

**Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
State Rehabilitation Council
Comfort Suites Inn
10601 Telegraph Road
Glen Allen, Virginia
DRAFT Minutes, Quarterly Meeting
10 December, 2011**

Members Present: Melanie Brunson (Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council), Doug Powell (Past Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council/former recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Valerie Walker (representative of a Community Rehabilitation Program), Michael G. Davis (representative of the Business, Industry, and Labor), Rick Holley (Consumer Advocacy Group – National Federation of the Blind), Marguerite Bardone (Business and Industries), Debbie Pfeiffer (Department of Education), Claudie Grant, Jr. (Defense Commissary Agency at Fort Lee, Virginia), Jim Taylor (Former employee of the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired).

Members Absent: Angie Matney (Former recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services), and John Bailey (Former recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services).

Guests Present: Ken Jessup (Representative from the SILC), and Ellen A. McIlhenny (representative from the Department of Rehabilitation Services-State Rehabilitation Council).

Staff Present: Raymond Hopkins (Commissioner of the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired); Bob Burton (Deputy Commissioner for Services); Marcus L. Byrd II (Support Staff).

Adoption of Agenda: Melanie Brunson called for a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. It was moved by Doug Powell, seconded by Richard Holley, and passed by unanimous voice vote that the agenda be adopted as distributed.

Action on Minutes of the Previous Meeting: Melanie Brunson called for a motion to approve the September 10, 2011 SRC meeting minutes. A motion was made by Jim Taylor, seconded by Doug Powell.

Comments from the Public: Melanie Brunson called for any comments from the public asking once, twice, and a third time, no comments made and therefore declared closed.

Commissioner's Report-Raymond E. Hopkins:

Melanie Brunson (Chair): asked the council members if the reports submitted via email prior to the meeting provided any helpful information. The members responded with a unanimous yes and requested for it to continue. A few minor issues were raised in regards

to the format used, and the fact that JAWS was unable to translate tables within the document.

Commissioner Hopkins: budgetary issues loom over the DBVI and other State agencies. The agency awaits the release of the Governor's budget which is expected on or about 19 December 2011 to learn what is proposed for the upcoming fiscal year. DBVI, as did all Executive branch agencies, submitted scenarios for possible budget reductions of 2%, 4% and 6% for the Governor's consideration. Previously, we asked that increased funding in vocational rehabilitation and independent living services are included in the proposed budget that Governor McDonnell sends to the General Assembly. We won't know what is proposed for DBVI until the Governor's budget proposal is unveiled.

Doug Powell: inquired about the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired and the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services.

Commissioner Hopkins: explained that he and Commissioner Rothrock have not reached an agreement in terms of altering the memorandum. In addition, Commissioner Hopkins explained that the issue would be pressed in the future in order to come to a conclusion.

Rick Holley: inquired about the Governor's plans to use surplus funds for transportation.

Commissioner Hopkins: explained that to his knowledge that a higher percentage of surplus funds would be legally mandated towards transportation. In addition, surpluses typically follow this route when you have savings in general fund dollars at the end of the year; essentially those funds are swept and then forwarded to other primary categories.

Claudie Grant, Jr: inquired about talks of the DBVI being merged with DRS.

Commissioner Hopkins: explained that currently he is unaware of any proposed legislation to merge the DBVI and any other health service agency. Legislation is apparently being crafted to combine the Department of Rehabilitative Services, the Virginia Department of Aging and the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing into a new agency. This was proposed by the Governor's Commission on Government Reform and Restructuring and adopted among the reforms that Governor McDonnell has sent to the General Assembly. Although DBVI is not included in this proposal, it is clear that the issue can be revisited. Some consumers are suggesting that DBVI should be included in the merger if DDHH must be.

The House of Representatives is expected to introduce a bill to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) prior to the December 10 SRC meeting. On 9 December 2011 the House of Representatives introduced two bills, which addressed re-authorization of the

Jim Taylor: inquired whether there had been a large out-cry within the deaf community in regards to the proposed merger between the Department of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and DRS.

