

**Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Rehabilitation Council
397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, Virginia
DRAFT Minutes, Quarterly Meeting
December 12, 2009**

Members Present: Faye Adams, William Alley, Marguerite Bardone, Melanie Brunson, Anna Burns, Michael Burton, Richard Holley, Michael Kasey, Raymond Kenney, Martha Macias, Hortense Macon, Doug Powell, Karen Trump

Members Absent: Pat Beattie, Catherine Burzio, Frances Daniel, Benjamin Franklin, Richard Gonzalez, Claudie Grant, Angela Matney, Sherrie Phillips

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

Guests Present: Danny DeBoer, DRS SRC; Robert Froehlich, TACE

Call to Order: Doug Powell called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Adoption of Agenda: A motion was made by Doug Powell, seconded by Hortense Macon, and passed by unanimous voice vote that the agenda be adopted with one minor correction.

Election of Chairperson for FY 2010: Doug Powell opened the floor to nominations for the 2010 chairperson position. Melanie Brunson nominated Doug Powell to serve as chairperson. Doug Powell turned the election process over to Bob Burton. Hearing no other nominations, Bob Burton moved that nominations be closed and that Doug Powell serve as chairperson for the Council for the upcoming year; Marguerite Bardone seconded, and it was passed by unanimous vote. Doug Powell thanked everyone for their vote of confidence.

There was a discussion as to whether a vice-chair should be appointed and to research into the bylaws of other state agencies to determine whether they had other appointed members. Doug Powell stated that there are two networks of SRC groups that meet fairly frequently where members could receive important information regarding other SRCs. The blind-specific group is headed by Pearl Van Zandt from Nebraska. He will send contact information to members on how to access that

network. The National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils is another group but is not a blind-specific group.

After much discussion, Michael Kasey proposed that the Council consider staying with only an elected chairperson who would appoint another member to conduct meetings in the absence of the chairperson. Rick Holly agreed with Michael Kasey. Rob Froehlich commented that there was a consultant from New Jersey, Pat Thomason, who works with SRC bylaws for state agencies and that she could provide the Council that information by teleconference if the Council decided to pursue this issue at a future meeting. Melanie Brunson and Rob Froehlich will correspond regarding this issue.

Action on Minutes of the Previous Meeting: A motion was made by Marguerite Bardone, seconded by Hortense Macon, and passed by unanimous voice vote that the minutes be adopted with one minor correction.

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

Commissioner's Report – Bob Burton reported in Ray Hopkins' absence

Budget Update

Regarding the federal budget, DBVI is still operating under a continuing resolution which expires next week. With this continuing resolution, there are no cost of living increases included which means we would be operating with level funding from last year. Once a budget is passed, agencies should be getting a cost of living adjustment which should be equal to last year's budget.

Regarding the state budget, there have been no requests for additional cuts for DBVI; however, the agency will find out more when Governor Kaine submits his budget bill to the General Assembly on December 18. Bob Burton attended a session where the Director of Finance gave a report with regards as to what was happening with the budget. At this session, the director reported that this is the first time Virginia has experienced having a decrease in revenues for two consecutive years.

Governor-elect McDonnell is getting his transition team together. He has announced his Chief of Staff. Top aides have been appointed; however, there has been no word on appointments on cabinet secretaries or agency heads.

Economic Stimulus Funds

DBVI received 1.5 million dollars of stimulus funds. This allowed the agency to open the two closed categories of the order of selection removing 72 individuals from a waiting list. Subsequently, DBVI is using the basic VR grant funds to serve only individuals with the most severely disabilities. Stimulus funds must be spent within a two-year timeframe; DBVI will not experience any problem with spending the funds. Once the stimulus funds are spent, the agency may have to close order of selection categories.

RSA Monitoring Visit Update

The RSA team headed by Terry Martin began the monitoring process on Monday, November 2, with the exit interview being conducted on Friday, November 6. DBVI expects a final report from RSA in late August or early September of 2010. The agency will be receiving a draft report and then have an opportunity to respond prior to RSA issuing the final report. Areas of concern that were raised were how financial forms were filled out; identifying specific state dollars to match federal funds; noted that there doesn't appear to be dedicated appropriation of general funds for the VR program, instead DBVI relies on other non-general funds such as the highway vending program, Business Opportunities for the Blind set aside funds, and indirect funding; questions regarding the full utilization of VRBCVI (renovation funding may be used as part of the state match funds for the upcoming year); informed choice was mentioned, however, no specific recommendations were provided; rehab rate and attrition were discussed; and transition in regards with consumers who are closed between eligibility and prior to plan development. Overall, RSA felt that transition efforts were very positive. The main focus of the visit was looking at data collected over a five-year period ranging from 2004 through 2008. The RSA monitoring team complimented DBVI staff on their openness in sharing information. The collection of data will be an ongoing process between RSA and DBVI.

