**Department of Aging and Disability Services**

**Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind**

**DeafBlind Advisory Committee Meeting**

**June 11th, 2024 - 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**

**Draft Minutes**

**Review of Meeting Protocol
Chris Lassen reviewed the protocol for participating in the DeafBlind Advisory Committee Meeting.**

**Voting Members Present**

**Hana Tyler, Chair, Consumer Representative; Wayne Seidel, Department of Developmental Services (DDS); Jesse Stanley, American School for the Deaf (ASD); Lisa Flaherty-Vaughn, DeafBlind Support and Access Network (DBSAN); Barbara Cloonan, Parent; Karen Olson, New England Consortium on DeafBlindness (NEC); Cheri Byrnes, DeafBlind Association of Connecticut; Sandra Miles, Department of Developmental Services – Southbury Training School (DDS-STS) Kathy Morgan Guardian; Christine Telford, Helen Keller National Center; Stephen Thal – BESB Board; Dwayne Strawder, Oak Hill School**

**Voting Members Absent**

**Bruce Stovall, Oak Hill School;**

**Non-Voting Members Present
Carol Jenkins, ADS-BESB Director; Christopher Lassen, ADS-BESB Adult Services; Marjorie Santos, ADS-BESB Adult Services; Krystal Kelly, ADS-BESB Vocational Rehabilitation; Alvin Chege, ADS-BRS, Mary Johns, ADS-BESB Children’s Services**

**Non-Voting Members Absent**

**Muriel Aparo, ADS-BRS, CT Tech Act;**

**Heidi Henaire, ADS-BRS**

**Others Present
Ed Peltier, Communication Advocacy Network (CAN); Rayah Martin, ADS-BESB; Lisa Drew, ADS-BESB; Alan Gunzburg; Sue Shatney, ADS-BRS; Abigail McNeal, Oak Hill School**

**Old Business**

**Approval of minutes from March 12, 2024.**

**Motion: Jesse Stanley moved to approve the minutes with the necessary revision of correcting the spelling of DeafBlind and the minor corrections from Margie Santos to her statement. We should change it to state "for those unfamiliar with Usher syndrome. There are three types, and it is always associated with a genetic disorder. and it is always associated with retinitis pigmentosa. There is no other eye disease that is Usher syndrome. Hearing loss varies. A person might be born deaf or hard of hearing or have hearing and vision but then lose both. Also, this is a reminder that they are being held for everybody in the State. She stated that it is important to restate that we are is dedicated to serving everyone in the State, regardless of their vision and hearing loss and the communication modality they use. The goal is to ensure that everyone, without exception, is served equally," and it was seconded by Lisa Flaherty-Vaughn.**

**Update, DeafBlind Technology Program (ATT)**

**Appendix i**

**For the period spanning from January 1, 2024, to March 31, 2024, we have been allotted a total budget of $123,203 for the 2023-2024 fiscal year.**

**During the third quarter, a total of twenty consumers received services through the Access Through Technology Program, comprising both new consumers and those continuing to avail themselves of our services. In this quarter, we successfully delivered fifteen devices along with one software program.**

**In quarter 3, the following expenditures were incurred:**

**- Assessments: $4,672**

**- Equipment/upgrades/inventory: $11,245**

**- Installation/Training: $13,648**

**- Administration cost: $2,044**

**- Outreach: $1,988**

**This amounts to a total expenditure of $33,597 for quarter 3. The outreach-related expenses for quarter 3 encompass advertising costs and fees for interpreters used during meetings with consumers.**

**Moreover, it is important to note that services for the month of June have been suspended temporarily, given that the full Access Through Technology grant of $123,080 for the year has been exhausted. Services are set to resume on July 1st, under the new budget allocation of $122,673.**

**New Business**

**Expenditures through May 10, 2024**

**Appendix ii**

**Setting DBAC meeting dates,**

**SFY 2025 September 10, 2024, December 10, 2024, March 11, 2025, and June 10, 2025.**

**The meeting dates are set for SFY 2025.**

**Report from CAN on SSP recruitment**

**Ed Peltier reported that the organization has been actively engaged in recruitment efforts, as evidenced by their presence at an event attended by over 200 Non-Profit organizations. Although some contacts were made, success in relation to CAN has been limited. Furthermore, it was announced that Sue Peterson, who has dutifully served as the volunteer full-time director for a decade, will be retiring at the end of the month. A special event to honor her is scheduled for September 14th,2024 with further details to follow. Additionally, Jennifer White Jackson has assumed the role of the new director since May 2024. She is undergoing an orientation process to gain a comprehensive understanding of the organization's operations, including the recruitment challenges. Appreciation was expressed towards the advisory committee and Carol Jenkins for their support in securing approval for a peer mentoring program outlined in the recently received contract. The program is slated to commence as a trial in the upcoming fall, during which time all logistical matters and recruitment endeavors will be finalized.**