Commissioner Hopkins: explained that a stakeholder meeting took place in which members of the deaf community “boycotted”; another meeting is scheduled to take place within the next few weeks (DDHH) in which Secretary Hazel plans to attend in an effort to directly interact with public. Furthermore, certain individuals within the deaf community are concerned and feel that if the DDHH is being included in the merger than the DBVI should be as well. Commissioner Hopkins also explained that one of the distinguishing characteristics of the DBVI is that it provides direct Vocational Rehabilitation Services as opposed to other agencies.

Commissioner Hopkins: In addition to potential budget reductions in State funding, DBVI faces reduced funding in its federally supported programs as well. The “Super Committee” failed to produce a plan for reducing the federal budget and debt. As a result, automatic across the board cuts are to be imposed. There is some talk of Congress taking action to avoid drastic cuts. At present, it is not known to what extent the Vocational Rehabilitation and Older Blind Independent Living programs will be impacted by federal budget actions. We believe that we are in a solid financial position for this year. However, we certainly may be negatively impacted in FY 2013 and beyond.

Currently, the Business Enterprise Program (the Randolph-Sheppard vending facility program) consumes much of the Commissioner’s time. The long time BEP manager, David Kennedy, retired effective 1 September 2011, Rich Sorey, his replacement, notified us in October of his intentions to take a position with the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services. As the individual within DBVI having the most BEP experience, Commissioner Hopkins is managing the program. DBVI has contracts to manage dining facilities at four Army installations. Each of these contracts is expiring and must be pursued through a competitive bidding process. To date, two solicitations have been released and both have been challenged by the state licensing agency for violations of the Randolph-Sheppard priority. The agency continues to work with the Rehabilitation Services Administration, DoD and Vending Facility Vendor’s Council (the elected committee of licensed vendors in Virginia) to resolve outstanding issues. Simultaneously, we are seeing challenges to the Code of Virginia provision which grants a priority to the blind to operate vending facilities in public buildings in the Commonwealth. The Virginia Department of Corrections has made decisions recently to pursue vending machine services through private entities in violation of the Code. The pivotal issue is concerning the DOC desire to receive commissions from licensed vendors which is prohibited. Also, the Governor’s Task Force on Mandates on Localities has recommended striking this provision from the Code as unnecessary. We have offered written comments and plan to appear at the December 9 Task Force meeting to give oral testimony.

The House of Representatives is expected to introduce a bill to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) prior to the December 10 SRC meeting. On 9 December 2011 the House of Representatives introduced two bills, which addressed re-authorization of the Work Force Investment Act. One of the proposals is to remove individuals from state agencies from serving on workforce investment councils.

The WIA includes the Rehabilitation Act as one of its titles. Although the Senate HELP Committee circulated its thoughts on updating WIA a few months ago, few Congress watchers expected action this year. Given that the WIA is several years past the time it should have been renewed, we can't assume that the introduction of a bill will necessarily result in an actual reauthorized law. Reference the following bill numbers (Workforce Investment Act) and the Representatives whom proposed them: Rep. Joe Heck (NV) introduced H.R. 3611, the Local Job Opportunities and Business Success (Local JOBS) Act; Rep. Virginia Fox (NC) introduced H.R. 3610, the Streamlining Workforce Development Programs Act; Rep. Buck McKeon (CA) introduced H.R. 2295.

Construction on the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired is expected to be substantially completed any day. We anticipate occupying the renovated building in February, 2012. The grand reopening/open house is slated for April 18, 2012. The

building should have nice meeting rooms and the SRC will be welcome to relocate its quarterly meetings back to the VRCBVI once the building is fully operational.

Agency Reports for the DBVI SRC December 2011 Quarterly meeting –

SRC Appointments – DBVI SRC appointments and reappointments for FFY 2012 have not been made. To date, DBVI has submitted resumes to the Secretary of the Commonwealth the following SRC representative positions:

- a representative of a parent training and information center;
- a representative of an individual who is blind, has multiple disabilities, and has difficulty representing him/herself or is unable due to disabilities to represent him/herself;
- a representative of the Client Assistance Program;
- a representative of a consumer advocacy group;
- representatives of business, labor, and industry;
- a qualified vocation rehabilitation counselor with knowledge of and experience with vocational rehabilitation programs who serves as an ex officio, nonvoting member of the Council if employed by the designated agency;
- a representative of community rehabilitation service providers.

Other representative positions that remain open include the representative of the State workforce investment board. No resume has been submitted by DBVI to the Secretary of the Commonwealth because no one has expressed interest.