Rob Froehlich commented that a lot of states are finding that the exit interview looked one particular way and the final report looks a little bit different. Susan Payne commented that DBVI just had their Fall VR staff meeting and had already addressed some of the areas raised. She also announced that there may be a spring VR staff meeting in 2010 (funding from the In-Service Training Grant permitting) in which Rob Froehlich would be contacted to obtain technical assistance with that meeting.

Lynnae Rutledge, who is the commissioner of the Washington general agency, has been nominated to be the next RSA commissioner. Her confirmation hearing was conducted on Thursday and approved to be sent on to the full Senate for confirmation. One of the hot topics for CSAVR was that a House Committee staffer has raised the idea of moving RSA from the Office of Special of Education and Rehab Services (OSERS) in the Dept. of Education to the Department of Labor. However, the Senate Committee does not seem to be interested. Rob Froehlich discussed the major concerns for such a move.

Alexa Posny has been appointed as the new Assistant Secretary of OSERS. She is the former Secretary of Education in Kansas and made a presentation at CSAVR but made no major pronouncements regarding vocational rehabilitation.

Update on Regional Offices – Bob Burton

- The Staunton regional office hired a new VR counselor who began working in October. She was previously employed at Woodrow Wilson.
- The Richmond regional office had one VR counselor, Bill Riddick, with 41 years of service to retire on December 1; another VR counselor, Candice Catron, with 25 years of service is retiring on January 1; and another VR counselor is out on short-term disability.
- The Norfolk regional office has offered an individual the O&M instructor position and it was accepted. This individual will begin in January.
- The Rehab Center has hired Leonard Recupero from the Department of Health with a background in program management to fill the position of assistant director for instruction. He will begin on January 4.

Standards and Indicators Quarterly Update

- DBVI passed the Standards and Indicators for 2009. Bob Burton gave a brief background on what the two standards and seven indicators involved.
- This year the agency had 170 successful closures. There were 183 the previous year.
- Of the closed cases that received services, the percentage with an employment outcome was at 58.4 %. 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 was 90 %. The federal minimum standard is 35 %.
- Ratio of average state wage for all workers in the state to the average wage of closed cases with employment outcome that have wages greater than or equal to minimum wages was .77. The federal minimum standard is .59 %.

- The youngest consumer closed was 18 years old with the oldest at age 84.
- The average weekly wages earned at successful closure ranged from \$37.50 to \$2,884.
- Anna Burns stated that DBVI is more conservative in reading the guidelines on what an integrated setting means in employment outcomes than DRS. Susan Payne responded that DBVI does have a stricter interpretation of what constitutes an integrated setting. Rob Froehlich commented that once the draft recommendations are received from RSA that would be the time to research this issue.

Update on VRCBVI Renovations:

Architectures are doing the final revisions to the drawings for the renovation of the administration building at VRCBVI. These drawings will be submitted to the Bureau of Capital Outlay Management, which is a state agency, on December 17. Once the drawings are approved, bids will be sent out to acquire a construction company to become the general contractor. Construction is scheduled to begin in early April. Staff will be relocated utilizing space in the dormitory, LRC, HQ, and two mobile office units. Construction should take approximately 18 months to complete.

Welcome of New Members to the Council

Bob Burton welcomed new SRC members to the SRC.

VR Program Update – Susan Payne

1. 2009 Annual Report

The report is due to the Governor and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources by December 31. The Council took a very different approach in developing the Annual Report this year. A subcommittee was formed to develop the 2009 Annual Report giving them approval to review, write, redesign, and submit the report. The subcommittee consisted of Marguerite Bardone, Pat Beattie, Sherri Phillips, Melanie Brunson, Susan Payne, and Doug Powell. As discussed in a previous meeting, the format was changed along with making it more reader friendly. DBVI success stories and quotes from consumers were also included in the report. Council members will receive copies of the ten-page report once it has been submitted.

Cover letters for the Annual Report submittals will be sent to Doug Powell for his review prior to submittal.

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

Development of the State Plan will begin after the first of next year. There will be input from public comments, SRC members, and various DBVI VR staff. The State Plan due to RSA by the end of June.

3. **Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA)**

DBVI staff are working with Rob Froehlich and Maureen McGuire-Kuletz with TACE to consider how the needs assessment should be conducted this year. DBVI has been reviewing the RSA CNA guidelines and considering how Virginia might use this guide to develop the assessment.

