**Department of Rehabilitation Services**

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

# Advisory Board Special Meeting Draft Minutes

## May 16, 2017

**Members Present**

**Alan Sylvestre, Chairman, Eileen Akers, Beth Rival, Mary Silverberg, Andrea Giudice, Stephen Thal and Randa Utter**

**Members Absent**

**Darcy Jones and Terri- Lynn Johnston (representing DSS Commissioner Bremby)**

**Others Present**

**Brian Sigman, BESB Director, Nathaniel Barnes, SRC member, Michael Bartley, SRC member, Mary Burgard, Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, Gary Gross, SRC member, Alan Gunzburg, SRC member, Colleen Hayles, SRC member, Kathleen Marioni, SRC member, Patrick Melfi, SRC member, Andrew Norton, Legislative and Administrative Advisor, Daryl Pease, Secretary, Nyema Pinkney, SRC Chairperson, John Reilly, Education Consultant, Catherine Summ, Education Supervisor, Lisa Tanguay, Office Supervisor, Ellen Telker, SRC member, Diane Weaver-Dunne, SRC member**

**Welcome and Introductions**

**Chairperson Sylvestre called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and acknowledged the presence of the members of the State Rehabilitation Council who were in attendance.**

**Public Comment**

**None**

**New Business**

**BESB Vocational Rehabilitation Policy Manual Updates for Action**

**Mr. Sigman reported that no public comments were received during the public comment period for the proposed updates to the Vocational Rehabilitation policy manual. However, the Bureau did distribute to the members of the Advisory Board and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) a written proposal for a number of technical adjustments. Mr. Sylvestre asked Mr. Sigman to review the contents of this document with the Advisory Board members. Mr. Sigman provided the following summation:**

**Chapter 1, Section 2 – General Information**

**Legal Benefits for Individuals in Connecticut who are Legally Blind**

**Mr. Sigman asked if this section should be considered as a policy or if it should be provided to clients as a document during the provision of services. The members of the Advisory Board discussed the options of retaining or removing this section.**

**MOTION: Ms. Akers made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thal, to exclude Chapter 1, Section 2 “Legal Benefits for Individuals in Connecticut who are Legally Blind” from the Vocational Rehabilitation policy manual with future discussion to take place at an upcoming Advisory Board meeting regarding methods for distribution of the information. Motion unanimously passed.**

**Mr. Sigman reviewed the additional recommendations of the Bureau.**

**Chapter 1- General Information**

**Section 3 b): State Rehabilitation Council**

**The federal regulations in 34 CFR 361.17 contain language that is not entirely reflected in the proposed changes. The Bureau recommends that the language as it appears in the federal regulations pertaining to the role and functions of the State Rehabilitation Council replace the existing language in its entirety to directly parallel all of the new wording of the federal regulations.**

**Chapter 2- General Policies**

**Section 1: Client Assistance Program**

**The Bureau recommends removing the address and phone number since these are subject to change and would be more appropriately put on the appeals forms provided to clients.**

**Section 3 b) (14): Case Recording**

**The federal regulations indicate that the minimum wage rate pertains to the state or locality where the client is working. The word “locality” was not included in the proposed policy updates and the Bureau recommends adding it to correct the reference.**

**Section 4: Civil Rights**

**The Bureau noted that the first and second paragraphs contain duplicative language. The Bureau recommends condensing this into one paragraph.**

**Section 6: Confidentiality and Availability of Case Record Information**

**The federal regulations in 34 CFR 361.38 contain language that is not entirely reflected in the proposed changes. The Bureau recommends that the language as it appears in the federal regulations pertaining to confidentiality and the availability of case record information replace the existing language to the extent possible and that existing language regarding the time frames for responding to requests to access case records, and the copying fees and circumstances when such fees are waived be retained.**

**Section 7: Informed Choice**

**The Bureau noted that the “Bureau of Administrative Support” is incorrectly named and it should be corrected to the actual name of “Bureau of Organizational Support.”**

