

**Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired  
Rehabilitation Council  
397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, Virginia  
Approved Minutes, Quarterly Meeting  
September 19, 2009**

**Members Present:** Faye Adams, William Alley, Marguerite Bardone, Pat Beattie, Melanie Brunson, Benjamin Franklin, Martha Macias, Angela Matney, Robin Metcalf, Sherrie Phillips, Doug Powell

**Members Absent:** Michael Burton, Frances Daniel, Richard Gonzalez, Richard Holley, Michael Kasey, Raymond Kenney, Hortense Macon

**Staff Present:** Ray Hopkins, Commissioner; Bob Burton, Deputy Commissioner for Services; Joan Carneal, Support Staff, Susan Payne, VR Program Director

**Guests Present:** Linda Boyd, Driver; Robert Froehlick, TACE; Karen Trump, DOE; Terry Martin, RSA (teleconference)

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

**Adoption of Agenda:** Ms Payne requested that one item be added to the VR Update portion of the agenda. A motion was made by Ms. Brunson, seconded by Mr. Powell, and passed by unanimous voice vote that the agenda be adopted as amended.

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

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

**RSA Monitoring – Terry Martin**

- Mr. Martin reported that he has already initiated contact with Ms. Beattie regarding the RSA monitoring visit.
- He outlined the purpose, scope of the monitoring effort and timelines of events, dates, issuing of the report, and the George Washington University Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) involvement. This very important relationship with the TACE will assist with DBVI and RSA in looking at the State plan and agency performance and need subsequent technical assistance.
- Mr. Martin requested the SRC's input during the meeting but invited members to email ideas to him at [terrence.martin@ed.gov](mailto:terrence.martin@ed.gov) . Comments should be sent prior to October 19. Mr. Martin will be preparing a summation of comments for Ms. Beattie's review.
- The RSA Monitoring has changed and is now a continuous improvement model looking at performance in accomplishing the mission of the agency. This model includes agency leadership and the TACE. This is RSA's fourth year of using this model. Virginia, New Jersey, and Puerto Rico will be conducted first during this cycle; Virginia being the first monitoring activity for this particular RSA State team.

- The intent and focus of the monitoring began through communication with the commissioner and management team. Mr. Martin has already visited the Azalea Complex and has become acquainted with DBVI programs and program directors. The RSA State team includes representatives from the RSA fiscal, VR, technical assistance, data, and IL units. The team is learning about the agency and the service delivery system in Virginia. They are reviewing the agency's performance and reaching out to speak with stakeholders starting with the SRC as required by law and statute. The team will be in communication with NFB representative, Mr. Fred Shroeder. Mr. Powell has volunteered to help with the monitoring process. One question to be addressed is what are the areas stakeholders deem to be important.
- Timelines for the monitoring begin in November and will include a site visit during the week of November 2 – 6. The team will visit both DBVI and the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) in Richmond during that week. Other team members will be going to the valley and the Hampton Roads area. Dialogue with DBVI staff will be at Headquarters and at the regional office level. In January the team will be conducting a one-day visit in two regional offices in the Northern Virginia area.
- Focus areas for the onsite visit agenda are being developed.
- During winter and spring, the State team will develop recommendations identifying areas to be addressed by DBVI. These recommendations will be provided in written form in early summer 2010. DBVI will be given adequate time to review the recommendations and prepare responses. The final monitoring report will be published in September of 2010.
- Current published State monitoring reports from 2008 and 2009 can be located on the RSA website. Mr. Martin will send the link to Ms. Beattie to share with members.
- The TACE will participate on the final day of the RSA State team site visit on November 6. They will provide technical assistance to DBVI in the needs assessment. The SRC chair is invited and others will participate in the final day of the monitoring visit as well. DBVI will be responsible for inviting individuals identified by RSA.
- A conference call with the SRC was discussed; however, the issue of the Sunshine Law was raised. SRC's partnership with RSA monitoring team is a critical part of the process to ensure input. SRC members raised several questions including: 1) What issues does the Council consider individually or corporately important for RSA to consider?; 2) What are the critical items for services delivery for citizens in Virginia?; and 3) What should RSA focus on during the monitoring process?
- Ms. Metcalf discussed the issue of CRPs and hopes the State team will look at employment outcomes in respect to wages earned, types of positions obtained, and whether the employment outcomes are full-time or part-time positions.
- Ms. Brunson discussed the application of informed choice concepts. What efforts are being made by DBVI to ensure that individuals have adequate information to make informed choices about their own rehabilitation?
- Ms. Matney discussed the issue of accessibility of materials to consumers. Part of being informed is being able to access materials.
- Ms. Phillips discussed follow-up services after an individual's vocational rehabilitation case has been closed to see if individuals are still working, and if they are satisfied with the services they received.
- Mr. Powell discussed the partnership between the SRC and DBVI staff along with the partnership of clients with their counselors. He is interested in where we are on the scale as individuals and the SRC compared to other states. Some SRCs conduct the consumer

