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

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

**Deafblind Advisory Committee (DBAC)**

**Meeting Minutes**

**October 22, 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; Karen Olson, New England Consortium on Deafblindness (NEC)**

**Non-Voting Members Present**

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

**Voting Members Absent**

**Still Fowler, Oak Hill; Emily Morgante, Parent/Guardian Representative; Hana Tyler, Consumer Representative; Al Sylvestre, Advisory Board for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired**

**Others Present**

**Susan Shatney, Counselor for the Deaf, ADS-BRS Community Living Program; Tammy Ennis, American School for the Deaf; Susan Pedersen, Communication Advocacy Network**

**Introductions**

**Those present introduced themselves. In the absence of Chairperson Tyler, Ms. Cloonan served as acting chairperson for the meeting.**

**DBAC Minutes from July 23, 2019**

**Ms. Morgan made a motion, seconded by Ms. Miles to adopt the minutes from the July 23, 2019 meeting and to accept a modification to the minutes to reflect the name change for New England Consortium of Deafblind Technical Assistance and Training to New England Consortium on Deafblindness (NEC) effective October 1, 2019. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Update on Deafblind Awareness Activities**

**Ms. Brown reported that the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) has hired someone who will represent HKNC on the Deafblind Advisory Committee. During the past year, confident living programs for seniors who are hard of hearing and legally blind were held. This program has been challenged by transportation issues.**

**Deafblind Technology Program**

**Ms. Brown reported on the Access Through Technology Program. There is $123,994 allocated for this fiscal year. Expenditures this quarter were $11,298. From July through September, 5 individuals that are all previous consumers of the program were served and 2 new individuals began to receive services. There are 2 applications pending additional information to determine eligibility. An outreach event was held in July and sponsored by the Walk & Roll, and the event was held in New Britain at Walnut Hill Park.**

**New Business**

**Discussion of Co-Navigator vs. Support Service Provider designation**

**Ms. Pedersen provided an overview of how Communication Advocacy Network (CAN) utilizes Support Service Providers (SSP) to assist with the community inclusion activities of clients served through their contract with this agency. Ms. Flaherty-Vaughn raised the question of whether the term “co-navigator” could be used in place of Support Services Provider. Ms. Flaherty-Vaughn stated that the term “co-navigator” reflects an equal partnership between the client and the SSP. Mr. Sigman advised the members that he would need to review the current contract language with CAN to determine if the term Support Services Provider or SSP was in the contract. If that is the case, then a contract amendment would likely be necessary to utilize “co-navigator.” Ms. Brown commented that the phrase “co-navigator” is not yet in common use based on her review of websites such as the American Association of the DeafBlind and the National Center on Deaf-Blindness. These organizations use the term “Support Services Provider.” After additional discussion on the topic, it was concluded that since CAN holds the contract with the agency, if such a change is desired, it would need to be initiated by CAN.**

**FY 2020 Funding and 1st Quarter Expenditures**

**Ms. Brown reported on the contract award amounts for FY 20 which consisted of CAN - $141,352.53, serving 16 clients; UCP - $9,999.00, serving 1 client; Oak Hill - $62,896.50, serving 34 clients; IJ - $9,986.88, serving 1 client; MS - $2,536.11, serving 1 client; HH - $7,054.85, serving 1 client; and JC - $9,999.00, serving 1 client.**

**For the first fiscal quarter, expenditures totaled $43,021 leaving a balance of $222,248 for the remaining three fiscal quarters.**

**Mr. Sigman suggested creating some other concepts on how the funds might be utilized by the contracted vendors to deliver different or expanded services with the expectation that increased utilization of the funding would result. Mr. Sigman indicated that he would reach out to CAN and Oak Hill to explore if additional ideas for the utilization of their contracted funding can be identified.**

**Legislative Session Summary**

**Mr. Norton provided an update on the work of the Advisory Board for Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.  Last year, the Board’s proposed bills were submitted to the legislature and a number of them passed.  One of the changes would allow Massachusetts accredited interpreters to interpret in Connecticut in order to expand the pool of interpreters. Some changes in education also passed. One change tells the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) and local school districts that they need to include consideration of children who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing in their emergency planning and include emergency planning in the student’s language plans.  The state and local school districts will also be required to consider the needs of students who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing in their school design plans. Schools will also be required to annually track the language progress of students who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing. In addition, another bill that passed makes clear that health insurance must cover the cost of hearings aids for persons of all ages, not just children age 12 and under.**

**Meeting Dates for 2020**

**DBAC meeting dates for 2020 were proposed to be scheduled on January 28, April 28, July 28 and October 27. A motion was made by Ms. Olson and seconded by Ms. Miles to adopt those dates. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Report from the BESB Director**

**Mr. Sigman announced the agency’s new name as the Department of Aging and Disability Services. The new website address is:** [**https://portal.ct.gov/AgingandDisability**](https://portal.ct.gov/AgingandDisability)

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Program budget received a re-allotment of $1.4 million and as a result, the Bureau is projecting the ability to serve all eligible vocational rehabilitation clients through FFY 21.**

**Report from the Chair**

**Ms. Cloonan stressed the importance of identifying strategies to make the best possible utilization of the appropriated funding. She expressed hope that the contracted vendors would identify strategies to fully utilize the funds that are allocated to them.**

**Announcements**

**Ms. Shatney reported that $300,000 in funding was appropriated in the FY 20 budget to be split equally amongst the five independent living centers so that each center could hire a staff person to work with individuals who are deaf. The Department of Aging and Disability Services has allocated $63,000 to hire a person to coordinate services for individuals who are deaf.**

**Motion: Ms. Morgan made a motion, seconded by Ms. Olson to adjourn the meeting at noon.**

**NEXT MEETING: January 28, 2020 - 10:00 a.m. at BESB**