

DRAFT MINUTES
DBVI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
VA Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Headquarters Building
397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, VA 23227

June 14, 2014

SRC Attendees

John Bailey, Fairfax, Chairman SRC, represents Business, Labor and Industry; Melanie Brunson, Vienna, Past Chair, represents Consumer Advocacy Groups; Rick Gonzalez, Springfield, represents VA Workforce Council; Ken Jessup, Virginia Beach, represents State Independent Living Council; Richard Holley, Hallwood, represents National Federation of the Blind and Disability Advocacy Groups and Judy Swystun, Hampton Roads, represents Community Rehabilitation Programs

Members Absent

Rebecca Bridges, Arlington, Vice-Chair, SRC, represents Business, Labor and Industry and Ann Olliff, Richmond, represents current or former recipients of services

Members of the Public

Elizabeth Horn, Fairfax, Disability Rights Advocate, represents the CATS (Client Assistive Technology Services) Program, appointed but not confirmed and Isaac Crisp, VR Counselor, Richmond Regional Office, DBVI.

DBVI Staff to the SRC

Rick L. Mitchell, Deputy Commissioner for Services; Susan Davis Payne, VR Director, Staff Liaison to SRC and Ramona L. Miller, Administrative Assistant for Services, SRC

Welcome and Call to Order

Chairman Bailey welcomed all in attendance and expressed appreciation to Susan Payne and Ramona Miller for their support of the Council. Mr. Bailey also commended Melanie Roane, VRCBVI Center, for her knowledge and passion shown during the tour of the Center.

Introductions and Welcome to New SRC members

The attendees introduced themselves.

Adoption of Agenda - Action Item

Modifications to the agenda were made to include:

- 1) Reminder/discussion about proxy votes; 2) Discussion about the VATS (VA Assistive Technology

System) Council representation and 3) Update on SRC Appointments.

- 2) Melanie Brunson moved for the adoption of the agenda as modified. The agenda was approved as modified.

Approval of March 8, 2014 Meeting Minutes - Action Item

Judy Swystun moved to accept the March Meeting Minutes as written. The March Meeting Minutes were approved.

Comments from the Public

There were no comments from the public.

Commissioner's Report

In the absence of the Commissioner, Susan Payne asked if anyone had questions regarding the Commissioner's Report. There were none. Ms. Payne reported on SRC Appointment updates: Judy Swystun and Ann Olliff have now been appointed and confirmed to the SRC. Elizabeth Horn, Isaac Crisp, Wanda Council, Colin Boyer and Nicole Drummond have made application but are not yet appointed. Ms. Payne mentioned she had conversation with the Secretary of the Commonwealth's representative, Lana Westfall, who indicated that the appointments for Ms. Horn, Ms. Council, Mr. Crisp, and Mr. Colin are forthcoming. Ms. Westfall had hoped it would happen before today. Ms. Payne specifically asked Ms. Westfall if the afore-named could attend the New Orientation Meeting and the SRC Meeting in advance of being formerly appointed. Ms. Westfall advised that there was no problem in doing so.

The SRC has critical vacancies; an area where the Council can assist. Vacancies include former and current recipients of services; a representative of Parent Training Information Center and a The representative of someone who is blind and has multiple disabilities and who has difficulty representing himself or is unable to do so because of his disabilities. The representative can be a parent, guardian or representative of one who cannot represent himself, including a family member. The Council does not have a representative of the Workforce Council. Though not required, the Council may want to identify a transition aged student to fill one of the vacant seats for current or former recipients of services. Another update includes the fact that The Workforce Innovation Act, passed by the Senate, called for moving the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to the Department of Labor. That has been withdrawn and it will remain at The Department of Education. The Independent Living Program, with the exception of the Elder Blind program, will move to Health and Human Services. The Elder Blind program will remain at RSA. The RSA Commissioner will remain a Presidential appointment.

Deputy Commissioner's Report – Rick L. Mitchell

Next month, the Bristol, Fairfax, Richmond Regional, and Roanoke regional offices will all be fully staffed. This is a first for Fairfax in 15 years. The last position being filled in Fairfax is the Counselor position. It was decided that the Fairfax, Norfolk, Richmond Regional and Roanoke offices will house a Transition Counselor to focus on student of transition age. Fairfax is the last of the offices to fill that position. There are two vacancies in the Norfolk office. Human Resources received fourteen applications. Hopefully, both positions can be filled from those applicants. With the decreasing education budget, responsibilities of the Fairfax Education Coordinator position will be shared by Richmond and Staunton Education Coordinators. The Staunton Regional

Manger position has been vacant since last September. The Manager for our Richmond Regional Office has been appointed as our Acting Manger since the fall of last year. The agency expects to fill the position by July 2014. There is also a vacancy in the Rehabilitation Technology Office at Headquarters.

In August 2013, a Case Review Instrument was developed for consistency in reviewing documentation by counselors. The Case Review Instrument was implemented in November 2013. Managers are using it and we are seeing a significant improvement in case documentation.