satisfaction surveys. It would be useful to know what direction the SRC should be moving toward based on what other states do.

- Ms. Macias discussed that one of the most important pieces to reaching the goal is having the correct adaptive equipment. VR counselors should know what technology is available and how to use them. This enhances the quality of employment outcomes. Therefore, technology needs to be understood better by both consumers and counselors.
- Mr. Powell inquired as to how are CRPs monitored and how successful are they with employment outcomes.
- After this conversation, RSA will be looking very closely at performance data that DBVI has and will be starting the discussion.
- A conference call is scheduled for September 29 to discuss data for developing an agenda. Mr. Hopkins requested that the agenda be communicated to DBVI staff before the visit. Mr. Burton will forward names of staff who will be available to discuss the areas of service delivery.
- Ms. Beattie inquired if programs like Ability One and the Randolph-Sheppard are included in the monitoring visit? Mr. Martin stated that they were not.

### **Successful Employment Outcomes - Ms. Macias**

Ms. Macias provided information about an individual whose vocational goal was to be a successful massage therapist. Good adjustment to blindness skills and assistive technology were needed. The VR counselor facilitated some connections in California and the consumer now resides in California working as a massage therapist making \$95 an hour. Ms. Bardone inquired if the SRC can receive these types of success stories to be included in the 2009 Annual Report. Ms. Payne will obtain information for the report. As a result of the report, successful employment stories will become a regular agenda item. Ms. Payne and Ms. Macias will provide these reports.

### **Commissioner's Report – Mr. Hopkins**

#### **Budget Update**

- Mr. Hopkins expressed his appreciation for the SRC members' spirit of volunteerism and reported that due to state budget deficits, stipends will no longer be provided to boards and councils. He introduced Dr. Karen Trump who is now representing the Department of Education. Dr. Trump should be appointed for the next term.
- There has not been any positive change in the Commonwealth's or DBVI's budgets in the last quarter. The Governor has recently concluded examination of budgets for the fiscal year; revenue projections are less than projected. DBVI has experienced several reductions that caused the agency to rely more heavily on the VR grant funding; many personnel costs shifted away from State general funds to federal funds. Last year, DBVI's budget was reduced by 3.5%. This year the Department of Planning and Budget (DPB) encouraged DBVI to apply approximately \$226,000 in carryover funds from 2009 to the anticipated budget reductions in 2010. The reductions resulting from the closing of some rest areas affected licensed vendors and as a result, this affected DBVI State fund match. DBVI lost approximately \$400,000 in State funds with the closing of rest areas. Loss of State funds on top of that is very problematic. DBVI does not get much in the way of general funds. It is \$6.6 million for the entire agency which is not much considering the agency's mission. DBVI's budget has not been reduced further in this fiscal year so as not to affect State match. New budget proposals for the next biennium received by DPB indicated that the State would see more significant reductions in the 2011 and 2012 budgets. DBVI is not the only program, department, or agency experiencing

tough budget times. There are important services being cut throughout the Commonwealth. DBVI closed two categories in January 2009 due to projections that DBVI would not have enough funds to get through the fiscal year. Trends in recent years show the agency is spending down the federal grant faster each year. Last year DBVI just broke even. This year, even with order of selection categories closed, DBVI has just enough to meet all of its obligations. DBVI continues to look at ways of managing these resources to make sure we are serving clients to the fullest extent possible. If DBVI doesn't have resources, it will have to go on an order of selection again.

