**Department of Rehabilitation Services**

**Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB)**

# Advisory Board Draft Minutes

## June 21, 2018

**Members Present**

**Alan Sylvestre, Chairman, Eileen Akers, Astread Ferron-Poole (representing DSS Commissioner Bremby) Andrea Giudice, David Gregoire, Katherine Guzman, Darcy Jones, Beth Rival, Mary Silverberg and Randa Utter.**

**Members Absent**

**Stephen Thal**

**Others Present**

**Brian Sigman, BESB Director, Chris Lassen, Adult Services Supervisor, Catherine Summ, Education Supervisor, Edward Owens, Business Enterprise Program Supervisor, Mary Burgard, Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, Lisa Tanguay, Office Supervisor, Lori St. Amand, Volunteer Program Coordinator, Andrew Norton, Legislative and Administrative Advisor.**

**Welcome and Introductions**

**Chairperson Sylvestre called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.**

**Public Comment**

**None**

**Old Business**

**MOTION: A motion was made by Ms. Akers, seconded by Ms. Giudice, to adopt the minutes from the March 22, 2018 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

**New Business**

**Vocational Rehabilitation Policy Updates for Action:**

**Mr. Sigman reported that there were no public comments received in regards to the proposed updates to the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) policies and that the State Rehabilitation Council approved the policy updates as drafted with an implementation date of July 1, 2018.**

**MOTION: On a motion made by Ms. Silverberg, seconded by Ms. Rival, it was unanimously accepted to approve the changes to the VR polices as they were written and presented to the public, with an implementation date of July 1, 2018.**

**Complete Streets Presentation**

**Chairperson Sylvestre introduced Ms. Emily Hultquist from the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG). Ms. Hultquist explained that CRCOG was formed to initiate and implement regional programs of benefit to the towns and the region. It is guided by the chief elected officials of the 38 Metro Hartford municipalities. It serves as a platform for shared services such as the Regional Purchasing Council and the Nutmeg Service Cloud. It coordinates disaster mitigation and emergency preparedness planning and undertakes matters of transportation, land-use, and economic development planning. Ms. Hiltquist welcomed suggestions from the Advisory Board members as to how to promote public awareness of safety concerns held by persons with disabilities. The Advisory Board members provided several recommendations, particularly in regards to the increasing public awareness of the laws granting the right of way to pedestrians in street crossings. Ms. Hultquist extended invitations to those members who wish to attend any of CRCOG’s meetings. For additional information, the website for CRCOG is:** [**www.crcog.org**](http://www.crcog.org)**, telephone number: 860-522-2217 ext. 219 and direct email address for Ms. Hultquist is** [**ehultquist@crcog.org**](mailto:ehultquist@crcog.org)**.**

**Budget Update**

**Mr. Sigman provided a budget update for the VR Program. For Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2019, that starts October 1, 2018, there are adequate funds to serve all eligible individuals. However, FFY 2020 is very close to the point where an order of selection may become necessary. Mr. Sigman recommended that the Advisory Board initiate the process of updating the policies pertaining to order of selection in preparation for implementation. It is hoped that an order of selection will not be necessary in FFY 2020, but planning must be initiated far enough in advance to be in a position to implement the required steps if the budget projections for FFY 2020 continue to move toward insufficient funding to serve all eligible individuals in that fiscal year. Mr. Sigman stated that he is hopeful the new policies passed by the SRC and the Advisory Board will have a positive effect on reducing the total expenditures in purchased services.**

**MOTION: A motion was made by Ms. Giudice, seconded by Mr. Gregoire to form a workgroup of four and one alternate to develop policy recommendations for order of selection with a specific request that the SRC works together with the Advisory Board to jointly develop the policy recommendations. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Budget Update**

**Mr. Sigman reported that the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) has seen a decline in funding due to reduced vending commissions brought about by the rest areas having only one shift per day, as well as declining employee populations in government buildings. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program no longer has funding available for BEP to utilize for equipment purchases and repairs, further impacting on the BEP budget. Children’s has sufficient funding to recruit to refill teacher vacancies which occurred in the prior year.**

**Legislative Update**

**Mr. Norton reported on Bills of interest including HB 5028, now Public Act 18-169 which makes the former Department of Aging now part of DORS; HB 309,** **An Act Aligning The Office Of The Long-Term Care Ombudsman With The Older Americans Act, which updates Connecticut’s Ombudsman law to align with federal requirements; HB 5503, An Act Concerning the Killing or Injuring of Seeing Eye Dogs and Assistance Dogs which will require the owner of a dog that injures or kills a service dog to pay not only for damages but also for the cost of training; HB 5245, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Best Practices for Providing Transportation for Persons with Disabilities, Senior Citizens and Veterans; and HB 5566, An Act Concerning Service Animals, which would have created a penalty for anyone pretending that a non-service dog is a service dog; this last bill did not pass.**

**Mr. Sigman stated that since the Department of Aging is now a part of DORS as the State Unit on Aging, a strategic planning meeting was organized to review what the new mission statement, organizational structure and priorities for DORS will be going forward. Additional meetings are planned to address these topics. Another item Mr. Sigman brought forward was a question raised by the consulting vendor that is designing a new case management system for DORS. They are asking about the word that should be used to describe the individuals that are served by DORS.**

**Motion: On a motion made by Ms. Utter, seconded by Mr. Gregoire, it was unanimously passed to recommend the continued use the term, “client”.**

**Program Updates – Business Enterprise and Vocational Rehabilitation**

**Mr. Owens reported that there were 7 transitions of facility managers in the last two months within the Business Enterprise Program’s Promotion and Transfer process. All facilities being transitioned have been upgraded with a Point of Sale register, capable of taking multiple payment methods. The Labor Department Cafeteria has been switched to a micro-market. A new field representative has been hired to replace a January retiree. Another field representative will be retiring as of August 1st bringing the total number of field representatives to four. A refill of that position will not be requested at this time. Currently, there are three VR client referrals in BEP Training.**

**Ms. Burgard reported on the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Within the last year and a half, six staff have left the program. Savings were achieved to date through staff transfers and positions held vacant. Mr. John Farrington is retiring and the Bureau is requesting to refill this position. Vocational Rehabilitation is partnering with the American Job Centers, where the VR Counselors are collocated on a part time basis. BESB has been working with the centers on the accessibility of training materials. Ms. Burgard recently attended a national conference where she and Mr. Jonathan Richmond presented on the VR Program’s initiative to train clients on how to use Career Index Plus to explore labor market information and career opportunities. Ms. Julie McLean has been assigned to train clients directly on Career Index Plus.**

**Vocational Rehabilitation – Advisory Board Recommendations**

**There were no recommendations beyond what was previously discussed.**

**Points to the Good and Welfare**

**Ms. Akers congratulated Ms. Giudice for being selected to chair the guide dog users session at the American Council of the Blind’s national convention.**

**MOTION:  On a motion by Ms. Silverberg, seconded by Ms. Giudice, the meeting adjourned at 12:02 p.m.**

**Next meeting – 13 September 2018, 10:00 a.m. to noon at 184 Windsor Avenue, Windsor, CT**