**Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS)**

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

**Deafblind Advisory Committee (DBAC)**

**Draft Meeting Minutes**

**July 28, 2020**

**Voting Members Present**

**Tara Brown-Ogilvie, Helen Keller National Center (HKNC); Barbara Cloonan, Parent/Guardian Representative; Lisa Flaherty-Vaughn, Deafblind Association of CT; Sandra Miles, Department of Developmental Services (DDS) - Southbury Training School; Kathy Morgan, Conservator; Karen Olson, New England Consortium on Deafblindness (alternate voting member for Ms. Luiselli); Jesse Stanley, American School for the Deaf (ASD); Al Sylvestre, Advisory Board for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired; Hana Tyler, Consumer Representative**

**Non-Voting Members Present**

**Heidi Henaire, ADS-Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS); Krystal Kelly, BESB Vocational Rehabilitation; Brian Sigman, BESB Director**

**Voting Members Absent**

**Still Fowler, Oak Hill; Erich Krengel, Capitol Region Mental Health Clinic (DMHAS); Tracy Luiselli, New England Consortium on Deafblindness (NEC); Emily Morgante, Parent/Guardian Representative**

**Non-voting Members absent**

**Mary Johns, BESB Children’s Services; Christopher Lassen, BESB Adult Services**

**Others Present**

**Andrew Norton, ADS Legislative Liaison; Marjorie Santos, BESB Adult Services, Lisa Tanguay, BESB; Sue Pederson, Communication Advocacy Network (CAN); Maria Basile, Bilingual Professional Agency; Anthony Draper, Interpreter; Susan Morgan Morrow, Interpreter; Elizabeth Staehle, Interpreter; Jason Farr, Interpreter; Alan Gunzberg; Brenda Moore**

**Introductions**

**Those present introduced themselves.**

**Approval of Minutes from June 9, 2020**

**MOTION: Mr. Sylvestre made a motion to adopt the minutes as amended, seconded by Kathy Morgan. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Public Comment**

**Mr. Stanley reminded those present the importance for individuals to state their name prior to speaking as part of the communication etiquette for accommodation purposes.**

**Final Report on Deafblind FY 20 Funding Utilization**

**Mr. Sigman provided a summary of expenditures for fiscal year 2020. Of the $225,826 that was reserved across 7 contracts to serve 55 individuals, $124,799 (55.3%) was expended on 33 individuals. An additional amount of $18,944 was expended on purchased services such as adaptive technology training, interpreters and Braille instruction. In total, $143,743 was expended, representing 54.2% of the appropriation. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the delivery of services.**

**Old Business**

**Update on Deafblind Technology Program**

**Marjorie Santos reported on behalf of Ms. Aparo on the Access Through Technology Program. In the fourth quarter, services were provided to one new consumer and to one returning consumer. There were 2 devices purchased and one device was upgraded. For FY 20, $44,304 was expended on equipment and services.**

**New Business**

**FY 2021 Community Inclusion Services**

**Mr. Sigman reported that collectively, the 6 contracts for FY 21 add up to $218,771 in funds to serve 58 individuals. Of those 58 individuals, five are newly identified and will be served through CAN. Thirty-two individuals will be served through Oak Hill, 22 through CAN and the remaining 4 are individual contracts. There are two additional requests for services pending further review and consideration. Collectively, between contracts and other expenses for services such as interpreters, Braille instruction, adaptive technology devices and training, there is approximately $22,000 that could be obligated for additional services. The Bureau has been reviewing clients served by the Independent Living Program to determine if there are other individuals who could be considered for services through this community inclusion funding.**

**Reopen Plan - COVID 19 Updates**

**Mr. Sigman reported that the agency is working to finalize the reopen plans across the bureaus. Currently, all staff are teleworking with a small number of staff who come to the office on a part-time basis. As employers have been reopening, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program of BESB is working with community providers to identify potential job opportunities for clients. Mr. Sigman asked the members of this committee for their input and recommendations as to how community inclusion services can safely resume, recognizing the unique challenges that tactile and close vision interpreting pose on social distancing requirements. Committee members provided their recommendations and gave examples of what has been put in place with other providers of community-based services. Mr. Sigman will put together a draft of possible protocols that factors in these recommendations to distribute to the membership for review and feedback. It was suggested that Mr. Sigman reach out to New York Commission for the Blind to learn what practices they are utilizing as well.**

**Legislation and Budget Updates**

**Mr. Norton reported that the legislature convened last week and that there were four pieces of legislation discussed, one of which was expanding the use of absenteeism ballets for COVID-19 related concerns. Mr. Norton indicated that to date he has not learned of any plans the legislature may have to work on adjustments to the current year’s budget.**

**Report from the BESB Director**

**Mr. Sigman announced that after 34 years as the Supervisor of the Business Enterprise Program, Edward Owens has retired. Tyrell Sampson was promoted to fill this vacancy. In Children’s Services, Peg Palmer and Jill Baker have retired as of July 1st and one additional teacher is retiring on September 1st. Jessica Gibson has been hired as a new Education Consultant in Children’s Services. The Children’s Services program is developing a virtual training program for school district staff which will be offered in place of in-person training for the Fall Inservice series.**

**Report from the Chair**

**Chairperson Tyler recognized the challenges during this period and will work to make any necessary accommodations and acknowledged everyone for their efforts during these challenging times.**

**Announcements**

**None**

**MOTION: Ms. Miles made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:25 p.m., seconded by Ms. Flaherty-Vaughn. Motion passed.**

**NEXT MEETING DATE: October 27, 2020 – 10:00 a.m.**