**N.J. Commission for the Blind &Visually Impaired**

**State Rehabilitation Council**

Meeting Minutes – April 15, 2016

Joseph Kohn Training Center - 130 Livingston Avenue - New Brunswick, NJ

**Voting Members Present:** Jennifer Armstrong, Rick Fox, John Goodman, Susan Head, Zoraida Krell, Fran Leibner, Kirk Lew, Kelly Reymann, Kris Tucker, Fr. Jim Warnke

**Voting Members Absent:** Dawn Monaco

**Ex Officio Present:** Dan Frye, Amanda Gerson, Danielle Licari-Scorzelli

**Staff/Members of Public Present:** Grace DeLeo, Victoria Jarosz, John Walsh

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m., Fr. Jim Warnke, Chairperson, welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. He announced that the meeting was being held in compliance with Section 105 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act 1973, as amended. It is also in compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meeting Act, NJSA 10:4-6.

After giving members a few minutes to review the February 5, 2016, Minutes, and hearing no corrections or additions, a motion to approve these Minutes was requested by Fr. Jim. On a motion made by Rick Fox and seconded by Zoraida Krell the Minutes were accepted as received.

**Deaf-Blind Services Presentation**

Victoria Jarosz and Grace DeLeo, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, who represent the Deaf-Blind Unit at CBVI, were invited to this meeting to describe their roles in this Unit. Vicky covers the northern part of the State and Grace handles the south. They reported that the clients they work with are varied; some have visual impairment, some are blind, some are hard of hearing, and some are deaf. They provide a variety of services to individuals (age range 14 to seniors) through transition, the Vocational Rehabilitation working population, college, and Independent Living. They noted there is a lot of variety in how clients communicate; what employment they are looking for; what education they are accessing. Some clients use American Sign Language and some use tactile sign language. Some are hard of hearing and use hearing aids or other adaptive systems to be able to make the sound louder and be able to communicate orally. Print on palm is another method used. They explained that the extra supports they put into place give these individuals the access to the assistive technology, which really opens up the ability for them to work in different environments, and not have the fact that they are hard of hearing really impact their ability to move up in their job. The Agency partners with The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) to help provide the services of both: 1) I Can Connect (ICC), which helps clients access technology; i.e. telecommunications and internet support. 2) Support Service Provider (SSP), acting as the eyes/ears for clients; facilitate communication in the community. On average, clients are entitled to 16 hours a month of this service. An SSP can be used for mail reading, bill paying, food shopping, medical appointments, assisting in the community for daily tasks, errands, etc. This service is really helpful to clients who live alone. The SSP does not drive the consumers. Traveling with vision and hearing loss becomes more complicated because you’re not able to pick up traffic ques. An SSP can serve as a human guide – someone that can give information about the general environment and facilitate communication as well. SSPs are trained on a 4-step module before they are matched with a client.

Another exciting opportunity, and collaborative project with TCNJ, the Agency is looking into is something called touch cues or pro-tactile; actually giving a deaf blind person tactile cues by touching their back; while an interpreter is giving the verbal communication the hapti-communicator is giving communication about what’s happening in the environment. Training for staff is scheduled to take place in a couple of weeks.

Kris asked, when NJ transit encounters customers who might benefit from services offered to the deaf blind community, what is the best way for them to contact this Unit. Kris was given Ed Sroczynski’s name and number (973-648-7504); he is the supervisor of the Deaf Blind Unit at the Agency. Rick commented on a problem that came up at the last Federation of the Blind meeting with regard to the deaf blind; the horn and the loudspeaker on the Access Link van that says “arrived” does not do a deaf person any good. A suggestion was made that if a text message was sent to the phone of a deaf person it would be an equivalent way of informing the person that Access Link has arrived. Rick will have the Deaf Blind Division contact Kris directly with a list of the customers he was referring to, and Kris will make sure Access Link has the correct information in the database.

