**Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)**

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

# Deafblind Advisory Committee Meeting

**Draft Minutes**

## January 29, 2019

**Voting Members Present**

**Barbara Cloonan, Parent/Guardian Representative; Lisa Flaherty-Vaughn, Deafblind Association of CT; Erich Krengel, Capitol Region Mental Health Clinic (DMHAS); Sandra Miles, DDS - Southbury Training School; Kathy Morgan, Conservator; Tracy Evans-Luiselli, New England Consortium of Deafblind Technical Assistance and Training; Robert C. Smith, Department of Developmental Services; Charlotte Dee Spinkston, Helen Keller National Center (HKNC); Al Sylvestre, BESB Advisory Board Representative; Hana Tyler, Consumer Representative.**

**Non-Voting Members Present**

**Marsha Brown, BESB, Adult Services; Heidi Henaire, DORS-BRS; Mary Johns, BESB-Children’s Services; Krystal Kelly, BESB-Vocational Rehabilitation; Chris Lassen, BESB; Adult Services; Brian Sigman, BESB Director**

**Voting Members Absent:**

**Still Fowler, Oak Hill; Emily Morgante, Parent/Guardian Representative**

**Non-Voting Members Absent**

**Patricia Richardson, DORS- State Unit on Aging**

**Others Present**

**Susan Shatney, DORS-BRS; Meghan Geary, American School for the Deaf (ASD)**

**1. Introductions:**

**Those present introduced themselves.**

**2. Old Business:**

**Approval of DBAC Minutes from October 30, 2018**

**Mr. Smith made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cloonan to adopt the minutes from the October 30, 2018 meeting. The motion passed with one abstention.**

**Update on Deafblind Awareness Activities**

**Ms. Brown noted that two Confident Living programs had been presented in the past quarter with the assistance of Mark Armstrong from HKNC. Another program is scheduled to be held on March 5, 2019. Feedback on the two programs was very positive. Mr. Sigman noted that one of the members of the Bureau Consumer Advisory Committee (BCAC) spoke highly of the programs offered for seniors with acquired hearing loss.**

**Update on Deafblind Technology Program**

**From October through December, the Access Through Technology Program expended $22,719.58. Three devices and 2 software upgrades were purchased along with 6 equipment repairs or upgrades to existing devices that have been previously provided. Ten individuals were served during this time period. One new application was approved for services.**

**Committee Membership Status**

**Thanks to the efforts of Ms. Johns, Meghan Geary, Social Worker at the American School for the Deaf attended the meeting and offered to serve on the DBAC as a representative from the category of “appropriate consultants” as identified in the state regulations.**

**MOTION: On a motion by Mr. Sylvestre, seconded by Ms. Miles, Ms. Geary was nominated for voting membership on the DBAC representing ASD as a consultant from this community-based organization. The motion to appoint Ms. Geary as a voting member passed unanimously.**

**3. New Business:**

**FY 2019 Contracts and Expenditures**

**Ms. Brown reported that, in addition to contracts for community inclusion activities, funds were also expended to purchase and install environmental notification devices in the homes of BESB clients, and for interpreters at meetings. Expenditures were also made for braille instruction provided by a vendor who is a BESB client and also for a field trip to Staten Island, NY for clients served through the contract with Communication Advocacy Network. Ms. Brown also reviewed the percentage utilization by various vendors for community inclusion activities.**

**Report from the BESB Director**

**Mr. Sigman asked the Committee what their preferences were in regards to the FY2020 contracts for community inclusion services. At this point in time, it is not known what the level of funding will be for FY2020. However, the current contracts all contain language that allows for funding adjustments and flexibility in allocations to individuals served through the contracts. Mr. Sigman asked if the committee desired to request an extension of the existing contracts for another year or if the committee desired for the agency to pursue new contracts for these services.**

**MOTION: A motion to extend all of the existing Deafblind community inclusion contracts through June 30, 2020 was made by Mr. Sylvestre and seconded by Ms. Miles. The motion unanimously passed.**

**Mr. Sigman provided an update on the DORS strategic plan. With the State Unit on Aging a part of DORS, there has been discussion on a potential new mission statement and possible name changes for the agency. Mr. Sigman indicated that a name change would require legislative action. He presented some of the ideas that were developed from the discussions during the strategic planning meetings. Mr. Sigman also presented the draft revised mission statement to the group. He stated that feedback was welcomed and encouraged.**

**As part of a state-wide initiative to redesign state agency websites, the new DORS website will be rolled out in the coming weeks. The new design is organized so that visitors can search for specific types of services of interest rather than needing to sort through bureau or program specific web pages to seek out services.**

**Mr. Sigman summarized recent changes in BESB personnel. He also noted that the 2019 large print calendar was sent out to everyone whose name was on the mailing list and if members are aware of anyone who has not yet received a calendar, to let him know.**

**Report from the Chair**

**Chairperson Tyler mentioned You-Tube videos from Vancouver, B.C. with three persons with retinitis pigmentosa achieving improved acuity, and other videos from Dr. Yu in Mexico.**

**Announcements**

**Discussion occurred regarding the difficulties being encountered in securing sign language interpreters for meetings. Ms. Henaire and Ms. Shatney provided insight into possible reasons for this and indicated that potential solutions are under consideration. Jessie Stanley at ASD is using Pro-tactile sign language (PTASL) and Communication Advocacy Network is sponsoring a training in early February, with BESB Mobility Instructor, Heidi Ross, of Adult Services, planning to attend.**

**MOTION: Mr. Sylvestre made a motion, seconded by Mr. Smith to adjourn the meeting at 11:55a.m. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Next Meeting: April 30, 2019 – 10:00 a.m. at BESB**