**Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)**

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

# Deafblind Advisory Committee Meeting

## April 30, 2019

**Voting Members Present**

**Barbara Cloonan, Parent/Guardian Representative; Lisa Flaherty-Vaughn, Deafblind Association of CT; Still Fowler, Oak Hill; Meghan Geary, American School for the Deaf; Erich Krengel, Capitol Region Mental Health Clinic (DMHAS); Sandra Miles, DDS - Southbury Training School; Kathy Morgan, Conservator; Karen Olson, New England Consortium of Deafblind Technical Assistance and Training; Robert C. Smith, Department of Developmental Services; Hana Tyler, Consumer Representative**

**Non-Voting Members Present**

**Marsha Brown, BESB, Adult Services; Heidi Henaire, DORS-BRS; Chris Lassen, BESB; Adult Services; Brian Sigman, BESB Director**

**Voting Members Absent:**

**Emily Morgante, Parent/Guardian Representative; Al Sylvestre, BESB Advisory Board Representative**

**Non-Voting Members Absent**

**Mary Johns, BESB-Children’s Services; Krystal Kelly, BESB-Vocational Rehabilitation; Patricia Richardson, DORS-State Unit on Aging**

**Others Present**

**Douglas Duford, Oakhill****; Susan Shatney, Counselor for the Deaf DORS-BRS Community Living Program**

**1. Introductions:**

**Those present introduced themselves.**

**2. Old Business:**

1. **Approval of DBAC Minutes from January 29, 2019**

**Ms. Cloonan made a motion, seconded by Ms. Miles to adopt the minutes from the January 29, 2019 meeting. Motion unanimously passed.**

1. **Update on Deafblind Awareness Activities**

**Ms. Brown noted that the Confident Living Program for Seniors Who are Hard of Hearing and Blind originally scheduled for March was cancelled due to inclement weather and rescheduled for May 2nd. Mark Armstrong from the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) is the trainer for this program.**

**Communication Advocacy Network (CAN) held a pro-tactile training for Support Service Providers (SSP’s) and clients with deafblindness at American School for the Deaf (ASD). The training was facilitated by one of BESB’s clients who is deafblind. Ms. Flaherty-Vaughn announced that the Deafblind Association of Connecticut will sponsor a deafblind appreciation day on June 1st from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at American School for the Deaf. Tables are available to vendors.**

**Ms. Shatney is currently setting up a database for data collection and tracking gaps in services for consumers who are deaf or deafblind . If anyone is aware of any gaps, please notify Ms. Shatney.**

1. **Update on Deafblind Technology Program**

**This is the second year of the permanent program, July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. The expenditures for the third quarter totaled $15,647.56. Three previous individuals were provided services, 2 new individuals applied to the program and 8 devices were purchased and 5 repairs or upgrades to existing devices were supplied to consumers. The FCC has reallocated $21,300.00 of the original grant of $124,611.00 to other states who requested additional funding. Spending for the third quarter has been minimal. With the reallocated funds, $48,176.70 still needs to be expended.**

**The CT Tech Act Project hosted an Assistive Technology conference at the Hilton Hotel in Hartford on March 29th which was well attended.**

**3. New Business**

**a) FY 2019 Contracts and Expenditures**

**Ms. Brown reported on the following vendors and their unliquidated balances to date for FY 19 from the Deafblind grant funds: CAN - $66,182; Oak Hill - $10,456, Oak Hill Camp pre-registration balance - $18,000, Hoyle - $5,478; Jeruss - $3,387; Sudol - $457; Corley - $3,146. There was $10,038 expended in projects including expenditures for equipment, alert master components, interpreting services, braille material, braille devices and repairs. Funding related to these projects also included braille instruction for clients who are not eligible for Social Services Block Grant funding. Projected total expenditures for FY 19 are $219,948 out of the grant award of $265,835, leaving a projected balance of $45,887.**

**A new deafblind braille instructor was recently identified by DORS-BESB and he is now on contract. The new instructor is also utilized by the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind as a certified interpreter. He is applying to be added as a certified interpreter for Connecticut as well. Ms. Shatney is assisting the instructor in getting on the registry for Connecticut. Once he is registered, he would potentially be available to provide interpreter services to DORS clients.**

**MOTION: On a motion by Ms. Morgan, seconded by Mr. Krengel, the committee is authorizing the BESB Director to request the business manager to explore whether current contracts can be amended or additional services can be provided to increase community inclusion for those individuals that are being served in FY 19. Motion unanimously passed.**

**MOITON: On a motion by Ms. Morgan, seconded by Ms. Cloonan, the committee authorizes the remaining community inclusion funds to be used for technology support. Motion carried unanimously.**

**b) FY 2020 Funding Update**

**Mr. Sigman reported that the Governor’s recommendations for the FY 20-21 budget are favorable for DORS. The Appropriations committee has put forth budget recommendations that include the funding levels for DORS that were proposed by the Governor.**

1. **Legislative Update**

**HB 7163 would rename DORS to the Department of Disability and Aging services. It is on the House calendar.**

**HB 7353 would require the individualized education program for children who are deaf or hard of hearing to include an emergency communication plan to assist such children in an emergency situation. It is on the House calendar.**

**HB 7230 would allow Connecticut to add interpreters that are registered in Massachusetts. It also adds a provision for reporting interpreting violations. It is on House calendar.**

1. **Report from the BESB Director**

**Mr. Sigman reported that the new website for DORS is up and running and it is organized very differently than the previous website. Links to external organizations no longer exist on the website. The Vocational Rehabilitation services handbook has been updated and will be issued to all new clients at the time of eligibility. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program is projecting the ability to serve all eligible individuals in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2020 but projections for FFY 2021 are very tight and an Order of Selection may become necessary in that year. Mr. Sigman is monitoring the budget closely. Vocational Rehabilitation will seek additional federal re-allotment funding when they become available in August.**

1. **Report from the Chair**

**Chairperson Tyler shared information about Haptics which is a form of communication in which people interact via the sense of touch. Information is provided about surfaces and textures, and is a nonverbal and nonvisual form of communication.**

**Announcements**

**Ms. Miles requested a moment of silence on behalf of a client who passed away.**

**MOTION: Mr. Smith made a motion, seconded by Ms. Morgan to adjourn the meeting at 11:42 a.m. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Next Meeting: July 23, 2019 – 10:00 a.m. at BESB**