students and adults. Ms. Phillips and Mr. Powell volunteered to work on this committee.

- Recommendation 2: DBVI will encourage consumers and VR counselors to take full advantage of computer labs, interest inventories, job fairs, job clubs in localities, including One-Stop Centers. DBVI will include VR counselors and regional managers to help develop strategies to accomplish this goal.
- Recommendation 3: DBVI will include a section in the VR staff meeting regarding functional aspects of various visual impairments and add an appendix in the manual that includes VR implications of eye conditions. Mr. Powell suggested that this appendix include long-term prognosis.
- Recommendation 4: DBVI policy already provides for access to a job coach for consumers who require substantial support to learn how to perform the functions of the job.
- Recommendation 5: DBVI currently provides information regarding self-employment to individuals who have the interest, aptitude, and ability to function in a self-employment capacity.
- Recommendation 6: DBVI will ensure that all transition students receive information regarding Summer Work programs.
- Recommendation 7: Due to significant budgetary constraints, this recommendation cannot be acted upon at this time.
- Recommendation 8: DBVI will assure that consumers with IPEs are provided with assistive technology information and services that might be necessary for them to obtain or maintain employment.
- Recommendation 9: DBVI will also include regional managers and VR counselors to develop strategies to accomplish this goal.
- Recommendation 10: DBVI will collaborate with GWU or other free consultants to provide “back to basics” training to VR counselors in this area. Associated cost for the training will be covered by the VR In-Service Training Grant.
- Recommendation 11: DBVI cannot independently meet this need. The chief deputy commissioner currently participates as a member of an Interagency Transportation Council. A primary focus of this group is rural areas. The SRC also has a transportation committee. Mr. Powell encouraged members to be involved at the local level to ensure that needs of blind and vision impaired are expressed.



- Recommendation 12: DBVI has developed a marketing committee that is addressing methods and strategies to increase outreach and recognition of services and this population and citizens of the Commonwealth as a whole.
- Recommendation 13: All regional offices are equipped with the necessary equipment to provide materials in alternate formats. A General Memorandum will be developed to advise staff to make consumers aware that all materials can be provided in alternative formats, upon request. In the most recent DBVI consumer satisfactions surveys, less than seven percent of those surveyed indicated that they had not received information about the availability of materials in alternative formats.
- Requested suggestions/discussion from the Council.

### **CSAVR Sponsorship**

With budget restrictions, DBVI staff will not attend the meeting this year. The agency will request approval from the Secretary of HHR to sponsor the Council chair, Ms. Beattie, to attend the meeting in the spring as only travel and registration are needed.

### **Report Discussion – Mr. Powell**

The National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) Resolution – Mr. Powell reported the following:

- A cover letter from the NCSRC chair, Steve Ditschler, along with organization documents, including the NCSRC Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Core Values and By Laws were forwarded to members prior to the meeting for their review.
- The organization has been trying to develop for three years.
- Mission, Vision, Core Beliefs, and By Laws are not completely developed.
- Resolution designed to have SRCs designate one person to represent Councils in the larger coalition. They are not asking for money.
- Ms. Bardone stated that she was uncomfortable with how vague the resolution was. She also stated that she was uncomfortable with having to travel to attend meetings. She spoke directly with one of the main supporters to get information. The resolution is really intended to garner larger support from a larger coalition to approach RSA to get funding to develop a Web site;

no plans other than the Web site at this point. Many other blind SRCs are not responding because of fear of losing separate recognition. Talked about a need to have more information before just jumping into a response. Ms. Beattie concurred. The coalition may have dues in the future.

- Ms. Schroeder, Ms. Beattie, and Ms. Matney stated that both SRCs in Virginia could be a member. Mr. Ward commented that DRS SRC is also discussing this same resolution and concurs with Ms. Schroeder, Ms. Beattie, and Ms. Matney. Ms. Brunson stated that if the coalition moves forward in the next step, DBVI SRC should be a part in order to address reservations, especially to ensure that SRCs for blind remain separate. Mr. Powell and Ms. Phillips concurred. Mr. Powell discussed a concern that the coalition is marketing themselves as the premier interface between consumers and public VR system. Ms. Bardone discussed her concern about one group representing all consumers with disabilities. The resolution was read by Ms. Payne. A motion was made by Ms. Brunson to accept the resolution. It was seconded by several members. Ms. Bardone stated that she was not comfortable and was not voting for the resolution. She asked if this council really wanted one coalition to represent everyone at the level of Capital Hill. Ms. Beattie stated that she thinks SRCs should be at the table to speak on behalf of each state SRC. The motion passes with one dissent. Mr. Schroeder moved for Ms. Beattie to represent this Council; it was seconded and passed by majority vote. Ms. Beattie plans to attend the April meeting, see what happens, then bring information back to the Council in June. Ms. Phillips stated that she was also interested in attending that meeting. Mr. Powell stated that if anyone had any concerns they wanted Ms. Beattie to convey at the April meeting to please contact her either by email at [pbeattie@nig.org](mailto:pbeattie@nig.org) or by phone at 703.623.9840.

### **SRC Update – Mr. Ward**

- Stated how impressed he was with the growth and amount of participation of the DBVI SRC.
- Announced that Ms. Metcalf had attended the last DRS SRC meeting and members were very pleased with our decision to appoint her as our official representative on their Council.
- Mr. Ward provided a general report about DRS SRC work, including current budget crisis.
- DRS SRC also was concerned about the HJR80 and took the same action as DBVI Council.

- DRS SRC has adopted two new awards; the Chairman's Award and the 2008 Roy J. Ward Employee Leadership Recognition Award for individuals who have given long/faithful/outstanding service and gone above and beyond the call of duty over a long period of time. Announced that five DRS employees have been recommended by the Committee to receive the Leadership Award which will be presented to them at the next DRS SRC meeting.
- Announced that DRS is trying to hold SRC meetings in other areas of the state to give individuals an opportunity to participate in the public comment portion of the meeting.
- The next meeting will be held in Roanoke in March.

**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. Phillips stated that she was very pleased to be able to participate in the meetings again.
- Ms. Bardone spoke about Internet CART (Communication Access Realtime Technology).
- Mr. Brunson commented on a job opening in her organization and announced a scholarship opportunity through that organization.
- Ms. Adams announced that the VOPA Virginia Beach office had closed but she was telecommuting from home. She also shared a victory story from last fall.

**Other Business:** None

**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 1:30 p.m. The next meeting will be held at the DBVI Headquarters Conference Room I/II, 397 Azalea Avenue, on Saturday, June 7, 2008, at 10:00 a.m.