Vicky and Grace reported that the type of employment their clients are in depends on their education. Just like in any other VR situation, it’s really across the board. Their clients include accountants, lawyers, audiologists, retail positions, teacher’s aides, laundry workers, and maintenance. But regardless, they help them with whatever they need in order for them to function in that capacity; i.e. assistive technology, adaptive equipment.

Kirk commented that the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has deaf and hard of hearing centers, and asked if this Unit collaborates with them. He pointed out that if we are looking for funds, they have dedicated funds and centers in each region that work on employment goals. He works with Bridges to Employment, which is located in the central region. If funds are needed, this is a perfect way to potentially blend those funds. Vicky noted that at times we do collaborate with DVR; there are some clients that work with DVR as well as the Agency. John pointed out that we are due for a reintroduction as it is his understanding there is some new leadership in this division; we want to make sure the new leadership knows who our consumers are in the Deaf Blind Unit. John noted that in the past we were involved with the SEED Program and the Fairlawn Program that were predominantly funded by DVR; many of our deaf blind consumers benefited from these programs.

Fran inquired about the 14-21 age group; how does the Unit collaborate with school districts and transition aspects (equipment; IEPs, etc.). Vicky noted that it continues to be the school’s responsibility to provide the equipment; this Unit works in an ancillary capacity; secondary when we take over as transition. The student has a primary education counselor from CBVI (TVI - Teacher of the Visually Impaired). We do braille instruction and 1:1 instruction. Amanda also commented that the deaf blind students being served by the Agency’s Education Unit have access to all the Meyer Center equipment. Similarly, with transition services, deaf blind consumers who are eligible for our summer programs, are invited to participate for the appropriate program. Transition makes up a pretty small portion of their caseload, but we usually have at least 1 or 2 students participate in each program each year. They function the same as our general VR transition counselors do.

Dan thanked members for their contributions. He pointed out that the SRC is an incredibly important entity that engages with this State Agency. He commented that although the obligations under Section 105 of the Rehab Act make it necessary to meet, it’s an obligation that really does fulfill an important communications relationship with the broader community. Each member is an ambassador; taking information from these meetings and also bring information to these meetings. He wanted everyone to know that if they have questions that are unsatisfied during the course of conversation that they always have access to him, John, and any member of the Agency team in between meetings and during the course of the year. Dan commented on the importance that our Agency is transparent in our availability to the consumer community and to everyone we serve.

**Federal and State Update**

Dan reported on the following:

