**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**

# December 20, 2017

**Members Present:  Mr. Alan Gunzburg, Mr. Brian Sigman, Ms. Ellen Telker, Ms. Nyema Pinkney, Mr. Patrick Melfi, Mr. Nate Barnes, Ms. Diane Weaver-Dunne, Ms. Diann Murray, Ms. Colleen Hayles, Ms. Beth Reel, and Mr. Michael Bartley.**

**Others Present: Ms. Mary Burgard, Mr. Andrew Norton, and Mr. John McNickle.**

**Members Absent: Mr. Gary Gross, Ms. Jeannette Rodriguez-Perez, Ms. Kathleen Marioni, Mr. Steve Famiglietti, Ms. Kimberly Tindall.**

**Call to Order: Mr. Alan Gunzburg, Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.**

**Old Business**

**Review and Approval of Minutes from the September 20, 2017 meeting: The Council motioned and unanimously adopted the meeting minutes with the following change: List Patricia Iorio in the category of “Members Absent”.**

**Workgroup Reports**

**Membership: Mr. Nate Barnes updated the SRC on those members whose first or second terms expire on June 30, 2018. Also, Mr. Carl Noll and Ms. Patricia Iorio have officially resigned from the SRC.**

**Finance: Ms. Murray reported on the two recent expenditures for Council activities which were the NFB Newsline and the Consumer Survey and Needs Assessment.**

**Consumer Satisfaction: Mr. Sigman reported that the survey results have been received and the full report has been posted on BESB’s section of the DORS website.**

**Technology: Mr. Gunzburg mentioned CSUN coming up in March and he is hoping to attend this event. CSUN is the largest technology conference held in the country for assistive technology.**

**Legislative: The workgroup did not have a report.**

**New Business**

**VR Success Story: BESB Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor Mark Ward introduced Lucretia Jones to the SRC. Ms. Jones is a Program Housing Assistant with the New Britain Neighborhood Housing Services. She explained how she secured this job through a collaborative effort between BESB- VR and a local Community Rehabilitation Provider. After giving the SRC members a description of her duties and the adaptive technology that she uses, she gave a heartfelt thank you to Mr. Ward and BESB-VR Rehabilitation Technologist Michelle Laramie. She expressed gratitude for the work that BESB does.**

**LYFT Presentation: Mr. Gunzburg arranged for a conference call from LYFT representative Cody Ward who then provided an overview of the various service options that LYFT can provide. Mr. Ward will be sending more information on the details of these services.**

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

**Business Plan Development Guide For Action: Mr. Sigman reported on two recommended changes by the Advisory Board. The first is under the section titled “Equipment Ownership” that the word “However” be added to the beginning of the sentence describing that BESB can provide reimbursement for repairs. The second is that the Business Plan template add a section for “Related Volunteer Service.”**

**Motion made, seconded and accepted unanimously to amend the guidelines as the Advisory Board recommends and implement the Business Plan Development Guide and business plan template.**

**Order of Selection Workgroup Recommendations: Mr. Sigman reported on the recommendations of the workgroup that was comprised of members from the Advisory Board and State Rehabilitation Council.  After providing an update on the latest budget projections that indicate the need for an Order of Selection by FFY 2021, Mr. Sigman detailed activities that have already been taken to reduce the cost of payroll and the associated fringe benefit costs. One Orientation and Mobility Instructor and one Special Assistant have been reassigned to Adult Services.  Two Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors have submitted their retirements effective April 1, 2018. Only one of these positions will be requested for a refill.**

**The Order of Selection Workgroup deliberated on the costs associated with purchased services and based upon this review, the members have put forth the following concepts for the SRC to consider:**

1. **Independent Living Residential Programs:**

**The workgroup recommends that the policy be considered for revision requiring that a mobility assessment by a BESB staff person be added as an additional requirement to the rehabilitation teacher assessment as to whether an in-state training option would enable the client to achieve the skills that are being sought. Skills that could be reasonably taught in-state by a mobility instructor or a rehabilitation teacher would not be funded in an out-of-state residential independent living program.**

**The initial approval to attend a residential independent living program would be for 12 weeks in total (including the assessment period). Extensions beyond 12 weeks would require the preapproval of the Bureau Director. In requesting an extension of the Director, the vendor would need to include the following:**

**- The list of skills that were not mastered during the 12 weeks of attendance;**

**- The reason(s) the skills were not mastered;**

**- The basis for concluding that the skills could be mastered with additional training;**

**- The anticipated length of time required for the client to master these additional skills; and**

**- The measure that will be used as the benchmark to demonstrate the skill was mastered.**

**2.  Higher Education:**

**It is recommended that the Vocational Rehabilitation Program at BESB align with the policy in place at the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and use the community college rate if the program of study is offered at the community college level or the credits acquired from the courses at the community college could be applied towards a bachelor’s degree at another school after the two years of community college training is completed. The residential portion of the policy (referred to as maintenance) would remain as presently written.**

**3. Adaptive Equipment**

**It is recommended that the policy add a statement that the Bureau will not pay for service plans or data plans.**

**Mr. Sigman further mentioned that the Advisory Board endorsed the concept of including within the policies for higher education the criteria that the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor utilizes when reviewing Individualized Plans for Employment (or subsequent amendments) that includes funding for graduate school.**

**Motion made, seconded and accepted unanimously to accept the recommendations as put forth by the Order of Selection Workgroup in addition to the criteria for graduate school.**

**Mr. Sigman explained that the next step would be for him to bring draft policies forward for the Advisory Board and the State Rehabilitation Council to review and finalize. After that occurs, the draft policies would go through a public comment process, with a public hearing to be held. Subsequent to the public comment period, both the Advisory Board and the State Rehabilitation Council would deliberate on the comments received and make recommendations to the Bureau on the final wording of the policies for implementation.**

**Report from BESB State Director**

**Program Update: Mr. Sigman reported on the state budget as it pertains to the Vocational Rehabilitation and Children’s Service Programs at BESB. Mr. Sigman also thanked Ms. Pinkney for assisting in the coordination of a very successful Mentoring Day held this past October at United Technologies as part of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Also, BESB- VR is finalizing agreements with the Regional Work Force Boards that will allow for VR Counselors to have a part-time presence in each of the five regions at the One-Stop career centers.**

**Legislation Update: Mr. Sigman gave an update on recent developments in Congress with the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. Mr. Norton reported that the state legislature is planning for a special session regarding the restoration of funding for the MediCare supplement program.**

**Report from Chair: Mr. Gunzburg thanked everyone for their service to the SRC and wished everyone Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year.**

**Adjournment: Motion made, seconded, and accepted unanimously to adjourn at 11:48 a.m.**

**The next Council meeting is scheduled for March 14, 2018 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at BESB**