**Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)**

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

# Deafblind Advisory Committee Meeting

**Draft Minutes**

## June 6, 2017

**Voting Members Present**

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

**Non-Voting Members Present**

**Marsha Brown, BESB; Heidi Henaire, BRS; Chris Lassen, BESB; Andrew Norton, DORS; Mary Quinn, BESB; Brian Sigman, BESB; Mark Ward, BESB**

**Voting Members Absent**

**Still Fowler, Oak Hill; Erich Krengel, Capitol Region Mental Health Clinic; Cindy Paluch, American School for the Deaf**

**Old Business**

**Approval of Minutes**

**On a motion by Mr. Sylvestre, seconded by Ms. Cloonan, the minutes from the April 18, 2017 meeting was unanimously adopted.**

**Update on Deafblind Awareness Activities**

**Ms. Brown reported on activities that are being planned for June. Communication Advocacy Network will be holding a walkathon on June 20th and 21st, culminating in a march through an arch of balloons in honor of Julia Brace, the first deafblind student to enroll at the American School for the Deaf in 1825. In addition the CT Tech Act Project is sponsoring a demonstration of deafblind technology by their technology trainers. Ms. Brown is working on a proposed press release to focus on these activities as well as the successes of individuals who are deafblind.**

**Update on Deafblind Technology Program**

**Ms. Brown distributed a report on the federal Access Through Technology Grant (NDBEDP) administered by Arlene Lugo, BRS. Seven consumers have been served so far. The Access Through Technology Grant has recently received permanent program status by the Federal Communications Commission. Ongoing efforts are being made to work in conjunction with the Lions Clubs to help promote awareness of the Access Through Technology Grant. The next seminar in the “Losing Sight and Sound without Losing Confidence” series is scheduled for October 15th at the Manchester Senior Center. Funding will be provided through the grant for outreach efforts to promote this event.**

**Membership Update on Vacancies**

**Mr. Sigman was pleased to report that the Deafblind Committee has achieved its full membership with the Helen Keller National Center filling their vacant spot on the committee with Ms. Spinkston.**

**New Business**

**Mr. Sigman reported that the deafblind grant received a rescission of $5,000 for FY 17. There are differing proposed versions of the FY 18 state budget which are awaiting action by the Legislature. It is unknown at present what the level of funding for the Deafblind line item will be for FY 18. Mr. Sigman recommended that the committee members consider a more fluid approach toward reallocating funding between clients to be sure that allocated funds are being fully utilized.**

**Ms. Brown provided an update on the Deafblind budget for FY 17. To date, of the $82,185 allocated for client services, $58,944 has been expended, with a remaining balance of $23,241. It is anticipated that DORS will be able to pay invoices submitted by June 25, 2017.**

**Plans for Allocating 2018 Funding**

**Ms. Brown reported that the contracts have been sent to the vendors for signature.**

**Report from the BESB Director**

**Mr. Sigman requested that Mr. Norton provide an update on the state budget and legislation. Mr. Norton provided an overview of each of the proposed budgets from the Governor, the House and Senate Democrats and the House and Senate Republicans.  He described the effects of each proposal on the funding for the deafblind grant. The legislative session ends on June 7th but if nothing passes by that date, the legislature would call for a special session in order to complete a budget.  Mr. Norton also gave an overview of some proposed bills.  He discussed House Bill 7237 which will restructure the Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired and also change its name to the Advisory Board for Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.  The new Advisory Board would no longer only advise DORS but would advise all of state government about issues concerning persons who are deaf.  The new Board would have 15-16 members including people who are deaf, parents and representatives from organizations for the deaf.  Another bill, Senate Bill 796, would re-write many Connecticut statutes to adopt person-first language. Under that bill the Board of Education and Services for the Blind would become the Advisory Board for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired.**

**Mr. Sigman reported that BESB will not know until September, 2017 if any federal re-allotment funds are awarded to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. While the program has sufficient funds to meet expenses in Federal FY 18, additional funding through the re-allotment process is essential for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to avoid an Order of Section in FY 19. BESB’s model has shifted for delivering summer camps for Children’s Services clients. BESB will no longer be directly staffing the two summer camps. Channel 3 Kids Camp and Oak Hill will be running the camps with their trained staff.**

**Policy manual changes for Vocational Rehabilitation and Children’s Services were approved at a special meeting in May of the Advisory Board and State Rehabilitation Council. A few discussion items remain and should be completed at the June meetings of the Advisory Board and the State Rehabilitation Council. The plan is to have these policy manuals on the DORS website as final policies with an effective date of July 1, 2017.**

**Report from the Chair**

**Chairperson Tyler shared a copy of her artwork of a mural she drew on the wall of an elementary school in Southbury demonstrating that as a person with deafblindness, she can still continue her work. The committee members complimented her on the scope and high quality of her artwork.**

**MOTION: On a motion made Mr. Sylvestre, seconded by Ms. Miles, the meeting adjourned at 11:46 a.m.**