**Department of Rehabilitation Services**

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

# Advisory Board Draft Minutes

## March 22, 2018

**Members Present**

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

**Members Absent**

**Beth Rival**

**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.**

**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 Mr. Thal, to adopt the minutes from the December 14, 2017 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

**MOTION: A motion was made by Ms. Utter, seconded by Ms. Akers, to adopt the minutes from the February 21, 2018 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

**New Business**

**Order of Selection Workgroup – Draft Policies for Review**

**Mr. Sigman gave a detailed overview of the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2019 and 2020 budget projections for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. It may be necessary to commence an order of selection in FFY20 based on current projections. Discussion took place on the savings achieved to date through staff transfers and positions held vacant. But these actions alone will not be sufficient to align projected costs with available funding in FFY20. Mr. Sigman restated the decision of the workgroup that costs of purchased services must also be reduced in the hope of avoiding an order of selection. Previously distributed draft policies on Personal Adjustment Training, Post-Secondary Training and Adaptive Equipment were discussed. Mr. Sigman noted that in the draft policy update for Personal Adjustment Training there was outdated wording referring to “pre-vocational” training, and that the State Rehabilitation Council motioned at their March meeting to replace that phrase with “pre-employment.”**

**MOTION: On a motion made by Ms. Giudice, seconded by Ms. Silverberg, the Advisory Board members voted to approve the draft policies with the modification made by the State Rehabilitation Council included. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Mr. Sigman indicated that he will draft a notice of public hearing on these proposed policy revisions.**

**Vocational Rehabilitation - - Advisory Board Recommendations**

**Without objections, Chairperson Sylvestre tabled the Vocational Rehabilitation -- Advisory Board recommendations for the June 2018 meeting.**

**Budget Update**

**Mr. Sigman provided an overview for FY 18. The approved state budget increased funding for the deafblind community inclusion grant. With the restored funding in the Children’s Services account it was possible to avoid the need to implement a fee-for-service model in FY18. Recruitment is underway to refill teacher vacancies. The Employment Opportunities account has received sufficient funding to utilize a portion for on-the-job supports for youth up to age 25 who are in supported employment.**

**Legislation Update:**

**Mr. Sigman reported that Mark Schultz has been nominated by President Trump to become the next Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services Administration.  Other Bills of interest consisted of HB 5038, an Act Concerning the Governor’s Budget Recommendations for Human Services; HB 5566, An Act Concerning Service Animals; HB 5503, An Act Concerning the Killing or Injuring of Seeing Eye Dogs and Assistance Dogs. Ms. Giudice raised concerns about the wording of the title for HB 5503, noting that the title used the wording of “Seeing Eye Dogs” that refers to a specific training facility and not to guide dogs in general. Mr. Sigman indicated that he would make the agency Legislative and Administrative Advisor aware of her concerns.**

**Program Updates**

**Mr. Lassen reported that the Adult Services Program is streamlining procedures for referrals to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program for children who are graduating from high school. Mr. Lassen indicated that rehabilitation teaching staff in Fairfield County are assisting with adaptive technology training for clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Efforts are underway with the Lions Clubs with the hopes they may be able to fund large print calendars for the low vision population who may not qualify for BESB’s services.**

**Ms. St. Amand reported that the Volunteer Program had a good recruitment month in January. However, long-term retention of volunteers has been a challenge.**

**Ms. Summ stated that the Children’s Services Program is working on a summer transition camp option for students. A total of 229 education team members participated in six Fall in-service training programs. Children’s Services events have included a rock climbing trip, the Leap into Life social group for middle and high school students and an Adaptive Ski Program. The Fall, 2017 Children’s Services newsletter was distributed to special education directors as well as parents/guardians. Recruitment is underway to fill three Education Consultant vacancies.**

**Points to the Good and Welfare**

**Mr. Thal reported that CRIS radio has a new satellite in Norwalk. St. Francis Hospital patients can now dial into CRIS radio. It will be offered to Connecticut Children’s Medical Center soon. CRIS is working in conjunction with museums to provide input to help make them more accessible.**

**Ms. Giudice reported that she participated in the “Watch for Me CT “ on March 16 with New England Assistive Technology. There is an upcoming daylong event scheduled for April 6, 2018 which will be focused on pedestrian and cyclist safety, titled Bike Walk-Connecticut’s 2018 Annual Summit, “Advocacy Through Action”. Inquiries can be sent to** **bikewalkct@bikewalkct.org****.**

**MOTION:  On a motion by Ms. Giudice, seconded by Ms. Akers, the meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.**

**Next meeting – 21 June 2018, 10:00 a.m. to noon at 184 Windsor Avenue, Windsor, CT**