**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 WITH MOTIONS**

# March 14, 2018

**Members Present:  Mr. Alan Gunzburg, Mr. Brian Sigman, Ms. Ellen Telker, Mr. Patrick Melfi, Mr. Nate Barnes, Ms. Diane Weaver-Dunne, Ms. Diann Murray, Ms. Colleen Hayles, Ms. Jeannette Rodriguez-Perez, and Mr. Steve Famiglietti.**

**Others Present: Ms. Mary Burgard, Mr. Andrew Norton, and Ms. Linda Mizzi.**

**Members Absent: Ms. Nyema Pinkney, Ms. Kathleen Marioni, Ms. Kimberly Tindall, Mr. Michael Bartley, and Ms. Beth Reel.**

**Call to Order: Mr. Alan Gunzburg, Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.**

**Old Business**

**Review and Approval of Minutes from the December 20, 2017 meeting and February 21, 2018 meetings: The Council unanimously adopted the meeting minutes of December 20, 2017 and February 21, 2018.**

**Workgroup Reports**

**Membership: Mr. Nate Barnes and Mr. Brian Sigman updated the SRC on membership status and the recent resignation of Mr. Gary Gross.**

**Finance: Ms. Murray reported on the recent expenditure for the NCSAB membership renewal.**

**Consumer Satisfaction: Mr. Sigman announced that the survey has been posted on BESB’s section of the DORS website and provided a brief overview of the findings.**

**Technology: Mr. Gunzburg discussed a few blindness specific apps and products that are available, and detailed one called “Aira.” The SRC members thought it would be helpful to have a demonstration of the Aira. Mr. Gunzburg will coordinate this for the June meeting. Mr. Famiglietti mentioned some apps available through Microsoft and Mr. Gunzburg will follow up to coordinate this presentation at a future meeting.**

**Legislative: Mr. Norton reported on a bill in the legislature that would officially make the Department on Aging a part of DORS. Also, based on last year’s legislation, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Board will hold their first meeting this month. Mr. Norton also provided an overview of the state budget and the current levels of funding in various accounts for BESB services.**

**New Business**

**VR Success Story: BESB Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) College Counselor Mr. Mike Cordero introduced Victoria Gerdo to the SRC. She gave a brief history of how she overcame challenges in her life to be able to graduate last year from Western Connecticut State University with BESB VR funding assistance. In addition, she spoke of her volunteer experience after graduation at the Youth Leadership Forum as a program assistant, helping teenagers with disabilities to find their own passion in life, learning self-advocacy, and feeling comfortable with their own disabilities. Currently, she works as a Direct Support Professional at a group home. She gave a heartfelt, sincere thank you to Mr. Cordero and Mr. Barry Rita (VR Transition Coordinator) who assisted her throughout the vocational rehabilitation process.**

**State Plan Update: Mr. Sigman reported that the public comment period for Connecticut’s draft state plan update under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) closed this past Friday. The Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) will vote to finalize the overall state plan, which includes the BESB VR portion as one of the sections.**

**Order of Selection Workgroup- draft policies for review: Mr. Sigman gave a detailed overview of federal fiscal year (FFY) 2019 and 2020 budget projections. It may be necessary to commence an order of selection in FFY20 based on current projections. Discussion took place on the savings achieved to date through staff transfers and positions held vacant. But these actions alone will not be sufficient to align projected costs with available funding in FFY20. Mr. Sigman restated the decision of the workgroup that costs of purchased services must also be reduced in the hope of avoiding an order of selection. Previously distributed draft policies on Personal Adjustment Training, Post-Secondary Training and Adaptive Equipment were discussed. Mr. Sigman noted that in the draft policy update for Personal Adjustment Training there was outdated wording referring to “pre-vocational” training. Mr. Sigman recommended replacing that with “pre-employment.”**

**A motion was made and seconded to send the draft policy updates to public hearing with the change in wording from “pre-vocational” to “pre-employment.” The motion carried unanimously.**

**SRC Preapproval Process for travel and expenses: Mr. Sigman announced that Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has provided guidance on the preapproval process for SRC member travel costs. Mr. Gunzburg has been provided with a copy of the guidance. He will be representing the SRC at the upcoming national conferences of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB).**

**Report from BESB State Director**

**Program Update: Mr. Sigman stated that the Children’s Service program is working on a summer transition camp option for students. With the restored funding in the Children’s Services account it was possible to avoid the need to implement a fee-for-service model in FY18. Recruitment is underway to refill teacher vacancies. The Employment Opportunities account has received sufficient funding to utilize a portion for on-the-job supports for youth up to age 25 who are in supported employment.**

**Legislation Update: Mr. Sigman reported that Mark Schultz has been nominated by President Trump to become the next Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services Administration. Mr. Sigman also mentioned that the President’s budget proposal includes an option for the commercialization of highway rest stops. Under current law, this agency receives commissions from vending machines at rest stop locations for use by the Business Enterprise Program.**

**Report from Chair: Mr. Gunzburg noted the need for continuous recruitment of members to fill vacancies on the SRC. He will have a report at the next SRC meeting on his CSAVR and NCSAB conference experience. Also, he stated that the SRC needs to do their part going forward to help the bureau stay out of an order of selection. Lastly, Mr. Gunzburg thanked Mr. Mike Cordero for his three decades of service and for his work to help so many clients during his tenure. Mr. Cordero will be sorely missed when he retires this coming April 1.**

**Adjournment: Motion made, seconded, and accepted unanimously to adjourn at 11:32 a.m.**

**The next Council meeting is scheduled for June 13, 2018 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at BESB**