**Section 8:  Order of Selection**

**a) Requirements and Implementation**

**Although the word “severe” in paragraph 3 is a direct copying of the word from the federal regulations, it is outdated language that in other places throughout the federal regulations is referred to as “significant” in reference to disability. The Bureau recommends replacing “severe” with “significant.”**

**c) Referral Services**

**The federal regulations in 34 CFR 361.37 is worded somewhat differently in subsections (a)(1) and (b). The Bureau recommends using the wording that is in the federal regulations.**

**Chapter 3- Case Processing**

**Section 1: Vocational Rehabilitation Status System**

**b)(2) Time in Status 02**

**The Bureau noted that the language pertaining to “exceptional or unforeseen circumstances” as noted in federal regulations 34 CFR 361.41(b)(1)(i) should be added to this sentence.**

**Section 3: Assignment of Cases**

**The Bureau asked if the word “cases” should be changed to “clients?”**

**After discussion, members of the Advisory Board concurred that using the word “clients” was a more accurate description.**

**Section 4 b): Applicant (Status 02)**

**The federal regulations in 34 CFR361.41(b)(1) has additional options for clients to make an application for Vocational Rehabilitation Services through common intake procedures at one-stop centers. The Bureau recommends that this language should be added to the policy.**

**Section 5: Assessment for Determining Eligibility and Priority for Services (Status 02-10)**

**The first sentence of this section references Individualized Plans for Employment, which does not occur until after a determination of eligibility is reached. The Bureau recommends deleting the first sentence of this section and then shifting the remainder of the first paragraph to the bottom of the second paragraph.**

**Section 9 m): Planning and IPE Development (Status 10-12)**

**This subsection does not have a title. The Bureau recommends using “Exempt Services” to parallel the title as found in 34 CFR 361.53(b).**

**Chapter 4- Administrative and Employee Responsibilities**

**Section 1: General Information**

**The last two sentences of the first paragraph are procedural activities and do not appear to be policy. The Bureau recommends their removal from the policy.**

**Mr. Sigman noted that there are two sections within the Vocational Rehabilitation policy manual proposed updates where the age at which Pre-Employment Transition Services (and funding) may commence are stated as age 16, unless the Planning and Placement Team has identified a younger age. Recent guidance from staff at Rehabilitation Services Administration indicated this proposed wording allowing for the use of Pre-Employment Transition Services funding at a younger age if the Planning and Placement Team makes such a recommendation may not be consistent with the federal regulations. He recommended this topic be taken up separately at a subsequent meeting.**

**MOTION: Chairperson Sylvestre motioned to recess at 10:30 a.m. without objection to enable the members of the Advisory Board to attend the meeting of the State Rehabilitation Council.**

**MOTION: Chairperson Sylvestre motioned to reconvene the Advisory Board meeting at 12:05 p.m.**

**Mr. Sylvestre noted that the members of the Advisory Board had participated as members of the public at the meeting of the State Rehabilitation Council and observed their deliberations on the proposed changes to the Vocational Rehabilitation and Children’s Services policy manuals. He asked for discussion from the Advisory Board members as to whether to accept the recommendations as passed by the State Rehabilitation Council or whether the members of the Advisory Board wished to have further deliberation to consider additional revisions to the language in either of the policy manuals.**

**MOTION: A motion was made by Ms. Silverberg, seconded by Ms. Utter, to accept the State Rehabilitation Council’s motions for proposed changes and to accept the Bureau’s recommendations as presented and modified for the updates to the Vocational Rehabilitation and Children’s Services policy manuals. Motion passed with no objections and two abstentions.**

**MOTION: Ms. Giudice made a motion, seconded by Ms. Silverberg to adjourn the Advisory Board meeting at 12:06 p.m.**

**Next meeting – 15 June 2017, 10:00 a.m. to noon at 184 Windsor Avenue, Windsor, CT**