* On April 1 the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) within the Department of Labor and Workforce Development submitted (after 16 months of deliberative process) the NJ Combined State Plan to the Federal Department of Education (DOE) and Labor for their collective consideration. The Commission has already been contacted by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA ) to comment on aspects of the plan, and to seek feedback and engagement. The federal authorities will be reviewing it over the next 90 days and we’ll have to implement and accept it, or propose amendments to it by July 1. People have until June 21 to offer feedback on the Combined State Plan. It is available on the SETC website and it will be circulate to SRC members. If anyone has comments, the SETC would be happy to receive, and make sure they are conveyed and incorporated into the composition of this document up until 6/21. The portions that are specific to CBVI reflect the strategic priorities of the Agency, and those strategic priorities mesh well with the 5 primary themes outlined in the Combined State Plan.
* John and Dan will be going to the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) conferences next week in Bethesda, Maryland. Dan noted that these 2 bodies represent all of the 80 VR agencies across the country. During this week of engagement with colleagues they will discuss the pending release of the federal regulations pursuant to WIOA that are related to VR. Although the VR regulations were slated to be released earlier this year, they have been delayed, and may be delayed further, until August. We are currently operating on a Notice of Proposed Regulations, released in April of last year. Currently functioning in good faith; in compliance with the existing law and in anticipation of the release of the final regulations.
* The Governor’s office has recently asked that we review and either adopt or modify the Administrative Code for VR (NJAC 10:95). We have responded that we would prefer to avoid re-adoption of that piece of regulatory work for the State, until the release of the federal regulations. However, we are engaged in conversation about whether or not the State regs that implement the federal law need to be readopted currently without change, or whether we have permission to wait until the federal regs are released so they can inform the State regs and we don’t have to go through the process twice.
* A stopgap measure has been taken so NJAC 10:92 (administration of our education programs) does not expire. In the NJ Register on April 18 the publication will say that the Commission is re-adopting NJAC 10:92 without change ; however, Dan commented that he doesn’t want members to infer that this reflects no work. In the Governor’s office right now is another version of 10:92, which we anticipate after budget season is finished that the Governor’s office will release and give us permission to publish. This version reflects a number of amendments that our Education Reform Taskforce (ERT) has proposed that we adopt. Changes include a move toward a more individual approach in providing education services to our blind, vision impaired, and deaf blind consumers. We will move away from a level based classification for providing educational services and go toward fashioning the IEP of our consumers based on the needs of that student. Our teachers are also going to be participating much more actively in IEP meetings on behalf of the Commission and on behalf of their students. It will be a much more advocacy based, individually tailored approach. As a consequence we are providing our teachers with more instruction on how to participate in IEPs and the like.
* We are planning an Agency statewide staff development seminar (November 3). Although it is a logistical challenge to bring together 300 people at a single site, Dan noted the importance of giving staff an opportunity to engage with one another as a single entity at least once every couple of years. The last seminar was in October, 2016. It is an opportunity to talk to each other about how the Agency runs and explore our Agency culture. The theme in 2016 is going to be incorporating the team approach we are all working toward at the Commission.
* Significant progress has been made in hiring staff to function as part of our Welcome and Evaluation (WE) team. This will be the entity that receives all incoming consumer requests, from Education to IL, and all inclusive. This team will thoroughly evaluate and engage with each consumer to ensure greater uniformity in explanation about available services, and make appropriate referrals to the appropriate discipline specific units, and then, in the fullness of time, to either an adult or child team that will provide the full array of services to each consumer. The WE team is expected to be functional by mid May/early June. The Business Relations Unit is almost staffed.
* Both the WE Team and the Business Relations Unit will be supervised by Amanda Gerson, who joins us today as the new Coordinator of VR and Transition Services. She is assuming these responsibilities, as well as playing a significant policy role in terms of providing VR and transition related policy guidance to all of our VR and transition counselors. It is a big job with broad responsibilities. Amanda will also be the liaison to the SRC, replacing Ed Sroczynski.
* We will be starting work on Administrative Code NJAC 10:97, which governs our Business Enterprises NJ (BENJ), or Randolph Sheppard Program in the State. A national consultant is scheduled to work with us in late June, to work with our elected committee of blind managers and the administration, to develop proposed changes to 10:97.
* Administrative Code NJAC 10:93, which governs Independent Living, expired in 2011; it was not renewed at that time. We’ve had the privilege this past year of having an intern with us; she worked with Liz DeShields, our IL and Project BEST Coordinator, on a proposed draft of 10:93. We’ll be sharing it with our policy committee, and after that we’ll be moving it to the Department of Human Services, Office of Legal and regulatory affairs, for consideration and ultimately the re-adoption as the new rule.
* Administrative Code NJAC 10:91 expires in 2018.
* Administrative Code NJAC 10:99 deals with sheltered workshops and is being handled primarily at the DHS level in Deputy Commissioner Dawn Apgar’s office.
* We have made substantial efforts to beef-up staffing and our responsiveness. Substantial hiring in the Education Unit has been made. A supervisor at the Meyer Center, and we have both a Director in Eva Scott, along with a Deputy Director in Chris Hinton. We’ve also hired 4- 5 new teachers. The Education Unit received the bulk of our hiring because it’s clear that education represents the foundation of opportunity for the consumers we serve. We also hired a number of Technical Support Specialists.
* In concert with the SRC’s Evaluation sub-committee, the Agency will be undertaking 2 specific surveys in the next few months, which will be designed to evaluate the level of satisfaction and customer feedback the Agency needs to have with its consumer community. An objective external party at a university will be hired, who has familiarity with surveying, so it’s done in a scientific and credible fashion. The survey will specifically evaluate the services, from Advancing Opportunities (our assistive technology external contractor), in response to consumer community expressions of concern. A broader satisfaction survey will also be done to evaluate all other aspects of Agency performance. Current and former recipients will be surveyed. The SRC’s subcommittee will be involved to talk about the parameters of the population to be surveyed and what questions we want to ask. Fr. Jim encouraged SRC members to forward suggestions in this regard to Rick Fox (Chair of the Evaluation sub-committee). A suggestion was made to use any surveys done in the recent past as a baseline for evaluating new feedback. John noted he would send the SRC members the questions/results from that 2011 survey, as well as the transcripts from the statewide needs assessment town hall session held in 2014.
* To solicit feedback from the community, in conjunction with the work associated with the adoption of the Combined State Plan, Dan noted that the Agency is considering convening another town hall meeting, similar to the meeting held in May, 2014. This exercise will also be useful as the Agency engages in organizational exploration.