Dr. Mitchell reported that the Services Division Management Team met to review the agency mission and to receive leadership training. The agency has a goal to improve relations between the field and VR CBVI Center staff through greater interaction.

SRC discussion included questions from members:

Judy Swystun asked if DBVI has considered using Facebook as a means to get the success stories out to the public? Once students complete the programs, they could be invited to post their own success stories, which would have greater impact. Also, from time to time they could give updates on Facebook.

Dr. Mitchell explained that in order to use Facebook, the agency has to have signed releases before success stories can be posted. DBVI is also considering setting up a Twitter account for student access.

Judy Swystun also wanted to know, who are the members of the Task Force?

The Task Force members include VR Counselors, Nancy Quisenberry, our lead VR counselor, Denise Stuck, Fairfax Office, Tracy Cross, Staunton Office, and Susan Payne, as a resource facilitator.

Richard Holley asked, why were seniors not mentioned in the agency report?

Ms. Payne explained that the SRC focuses on vocational rehabilitation. Services to Older Blind individuals is a different program and is not included in this report, though our VR counselors sometimes work with seniors. Susan Payne will send the Older Blind report to Mr. Holley. In addition, Ms. Payne will add the Older Blind Rehab Teaching Program report to the quarterly report.

The VR Program Update – Susan Payne

SRC had one question regarding the VR portion of the agency report.

Regarding Standards and Indicators, Rick Gonzalez asked, why is the sub-minimum wage of 1.3% stated if the minimum wage is the same across the board for everybody? Is it legal to pay below minimum wage?

Susan Payne explained that some workers are making below the federal wage; some are family members, agricultural workers, piece workers and/or restaurant workers. This figure (1.3%) does not capture anyone among the DBVI clients served.

DBVI/DARS Liaison Report – Ken Jessup

DARS met one week ago. They had five recipients of the Roy Ward Award. It was noted that the DARS' placements are making much lower incomes than DBVI placements; however it seems to be in proportion to the

general population. DARS' Council, just as this Council, has vacancies. The meeting was good. DARS' Council members do not come to SRC Meetings because the meeting is on Saturday.

Employment Workgroup Report – John Bailey

The Chairman gave a synopsis of the Employment Workgroup Report in the absence of Rebecca Bridges. The Employment Workgroup had one meeting where they generated eight questions for DBVI. The answers will be instrumental in helping the group set goals. Susan Payne will review the questions, provide a response and then share the information with the Council.

Marketing Workgroup Report – Ken Jessup

The Marketing Workgroup met once since the Council's last meeting. The workgroup requests and needs the assistance of a DBVI staff member who is knowledgeable about marketing best practices before it can proceed. Mr. Jessup invites other Council members to join the Marketing Workgroup.

The Chairman announced that rather than scheduling an hour in the agenda for workgroup reports, if any workgroup has a report, the group should inform the Chairman prior to the meeting so that time can be allotted.

**Approval of 2015 SRC State Plan Recommendations –
Action Item - John Bailey**

The SRC discussed the State Plan recommendations. Ms. Brunson expressed concern about the tone of the agency responses to the SRC Recommendation attachment 4.2 (c). Specifically, there was a question about recommendation 11 regarding DBVI submitting the DBVI Marketing Plan to the SRC for approval. Would DBVI respond in a more positive manner if the wording was changed from “approve” to “education and advice.”

Ms. Payne indicated that amending the recommendation to remove the word “approve” would alter the agency's response.

The agency's response was that the Department is looking to strengthen marketing and outreach efforts with the intention of developing, with professional assistance, a marketing plan. While input from the SRC is welcomed, the department will not submit its marketing plan to the SRC for approval. It is left to the agency's discretion to implement any recommendations.

Additionally, there was a question regarding attending meetings in recommendation 4 in attachment 4.2(c). Specifically, the agency responded that DBVI is unaware of any restriction that has prevented SRC members from participating in the meetings referenced in this recommendation. Participation of a member of the Executive Committee of the SRC to participate in other Commonwealth council meetings and state and national meeting in the development of the SRC Resource Plan which is included in the 2015 State Plan attachment 4.11 (d), as it has been for the last several years, SRC participation is subject to the guidelines issued for executive branch agencies for the commonwealth and availability of funds.

Ms. Brunson continued, “We just want it to continue. We were told in order to make sure that it continues, we should recommend it.”

Ms. Payne indicated that amending recommendation regarding the Marketing Plan to remove the word “approve” would alter the agency response to the recommendation. As noted in the State Plan, while the agency will not

submit its Marketing Plan to the SRC, recommendations from the Council are welcomed. It is left to the agency's discretion to implement any recommendations.

With regards to recommendation pertaining to sponsorship of SRC members participating in other councils and meetings such as NCSRC, CSAVR, and NCSAB, Ms. Payne directed Council's attention to the attachment to the SRC Resource Plan, noting that \$24,200 has been budgeted for SRC activities. This includes administrative support, travel expenses, reimbursement for drivers, working lunches while conducting business, interpreter services. Five thousand dollars (\$5,000) has been budgeted for training for groups and/or individuals to assist the Council in carrying out its responsibilities, including sponsoring a representative to attend the spring and fall CSAVR, CSAV and NCSRC Council activities. There are \$3,000 budgeted for new initiatives.

