**State of Connecticut**

**Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS)**

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

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

# DRAFT MINUTES

## December 16, 2020

**Members Present: Mr. Gary Allen, Mr. Scott Baecker, Ms. Brandy Altergott, Mr. Jay Brown, Mr. John Carnemolla, Ms. Lucretia Jones, Mr. John McNickle, Ms. Enaida Mendoza, Ms. Deb Reed, Ms. Dawn Russell, Mr. Brian Sigman, and Ms. Kendra Valente.**

**Others Present: Ms. Jennifer Jenkins, Ms. Mary Burgard and Mr. Daryl Pease.**

**Members Absent: Mr. Michael Bartley, Ms. Amanda Billiot, Ms. Beth Reel, Ms. Nicole Rico Serrano, and Ms. Eileen Rose.**

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

**Public Comment: None.**

**Old Business**

**Review and Approval of Minutes from the September 23, 2020 minutes: MOTION: A motion was made by Ms. Reed, and seconded by Ms. Jones, to adopt the minutes from the September 23, 2020 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Workgroup Reports**

**Membership:** **Mr. Sigman updated the members on the SRC’s newest member Ms. Nicole Rico Serrano, representing the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation-Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program, who will be serving out the remainder of Mr. Pat Melfi’s term which is expiring July 22, 2021. The status of current vacancies was also reported on.**

**Finance: Mr. Baecker reported on the committed funds for FY 2021. Purchases have included a Focus 40 Braille Display, tutorial Flash Drives, and a Chameleon Braille Display all for the BESB Technology Lab. Other expenditures included the attendance fees for the SRC Chair and Vice-Chair to attend the fall virtual CSAVR seminar, the renewal of NFB Newsline, and the SRC Satisfaction Survey.**

**Consumer Satisfaction: Mr. Sigman has just received the completed Consumer Satisfaction Survey report from Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). He summarized the findings for the membership. The entire report will be distributed shortly to members and posted on the agency website.**

**New Business**

**VR Success Story: Ms. Charlotte Copenhaver, BESB Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Counselor, introduced Mr. Michael Fulton who she has been working with for the past five years. Mr. Fulton spoke about how BESB has been part of his life starting in elementary school. With the help and guidance of BESB-VR, he attended college at Western New England University to obtain a degree in Information Technology in 2018. Finding employment at that time was difficult and took a lot of perseverance. Ms. Copenhaver referred Mr. Fulton to the American Job Center for services and also connected him with a CompTIA A+ certification program. Mr. Fulton subsequently was hired by the Springfield Housing Authority of Massachusetts, working full time with benefits.**

**Comprehensive Needs Assessment Update: Mr. Sigman reported that the completed Comprehensive Needs Assessment was just received from CCSU. He reviewed for the membership the recommendations that were made by the CCSU staff. The full report will be sent out to the membership for review. The Comprehensive Needs Assessment will be used to begin the process of developing new goals, objectives and strategies for the next state plan update.**

**VR Policy on Personal Adjustment Training: Mr. Sigman reported that two public comments were received during the Public Hearing and two written comments were received. None of the commenters opposed the proposed changes.**

**Mr. Sigman also stated that the Advisory Board for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired took up the policy at their meeting last week and they voted to approve it and send it on to the SRC for action.**

**MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Allen, seconded by Ms. Reed, to approve the Personal Adjustment Training policy revision. Motion passed unanimously.**

**MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Allen, seconded by Mr. McNickle, to make the updated Personal Adjustment Training policy effective February 1, 2021. Motion passed unanimously.**

**SRC Annual Report: Ms. Russell reported that the SRC Annual Report is finished and she will be submitting it next week to the Governor and the Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services Administration.**

**Report from BESB State Director**

**Program Update: Mr. Sigman reported on the federal fiscal year that ended in September and the impact that COVID-19 had on employment opportunities for clients. He highlighted strategies that were put in place to coordinate and provide virtual services to clients. BESB-VR had sufficient funds to continue to serve every eligible individual during the fiscal year and it is projected that the program will have enough funds to serve everyone eligible in this federal fiscal as well.**

**Legislation Update: Mr. Sigman reported that Congress passed, and the President signed, a bill to keep the Federal Government open through this Friday at midnight. As of right now, Congress is working on a consensus bill to keep the Federal Government open past that time as negotiations continue around the COVID-19 relief bill. Our federally funded programs have sufficient carry-over funding to keep these federally funded programs operational if a temporary shutdown at the federal level were to occur.**

**Report from Chair: Ms. Russell thanked Mr. Sigman, BESB staff, and Council members who have contributed in this very challenging year to improve the quality of life for people with visual impairments and blindness. Ms. Russell wished everyone a Happy Holiday Season and looks forward to a new year in 2021.**

**Adjournment:**

**MOTION: A motion was made by Ms. Valente, seconded by Mr. Baecker, to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.**

**The next Council meeting is scheduled for March 24, 2021 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.**