**One-Stop Certification Criteria**

Kirk Lew commented that the SRC is now the policy arm to the SETC. The SETC is equivalent to the State Workforce Development Board. The SETC provides the oversight, policy and performance, in regard to the local and state workforce systems. Ultimately, the SRC will provide expertise in the area of disabilities, specifically to blind and vision impaired, so we can ultimately drive policy and the needs within the system, so it’s more comprehensive for all citizens. In WIOA, Section 121, the State Board has to create criteria and a process around certifying One-Stop centers. There are 31 centers throughout the State and each one has to be certified based on the established criteria. Kirk noted that before the criteria is voted on by the SETC he thought the SRC should have a say in the criteria and ensure it is comprehensive.

The One-Stop centers are the locations where people receive information/services in job searches, training opportunities, workshops, job fairs, etc. The One-Stop serves all populations. Most of the DVR offices are co-located near the One-Stop centers. Traditionally, people from the broader community go through the One-Stop center, while people with disabilities usually go to a DVR access point; the SETC wants to eliminate that. More importantly, if a person doesn’t want to be served by DVR, they should have an option and be able to go to the One-Stop and vice versa. The SETC wants to create a process that allows and assures One-Stops are accessible, comprehensive, and serving the needs of the clients and employers, based on quality programs; and that service providers receiving these funds are quality as well, and it is based on performance measures and continuous improvement.

Kirk reviewed the criteria: governance and strategies – making sure effective governing; looking at workforce development boards governing the One-Stops and services in the local areas; customer focus and satisfaction - making sure people are satisfied; expectations/preferences are met; building relationships on satisfaction of the customer. Employer engagement and effectiveness - making sure key business industries in the local areas are recognized; products and services are driven to help them. Kirk noted that a portion of the person’s salary as an incentive to an employer can be paid. Designing and management of the centers, making sure they are engaging, providing adequate services, and staff development is all part of the oversight; continuously improve the system. Rick commented that it would be reasonable to have CBVI represented either through the SRC so that blindness needs could specifically be represented on that governing board. Kirk noted that each of these governing boards are the local board that has to govern the process, so what we mean by governments and strategy is the actual process for looking and evaluating the One-Stop Centers. So when they are evaluating the actual workforce development board has to take that assessment and do something with it – implement it into their strategic plan to admit those improvements. We will give the tools to the board to then conduct the actual certification process. Kirk noted that he wants to make sure the SRC is part of creating that procedure. Fr. Jim asked how the boards are selected; Kirk noted they are appointed by the local elected official; criteria for membership; some are mandatory members that have to be a part of helping that organization.