### **Economic Stimulus Funds**

VR and Older Blind economic stimulus funds are being used to provide direct services. VR funds are being used to serve individuals in Categories 2 and 3 rather than placing those individuals on a waiting list. These funds allow DBVI to keep all categories open. This year DBVI will begin filing federal reports accounting for how funds are being used. In April we received \$740,000, the remaining funds were received in September. Older Blind funds are being used to supply accessible computers to the older blind population.

### **Informed Choice**

- Informed choice is a topic recommended to be addressed in the RSA monitoring visit. DBVI is a proponent of informed choice. Mr. Hopkins explained that customer choice and informed choice is not the same thing. The key is that information is provided upon which consumers can make sound informed decisions. Informed choice means that DBVI must explain how programs and policies work. If there are individual cases that need to be addressed, DBVI needs to know the situation so that individual issues can be understood and addressed. Informed choice has been a training agenda item in VR trainings and other meetings with staff. This is an issue that will be added on the agenda each quarter to assure open and continuous communication between SRC and DBVI.
- Ms. Bardone inquired about the accessibility policy. At the last meeting, it was an activity that had not yet been assigned. Mr. Hopkins stated there was a policy issue which needed to be addressed before moving forward. Ms. Payne will follow-up on posting this policy to the website.
- Ms. Adams stated that sometimes consumers feel they have not been given enough information to make an informed choice and gave examples.
- Ms. Brunson discussed that sometimes part of the problem is how those choices are being presented and gave examples.
- Ms. Payne and Mr. Burton will emphasize the importance of informed choice to staff, and it will be revisited at the VR staff meeting in December.
- A subcommittee was appointed to address informed choice. Ms. Metcalf, Ms. Matney, Ms. Macias, Ms. Phillips, and Ms. Brunson will address practical issues of informed choice. Ms. Payne and Ms. Carneal will make arrangements to facilitate the conference calls.

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

- Bristol hired a wage employee to fill the full-time O&M position that is vacant due to retirement.
- Roanoke has one education coordinator position vacant and is waiting for a response from DOE regarding the IDEA grant funding before recruiting.

- Staunton has selected a new VR counselor who will begin in October.
- Fairfax has hired a new rehabilitation teacher, Marilee Kenlon, who began on August 17. She worked at the Center for a short time as a Braille and kitchen skills instructor.
- Richmond has a VR counselor with 41 years of experience retiring effective December 1.
- Norfolk has one O&M specialist position vacant, and we are currently recruiting.
- VRCBVI conducted interviews for the assistant director for instruction position. Two individuals were selected for second interviews. Interviews have been scheduled for two O&M specialists at the end of September. There are five applicants for these positions.
- Headquarters scheduled four interviews for the policy analyst position; however, all four individuals withdrew their application, and we are re-advertising for that position.

### **Standards and Indicators Quarterly Update from October 1 to August 31.**

- At the present time we have 158 closures. Last year we had 183. We generally have a high closure rate at the end of September so we anticipate that we will meet our goal.
- Of the closed cases that received services, the percentage with an employment outcome is currently at 57.1%. The federal minimum standard is 68.9%. We anticipate that this will improve with the additional successful closures that usually come in at the end of the federal fiscal year.
- 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 89.3%. 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 96%. 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 0.71%. 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 support 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 support at closure, we are at 53.6%. The federal minimum standard is 30.4%.
- Ratio of minority service rate to non-minority service rate, we are at 1.086%. The federal minimum standard is .80%.
- Mr. Burton congratulated Ms. Macias for the highest score of 23 successful closures in competitive employment this year. Also stated that Mr. Sorey, Norfolk regional office manager, had reported that he had received very positive feedback from consumers regarding Ms. Macias' performance this year.

