

# **N.J. Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired State Rehabilitation Council**

Meeting Minutes – April 21, 2017  
Joseph Kohn Training Center - 130 Livingston Avenue - New Brunswick, NJ

**Voting Members Present:** Jonathan Goodman, Zoraida Krell, Fran Leibner, Kelly Reymann, Fr. James Warnke

**Present (pending appointments):** Gary Altman, Joan Leonard, William Robinson

**Voting Members Absent:** Jennifer Armstrong, Rick Fox, Susan Head, Dawn Monaco, Kris Tucker

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

**Staff/Members of Public Present:** Janice Oursler, Eva Scott, John Walsh

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The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m., Fr. James Warnke, Chairperson, welcomed everyone. 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.

## **Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

The meeting minutes of February 3, 2017 were reviewed. A motion was made by Gary Altman and seconded by Joan Leonard to approve these minutes. All were in favor; the minutes were accepted and will be put into the permanent record of the SRC.

## **NJ Administrative Code 10:92 (Education):**

Eva Scott, CBVI Director of Blindness Education, attended this meeting to highlight some of the changes being made to N.J.A.C. 10:92, and to give an update on the status of the adoption of this Code. Eva noted she began formulating amendments 18 month ago, when she began working at CBVI. In addition, many of the amendments were recommended by the Education Reform Taskforce, which convened in March, 2015.

One area of concern was that the Code was not properly aligned with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which guarantees free and appropriate public education to everyone. In addition, there were some elements of the program that were out of alignment with the federal statute, as well as the Special Education Code of the Department Of Education (DOE) (N.J.A.C. 6A:14). Eva noted that there were also some minor changes made in the language and the way we talk about blindness education in the Code.

The 4-level system of service agreements has a history dating back to 1993. The problem has been that the levels have limited the types of service that certain children could receive. The plan is to have 7 tiers of service. Each tier, in no way will dictate what specific service a child will get. Every child should be able to access any service the Commission provides. The tiers will essentially define quantity; the number of minutes and the number of visits. We will not dictate what the services will be, or the level, but will be collaborating with the

school team, which includes the parent, to develop the services that are to be provided and how often they will be provided. This also includes learning media, whether it is going to be braille or large print.

Although this rule is still in draft and has not been given final approval, Eva noted she is currently reinforcing the language of the new rule with her staff. Most likely, the rule will not be finalized during the current school year, but is expected to be adopted within the next school year.

Another change in 10:92 includes reporting progress; this will be done more frequently throughout the year. In the past, it has been the Commission's practice to provide an end of the year report. Not to say that our teachers weren't in contact with parents or school districts to talk about some of the problem areas; they just never did it in a formal way. This will be formalized and occur more frequently throughout the school year. Fran asked whether or not we are going to say how many progress reports the TVIs have to provide each school year. Eva commented that this year, the minimum was 1 interim report during the school year and then a final report. Then, she left it open – federal mandate says, with each time a non-disabled child's parents are informed of their child's progress that's what we should provide (quarterly report cards); however, most districts and parents understand teachers are working multiple districts; they may not be in-tune as some use 6, some use 4, and some use 3; but all of our teachers have been directed that if they are asked to provide interim progress reports more often, they will provide quarterly. Eva noted that she examined quarterly reports that others were providing and they are not volumes of reports; they are short, to the point; they have 2 criteria; talk about the instruction provided and how the child responded to that instruction. John noted that we are also in the process of migrating from one case management system to another; this allows us to look at our business rules and practices. He commented that we are trying to find ways to streamline the process for the teachers; we want to make it as easy as possible for the teachers to report relevant information to families/child study team; and IEPs; not to do undue burdensome paperwork. We also will have the ability to do more robust data runs as well; more in-depth analysis of how our services are having impact and outcomes on students.

One of the other provisions under the federal mandate is that the current level of educational performance has to be presented at the annual review time. Our teachers are used to doing a functional vision assessment with every child, every year. Eva commented that she doesn't necessarily see meaning or purpose of that every year; therefore, we are defining when assessments are necessary, and they will be done then. Some key times are: every 3 yrs when their eligibility for Special Ed services comes up for review; or if they transition from preschool to elementary school; or middle school to high school; those are natural times to perform these kind of assessments; that's functional vision, having nothing to do with children who are blind and braille readers. So we are exploring ways that we can do functional assessing with regard to skills of independence, and how we can provide some information in an informal way to the students, parents, and school districts.

