**Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)**

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

**Deafblind Advisory Committee Meeting**

**Draft Minutes**

**October 30, 2018**

**Voting Members Present**

**Barbara Cloonan, Parent/Guardian Representative; Lisa Flaherty-Vaughn, Deafblind Association of CT; Kristen Granatek, Oak Hill; Sandra Miles, DDS - Southbury Training School; Kathy Morgan, Conservator; Emily Morgante, Parent/Guardian Representative; Karen Olson (representing Tracy Evans-Luiselli), New England Consortium of Deafblind Technical Assistance and Training; Hana Tyler, Consumer Representative; Robert C. Smith, Department of Developmental Services; Charlotte Dee Spinkston, Helen Keller National Center (HKNC).**

**Non-Voting Members Present**

**Marsha Brown, BESB, Adult Services; Chris Lassen, BESB; Adult Services; Brian Sigman, BESB Director; Krystal Kelly, BESB-Vocational Rehabilitation; Mary Johns, BESB-Children’s Services; Patricia Richardson, DORS- State Unit on Aging.**

**Voting Members Absent:**

**Erich Krengel, Capitol Region Mental Health Clinic (DMHAS); Al Sylvestre, BESB Advisory Board Representative.**

**Non-Voting Members Absent**

**Heidi Henaire, DORS-BRS**

**Others Present**

**Andrew Norton, DORS Administrative and Legislative Advisor, Susan Shatney, DORS-BRS**

**1. Introductions:**

**Those present introduced themselves.**

**2. Old Business:**

**Approval of DBAC Minutes from July 24, 2018:**

**Ms. Miles made a motion, seconded by Mr. Smith to approve the July 24, 2018 minutes with amendments to the year “2918” on the last page which should read “2018” for the effective date of the policies, and Susan Shatney should be reflected under “Others Present” rather than “non- voting members”. Motion carried.**

**Update on Deafblind Awareness Activities**

**Ms. Brown gave an update on Deafblind Awareness activities. A mailing will be done in the coming months that will include resource information on technology and financial resources for hearing aids. BESB is planning another confident living program for seniors who are legally blind and hard of hearing.**

**Update on Deafblind Technology Program**

**There was no new information reported at the meeting.**

**Committee Membership Status**

**Ms. Johns will reach out to the American School for the Deaf to request a representative to serve on the Deafblind Advisory Committee as a voting member.**

**3. New Business:**

**FY 2019 Contracts and Expenditures**

**Ms. Brown reported that all of the contract amendments are in the final stages of approval. There was approximately $3,000 in expenditures for alert master equipment due to several clients needing an upgrade. Funds were also allocated to be used for braille instruction. Justifications will be submitted for a new proposed contractor to provide braille instruction to clients who are deafblind. Expenditures for the first three months of the fiscal year are: Oakhill - $9,045; CAN - $12,452 in state funding and $6,017 in SSBG funding; UCP - $2,063; HH - $440; IJ - $1,600; MS - $648; JC - $2,713.**

**Interpreter Workgroup update**

**Ms. Brown reported that the purpose of the workgroup was to explore options that could potentially increase the number of interpreters who are available to provide tactile and close vision interpreting for individuals who are deafblind. The committee members noted from their research that some states offer a fee differential for interpreters who provide this level of interpreting.**

**MOTION: Mr. Smith made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cloonan, for the workgroup to make a recommendation to the full DBAC committee that when the next interpreting contract is considered for either an amendment or competitive bid that consideration is given to requesting a rate differential for close vision and tactile interpreting. Motion passed.**

**Report from the BESB Director**

**Mr. Sigman reported that a public comment period is currently open on the Vocational Rehabilitation policy updates for Order of Selection. He clarified that this is not implementing order of selection but only updating the Vocational Rehabilitation policies in order to align them with language in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act and to have comparable policy language to the definitions used by the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. The State Rehabilitation Council and the Advisory Board will deliberate on the comments received at their December meetings. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program received $430,000 in new money from the federal re-allotment process in addition to receiving approximately $16,000 in social security reimbursement funds. With this additional funding, the program projects the capacity to serve all eligible individuals in FFY 2020. Ms. Burgard and Mr. Richmond are both attending the NCSAB/CSVAR conferences and presenting on how BESB is utilizing Career Index Plus to actively engage clients in career exploration and job seeking. The 2019 large print calendars will be getting mailed to clients during the month of December. Three new Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments have been hired. A new Field Representative was hired in the Business Enterprises Program. The agency staff attorney is reviewing the process for updating the state regulations for BESB.**

**Report from the Chair**

**Chairperson Tyler shared a story from YouTube regarding an app that could be used by people who have no vision and no hearing. This app provides for vibrations on a cell phone allowing someone to communicate by Morse code. Another device by Samsung alerts an individual with deafblindness when there are instances of water overflowing in the home.**

**Announcements**

**Ms. Olson announced that the Perkins Deafblind Consortium grant was awarded for the next five years. This is a federal grant to provide technical assistance to families and educational teams for children who are deafblind through age 22. The State of Connecticut lends support to any children who are BESB clients to assist with recommendations around their education. For those students who may not qualify for BESB services, they could still be considered under this grant. In-service training for educational teams and events for families/parents are also areas covered under the grant.**

**MOTION: Ms. Miles made a motion, seconded by Mr. Smith to adjourn the meeting at 11:40 a.m.**

**Next Meeting: January 29, 2019 – 10:00 a.m. at BESB**