**Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)**

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

**Advisory Board Meeting Minutes**

**DRAFT**

**September 14, 2017**

**Members Present**

**Alan Sylvestre, Chairman, Eileen Akers, Andrea Giudice, Terri- Lynn Johnston (representing DSS Commissioner Bremby), Beth Rival, Mary Silverberg, Stephen Thal, Randa Utter, David Gregoire, and Katherine Guzman.**

**Members Absent**

**Darcy Jones**

**Others Present**

**Brian Sigman, BESB Director, Chris Lassen, Adult Services Supervisor, Andrew Norton, Legislative and Administrative Advisor, Catherine Summ, Education Supervisor, Edward Owens, Business Enterprise Program Supervisor, Lisa Tanguay, Office Supervisor, Lori St. Amand, Volunteer Program Coordinator.**

**Old Business**

**MOTION:  A motion was made by Ms. Akers, seconded by Ms. Rival, to adopt the minutes from the June 15, 2017 meeting. Motion passed unanimously.**

**New Business**

**Budget Discussion – Status and Options**

**Mr. Sigman reported that the State budget has not been passed yet and the state is operating under Executive Order. On the federal side, the bureau will not know until the end of September if any federal re-allotment funds are awarded to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. While the program has sufficient funds to meet expenses in Federal FY 18, without additional funding through the re-allotment process, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program will be on the brink of needing to implement an Order of Selection in FY 19.**

**MOTION: On a motion made by Ms. Akers, seconded by Ms. Rival, it was unanimously passed to form a workgroup of the Advisory Board to work with the State Rehabilitation Council to examine criteria for Order of Selection and make recommendations to the bureau regarding implementation.**

**The following members volunteered to serve on the workgroup: Mr. Gregoire, Ms. Giudice and Ms. Utter.**

**Legislative Update**

**Mr. Norton reported that the legislature has not yet passed a budget. Ms. Akers requested that the Advisory Board receive an update on the status of the state and federal budgets prior to the December meeting.**

**Mr. Sigman reported that the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind has submitted public comments in response to the President’s executive order to review federal regulations that could potentially be modified or repealed. The closing date for public comment is September 20th.**

**Bureau Update**

**Mr. Owens reported that the Business Enterprise Program currently has 35 locations with 33 managers. The program is currently waiting to see the status of the seven rest areas which are a part of the statewide vending contract, when a budget is approved.  Currently, the hours of operation have been reduced to the first shift only. This has resulted in a nearly 50 percent reduction in commission income from these locations.  Nationally, there is a discussion about the commercialization of the highway rest areas. A bill has been introduced in Congress and it is anticipated to be in the President’s budget under infrastructure improvements.**

**One Field Representative will be retiring at the end of the year but due to funding constraints, it will likely not be refilled.**

**Ms. Burgard reported on the Vocational Rehabilitation Program which had some staffing changes. One Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor retired as well as a Rehabilitation Teacher. Two Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors were hired, Ms. Enaida Mendoza and Ms. Mychelle Carter. The Rehabilitation Teacher vacancy will remain unfilled due to budget issues and those duties have been assumed by another Rehabilitation Teacher within the program. Other staffing change involved reassignment of duties among the Pre-Employment Transition Counselors.**

**Ms. Summ reported on the Children’s Services events. Two summer programs were sponsored which included Camp Independence at Channel 3 Kids Camp in Andover with 17 students participating, and a Skills for Life program which held two separate weeks of a mobility themed day camp for students. A total of 11 students participated, all of whom were cane travelers between the ages of 12-17. Upcoming events include pre-school, school age and special services Fall in-services during the last week of September and first two weeks in October, and a rock climbing field trip in early November. Children’s Services is currently serving 948 registered children at BESB.**

**Mr. Lassen provided an overview of Adult Services staffing.  One Rehabilitation Teacher resigned and a Social Services Assistant retired on August 31, 2017.  A Human Services Advocate, previously transferred from the Business Enterprise Program into Adult Services is helping to fill the void. An Orientation and Mobility Instructor and a Rehabilitation Teacher, both from the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, are assisting Adult Services due to those vacancies. As for volunteer services, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, 223 volunteers reported 14,773 hours at a value to BESB of $432,701.17, based on the National Points of Light Foundation, Independent Sector Organization estimated value of $29.29 per volunteer hour for this state.**

**Mr. Thal recommended updating the bureau’s brochures and making them available in electronic formats for eye doctors, consumer organizations and clients of the bureau.**

**Business Plan Development Guide for Review**

**Mr. Sigman distributed the proposed business plan development guide and template. This guide draws directly from the Vocational Rehabilitation policy language and is a step-by-step guide which includes a business plan template to help clients to fulfil the requirements for business plan funding requests. Ms. Akers proposed some modifications, but due to late hour of the meeting, Ms. Akers agreed to forward the recommendations for the members to review in advance of the December meeting.**

**Meeting Dates for 2018**

**MOTION: On a motion made by Ms. Akers, seconded by Ms. Rival, the 2018 meeting dates were approved as amended: March 22, June 21, September 13 and December 13, 2018.**

**MOTION: On a motion made by Ms. Akers, seconded by Ms. Rival, the meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.**

**Next meeting – December 14, 2017 at 10:00 a.m. - BESB**