Kirk noted that after looking at data from LMI, satisfaction surveys, performance measures, we now have to look at things differently. Look at longer periods of time for people and their success; look at how effective with certain employers; look at nationally recognized credentials or industry recognized credentials people are receiving; skill gains. This makes it even more important that we are collaborating, and that services are provided in a comprehensive fashion. So we are meeting performance measures as well, and the satisfaction of employers and job seekers.

Kirk reported that DOL is creating Career Connections. Every vendor, any person providing services, whether it’s in the library, in a community college, at a One Stop Center, will have access to a virtual portal of different resources - skill inventories; career inventories; it will have common standardized forms. This will provide another way for staff development; so people have a level playing field; providing similar services. It’s important these types of services and One-Stops are assessable to all.

Kirk commented that he didn’t have anything in writing until it’s into a policy by the SETC, (will be voted on in June). He just wanted to give everyone an idea of what’s happening, and then have further discussion as the policy is developed. He said he wants to make sure the SRC is part of creating the procedure so things that are needed are recognized.

Rick commented that in the past accessibility has been non-existent; at least in the technology area. When technology was available it was usually old and nobody knew how to use it. He noted that he was eager to make sure that the blindness and visually impaired perspective would be reflected in the governance as well as other things. John noted that one of the developments since the adoption of WIOA, and since Dan came on board as the Executive Director, the Commissioner of DHS is part of the State Workforce Investment Board – SETC. Commissioner Connelly has decided to appoint as her designee – our Executive Director, so Dan actually sits on the SETC; his voice is there at the governing body for all of the local boards. The second significant piece is the disability issues subcommittee; it is important the SRC understand their role in that (description in the Combined State Plan – beginning on page 62). The fact that under the new Combined State Plan the two State rehab counselors (DVR and CBVI) are now considered to be a policy arm of the broader SETC. That’s an important role, and the fact that this Council is going to have more of a say around how blind, vision impaired, and deaf blind people access the broader One-Stop system has some interesting potential as we move forward. Fr. Jim and John already reached out in communication with our counterpart in that group. Kirk commented that the SRC now has a say in the process. When the actual process is being created the Council can say - that certain equipment is up to date; certain staff development training is up to date; the One-Stop staff can be educated on what is needed. For the first time ever there is a stronger collaboration between DOL, DVR and CBVI. We are putting in a process; collaborating in a more comprehensive way so we can provide better services.

Combined State Plan:

* Page 62 - talks about the SETC councils and subcommittees; disability issues subcommittee is listed first within that group of councils. It gives you a brief description of the role of the 2 SRCs for the VR agencies.
* Page 133 also talks about addressing accessibility of the One-Stop delivery system for individuals with disabilities and the role of the SRCs in helping the SETC to define that.
* Page 190 - the particular VR State plans for the Commission and DVR.
* Page 325 - performance metrics.

John noted that the Council may want access to the accessibility check list. Kirk agreed. John commented that he though we should still be able to have comments regarding that. He explained that what the committee did was, they found an accessibility checklist that was developed by the Institute for Community Occlusion and did some preliminary reviews, but there still needs to be additional looks at the blindness specific accessibility portion. John noted that we had some of our TSS staff do some of that assessment, but he thinks it would be helpful for the Council to give feedback on that checklist as well. Kirk commented in terms of duration of the certification, it happens every 3 years; a criteria has to be evaluated every 2 yrs. So we have to look and reevaluate the criteria; I don’t see that changing very often; maybe when technology changes we’d want to relook at the criteria, but as long as it’s broad enough we can make sure it’s all-encompassing. The local areas did have a timeline to evaluate all of their One Stops. So their main One-Stop would be first and then all of their satellite One-Stops would follow after that. The process has to happen and start by July 1, 2017; so we’re establishing the criteria; looking at creating a process. All states do it in different ways; some require the local area to write a report on how they are accessible; we don’t want to do that; we want each local One-Stop to go through a process with a team of people; shouldn’t just be a Workforce Development Board; it should be your employment services manager, One-Stop operator; should be a bunch of different people that look at that physical location in a variety of different ways. There are a couple of States that do it in a comprehensive manner; we’re looking at those processes now, and we will ultimately share that with you, so you have an understanding of the process. Kirk noted that consumers of the One-Stops do complete an evaluation survey; however, they are also revamping that process to make it much more accessible.