An interested individual has submitted his own resume for consideration as a

representative of the Statewide Independent Living Council who must be the chairperson or other designee of the Statewide Independent Living Council.

Regional Office Update- Bob Burton: This is a report on current recruiting efforts and vacancies filled in the Division for Services. In the Bristol office, the part time job development/placement specialist position has been filled. In the Roanoke office, a new orientation and mobility specialist began on October 10th. Lisa Tayes is a certified O & M Specialist who comes to us from San Diego California and has over 26 years experience. Tom Wood, the Roanoke Regional Manager, has made an offer to fill the remaining vacant Rehab Teacher position to a recent graduate of Salus University who will have both her Rehab Teacher and Low Vision Specialist certifications and as of 9 December 2011 the offer was indeed accepted. He is also planning to conduct interviews shortly with some qualified applicants for the vacant Education Coordinator position. In the Staunton office the part time job development/placement specialist position has been filled. In Fairfax we are recruiting to fill the vacant Education Coordinator position. In the Norfolk office Caren Phipps has been selected to fill the Regional Manager vacancy that was created by the resignation of Rich Sorey. Caren has over 30 years of experience in the Vocational Rehabilitation field and most recently served as a VR Counselor in our Richmond office. We are also recruiting to fill the VR Counselor position recently created by the resignation of Martha Macias. Martha has been a strong advocate for her customers and led the state in successful closures for the past three years. She will be missed. As a result of Caren Phipps' promotion we are now recruiting to fill her VR Counselor position in the Richmond regional office. Another recent change in Richmond involved the transfer of Ray Bowie, O & M Specialist, who moved over from the Rehab Center. Recruitment is also on-going for the Richmond Education Coordinator position. VRCBVI has announced two additions to their staff effective January 10, 2012. Michael Fish has been hired to fill the Computer Instructor vacancy that was created by the retirement of Charles Bruce. Michael has most recently been working as a Teacher of the Blind and Visually Impaired in the Arlington county Public Schools. Filling the vacancy created by Ray Bowie's transfer to the Richmond regional office is Becky Keller. Ms. Keller is an NOMC certified instructor who has been teaching O & M at BISM in Baltimore Maryland for the past several years. The Rehab Center is also currently recruiting for an Assistant Director for Instruction. At Headquarters we are recruiting for a Rehab Technology Specialist to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Keith Holzbach. Keith has graciously agreed to come back on a part time basis to assist in the provision of technology services while we work to find a full time replacement.

Standards and Indicators Quarterly Update Bob Burton: The Rehabilitation Services Administration uses the standards and indicators report as one strategy to evaluate the vocational rehabilitation programs throughout the country. Attached is the report that summarizes DBVI's results for federal fiscal year 2011 which ended Sept. 30th. We are particularly pleased that the number of successful closures in the program increased by 23% over the previous year. Additionally, we continue to do well in the indicator that computes a ratio of the average state hourly wage for all employed persons to the average hourly wage for blind and vision impaired customers that were

successfully closed. The established guideline for this indicator is .59 and we posted a result of .80, up from .76 last year. **Please Review Reports, Monthly-267 (Attached).**

The Vocational Rehabilitation program held a very successful statewide training meeting Nov.30, Dec. 1 and 2. In attendance were VR Counselors, Job development/Placement

Specialists, Rehab Technology Specialists and Regional Managers along with some teaching and counseling staff from the Rehab Center and two other Program Directors. Topics included the Rehab Act and amendments, a session on ethics and a full day presentation by Karen Wolffe, a nationally recognized trainer who specializes in career counseling and job placement for blind and vision impaired individuals. We recognized the VR Counselors that closed the most number of cases as successfully employed. These included Martha Macias from Norfolk who closed 23 successfully and Candace Catron from Bristol who closed 15 customers in successful employment. James Carroll from Fairfax and Caren Phipps from Richmond each had 12 successful closures. Bob Burton reviewed a report that presented specific information on those cases closed successfully. He noted that there were 6 customers that had no reported earnings at application for services and were closed with wages ranging from \$55,000 to \$150,000 per year. He also read a partial list of occupations in which customers had been closed. These included: Cook, Environmental Compliance Inspector, Pharmacy Technician; Real Estate manager, Lawyer, Budget Analyst, Dishwasher, Minister, Management Analyst, Computer Support Specialist, Training and Development Specialist, Janitor, Physical Therapy Assistant, Customer Service Representative, Sales Manager, Database Administrator, Medical Records Technician, Anthropologist, Registered Nurse, Pre School Teacher, Truck Mechanic, Medical Transcriptionist and Receptionist.