Ms. Brunson made a motion to change the wording of the SRC recommendation in Section 11 to eliminate the words "for final approval" and change to "the SRC recommends that the agency submit its Marketing Plan to the Council early in 2015 for its education and advice." Motion carried.

Ms. Brunson also made a motion to remove recommendation No.4, regarding monies for meeting attendance because it was already recommended in the Resource Plan (411.d.)" Motion carried.

Judy Swystun had a question on recommendation 12, "How much time are VR counselors spending on the road?" She stated it is noted that blind VR counselors have an advantage over sighted VR counselors because they have a driver and can do much of their administrative work in the car. Ms. Swystun would like to recommend something to enable VR counselors to be more productive in the use of their time and recommended a short survey may be an option.

Ms. Swystun also wanted to know, what is the purpose of the State Plan?

Ms. Payne provided a brief overview to address her questions.

Ms. Swystun had a number of questions regarding the state plan including, if DBVI does not use all of its monies, it is given to DARS. If DARS doesn't use all of its monies, is it given to DBVI?"

Ms. Payne reported that DARS always uses all of their monies. There has never been a time when they did not use all of their funds.

- Regarding 4.11(d).10 Supported Employment. Ms. Swystun asked, "Why is DBVI supporting individuals after their cases are closed?"
- Regarding 4.11(d) Strategies Update. Does the report come to the Council?
- Regarding 4.11 (b), is the attachment only about the Vocational Rehabilitation Program?
- Has DBVI considered younger students and their parents for a transition program at VRCBVI?
- Regarding 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personal Development, does DBVI reach out to all universities across the state?
- Regarding Outreach Activities to identify served and underserved groups. Is the SRC briefed about these activities?

Mr. Holly was concerned about the use of the word "minorities" in the 4.10 attachment.

Ms. Payne explained that DARS always uses all of their monies and that DBVI provides supported employment services to some individuals, who may have multiple disabilities, and need additional support in order to keep

their jobs after their case is closed. She also outlined that the SRC receives a report on the outcome of strategies and measures annually through the State Plan attachments.

Ms. Payne reported that DBVI has a newly constituted transition team being led by our Lead Transition Counselor, Sara Mateyka, which has a goal of identifying students at an age earlier than 14.

Ms Payne also explained that DBVI sponsors students at all colleges and universities.

The 4.10 attachment requires that agencies reach out to minority colleges and universities. The use of the word “minorities” is based on specific requirements of federal government.

The Chairman asked if there is a motion to accept the State Plan as a whole. It was moved by Ms. Swystun and second by Melanie Brunson that the State Plan be accepted. Motion carried.

Working Lunch - Overview of new client intake process – Susan Payne

By law, VR counselors are required to talk with clients about their rights on four (4) specific occasions: a) at application; b) eligibility; when category for order of selection is decided; c) when their individualized plan for employment is signed; d) When their individual case is closed. These are the steps taken to ensure compliance. In addition, our Managers conduct case file reviews and our Consumer Program Analyst also does consumer satisfaction surveys. There were no questions for Ms. Payne.

1. Review of action items – DBVI Marketing Plan

Ms. Payne explained that DBVI is planning to increase marketing and outreach efforts and to develop a Marketing Plan; the agency will update the Council on the development and implementation of the Plan on a quarterly basis.

2. Existing Business and New Business

Proxy votes – SRC members may select an individual to issue a proxy vote in their absence. DBVI staff will develop a proxy vote form.

Mr. Holley mentioned that he will not be in attendance at the September SRC meeting and appointed Ms. Swystun as his proxy.

VATS Council – Ms. Brunson reminded the Council that it is entitled to have a representative seat on the VATS Council. The Council meets at DARS headquarters three times a year in January, May and September on the third Thursday of the month from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm. As of September, Ms. Brunson will no longer be a member of SRC and will no longer represent DBVI SRC on the VATS Council Board. Members can participate in meetings by phone or in person.

An agenda item for September will be to select an SRC member to represent the Council on the VATS Council. DBVI also has a staff member serving on the VATS Council.

3. Announcement of SRC elections for Chair and Vice-Chair at September meeting – John Bailey

The positions of Chair and Vice Chair are open for the 2015 Fiscal year and the elections will be held in September 2014. Individuals interested in running for either position, should contact Rebecca Bridges, who will be handling the elections. Members can review bylaws for eligibility to serve as an officer.

4. Date for Next Meeting/Adjournment – John Bailey

The date for our next meeting is Saturday, September 13, 2014.

Mr. Holley mentioned that he will not be available to attend the September SRC meeting. The Chair reminded him that he must submit his intention in writing. Mr. Holley will do so when he receives the proxy form. He also appointed Ms. Swystun as his proxy.

The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. It was moved and second that the meeting be adjourned. Motion passed.