**VR Unit Report**

Amanda updated members on the summer transition programs.

Life 101 (held at JKTC), Work Skills Prep & College Prep/Bonner (housed/run by TCNJ) are all at capacity, and on wait list right now. Everything moving forward and looking great for all of our students to participate and continue to build on education/independent skills, and start talking about employment and careers and post-secondary education; starting from summer after their freshman year, all the way through graduation. There is one substantive change in connection with the College Prep program – this year both a credit and non-credit bearing option for our Bonner Program. The way the Bonner program structured it meant that the non-credit portion would be in the second week; essentially our college prep component – a 2 week component where we would start to build college prep skills, awareness, and competency traveling the campus, familiarizing the students with the technology they’d be using 2 weeks before Bonner starts and then Bonner starts the end of that weekend; the credit portion is starting the end of that weekend; the non-credit portion is starting a week after. With the structure of that program it was decided it would not be a good option for our students, with that one week break in the middle. So we’ve developed a 2-week robust college prep experience for all of the individuals who applied to the College Prep Program. There are 15 individuals who are going to be going through the college prep program working on research and writing skills; working on literacy; working on assistive technology skills; talking about self-advocacy; rights and responsibilities within a college setting around getting accommodations. They will work with Disability Services at TCNJ to learn that process, and for those continuing on to Bonner to solidify what their accommodations will be for the course. They are going to be participating in some volunteer experience. Even those who are not continuing on to the Bonner program will get a civic engagement piece. All students that go through the program as part of their writing skills are going to walk out with a personal statement that they can use when applying to college the following year. It’s going to be a strong complement to the Bonner Program for those who are going through those additional 2 weeks, and it will be a great foundation for those who apply to the program, but who were maybe not ready to enter the Bonner Program, which is a competitive acceptance process. Those that go through the college prep experience and still have a year of high school left, will then have the option of applying to the Bonner Program the following year.

EDGE is looking great; first year coming to a close. Amanda noted that John Goodman is a mentor in this program. The program started with 42 students (mid-30s to date). Of those, it is anticipated that 20 are continuing next year. The ones not continuing are graduating; therefore, not eligible. The coordinators/mentors, in collaboration with employment coordinators from family resource network, are working on getting students vocational experiences over the summer. Some of them are pursuing competitive employment, summer part-time jobs; some are interested and continuing the rest of next school year; some currently have jobs and working to explore ways they can expand responsibilities. Some do not have the time to commit to employment; some students are captains of swimming teams, involved in marching bands, and all of that; so while they are interested in employment activities they just don’t have it in their schedules. We are working with them to find more short term volunteer opportunities, job shadowing opportunities in area of interest. Some have volunteer experiences that they are a part of; we are helping them convert those to paid employment or expand – help supplement through the program with a stipend to make that experience more meaningful. Working on a new cohort for next year; it will be a duel track program. Those that have gone through the program will continue to build on the skills and knowledge next year, and bring it to a higher level with a greater focus on practical use of the skills they are learning. The new cohort will go through a similar foundation check as to what the students went through this year; with them joining for special presentations and activities, and for collaboration, so there can be some peer mentoring as well. The parent component is going to continue with a similar duel track structure.

Rick suggested a presentation by people who participate in the EDGE Program; everyone agreed. This will be arranged for the October meeting.

Last year, Work Skills Prep celebrated its 10th year at TCNJ. As part of the 10-year process a work group was set up to look at the effectiveness of the program. The group is looking at everyone who has been through the program in the last 10 years. Looking at what their employment outcomes are; where they are in our system. If still open, that will help identify how we can add more supports and help attain employment outcomes. Will share results with the SRC.