Another big area in assessment is learning media assessment. Under the federal statute that assessment isn't even required unless a school team is planning to opt out of braille, because braille is the default media. However, in practice, the opposite happens (nation-wide problem); the learning media assessment tends to happen when they want to opt into braille, which should not happen, but we do learning media assessments when they are requested of us. Many times when there is a disagreement about what the learning medium is, we always perform those assessments.

Eva noted that the teachers are attending IEP meetings, and in preparation for the new system, they are giving more information, i.e. if they see a child 3 times a week – they are now going to define how many minutes a visit will be. Some districts are even asking them to define how many minutes will be direct instruction and how many minutes will be with the student and teacher in the classroom, and then how many minutes of technical assistance (consultation) with the school staff; this includes training the para educator, who may be supporting a braille reader. Fran questioned where in the IEP template is this information being placed; i.e. related services or support section. Eva noted that different districts do different things – she has seen them put our technical assistance services in that section; but then direct supports to students they put in there. She

commented that our goals and objectives tend to be stapled on the back of the document, as we're not part of their database of choices. Fran commented that it isn't prescribed where or how they do it, but just that someone picking up the document would know, yes, this child has a TVI coming twice a week for 30 minutes, or whatever it is.

Eva noted that it has largely been well received by CBVI teaching staff, that we will now be generating goals and objectives for each child; measurable goals and objectives; presenting them to school teams, including parents, for approval.

Eva reported that we've now put into policy that we can make a recommendation of whether the child is going to use braille or print, but it's ultimately the decision of all of the players in that child's educational life. Eva noted that when she started working at the agency there were approximately 125 braille students; last count: 222. She commented that we are now teaching braille to preschool children. Any case where a parent isn't approving braille to be taught is brought to Eva's attention, so she can also have a dialog with that parent.

Eva explained that these were her major tasks with regard to developing the amendments. She didn't want to wait until the Code was adopted before putting some of it into practice within the agency.

Eva reported there were 2 sets of public comments; both of which offered compliments that we had done some things correctly; each had some concerns that we needed to be brought into full compliance with federal and state statutes. A few additional amendments will be made as a result of those valuable public comments. Example: Commenters mentioned there was something in our Code that talked about service provided as funds were available, and the Code also referenced needs testing, financial needs testing of the family. They commented that education services are supposed to be free and appropriate – so we are boosting that language to make sure the public understands when they read this Code that everything that is under the federal or state mandate, that is provided under Special Education services, will be free and appropriate – so taking out that kind of language that indicates a needs assessment may have been required at some point.

Joan asked about the effect the new braille code (Unified English Braille UEB) has had on students and teachers. Eva explained that in January, 2016, the North American Braille Authority, which tells us what specific symbols in braille we need to teach, adopted something that should have been done a long time ago – Unified English Braille. Eva noted that she mistakenly thought that this was the braille code of all English speaking countries world-wide; she was wrong; it was only utilized in Australia and New Zealand; Canada then adopted the UEB code, but England still uses something else. All braille instruction for new braille students needs to now occur in UEB. Eva noted, prior to her arrival at CBVI, Dan had required teachers to become UEB certified through the Hadley School. We are going to provide more training this coming fall also; Dr. Edward Bell from Louisiana Tech is going to do some additional robust training in UEB. Our teachers will also take the national test, as an information source. Interestingly, so many of the children already had the UEB symbols before our teachers got to it, and they are adjusting much better than the adults in their lives; no surprise! Dan commented that it is a bit of a learning curve; 16 of the contractions were changed. The rationale behind the change for the UEB was to enable print documents to be translated more accurately and to correspond in braille with what was seen in print. It also was, according to those that are very good at computer coding, advised that the UEB would allow for faster more efficient translation. It is also fair to say that the presentation of the braille is now more correspondent to what you see in print, and just as we had to learn how to move from grade 1.5 to grade 2, and for those of us that know grade 3, for very quick braille notation taking, we will all, in this next generation, make the necessary moderate adjustment required for UEB. Dan noted that UEB also creates continuity and uniformity across the entire English braille using countries, and that is helpful for purposes of international book sharing and alike. Dan commented that braille is an evolving code and because it has to be translated he suspects this won't be the last we see of a change. He added that he wants our teachers to take this national test to guarantee a level of competency. If they don't pass for some reason, they will not be judged;

