**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

## December 19, 2018

**Members Present:  Mr. Alan Gunzburg, Mr. Brian Sigman, Mr. Steve Famiglietti, Mr. Patrick Melfi, Mr. Nate Barnes, Mr. Michael Bartley, Mr. John McNickle, Ms. Enaida Mendoza, Ms. Linda Mizzi, Ms. Beth Reel, Mr. Gary Allen, Ms. Kimberly Tindall, Ms. Lori Bartolucci, Ms. Amanda Billiot, and Ms. Dawn Russell**

**Others Present: Ms. Jennifer Jenkins, Ms. Sarah D’Agostino (Interpreter), and Ms. Tara McAuliffe (Interpreter)**

**Members Absent: Ms. Colleen Hayles, Ms. Kathleen Marioni, Ms. Eileen Rose, and Mr. Scott Baecker**

**Call to Order: Mr. Alan Gunzburg, Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.**

**Old Business**

**Review and Approval of Minutes from the September 26, 2018 minutes: MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. McNickle, seconded by Mr. Bartley to adopt the minutes from the September 26, 2018 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Workgroup Reports**

**Membership: Mr. Nate Barnes and Mr. Brian Sigman started their report by introducing the new council members. Mr. Sigman reported on the vacancies that still exist: Employer - 1 vacancy; Representative of an Individual Who Cannot Represent Themselves - 1 vacancy; Recipient of Services - 2 vacancies. Candidates have been identified for all of these vacancies and their information has been provided to the Governor’s office.**

**Finance: Mr. Famiglietti reported on expenditures since the last meeting that has included renewal of NFB Newsline, and equipment for the two adaptive technology laboratories in Windsor and New London.**

**Consumer Satisfaction: Mr. Sigman informed the members that the executive summary for the 2018 consumer satisfaction survey has been received and the full report is forthcoming. The executive summary reported that levels of satisfaction have declined in comparison to the survey results from last year. The members agreed to form a workgroup comprised of Gary Allen, Linda Mizzi, Alan Gunzburg, and Amanda Billiot to review the full survey report and to facilitate a discussion on the survey results along with recommendations at the March meeting of the SRC.**

**Technology: Mr. Gunzburg stated that coming up later on in the meeting will be a presentation from Alexander Jensen on the iPhone app “Be My Eyes.”**

**Legislative: The workgroup has not met. Mr. Sigman reported that DORS has not submitted any agency bills for the upcoming legislative session.**

**New Business**

**Vocational Rehabilitation Success Story: Ms. Charlotte Copenhaver, BESB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, introduced Mr. Anthony “AJ” Barba. Mr. Barba began his story by telling everyone what caused his vision loss. He was referred to BESB- VR and shortly thereafter started interview preparation services with a local community rehabilitation provider which transitioned into a work evaluation at a local Elks Club, working in the kitchen. Gaining more confidence, learning bus routes with the help of a BESB Mobility Instructor and now having some experience in food preparation, Mr. Barba decided he wanted something more fast-paced. Ms. Copenhaver and the community rehabilitation provider collaborated again and set up job coaching at a local restaurant which led to Mr. Barba being hired as full time front line cook.**

**VR Policy Update on Order of Selection for Action: Mr. Sigman reported that there were four people who attended the public hearing on the proposed update to the Vocational Rehabilitation policy on Order of Selection. No public comments were submitted.**

**MOTION:  On a motion made by Mr. Bartley, seconded by Mr. McNickle, the motion passed to adopt the proposed policy update on Order of Selection. Mr. Allen abstained.**

**Adaptive Technology Presentations: Alexander Jensen gave a presentation on the iPhone app “Be My Eyes.” This app connects people with blindness or visual impairment with sighted volunteers to help them lead more independent lives. The app is installed on a smartphone and volunteers are available to assist in describing the surroundings of the app user through a video connection or the device’s camera. Volunteers assist with describing a full range of activities such as telling the app user what the expiration date is on a carton of milk, reading street sign names, and identifying clothing colors. Volunteers are available 24 hours per day. There is no cost for the service. The app can be downloaded for free through Google Play or the App Store. It is available for both iOS and Android devices.**

**SRC Annual Report Update: Mr. Gunzburg reported he will be finalizing the annual report so that it can be submitted on time to the Governor and Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services Administration.**

**Report from BESB State Director**

**Program Update: Mr. Sigman reported on the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.  One Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Jonathan Alberto, was hired on November 9, 2018 and is assigned to the Bridgeport/Waterbury territory which helped shift other VR Counselor’s territory to even out caseloads. BESB-VR continues to work closely with American Job Centers on computer accessibility and their job seeking classes as well. Also, Mr. Sigman reported that the Vocational Rehabilitation Program received $431,000 in federal re-allotment funds in September. With these additional funds, it is projected that FFY 2020 will have sufficient funding available to serve all eligible individuals in that fiscal year. It is hoped that the cost savings measures that were put in place may prevent the need for an Order of Selection in FFY 2021.**

**Legislation Update: Mr. Sigman informed the members that the Secretary of Education has reissued a notice of possible plans to issue a notice of proposed rulemaking to amend the regulatory definitions pertaining to the Rehabilitation Act. Current information indicates that the definition of an employment outcome would be the focus of the proposed rulemaking. There is no additional information available at this time and Mr. Sigman indicated that he would inform the SRC membership if a notice or proposed rulemaking is issued so that the SRC membership could consider if they desired to submit public comments.**

**Report from Chair: Mr. Gunzburg wanted to share how much he appreciated everyone’s help this past year ranging from all the workgroup activities to everyone’s ideas on how to make things better overall. He looks forward to going into 2019 with the SRC and wishes everyone Happy Holidays and a Happy and Healthy New Year.**

**Adjournment:**

**Motion made, seconded, and accepted unanimously to adjourn at 11:53 a.m.**

**The next Council meeting is scheduled for March 13, 2019 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at BESB.**