WE Team: developing an end piece of checking with consumers as they leave our system. Also developing a resource guide to be used internally in the system so when consumers identify needs we are not equipped to handle, we make sure to hand them off to other agencies, be it state, local, private entities in their area, to fulfill these needs.

**Updates: Strategic Plan & Annual Report**

John provided an overview/update of the basic workgroups within the strategic planning group.

* Service Delivery Redesign – this group focuses on the big picture of how we deliver services at CBVI. How we improve employment outcomes, education outcomes, and services. How we communicate with the broader community. How we improve Staff Development and Human Resource processes. How we develop additional partnerships. We know we can’t do it alone; we know we have to have other partners out there, so how do we continue to develop those relationships. Also looking to improve our Business Enterprise of NJ Program (BENJ). WE Team – once fully staffed we will develop protocols about how we do that initial first point of contact; how we present information to every consumer coming in. Around employment outcomes we are looking to develop the Business Relations Unit to have additional contacts with the employer community. One of the employers we started to work with even though this Unit is not formally up, Kathy West-Evans from the Council of the State Administrators of VR runs a program called the National Employment Team; she had mentioned Prudential was interested in developing relations with the 2 VR agencies in NJ. We are now connected with the leadership within Prudential to do some educational activities with them and hopefully getting employment outcomes related to that. So far we have one individual that’s an intern at Prudential. We also have one consumer in VR that currently works there and needs some additional assistance. So we are excited about developing that relationship. Another exciting development is the developing relationship with Senator Booker’s office. One of our college students is working on an intern program. Their intern coordinator has asked us to send another summer candidate, and they want one for the Camden office as well. This is a great opportunity for our college students to get some robust experience working in a Senator’s office.
* Education work group – Now in the midst of totally revamping our policy manual. The Education Reform Taskforce has completed their recommendations for changes to NJAC 10:92 (Administrative Code that oversees education services). The creation of a new parent advisory group to replace the ERT will be announced soon – Parent Education Advisory Council for Excellence in Blindness Education (PEACE-BE). This year 90 students will participate in SHARP; grades 1-8 to participate in a day program, occurring in each of the regions of the State. Our Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI), Technical Service Specialists (TSS), and Independent Living (IL) staff participate – very robust program.
* Communications – Bernice Davis will be leading our Public Relation (PR) efforts. Dan is working with Bernice to develop the exact initiatives that we will undertake to promote our footprint; get a better PR image out for the Commission. Expecting in a couple of weeks to have some of her ideas linked to what the strategic work group had put out, so we can start moving that initiate forward.
* Human Resources – need to reformat this group; lost some membership. Looking to revise some of our performance assessment protocols; to give staff expectations of the various jobs. The State system is trying to implement an electronic performance assessment review; however, it’s not accessible at this time, so we will implement something in a Word document that is accessible. Hoping to develop standards around each of the jobs we perform that have certain competencies linked to them. Also trying to develop more robust systems of Staff Development, i.e. doing a supervisory forum (using Excel for case reviews; or how to pull down data from our case mgmt. system). Trying to find low cost, but robust, training. Calling on partners; looking at Civil Service Commission to see what they have to offer.
* Partnerships – under WIOA we know we are going to have to look at all of our Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and renegotiate all of them; waiting for release of final regs.
* Business Enterprise – bringing in consultant to revamp NJAC 10:97.
* JKTC – some of the things they’ve already accomplished in their plan was streamlining the intake system. Developing more communication with our field staff to update on what is occurring at the Center and timelines around that. The manager at JKTC has fully taken over the Life 101 program, which runs at JKTC. The most recent development around JKTC is staff makes sure every consumer coming for training leaves with a developed Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Too often our clients were coming here and not leaving with a plan; we had a gap in that service provision.

John commented that we made a concerted effort not to make the Strategic Plan something you put in a binder and on a shelf. Each of the work groups is assigned 2 co-leaders and there are staff throughout the Agency that are part of that work team. They have individual work plans that talk about products, outcomes, and due dates. We set up quarterly meetings that each of the team leaders present updates.