### **Update on VRCBVI Renovations:**

Final architecture drawings have been submitted and are currently being reviewed by the Bureau of Capital Outlay Management (BCOM). Major changes relate to grouping of the training areas and assuring that staff and students have total accessibility to the building.

### **VR Program Update – Ms. Payne**

#### **1. 2009 Annual Report**

At the March meeting, the Council had a discussion about developing the 2009 Annual Report. Council agreed on several items including: 1) leaning down the report to get rid of excessive text and unnecessary components; 2) developing a Table of Contents; 3) having a banner on every page with only one page per topic area; 4) adding a human interest element using quotes from students and adults who have or are receiving services; 5) preparing the Annual Report in Word; and 6) using a bullet format. The 2008 Annual Report was emailed to committee members to review for content purposes. A conference call is scheduled for September 22 at 2:00 p.m. to initiate development of the report.

2. **State Plan Update for FY 2010**

The State plan was submitted electronically to RSA in June. Only a few minor changes were made. It is anticipated that we will receive approval on the 2010 State plan in the very near future.

3. **Updates of VR Outcomes**

- Total number of cases open is 1,499.
- There are currently 992 open cases.
- Average hourly wages at closure for employment in integrated settings was \$12.63.
- Average hourly at closure for self-employment was \$16.46.
- Average hourly for all closures was \$13.26.
- Hourly wages at closure for supported employment was \$7.34.
- Average weekly earnings at application for integrated settings was \$259.05.
- Average weekly earnings at application for self-employment was \$169.29.
- Average weekly earnings at application for all cases was \$230.96.
- Average cost of services for all was \$9,145.86.
- Average cost of services for self-employment was \$13,826.96.
- Average age at closure was 45.
- Average caseload size was 154.

4. **Public Meeting Schedule**

Ms. Payne is scheduling meetings in Bristol, Richmond, Williamsburg, Virginia Beach, Roanoke, and Northern Virginia and anticipates conducting another public hearing in partnership with DRS at the Transition Forum again this year. Written comments are always welcomed. Once scheduling has been completed, all meetings will be posted to the Town Hall calendar and sent to appropriate organizations for distribution.

5. **Appointments for 2010 SRC**

Ms. Payne has been communicating with Lucy Hutchinson at the Secretary's office. Ms. Hutchinson reports that recommendations have been received and are being considered. DBVI should hear word regarding appointments and reappointments in the very near future which is much earlier than in the past several years.

Lunch - Adjourned for lunch from 12:15 p.m. to 12:30 p.m.

**Subcommittee Reports:**

## **Transportation – No Report**

## **Transition – No Report**

Ms. Beattie discussed a news article regarding how the DOE stimulus funds are being used in the Tidewater project. Ms. Beattie will send Dr. Trump the article in order for her to research the information and report back to the Council at the next meeting.

## **Coordination with DRS SRC – Ms. Metcalf**

- Draft minutes from the DRS SRC meeting held on August 10 were forwarded to members on August 18 for their review.
- Since Ms. Metcalf's term has expired, a new representative to replace her representing the DBVI SRC on the DRS SRC should be appointed. DRS SRC meets five times a year and some of those meetings are held out-of-town so travel is involved.
- Ms. Metcalf will attend the next DRS SRC meeting to be held in November representing this Council and will send a report.

Mr. DeBoer emailed his report to be included in the minutes.