they will be given the opportunity to take it again. He noted he wants the Commission to be on the leading edge of making sure that we are cognizant of the most progressive positions in braille. Eva noted that the North American Braille Authority gave some leeway in terms of Nemeth; NJ will continue to teach the Nemeth code. She noted that she didn't know how a student would be able to take calculus without Nemeth; (it is the math/science of braille). So we will have UEB for literary content and continue to use the Nemeth Code also.

Fr. Jim thanked Eva for her presentation, and complimented her on the work going on in the Education Department. He told her not to hesitate to get in touch with the SRC, through Dan and John, if there is anything they can do to be supportive of her work.

### **State/Federal Update:**

Dan took a moment to acknowledge and thank Eva for her leadership in the blindness education program. He commented that Education is the department that he had to make the most changes since he arrived at the Commission. He also commented on the importance to be compliant with IDEA, and that the Agency is looking forward to conversations to strengthen our Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with DOE in a number of different contexts, so we have a strong relationship and so the Commission is a leading front with a central administration for blindness education. He noted that we are in the last stage with DHS in getting these final amendments adopted.

Dan reported that we are also in the final phase of the final adoption of N.J.A.C. 10:97, the Chapter of the Administrative Code that governs our Randolph Sheppard program; the federal program that provides entrepreneurial opportunities to blind people on federal, state, and municipal properties. A number of changes have been made to the Code, including establishing a more robust interview and promotions process; expanding the role of Business Enterprise Program (BEP), so that not only can we create business opportunities on government property, but we can also now engage in business opportunities on private property, if they are interested in adhering to the terms of the Randolph Sheppard program; we have done that even before the adoption of the rule with the Bank of New York Mellon. We also have a new private BEP venture; started as a pilot. Dan noted he is optimistic about the growth. In an effort to make the BEP program even more dynamic, Dan reported we are looking at hiring a marketing manager for the program in concert with the elected committee, so we can have someone out there looking for opportunities where we can create businesses and create opportunities for people to go to work in executive level work.

Due to imminent change in government administration, if further administrative work cannot be completed by May 1, most likely it will not get through until after the November election. Therefore, we've decided to pull back on the hard pushing work related to 10:95 (administrative chapter that governs our VR program). Instead, by way of foundational building, we will adopt policies consistent with the new federally adopted WIOA, and from those policies, at the beginning of next year, introduce 10:95 when there is a new administration.

Dan reported that the Agency continues working with our existing vendor Libera, which provides our System 7 Case Management System, and our new vendor, Alliance, which provides us with a system called Aware. We are optimistic this new system (cost 1.2 million dollars) will enable our counselors and teachers, as well as our Project Best staff and IL staff, to better track the services we provide and the effectiveness of those services; keeping the organization in a level of accountability that will be unprecedented. Alliance clearly is the strongest system, and the 2 companies have collaborated to help facilitate this process. Dan noted he is hopeful we will be able to move to the next step soon, which is transferring data and creating the new system to accommodate the Commission. To complete the entire conversion process will probably take another 12-18 months; it takes this length of time to drive and introduce a system as substantial as a new case management system.

Dan reported that he and John attended the spring semi-annual conferences of the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). Dan commented that he is serving as president-elect of NCSAB and was responsible for organizing this program; he will be responsible for organizing the fall program as well. The 2 conferences focused on further work under WIOA, and how it is to be implemented. One of the things that came out of the conference was news that our federal monitoring partners, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), has started monitoring agencies and expects them to be in compliance with WIOA. When our opportunity for monitoring comes around, we will embrace and welcome it as an opportunity to learn. Dan noted that we have to attend to cultivating some MOUs with a number of our partners in the broader workforce system. VR has, for many years, functioned as a viable program to help our clients find work and become self-sufficient, and learn skills of independence. The re-authorization of WIOA has really made it clear that congress wants VR to get involved with the other workforce programs that promote employment in this country. Consequently, we have to cultivate relationships with our DOE, and also with the Medicaid system so we can make sure we are aware of who has qualified for those services and leverage those benefits. Dan reported that he is now working actively with the SETC, and we are delighted again to have Gary Altman with us, where we are reciprocating on each other's Boards and sharing ideas.