Annual report - the report was submitted to the RSA and Governor’s office on time (December 31); however, as we like to move the document into a high production piece we can use for PR, we have been behind in this step. We’ve gone through multiple proofing editions (Fran - thank you for your edits). It is now at the bidding process to get a printer. Hope to have this project completed by the end of the month; will distribute to SRC when printed copies are obtained.

**Subcommittee Reports**

Resource: Danielle thanked Kris who had sent her a resource of all the transportation services in each county; now a brand new list; circulated to counselors. John noted that 2 of the WE team members have also been working on a county by county collection of community based organizations that haven’t made it on other lists; will share their resource list with this Committee.

Evaluations: Rick commented that this committee will be meeting regularly now that they have a roadmap for things needed to be done, which is based on the concerns expressed to Dan, and also the foundation of the motion made 6-9 months ago to work with the Commission and a scientific organization to do an evaluation.

SRC Annual Report: See above update. SRC members were asked to consider being part of this committee; will solicit volunteers at next meeting. John explained that employees will still be putting together content and updates on programs. Content will then be presented to the chair of the subcommittee for the Council to also add additional information. We need a chair and committee to work on this in more detail. Fr. Jim requested that members get a few additional copies of the finished report, so they might present them to local legislators, people in their churches, mosques, synagogues, or in positions of authority in the community, as a PR tool.

Business Relations: As the Business Relations Unit is still developing, no work has been done on this committee yet. Kelly commented that employers are key to the work we are doing in partnerships, for internship opportunities, job sampling opportunities, or employment opportunities, so everyone is connected – families, friends, students – she asked that everyone keep that in the back of their mind. She reported that she informally recruited Kirk Lew to this committee. She noted that on a different committee with the Commission she was on they did a draft of a portfolio – first copy was looked at by our friends at Mark Gold Associates, to give us edits/suggestions, so that’s probably what this committee will start with; looking at the brochure we are going to disseminate to businesses and make sure it’s business friendly. The resource guide, if we collaborate with that, (employers should have some type of resource guide) will review to make sure it’s employer friendly. Kirk suggested linking up with the town networks through Labor; they are looking at creating career pathways and programs with employers that are career focused; maybe sharing materials with them so they can market CBVI too, and job seekers as well. Plus they are looking at it at a very high systemic level; our clients should be part of that discussion as well.

Policy Committee: Fr. Jim reported he has begun reading the policy material he received; Susan Head and Kirk Lew noted they had not received the material; this will be forwarded to them.

Fr. Jim reported that he has been in telephone contact with his counterpart at the other SRC and they are planning to talk again. In preparation for this meeting we decided that she and her group were going to get the Minutes from this meeting, and we requested minutes from their meetings, so we can work collaboratively with them to have the biggest impact possible.

**Old Business**

Fran noted that Bill Freeman (DOE Transition Specialist) had presented at an SRC meeting a while back; she offered to send Amanda (Amanda.Gerson@dhs.state.nj.us) the link to the DOE website on transition information.

**New Business**

Jonathan offered to assist with any of the subcommittees that need membership. Kelly noted that she could use an additional member on the Business Relations Unit Committee; Jonathan accepted.

Fr. Jim reminded members that if there are any changes in their contact information; i.e. phone #s or email addresses, this should be sent to Chris Cooper (Christine.Cooper@dhs.state.nj.us).

Fr. Jim thanked everyone for their excellent work, both at these meetings and in between meetings. He commented that he really likes the way this group is developing and emerging, as a force to help the Agency help clients throughout the state; wonderful!

**Adjournment**

A motion was made by Rick Fox, and seconded, to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned.

The next SRC meeting is scheduled for Friday, June 3, 2016, at the Joseph Kohn Training Center.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Cooper

CBVI – Administrative Assistant