**State of Connecticut**

**Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)**

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

**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to BESB**

# DRAFT MINUTES

## June 12, 2019

**Members Present:  Mr. Alan Gunzburg, Mr. Brian Sigman, Mr. Patrick Melfi, Mr. Nate Barnes, Mr. Michael Bartley, Ms. Enaida Mendoza, Ms. Linda Mizzi, Mr. Scott Baecker, Ms. Eileen Rose, Ms. Kendra Valente, Ms. Amanda Billiot, Ms. Kathleen Marioni, Mr. John McNickle, and Ms. Dawn Russell.**

**Others Present: Ms. Mary Burgard, Ms. Jennifer Jenkins, Ms. Melissa Thompson, Mr. Andrew Norton, Ms. Kathy Strauss (Interpreter), Ms. Kim Dziezynski (Interpreter), and Ms. Anita Benjamin (Interpreter).**

**Members Absent: Ms. Colleen Hayles, Mr. Gary Allen, Mr. Steven Famiglietti, and Ms. Beth Reel.**

**Call to Order: Mr. Alan Gunzburg, Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.**

**Old Business**

**Review and Approval of Minutes from the March 27, 2019 minutes: MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. McNickle, seconded by Ms. Billiot to adopt the minutes from the March 27, 2019 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Workgroup Reports**

**Membership: Mr. Nate Barnes and Mr. Brian Sigman reported on the vacancies that still exist: Employer - 2 vacancies with one application packet submitted and another candidate pending; Recipient of Services - 2 vacancies with one application packet submitted and another candidate pending; Consumer Organization- 1 vacancy with one candidate pending. Also, an update on SRC members whose terms expire in 2019 was reviewed. Lastly, Ms. Mizzi announced she will be retiring effective this coming September 30 with one person identified to fill this impending vacancy.**

**Finance: Mr. Sigman, on behalf of Mr. Famiglietti, reported on expenditures since the last meeting that has included the annual renewal of CSAVR membership dues, and the FY19 portion of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey.**

**Consumer Satisfaction: Mr. Bartley summarized the initial activities of the workgroup that was formed to review the survey instrument currently being used to analyze the consumer satisfaction level of BESB-VR clients. More meetings will take place going forward. Ms. Billiot recommended exploring online survey tool options rather conducting the survey through phone calls in the future. This would not only streamline the survey, but save money as well. Ms. Billiot agreed to join the next meeting of the workgroup to provide more detail on her ideas.**

**Technology: Mr. Alan Gunzburg is working on setting up a demonstration by Orcam for the next SRC meeting.**

**New Business**

**VR Success Story: Mr. Erik Jones, BESB VR Counselor, introduced Ms. Heidi Petersen. Mr. Jones explained how Ms. Petersen achieved independence and employment while overcoming visual and developmental challenges. From her participation in vocational assessments, Ms. Petersen demonstrated motivation and a strong desire to work. These assessments found that with the provision of job coaching assistance, her goal of employment could be achieved. Mr. Jones reached out to local Community Rehabilitation Providers to collaborate on securing the services that would be needed. A Work Evaluation at Fiddleheads in New London led to securing a job. A letter from Ms. Petersen’s supervisor was read to the Council describing her daily job duties and how she is always cheerful at her job, willing, and capable of her job responsibilities. Ms. Petersen described her daily work routine and how much she enjoys working at Fiddleheads.**

**Youth Leadership Funding Request: Mr. Gunzburg and Mr. Sigman discussed the Youth Leadership Forum being held next month at UConn and asked the Council if the members would like to contribute $2,500 for support as cosponsors. Positive feedback was given on the YLP and how important it is.**

**MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Barnes and seconded by Ms. Billiot to provide cosponsorship funding of $2,500. The motion carried unanimously.**

**Consumer Satisfaction Survey Updating: Discussed under “Consumer Satisfaction” earlier in the Agenda.**

**Slate of Officers for FY 2020:  Mr. Gunzburg sought a slate of officers to be elected at the SRC September meeting. Nominations were made that included: Chair, Alan Gunzburg; Vice-Chair, Michael Bartley; Secretary, Nate Barnes; and Treasurer, Scott Baecker. Nominations will be taken from the floor at the September meeting and then an election of officers will occur at that meeting.**

**CSAVR and NCSAB Conference Topics: Mr. Gunzburg reviewed some of the topics covered at both the CSAVR and NCSAB conferences this past April. A major theme from both conferences was the emphasis on data collection and data verification. Mr. Gunzburg expressed concern that this priority is taking away time from the VR Counselors that needs to be spent in working with clients. Mr. Gunzburg further reported that the timing of the new Unified State Plan was discussed at the conferences. Mr. Sigman confirmed that efforts will begin in the autumn to develop the new plan and that a workgroup will need to be convened to assist in the development of the plan.**

**Report from BESB State Director**

**Program and Budget Update: Mr. Sigman reported on the recently completed Business Engagement Initiative Training Conference held on June 4. One of the highlights was a BESB-VR client who participated on a panel expressing how appreciative she was for the assistance that she received from BESB-VR and how the services helped her to achieve her employment goals.**

**Mr. Sigman provided a budget update, expressing concern that the margin of projected carry forward funding from FFY 20 into FFY 21 is barely sufficient to cover all of the projected costs in FFY 21. Mr. Sigman is concerned that an Order of Selection may be needed for FFY 21 unless the fiscal projections improve. He will provide an updated report at the September meeting. By then it should be known how much funding was obtained through the reallotment process.**

**Legislation Update: Mr. Norton provided updates on the recently concluded legislative session that ended last Wednesday. Of special interest to the Council were four bills that did not pass; the first being health insurance cost coverage for a service animal. The second was requiring that State Government make agency websites auditory accessible. The third involved a motorist yielding to a pedestrian approaching a crosswalk; and the fourth was expanding the definition of service animals for people with disabilities in public places. Additional funding was added to the budget for CRIS Radio and also to the Department of Transportation to re-open or expand the hours of some rest stops and welcome centers. The Business Enterprise Program has vending machines located along I91, I84, I95, and the Merritt Parkway so an increase in the operational hours of these rest stops would likely increase the revenue to the Program. Mr. Norton also reported that the bill passed to rename this agency effective October 1, 2019 to the Department of Aging and Disability Services.**

**Report from Chair: Mr. Gunzburg reminded everyone of the work ahead and hopes the next meeting in September brings good news on reallotment dollars from the Budget Update report.**

**Adjournment:**

**MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Barnes, seconded by Ms. Russell, to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:58 a.m.**

**The next Council meeting is scheduled for September 25, 2019 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at BESB.**