**Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)**

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

**Deafblind Advisory Committee Meeting**

**Draft Minutes**

**July 24, 2018**

**Voting Members Present:**

**Barbara Cloonan, Parent/Guardian Representative; Sandra Miles, DDS - Southbury Training School; Tracy Evans-Luiselli, New England Consortium of Deafblind Technical Assistance and Training; Emily Morgante, Parent/Guardian Representative; Hana Tyler, Consumer Representative; 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; Heidi Henaire, DORS-BRS; Susan Shatney, DORS- BRS; Krystal Kelly, BESB-Vocational Rehabilitation; Patricia Richardson, DORS- State Unit on Aging.**

**Voting Members Absent:**

**Lisa Flaherty-Vaughn, Deafblind Association of CT; Erich Krengel, Capitol Region Mental Health Clinic (DMHAS); Still Fowler, Oak Hill; Kathy Morgan, Conservator; Charlotte Dee Spinkston, Helen Keller National Center (HKNC).**

**Non-Voting Members Absent**

**None**

**Others Present**

**Andrew Norton, DORS Administrative and Legislative Advisor**

**I. Introductions:**

**Those present introduced themselves.**

**II. Old Business:**

**Update on Deafblind Awareness Activities: Ms. Brown gave an update on Deafblind Awareness activities. Two more outreach posters featuring BESB clients with deafblindness have been produced with financial assistance from the CT Tech Act Project. They are now on display in the Administrative Conference Room. Ms. Brown, Ms. Lugo and Ms. Aparo will meet in August to develop an outreach plan.**

**FY 2018 Outcomes and Expenditures: Ms. Brown reported on three events that she organized with assistance from HKNC staff and other organizations in May. On Tuesday, May 29, 2018, ten clients with deafblindness and spouses participated in the Confident Living Program for Seniors Who are Legally Blind and Hard of Hearing, facilitated by Mark Armstrong from HKNC. The focus was on the types of hearing loss, the types of hearing aids, and psychosocial aspects pertaining to loss and adjustment.**

**On May 30, 2018, a Deafblind Technology Fair was held at NEAT with assistance from Oak Hill, Communication Advocacy Network (CAN) staff, and HKNC staff. Anindya Bhattacharyya, technologist from HKNC and Michelle Clark, contracted braille instructor for BESB were the keynote speakers for this event. Steve Deltatto from Silver Lining and Steve Famiglietti from Oak Hill also presented information on braille notetakers. The event included tactile and ASL interpreters who assisted the participants as well as Support Servicer Providers (SSP) funded by BESB and CAN.**

**The final event was a staff training held on Thursday, May 31, 2018 that included an overview of Helen Keller National Center services and conditions that cause deafblindness. Mark Armstrong provided training on blindness and hearing aids as well as information on deafblind technology including apps. Adult Services field staff, two BESB VR counselors and Heidi Henaire from BRS also participated in this event.**

**For all three presentations, there was considerable positive feedback from attendees, which led to the conclusion that additional BESB clients and staff would benefit from similar presentations. Ms. Henaire would like future programs to cover cochlear implants in more depth and would like to investigate training the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors with deafness (known within DORS as RCDs) in aspects of blindness and deafblindness. This is a training that Marsha Brown and Ms. Henaire will organize.**

**Approval of DBAC Minutes from April 24, 2018: On a motion made by Al Sylvestre and seconded by Robert Smith, the minutes from the meeting of April 24, 2018 passed unanimously.**

**Meeting Dates for 2019: DBAC meeting dates for 2019 were proposed to be scheduled on January 29, April 30, July 23, and October 22. A motion was made by Al Sylvestre and seconded by Barbara Cloonan to adopt those dates. The motion passed unanimously.**

**III. New Business:**

**Amended Budget for FY 19: The total budget for deafblind community inclusion services approved the Legislature and signed into law by the Governor was $262,643. The members reviewed the proposed revised draft budget for FY 2019, with allocations totaling $193,636 for community inclusion services provided by vendors, in addition to $42,000 for special projects, and $16,500 for contracted services. A motion to adopt the amended budget was made by Al Sylvestre, seconded by Robert Smith and passed unanimously.**

**Expenditures for FY 18: A total of $134,401.38 in deafblind community inclusion funding was spent in FY 18 including projects and vendor expenses.**

**Tactile Interpreting: Ms. Brown discussed the difficulties she has encountered when attempting to secure tactile interpreters for multiple clients on the same date. Ms. Henaire reported that she had participated in the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) convention held in Hartford recently and over 200 people participated. She attended the Protactile workshop.**

**On a motion from Sandy Miles, seconded by Barbara Cloonan and approved unanimously, an ad hoc committee was established to report back at the October meeting on capacity building strategies to increase the number of interpreters to serve individuals that require tactile interpreting. Members to include (but not limited to) Ms. Brown, Ms. Henaire, Ms. Shatney, Ms. Flaherty-Vaughn and Michael Ahimsa, DORS interpreter.**

**Update on Deafblind Technology Program: Ms. Brown distributed a report submitted by Muriel Aparo, CT Tech Act Project, NDBEDP. The total allocation for Year 4 starting July 1, 2017 was $124,939. Expenditures for the third quarter were $22,910. Three requests from consumers were received in this quarter for repairs and updated equipment. Ms. Brown continues to work with the staff of the CT Tech Act Project to publicize the program through mailings and outreach efforts.**

**Committee membership status: It was noted that Karen Olson was going to reach out to the American School for the Deaf to gauge their interest in designating a representative to serve on the committee. Her report is pending.**

**Bureau Director Update: Mr. Sigman informed the committee that the former Department on Aging is now within DORS as the State Unit on Aging. The Unified State Plan for Connecticut that includes the Vocational Rehabilitation Programs at BESB and BRS was approved in June. The BESB VR policy manual has been updated subsequent to a public comment period. The updated policies have been posted on the agency website and became effective July 1, 2918.**

**Report from the Chair: Ms. Tyler shared her very positive experience using a free App, “Be My Eyes,” on her iPad. The App connects the user with volunteers who are available to provide visual and environmental cues by utilizing the camera feature of the iPad.**

**MOTION: On a motion by Mr. Sylvestre, seconded by Mr. Smith, the meeting adjourned at 11:58 a.m.**

**Next Meeting: October 30, 2018 – 10:00 a.m. at BESB**