**Update on development of contract with HKNC**

**Christine Telford gave an update. They have submitted our proposal to BESB Helen Keller, and they just need to submit some supplemental information. Hopefully, that will be submitted soon, so they are pending.**

**Discussion on serving newly referred clients·**

**Mr. Chris Lassen mentioned that the only client contract we can currently add clients to is the CAN contract. In the last three months, several clients with needs for SSP assistance have been identified. He and Marjorie Santos will contact Jennifer White-Jackson, Sue Shatney, and Ed Peltier to provide those names. This is partly in response to Ed Peltier's question about identifying clients needing services. Ed Peltier will be in touch shortly after this meeting. Hopefully, they can set up a meeting, possibly next week, with ED Peltier, Jennifer White-Jackson, and Sue Patterson if she is available.**

**Report from the Chair**

**Hana Tyler reported that her husband was discussing a topic with an elderly gentleman who was quite devastated. The gentleman felt he was a burden to his wife and was losing his vision. The gentleman made a comment. He asked if there are any services to help emotionally and spiritually. Individuals here in our group may understand because when she became handicapped, there were services under Medicare and Medicaid, but some people do not access them due to stigma and fear of the information being recorded in their medical forms. This individual just needed emotional support and a way to connect with others in the same situation. She is a Christian, and her faith gives her peace and happiness.**

**Ms. Hana Tyler asked a question to the committee how we support our clients emotionally and if the clients have connections to their families.**

**Lisa Flaherty-Vaughn suggested the committee members speak with Marjorie Santos, and maybe it is something we can investigate and share in another meeting.**

**Ms. Hana Tyler addressed the concern that a deafblind person would have a psychologist or our support group in the State of Connecticut. If there is a way a person cannot get to the location, the meeting would be virtual. Perhaps providers can bring the client to a support group.**

**Marjorie Santos added in her capacity as a social worker, she recognizes the unique nature of each individual's circumstances when she engages with them. While she emphasizes the potential benefits of participation in support groups, she explained she is cognizant of the fact that this may not align with everyone's comfort level. There exists a variety of avenues through which support can be sought, including virtual meetings and telephonic interactions. She also advocates for a thorough exploration of one's insurance policies to evaluate whether tailored counseling services may better suit their needs.**

**Encouraging individuals to connect with peers who have effectively traversed vision loss is an integral part of her approach. She acknowledges the individualized nature of these experiences and the extensive spectrum of challenges posed by vision impairment and education. Our rehabilitation and orientation mobility professionals are adept at identifying those who may benefit from supplementary emotional guidance and actively promote their pursuit of such assistance.**

**While she offers recommendations and supplies informative materials about support groups and other pertinent resources, the decision to seek assistance ultimately rests with the individual. Various channels, including religious communities and national helplines, offer avenues for gaining support. However, it is incumbent upon the individual to exhibit the requisite motivation and engagement in their personal journey of adapting to blindness.**

**Announcements**

**Lisa Flaherty-Vaughn, a representative for the DeafBlind Support and Access Network (DBSAN), shared. They are having an exciting event coming up from July 6th, 2024, through July 13th,2024. It is our DeafBlind retreat here in Connecticut. They will have a DeafBlind camp with staff and individuals.**

**She welcomes everyone to come to visit with them and take a look at the camp and get some information so that you can see what DeafBlind Support and Access Network (DBSAN)is doing with this retreat.**

**The lunch costs $20, but you get to interact with many people and see what is happening at the event. Swimming is available. They will have many booths, so she hopes the committee members and others will join them.**

**ED Peltier added they will honor Sue Patterson on Saturday, September 14th,2024. At a special event they will be sure to share with everyone. If a committee member is interested, look for some information in the mail, and they can invite other individuals who are very involved in all of the different activities. The very special day is July 11, 2024. He added that if the committee members and others can attend, that would be great; if not, please inform Sue Patterson, who would appreciate a note. He added he calculated the volunteer hours that Sue Shatney spent as Director of the CAN and it totaled at 18,000. She has worked full-time for ten years as a volunteer so it is quite commendable in recognizing her on September 14, 2024.**

**Sue Patterson agrees with Ed Peltier that her volunteer hours for 10 years are equivalent. She stated yes, that is excellent.**

**Sue Patterson added that the committee members and others are all invited to have a booth for this group so that the deafblind individuals and services and others can see what is going on with the group and what services are provided. So, if the committee members would like to have a booth at the DeafBlind retreat, please get in touch with them, and they will send you a form.**

**Adjournment**

**Motion: Jesse Stanley's motion to adjourn the meeting was seconded by Lisa Flaherty-Vaughn.**

**NEXT MEETING DATE: September 10, 2024, - 10 AM to 12 PM via Zoom**