MEETING MINUTES FOR December 7, 2012

N.J. Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NJCBVI)

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

Joseph Kohn Training Center

130 Livingston Avenue

New Brunswick, NJ

**Kathy Wood, Chair**

This meeting is held in compliance with Section 105 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act 1973, as amended. This meeting is also in compliance with the N.J. Public Meeting Act, NJSA 10:4-6.

**Present:**

Titus Massey, Alwin Glasgow, Heather Smith-Bermudez, Chrysoula Fantousakis, Dorothy Doran, Ed Kawalec, Del Basha, Kevin Harris, Rob Paige, Kelly Richards, (DRNJ representative.

Ex Officio: Vito DeSantis, John Walsh, Ed Sroczynski, Michael Kosec

Member of the Public: Fran Liebner

Kathy Wood called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Since a quorum of members was not present, Kathy asked for approval of the minutes of June 8, 2012 by consensus. Members agreed and the minutes were approved.

**Federal and State Updates:**

Vito DeSantis indicated that there is uncertainty about the Federal budget regarding discretionary funding which directly impacts on available funds for the VR program. CBVI has ample funding to cover the expected expenses for FY 2013 due to funds that were carried over from the previous year. Vito indicated that RSA is keeping a close watch on VR program outcomes including employment closures, level of salary and rehab rate. Vito added that Independent Living services are also impacted by discretionary funding. Kathy Wood added that Congress is closely monitoring Return on Investment for those who are served by the VR program. Program funding will be prioritized based on program outcomes.

NJ State budget meetings were held and no budget cuts are forthcoming. The new State budget will go into effect on July 1, 2013. Vito added that there is uncertainty about budget implications resulting from Hurricane Sandy.

**BEP Update:**

Del Basha reported that in November he was contacted by the Facilities Management Coordinator of the Federal General Services Administration for assistance to revitalize a cafeteria housed in a 350,000 square foot office building in Lincroft NJ. The building was leased to provide an operational center for Federal and State volunteer agencies deployed to manage recovery efforts following Hurricane Sandy.

The BEP staff quickly arranged for a meeting with FEMA / GSA management at the site, evaluated the location as well as the equipment. Health and food permits were obtained and a BEP operator with experience in food service production stepped up to assume the role of Cafeteria Manager. The cafeteria was soon fully operational and opened for business on November 27th, with a full menu for breakfast and lunch. A lease agreement allowed the cafeteria to remain up and running for six months. GSA’s collaboration with CBVI quickly met a vital need for the employees at the Lincroft location and opened up the opportunity to expand employment opportunities for BEP program participants.

**Transition Services Update:**

Dawn Corbett-Nivason reported that Transition services are provided in 21 counties throughout NJ for high school students beginning at age 14. An initial assessment of each student’s functioning determines a student’s transition from high school to work.

A number of students are referred to the Leadership Advocacy Education and Determination, (LEAD) program which facilitates

independent functioning, advocacy and includes mentoring with adults in the blindness community. LEAD engages students in fun activities and provides students with a social network.

College bound students are referred to the College Prep Experience, (CPE) program held at Raritan Valley Community College, (RVCC.) Students increase their confidence, identify skills and areas for improvement in preparation for college. They earn five credits for transfer to a college of their choice and acquire independent living skills at the JKTC where they reside during the program. Kathy Wood added that the SRC was a catalyst for negotiating the transition from the program at Drew University to the current CPE program which offers a more realistic experience in an integrated college setting.

The Work Skills, (WSP) Program is held at the College of New Jersey and is designed to serve blind and visually impaired students with additional disabilities. The program facilitates independent functioning and an opportunity for two short term work experiences under the guidance of a job coach. Recreational activities, Life skills, goal setting and adaptive technology are also covered during the program. In 2012, the program was expanded to include a parent education training session. WSP and CPE programs serve to assess the students functioning. A report is generated which is up loaded to the FACTS system and distributed to the team working with each student.

Dawn indicated that around their junior year students are referred for Psychometric testing which provides IQ levels and vocational interest which guide each student’s transition to college or VR services. School transition counselors are also instrumental in helping students negotiate the transition.

John Walsh added that there are two CBVI counselors dedicated to assist individuals who are deaf-blind to negotiate transition services. Vito remarked that transition services are focusing more on employment in line with the Governor’s declaration of New Jersey as an Employment First State.

**VR Update:**

John announced that the year-long grant through the Institute for

Community Inclusion (ICI) will be complete in mid-February. The grant is instrumental in designing the agency’s new quality assurance, (Q&A) system. Q&A protocols include performance metrics to track the quantity and quality of outcomes throughout the agency. Hourly wage, percentage of full time employment, rehabilitation rate, quality and frequency of engagement with consumers are measured. Amount of referrals, consumers served and exiting the program, movement of cases in a timely fashion according to Agency standards will also be measured. Metrics include action steps with timelines. All components will be displayed on dashboards accessible through the FACTS system. The dashboards will provide transparency by displaying VR counselor performance data in realtime posted for review by all VR staff. The new Case review and Q&A policies will be forwarded to the SRC Policy and Planning Subcommittee and Ten Guiding Principals sent to the SRC Evaluation and Assessment Committee for review and comment.

The VR Administrative Team, Office Managers, VR Supervisors and VR Counselors will serve on review teams to conduct four annual Q&A reviews. Best practices and areas for improvement will be identified. A brief satisfaction survey will be submitted to consumers as a follow up. VR Supervisors will conduct two annual case reviews in April and October. The reviews will be based on a risk assessment model, utilizing a checklist to identify trends of timeliness, progress and areas for improvement.

The Administrative staff will identify ways that the agency can improve on its return on investment. Work teams will look at how CBVI can improve processes for complying and exceeding Federal standards.

**Agrability Program:**

The University of Delaware was awarded a grant through The US Department of Agriculture to work with disabled individuals in farming communities to access employment. CBVI was requested to assist with individuals who are blind or visually impaired who are under the

Agrability Program. A flyer and a presentation about CBVI services to facilitate outreach efforts for the initiative will be developed. Rob Paige commented that the University of Delaware approached DVRS in 2012 about the Agrability Program which resulted in no referrals to date.

**SRC Annual Report Update:**

John reported that the Annual Report is being finalized and will be forward to the SRC for review and submitted to RSA by the end of the year.

**SRC Sub Committees:**

No committee reports were submitted. Kathy Wood appointed Kelly Richards, (DRNJ Representative) to be the Chair of the Policy and Planning Sub Committee with the consensus of the SRC members.

**New Business:**

Vito announced that the Manager of the JKTC Don Potenski will retire on December 14, 2012. An interview process is in place to select a new Manager for the Center. Mike Kosec will serve as the Acting Manager of the Center until a new Manager is selected.

Ed Kawalec asked the group to remember Jim Fox who passed away in 2012. Ed remarked that Jim was a strong advocate and an active member of the Board.

Rob Paige announced that DVRS Director *Alice Hunnicutt and*representatives from the Department of Labor are attending the National Employment Conference in Washington D.C held on December 5, 6 and 7, 2012. DVRS applied for grants which are slated for serving individuals with autism as part of the Employment First initiative. Rob spoke about DVRS and CBVI’s successful collaboration during the Schedule A hiring event in Southern NJ during 2012. In 2013, a similar hiring event will also be scheduled in Northern NJ.

**Adjournment:**

Dorothy Doran made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Heather Smith-Bermudez at 12:00 noon.

**Next meeting:**

The next SRC meeting is scheduled for **Friday, February 8, 2013** at the Joseph Kohn Training Center.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ed Sroczynski

CBVI Liaison to the Board