Update on DBVI Renovations – Bob Burton: The renovations are substantially completed and we are anticipating that furniture will be delivered such that we can begin moving back into the Administrative/Activities building in February of 2012.

VR Updates by Susan Davis Payne

Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CSNA): DBVI has entered into year three of the DBVI CSNA. Year one activities which included review and analysis of internal and external data regarding individual with blindness, visual impairment, and deaf blindness have been completed and was included in the 2010 Annual Report. Year two activities which included development, implementation, and analysis of survey data obtained from consumers, DBVI staff, employers, and SRC and other interested stake holders were initiated. However, with the unexpected departure of the primary DBVI staff member responsible for gathering and analysis of this information, all data was lost. Year three work also was to include key informant interviews; these interviews were not conducted. Year three activities were designed to integrate information gathered in year one and two data gathering activities. DBVI has contacted Mississippi State University who has agreed to assist DBVI in completing the CSNA including surveys and data analysis required for DBVI to complete the federally required CSNA by October 1 of 2012.

VR Outcomes for FFY 2011: During FFY 2011 the DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation program assisted 176 individuals in accomplishing their vocational goals in integrated and competitive settings. The average hourly wage was \$15.37 with an average weekly earnings of \$525.32; average age of workers was 46 years with average number of hours worked equaling 29. Individuals cases were closed in the following RSA categories: 142 competitively employed with an average hourly wage of \$15.78; 13 self-employed with average hourly wage of \$13.91; 4 employed via Randolph-Sheppard Food Manager's Program with average hourly wage of \$8.95; 12 became Homemakers; 2 were unpaid family workers; 3 Used Supported Employment Services with an average hourly wage of \$11.20. Average cost of services was \$927.58.

Public Meetings: A total of five public meetings were conducted across the Commonwealth of which three were conducted in conjunction with consumer advocacy group meetings. Meetings were conducted in Roanoke, Virginia Beach, Falls Church, Richmond, and Bristol. Approximately 85 members of the public participated in these meetings. One SRC member attended the Roanoke meeting, three SRC members attended the Virginia Beach meeting, and two SRC members attended the Falls Church meeting. No SRC members attended the Richmond or Bristol meetings. The VR Program Director is developing the summary and agency responses to the public meetings for inclusion in the 2013 State Plan. The SRC will receive the summary prior to DBVI posting the summary on the agency website.

SRC Discussion and Action Items:

Annual Report for FFY 2011: Action Item: Melanie Brunson called for a motion to approve the Annual Report for FFY 2011 as presented. It was moved by Doug Powell, seconded by Debbie Pfeiffer, and passed by unanimous voice vote that the report be adopted as distributed.

Election of Vice Chair for 2012: Melanie Brunson called for nominations for a member of the SRC to serve as vice-chair. Doug Powell nominated Michael Davis and he accepted. Debbie Pfeiffer nominated Rick Holley, and he accepted as well. Doug Powell moved that nominations be closed and Marguerite Bardone seconded the motion. Melanie Brunson declared the nominations therefore are closed. The election ensued between Michael Davis and Rick Holley resulting in a 7 to 3 in favor of Mr. Davis.

SRC Retreat: Susan Davis Payne, Melanie Brunson, and Doug Powell agreed via discussion that it would be advantageous to conduct the SRC Retreat/Meeting on 2-3 March 2012. Board appointments are currently pending, and aside from that being an issue the members agreed with the aforementioned date.

New Member Orientation: A specific date has not been designated for the new member orientation; rather Melanie Brunson recommended that discussion via email would be appropriate to decide. In addition, since all of the council member appointments have yet to be made, it was also recommended that two separate new member orientations may be required.

Formation of Committees for 2012

Working Lunch – SRC Representative Updates

Melanie Brunson: due to the unavailability of Michael Davis for the December 2012 meeting, Mrs. Brunson recommended that the SRC meeting be convened on the first weekend of the month.