- The SRC last met August 10, 2009.
- Florence Watt, from Hanover County and a long-time advocate for folks with disabilities, was elected Chair for the 2009-2010 session of the DRS SRC. She is replacing outgoing Chair, Cheri Takamoto. Cheri is director of the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC). Marianne Moore with the Va. Department of Education was elected Vice Chair.
- Commissioner Jim Rothrock was honored for his long time and outstanding service to DRS by the naming of Woodrow Wilson's newest facility, the medical building, Rothrock Hall.
- DRS is preparing further budget reduction plans of 5%, 10%, and 15% to be sent to the Governor.
- Internal Committee Chair, Karen Baugh, presented the results of the 2008 VR Consumer Satisfaction Survey which had an 81% overall satisfaction rate. The rate among consumers who had been successfully rehabilitated was 89%.
- External Affairs Chair, Danny DeBoer, reported that the committee had finalized the SRC's mission & vision statements. The full Council passed these statements unanimously.
- The committee finalized the *Guidelines for Public Comment*. The Council approved unanimously.
- The Committee will hold a called meeting on September 21 to discuss ways to increase public and consumer input into the work at DRS.
- The annual SRC retreat will be held in conjunction with their quarterly meeting on November 16 - 17 at DRS Headquarters. The George Washington University Technical Assistance & Continuing Education Center (TACE) will facilitate a discussion regarding strategic planning and team building.

## **Mentoring Update - Mr. Powell**

- New efforts are being made to get information to students now that school has resumed.
- Applications have been received for mentors but not mentees.

- There is a need for more promotion of the program. Ms. Lindsey is working with Mr. Powell on this issue.
- Ms. Payne will check to see if the applications are on the website.
- Ms. Matney believes responses will come in more now that school has reopened.
- Ms. Payne stated that this is a program that consumer groups need to promote as well as the agency.
- There was discussion regarding media coverage on this program. Ms. Payne will check into appropriate procedures for media coverage concerning State agencies and what approach SRC should take regarding media coverage.
- Ms. Bardone and Mr. Powell will work together on promoting this program.

#### **Contracted CRP Service Delivery – Pat Beattie**

- Ms. Beattie discussed what Community Rehab Program agencies are providing to DBVI and how we are evaluating their success in serving blind clients.
- A subcommittee was appointed consisting of Ms. Beattie, Ms. Metcalf, and Ms. Brunson. Ms. Payne will facilitate conference calls.
- Ms. Beattie discussed how Columbia Lighthouse is serving DBVI clients, which must be more than just supported employment. Ms. Payne will identify vendors who provide supported employment services and what type of services. Ms. Payne will also research specific information regarding what Columbia Lighthouse provides to DBVI.

#### **Update from CSAVR and NCSAB, and NCSRC – Pat Beattie**

Notes from the National Working Group for Rehabilitation Council and Commission Members to Blindness, VR agencies, conference call which was held on July 15 were sent to members on August 20 for their review. Ms. Bardone and Ms. Phillips participated in that conference call.

#### **SRC Member and Member Organization Update:**

- Ms. Brunson reported on a lawsuit filed by ACB against SSA that information was not being provided to blind people in accessible formats. There will be a two-week hearing. Ms. Brunson will keep members informed of the outcome.
- Ms. Phillips participated in the Rehabilitation Council and Commission Members to Blindness conference call. She found it fascinating to hear what other states are doing with stimulus funds and issues regarding Medicaid and Medicare. Ms. Phillips will email notes from the call to SRC members. The next conference call is scheduled for October 21 at 8:00 p.m. She is working with NASA to develop a summer camp for blind individuals next year. In a request for assistance, Mr. Alley stated that Ms. Phillips could contact any Lions Club to assist her with the massage therapy website application that she is having difficulty completing. Ms. Payne suggested that she contact the Norfolk regional office as well.
- Dr. Trump reported that she had been on special assignment to consolidate the Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. She has recently been reassigned as the contact person for blindness issues for the Department of Education replacing Ms. Moore. Teachers for the Visually Impaired (TVI) are not included in the Standards of Quality (SOQ) funding formula that is approved by the General Assembly. As such, TVI do not have a maximum caseload size and they are not included in the SOQ funding formula that the Department of Education (DOE) uses to fund school divisions for special education. Currently, funding for TVI comes through DBVI, which has \$509,328 to distribute between the 171 full- and part-time positions. The



Board of Education, DOE and DBVI are working cooperatively to include TVI in the Standards of Quality so that TVI will have a maximum caseload size and funding of special education programs for the visually impaired in the school divisions will increase by about 2.5 million dollars.