4. **Updates of VR Outcomes for 2010**

There were 921 individuals who received services in 2009. The average hourly wage was \$14.47 with the average weekly earnings being \$434.41. The average age of individuals who went to work was 44. The average number of hours worked per week was 28. There were 170 individuals who achieved a successful employment outcome. Of the 170 individuals who accomplished their employment goal and went to work in integrated settings; 125 were competitively employed with an average hourly wage of \$14.73; 28 were self-employed with an average wage of \$15.76; two were employed through the Randolph-Sheppard Food Managers program with an average hourly wage of \$8.90; seven became successful homemakers; and eight began working using supported employment services with an average hourly wage of \$7.34. The average cost of services to individuals who achieved their employment goals was \$9,622.90.

5. **Public Meeting Updates**

DBVI conducted five out of six public meetings which were held in Bristol, Richmond, Williamsburg, Fairfax, and Roanoke. There were approximately 60 individuals who participated. Topics addressed included the need for eye care practitioners to refer individuals to DBVI, the need for VR counselors to be more empathetic and helpful in the Fairfax regional office, in particular, with transition services. One additional public meeting will be conducted in conjunction with DRS during the 2010 Transition Forum scheduled in March.

Danny DeBoer will contact Susan Payne to discuss strategies as to how to work together to increase public participation during VR public meetings.

6. **Orientation Meeting for New Members**

An orientation meeting for new members will be held in March on Friday prior to the Saturday quarterly SRC meeting. Susan Payne will be contacting Rob Froehlich to acquire technical assistance regarding this orientation.

7. **Success Stories**

Jim is a 23-year-old man who has received multiple services from DBVI, including orientation and mobility, transition services, rehabilitation teaching, sponsorship in college, and assistive technology. The VR counselor assisted this student in obtaining an internship with Microsoft. After graduation, Jim became employed with Microsoft and relocated to Washington State. He has already received a promotion. Jim is making more than \$80,000 per year in job with Microsoft.

Subcommittee Reports:

Transportation – No Report

Transition – Susan Payne

At VRCBVI this year, there were 12 students who participated in the College Assessment program; 18 students who participated in the Transition from School to Work program; and five students and their parents who participated in the GOAL program. GOAL stands for Gain Independence, Opportunity Exploration, Achieve Success, and Learned Skills.

In the Summer Work program this year in Virginia localities, there were 59 public and private sector employers who hired a total of 73 transition-aged students for summer work. Twenty-four students received payment from the employer making minimum wage or above with an average hourly wage of \$9.21; eight worked as volunteers doing real work; and 41 students received a training stipend.

Coordination with DRS SRC

Doug Powell stated that we needed to appoint someone to serve as liaison between the DRS and DBVI SRCs. There are a total of five DRS SRC meetings during the year. Meetings are held on Mondays. They are scheduled to be held on January 25, March 15, May 10, August 9, and November 16 - 17. The March meeting is in conjunction with the Transition Forum held in Roanoke. The November meeting is a two-day meeting with the 16th being a retreat and the quarterly meeting on the 17th. Committee meetings begin at 9:30 a.m. with the quarterly meeting beginning around

10:00 a.m. They usually end around 2:00 p.m. Susan Payne commented that expenses for travel, lodging, and meals would be covered to attend those meetings. The liaison position will be shared between Melanie Brunson, Michael Kasey, and Raymond Kenney. Michael Kasey plans to attend the January 25 meeting. The three will coordinate attendance of the other meetings. Danny DeBoer stated that he would contact Barbara Tyson and have her send appropriate information to the three members representing DBVI. Susan Payne offered to provide transportation for the liaison to the March meeting as she plans to attend the Transition Forum in Roanoke.

Pilot Mentoring Program – Doug Powell

Doug Powell stated that Melody Lindsey, VRCBVI director, has made two separate attempts to promote this program with very little success. There have been only two applications for mentors and none for mentees. He stated that Melody has not had a lot of extra time to promote the mentoring program in the past due to the lack of an assistant director for instruction.

Karen Trump stated that if the mentoring program was further developed, she would be happy to share the information with DOE. Marguerite Bardone discussed the importance of advertising through the media and reaching the general public. Discussion was raised pertaining to the possibly of expanding the program outside of the Richmond area.

Documents will be emailed to the subcommittee to work on revitalizing the interest and work on ways to promote this program. Susan Payne will be contacting Doug Powell before the first of the year but will coordinate a conference call between the mentoring subcommittee consisting of Doug Powell, Melanie Brunson, Rich Sorey, Angie Matney, Hortense Macon, and Melody Lindsey. This conference call will not be scheduled until after the first of the year.

Susan Payne stated that three staff members are involved with planning the 2010 Transition Forum. Glen Slonneger has been working with the transition committee; Susan has been working on the marketing committee; and one other staff member has been working on the presentation selection committee. There are three DBVI proposals for presentations.

