**Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)**

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

# Deafblind Advisory Committee Meeting

**Draft Minutes**

## December 19, 2017

**Voting Members Present:**

**Barbara Cloonan, Parent/Guardian Representative; Lisa Flaherty-Vaughn, Consumer Representative, Deafblind Association of CT; Sandra Miles, Department of Developmental Services - Southbury Training School; Hana Tyler, Consumer Representative; Still Fowler, Oak Hill; Robert C. Smith, Department of Developmental Services; Al Sylvestre, BESB Advisory Board Representative.**

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

**Marsha Brown, BESB, Adult Services; Chris Lassen, BESB, Adult Services; Brian Sigman, BESB Director; Patricia Richardson, DORS, Department on Aging.**

**Guest: Kristin Granascek, Oak Hill.**

**Voting Members Absent:**

**Erich Krengel, Capitol Region Mental Health Clinic; Kathy Morgan, Conservator; Emily Morgante, Parent/Guardian Representative; Charlotte Spinkston, Helen Keller National Center (HKNC); Karen Olson (representing Tracy Evans-Luiselli), New England Consortium of Deafblind Technical Assistance and Training.**

**Non-Voting Members Absent**

**Heidi Henaire, BRS; Mark Ward, BESB; Mary Quinn, BESB.**

**Old Business**

**Approval of Minutes:**

**MOTION: On a motion by Sandra Miles, seconded by Lisa Flaherty- Vaughn, the minutes from the June 6, 2017 and September 26, 2017 meetings were unanimously approved.**

**MOTION: On a motion by Alan Sylvestre, seconded by Robert Smith, the meeting dates for 2018 were approved as follows: January 30, April 24, July 24 and October 30.**

**Committee Membership Status**

**Mr. Sigman expressed his concern that several DBAC members have been absent from meetings. He will ask Tracy Luiselli if Karen Olson is going to be designated as the new voting representative from the New England Consortium of Deafblind Technical Assistance and Training. Mr. Sigman will also reach out to ASD to seek a replacement for Cindy Paluch. Ms. Brown will reach out to Charlotte “Dee” Spinkston from HKNC to see if she can participate in future meetings by teleconference call if she is not able to attend in person. Emily Morgante, who is a guardian of several Southbury clients, may need to be replaced as well if she remains unavailable to attend most meetings.**

**Update on Deafblind Awareness activities:**

**Ms. Brown reported that Michelle Clark’s success story was submitted to DORS and approved. It will be published in the DORS January newsletter, including the photograph of Michelle that was produced in conjunction with the new poster created by Chairperson Hana Tyler. A revised version of the success story is also in the process of being submitted to HKNC and Hadley School for the Blind.**

**Update on Deafblind Technology Program**

**Ms. Brown distributed a report submitted by the CT Tech Act Project, DORS-BESB, Access Through Technology Grant, National Deaf Blind Equipment Distribution Program. The funding allows eligible consumers to improve telecommunications access. The total allocation for Year 4 starting July 1, 2017 is $124,939; expenditures for the first quarter are $20,133. Ten consumers have been served year-to-date. Ms. Brown is working with the staff of the CT Tech Act Project to publicize the program through mailings and by information distribution through other venues including Senior Centers. Two Losing Sight and Sound seminars were delivered at the Manchester and Windsor Senior Centers this past quarter. Patty Richardson is also willing to help out with publicity via aging network resources.**

**New Business:**

**Plans for allocating remaining 2018 funds**

**Mr. Sigman reported that the approved state budget increased funding for the DB Community Inclusion grant from $88,000 to $262,643. Although potential “holdbacks” were identified by the Governor for FY 18, this account was not identified for reduction. As a result, recommendations for the use of the remaining funding are requested from the membership. It was pointed out that it typically takes 120 days to amend contracts and as a result, contracts might not be amended until May.**

**Mr. Sigman reported that based on year-to-date expenditures, Oak Hill had spent an estimated 18.6% of their total funding, Hoyle 20.6%, Jeruss 35.3%, Corley 46% and CAN 32%.**

**Under this set of circumstances it was pointed out that the two vendors most capable of utilizing the funding under this set of circumstances are CAN and Oak Hill. Oak Hill could potentially cover camp registrations for more clients. CAN could collaborate with BESB, CT Tech Act and NEAT Marketplace to hold an event at NEAT to train clients on technology and cover the cost of camps including but not limited to the Silent Camp for Deaf Adults, an annual event held in R.I. and coordinated by one of CAN’s clients. Using the funding to add additional hours for 1:1 consumer services may or may not be feasible because of the severe time restraints involved in amending contracts.**

**Mr. Sigman requested that Committee members submit additional recommendations. Ms. Flaherty-Vaughn recommended that the Deaf Blind Association of CT (DBA-CT), a group that is co-chaired by Ms. Vaughn and Ms. Michelle Clark assist the Committee by getting feedback from their participants. Mr. Sigman asked Ms. Vaughn to try to obtain ideas from their membership prior to the next DBAC meeting date in January.**

**Finally, there was discussion of using some of the funding for the purchase of adaptive equipment for clients.**

**MOTION: On a motion by Mr. Sylvestre and seconded by Ms. Cloonan, the Committee voted to allow up to $15,000 for the purchase of braille devices and alert master environmental notification parts. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Report from the BESB Director**

**Mr. Sigman reported on the recommendations of the Order of Selection workgroup that was comprised of members from Advisory Board and State Rehabilitation Council. After providing an update on the latest budget projections for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, that indicates the probable need for an Order of Selection to be implemented by FFY 2021, Mr. Sigman detailed activities that have already been taken to reduce the cost of payroll and the associated fringe benefit costs. One Orientation and Mobility Instructor and one Special Assistant have been reassigned to Adult Services from Vocational Rehabilitation. Two Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors have submitted their retirements effective April 1, 2018. Only one of these positions will be requested for a refill. The Order of Selection Workgroup deliberated on the costs associated with purchased services and based upon this review, have put forth recommendations pertaining to purchased services in the categories of independent living residential programs, higher education, and adaptive equipment. Any changes to existing policies would require a public comment period.**

**The Children’s Services account was almost fully restored to $3.9 million. It allows the Bureau to request some refills of vacant teacher positions.**

**Report from the Chair**

**Ms. Tyler reported that she is working on a two room mural at a Church in Woodbury.**

**Announcements:**

**Ms. Richardson reported that she plans to sponsor training on ADRC benefits in Waterbury for the deaf community. Ms. Brown recommended that she contact Susan Shatney to participate. Ms. Shatney provides information and referral services and counseling to the deaf community for DORS.**

**MOTION: On a motion by Mr. Sylvestre and seconded by Ms. Miles, and passed unanimously the meeting adjourned at 11:47 a.m.**

**Next Meeting: January 30, 2017 at 10:00 a.m. at BESB**