- Ms. Macias announced that she loved the accessible I-phone. She pointed out the importance of universal accessing products.
- Mr. Franklin stated that he learned many things available to him while at the Center years ago and that assistive technology and Braille opened up a new world for him. Stated that he wanted to be part of the grassroots efforts to share information about technology and services.
- Ms. Bardone referred to the Described Narration and Captioned Media Program; formerly known as the Captioned Media Program. Originally, the program created standards for Offline Captioning (the Captioning of pre-produced Video programs), and via certification tests created a database of Offline Captioning vendors that adhered to the standards. The program is currently in the early stages of a similar effort for Described Narration. Focus on Described Narration has been sparked by the U.S. DOE finally initiating grant funds for such Access in materials. Also referred to the increase of Live Captioning of government meetings, despite the budgetary constraints of the ongoing recession. More meetings have been occurring, with Access, to enable more efforts to address financial matters. The important of such Access is enabling "Government by the people, for the people," with all the people being able to participate fully in government meetings. While many folks think captioning is an ADA accommodation solely for the Deaf/HOH communities; in truth, it also serves the deafblind communities who use software to grab the Line 21 Captions for an instant Braille readout. Indeed, Captioning serves many communities including: Persons with Cognitive Disabilities and Traumatic Brain Damage as well as Adults and Children learning English. Ms. Brunson suggested that Ms. Bardone contact Joel Snider regarding Described Narration for deafblind individuals. Ms. Brunson will forward contact information to Ms. Bardone.
- Mr. Alley serves on the Volunteer Council at the Center and announced that the clothes closet is now open at VRCBVI, which includes used clothing and new undergarments. They have plenty of average sizes but are requesting donations for smaller and larger adult clothing. Stated that the Lion's Clubs was assisting with grounds clean up at VRCBVI today.
- Ms. Adams announced that VOPA staff, Celia Yette, has been appointed to the DRS SRC representing the Client Assistance Program.
- Ms. Metcalf attended the Governor's Forum on People with Disabilities and DBVI was well represented at that meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to receive recommendations for employment for people with disabilities.
- Ms. Matney recently took the Virginia Bar Exam. She was the first person to use laptop and JAWS in Virginia to take the Bar. NFB will soon be releasing a book with 100 letters to President Obama regarding the use of Braille in which one of her letters is included in this publication.
- Mr. Powell announced the ACB Mid-Atlantic Region Conference is scheduled for the weekend of October 31. In two weeks, he will do the second half of the Iron Man Marathon.
- Ms. Beattie attended a meeting with the new assistant secretary, Kathy Martinez for the Department of Labor (DOL) at the Office of Disability Employment and Policy in Washington, D.C. Ms. Beattie reported that she and Ms. Martinez were the only two blind individuals in attendance. Ms. Martinez's first priority is working toward getting Schedule A implemented in the federal agencies. The major problem is with human resources coordinators; an Executive

Order from the President will be issued stating that Schedule A will be handled in the correct manner for federal agencies hiring individuals with disabilities. The DOL is already implementing Schedule A. Accessibility is another issue addressed by this new secretary and the implementation of Section 508 has become another one of her highest priorities.

**Other Business:** No report.

**Adjournment:** There being no other business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 1:35 p.m. The next meeting will be held at the Library and Resource Center; large conference room at 395 Azalea Avenue on Saturday, December 12, 2009, at 10:00 a.m.