Recommendation from SRC Member Bardone: Establish the SRC Annual Report Workgroup at the December SRC meeting of each year with the immediate post-meeting provision of the latest Annual Report to each Workgroup member.

Melanie Brunson: called for the collaborative efforts of two workgroups prior to the next SRC meeting, 1). A workgroup to focus on the Annual Report (Marguerite Bardone, Doug Powell, Rick Holley, and Debbie Pfeiffer all volunteered; 2). State Plan (Marguerite Bardone, Valarie Walker, Jim Taylor, and Melanie Brunson have all volunteered to serve on the workgroup. A recommendation was made by Marguerite Bardone for all members of the State Plan to read the previous year version. **(Action Taken)**

Recommendation from SRC Member Bardone: Establish the SRC State Plan Workgroup at the December SRC meeting of each year with the immediate post-meeting provision of the latest State Plan to each Workgroup member.

Commissioner Hopkins: recommended that for those interested in working on the SRC State Plan meet with Susan to discuss via email. **(Action Taken)**

Recommendation from SRC Member Bardone: Establish the SRC State Plan Workgroup at the December SRC meeting of each year with the immediate post-meeting provision of the latest State Plan to each Workgroup member recommendations from SRC members

Recommendation from SRC Member Bardone: Recommend DBVI VR Exit Interviews be conducted not only with Consumers, but also with VR Counselors and Field Service Personnel to acquire a more holistic reflection of VR service provision and receipt, and to better determine areas of success and need.

Commissioner Hopkins: explained that exit interviews are conducted when an employee leaves state agency employment. A consumer satisfaction survey is conducted with consumers whose cases have been closed in effort to determine satisfaction with the provision of VR services.

Marguerite Bardone: reneged on her recommendation and explained to the members of the council that she will refine the details of the information submitted. **(Action Taken).**

Recommendation from SRC Member Bardone: Recommend the SRC send a member or members into the field with VR Counselors to enable the SRC to become more connected with and informed about the VR process.

Melanie Brunson: recommended to allow members of the SRC an opportunity to get more involved with VR counselors in order to receive a better understanding as to what and how they conduct business on a day-to-day basis. Furthermore, Mrs. Brunson called for a counselor from the DBVI to attend the next meeting and elaborate on their day-to-day experiences as well. **(Action Taken)**

Recommendation from SRC Member Bardone: Recommend an SRC member or members participate in the VR Counselors monthly teleconnect Conference calls to share information about the SRC, its mission and members, and to enable both the SRC and VRC's a greater connection in and rapport about the VR process.

Commissioner Hopkins: explained that conference calls as they stand today will become obsolete, rather monthly state-wide video conferences are being conducted and topics of discussion are provided by counselors. **(Action Taken)**

Updates from the Chair: None to report

Other Business/Date for Next Meeting/Adjourn

The next SRC Meeting and Retreat will be conducted on 2-3 March 2011.

Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Standards and Indicators Report
 Federal Fiscal Year 10/1/2010 to 9/30/2011

Reporting Structure Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

Data Source Current Case Data

Summary Data by Reporting Structure			
	Current Year	Previous Year	Difference
Standard 1 Data			
Total Closed Cases for Reporting Period	544	488	56
With Employment Outcomes	176	143	33
After Services Provided	284	280	4
With Employment Outcomes, earning greater than or equal to Minimum Wage	158	131	27
With Employment Outcomes, earning greater than or equal to Minimum Wage with Significant Disabilities	158	131	27
State Minimum Wage	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$0.00
State Average Wage	\$19.44	\$19.44	\$0.00
Average Wage of the Closed Cases that are greater than or equal to Minimum Wage	\$15.61	\$14.70	\$0.90
Closed Cases with Employment Outcomes earning greater than or equal to Minimum Wage with own income as Largest Single Source of Support at Application	55	54	1
Closed Cases with Employment Outcomes earning greater than or equal to Minimum Wage with own income as Largest Single Source of Support at Closure	145	130	15
Standard 2 Data			
Total Closed Cases, Minority Background	267	216	51
Closed Cases Receiving Services, Minority Background	123	118	5
Total Closed Cases, Non-Minority Background	277	272	5
Closed Cases Receiving Services, Non-Minority Background	161	162	(1)