Informed Choice – Susan Payne

Fred Schroeder was the opening speaker at the VR staff meeting held on December 9 with a presentation regarding informed choice. He was the RSA commissioner

during the time that informed choice was added into the Rehab Act. He was charged with explaining what informed choice means and how it got into the federal regulations. One of the hallmarks of his presentation was informed choice springing from discussion and rapport building and the establishment of a relationship between the VR counselor and the individual receiving services. He stressed that this should be an ongoing process throughout the entire VR process. Martha Macias stated that the VR counselor must have a position attitude, and in many cases, the VR counselor believes more in the individual than they do in themselves.

Susan Payne reported that the chapter on informed choice in the VR Policies and Procedures Manual would be revisited. She stated that in revising the chapter, input will be obtained from consumers, staff, VOPA, and the SRC.

Other Business:

Susan Payne stated that Karen Trump will be giving a transition report which will be focused on students around the state with visual impairments. Karen Trump gave an overview of her job responsibilities at the Department of Education over the past 11 years. Karen addressed an issue raised by Marguerite Bardone regarding state initiatives of the state for accessibility for students who are visually impaired throughout the Commonwealth. She explained how George Mason University and the teacher for the visually impaired coordinated accessibility of materials for students. She stated that she meets with teachers of the visually impaired to ask three basic questions. They are: How are things going? What challenges are you facing? How can I help? She stated that teachers for the visually impaired are most impressive professionals. Rick Holly inquired about teachers who taught Braille. Karen Trump stated that Virginia will pursue having vision teachers take a Braille examination when entering the teaching field. They will be tested but it has not been decided how and what type of test will be given. She is researching this issue with other states to see how they conduct their testing. She will have a report on this issue by the next quarterly meeting. Rick Holly stated that students in grammar school were being taught simple sign language and suggested that students be taught simple Braille as well.

Danny DeBoer highlighted points of interest from the November 16 and 17 DRS SRC draft minutes. A copy of the DRS SRC minutes had been forwarded to members on November 30 from Robin Metcalf. One discussion item was that Ms. Takemoto made a motion for the SRC to send Governor-elect McDonnell a letter to provide an orientation to the SRC and the value of the vocational rehabilitation program as a “jobs” program. Doug Powell entertained the idea of having a joint

letter go to Governor-elect McDonnell. Susan Payne commented that one idea of sending two letters is that he hears twice from the community that there are individuals with disabilities who have human resources for employers. Perhaps it would be best to consider sending two letters referencing the other Council as partners. This would enable the Governor-elect and his advisors to hear from two Councils that there are citizens here in Virginia that he needs to be paying attention to rather than just one.

SRC Member and Member Organization Update:

- Doug Powell stated that he would be participating in a marathon on March 20.
- Bill Alley stated that he had been elected President for the VRCBVI Volunteer Council for 2010.
- Rick Holly discussed his experience at the Center earlier in the year and shared two suggestions that he had made upon leaving.
- Michael Kasey stated that the NFB convention held in Williamsburg had been a very big success.
- Mike Burton stated that he and his wife were very involved in volunteering in the Buchanan area.
- Faye Adams stated that she would speak to her husband, Ken Jessup, about volunteering as a mentor.
- Martha Macias thanked Susan Payne for holding the statewide VR staff meeting in which she received valuable training. Susan Payne announced that Martha had the highest number of successful closures throughout the state.
- Raymond Kenney stated that he was a member of the Statewide Independent Living Center. He is also the National Director for the Virginia Mid-Atlantic Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America. He works with McGuire Veterans Hospital as a liaison.
- Rob Froehlich stated that TACE is currently working on submission for their needs assessment for 2010 and their work plan.
- Marguerite Bardone discussed 2010 rollouts to enable people to keep up and increase communication access.
- Susan Payne stated that on Monday she would be meeting with Squigg Moore from the Office of the Attorney General regarding revisions to the VR state regulations.
- Anna Burns stated that she was looking forward to working with everyone on the Council.

- Melanie Brunson stated that ACB had won the case against SSA that was discussed at the last meeting. She explained what impact this decision would make for individuals with visual impairments when dealing with SSA. She requested that agencies such as DBVI to help distribute SSA notices with a toll-free number regarding accessible formats. She will be forwarding that information to Susan Payne and Ray Hopkins once she receives the notices. She also announced that ACB would be holding their Annual Legislative Seminar on February 2 - 4. She requested members to contact her if they would like to have more information regarding that seminar.

Adjournment: There being no other business to come before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 1:10 p.m. The next meeting will be held at the Library and Resource Center, large conference room, 395 Azalea Avenue, on Saturday, March 13, 2010, at 10:00 a.m.