As part of our comprehensive statewide needs assessment, and as a collaborative exercise with the SRC, CBVI is organizing a town hall meeting for June 10. All SRC members are invited to participate in this event. The purpose of the day will be to solicit feedback on what services are needed for those who are underserved or not served at all. Like we did in 2014, we will provide transportation from all of our local service centers; lunch will be provided; and a keynote speaker will exist. It is going to be held at the DCF Training Center in New Brunswick. There will be a morning plenary session, and then afternoon breakout sessions. At the end of the summer we report to the federal government on what we've done to evaluate services we can provide. San Diego State University is contracting with us, to do some of the actual data crunching.

Dan reported that the Agency is engaging in substantial hiring of staff in the education area, in mid-level supervisory roles in our Business Relations Unit, and looking for someone to perform program administration accountability work (quality assurance). Also, going to be hiring a number of O&M instructors, travel instructors, and home teachers or rehab teachers, who will go out into the community and go to homes to teach skills. Regrettably, right now, the Commission is experiencing an acute shortage of these staff; we are really stretching to provide these services. We've had resignations, retirements, and some long-term requests for medical leave. We are adopting measures to mitigate the challenges, including setting up a priority triage system, asking other staff to take on some of the work they are equal to do.

Dan reported that our Atlantic City office recently opened; this service center was originally located in Hammonton. It is alongside a 7<sup>th</sup> Library Equal Access Program (LEAP) site, where we collaborate with the NJ State Library Talking Book & Braille Center and the local library, to put in assistive technology in local libraries (particularly for 55+); it also gives us an additional site from which to teach our community how to use that technology. Dan noted that we now have 7 LEAP locations.

Dan commented that SRC members will receive copies of the 2016 Annual Report. He acknowledged Amanda Gerson for her work in pulling this document together for the first time; she added some new dimensions to it. He also thanked Fran Leibner, who contributed as she always does, with editing. Dan noted that this document reflects positively on what occurred in 2016. He commented that CBVI continues to do really powerful work under a philosophy that we believe in the capacity of people who are blind, vision impaired, and deaf blind. We believe they can achieve anything they want, if they have been given good training, good skill sets, and resources. Once they have that, Dan commented that he likes to think the Commission has done its work. Dan commented that we are trying to promote all of these truths by our new partnership with TCNJ's communication unit; where we are creating a plan to publicize more actively all that the Commission is doing,

through a strategic PR initiative. We are working on revising Agency literature; looking at preparing a video that orients the public to the Commission; doing work on our website to make it more modern. Dan urged members to read through the Annual Report, and if they had any questions, to contact him. Joan asked if the report is in an accessible format. Dan noted that it is available electronically on our website in PDF; it can also be made available in braille. Amanda e-mailed everyone a PDF copy during the meeting. Fran asked about getting extra copies; a box was available at this meeting and members were encouraged to take as many as they wanted. If any additional copies are needed, members were asked to contact Chris Cooper and she will ship additional copies.

Dan commented he was delighted to see Janice Oursler, from Rutgers, here today. John and he had occasion to visit with her a few weeks ago to talk about other collaborative work that the Commission and Rutgers can do together. Just as we have a strong relationship with TCNJ, Rutgers is the only university in NJ right now that prepares certified rehabilitation counselors; so they are an avenue for rich talent that we value. Dan noted that we are looking at other projects we might engage in with Rutgers, again, to become more integrated into the broader workforce and education systems.

Dan commented that things are on the move at the Commission and he couldn't do any of it without the work of his incredibly talented, dedicated, hard working staff. In the presence of the SRC he wanted to recognize all of them for their work. He noted that they all deserve his appreciation for helping propel the Commission forward.

John asked if Dan had any additional insight, as of this morning, regarding the continuing resolution with keeping the federal government open. Dan noted that while negotiations are still occurring, most people are optimistic that the government will stay open. We currently are operating at the federal level, under a continuing resolution that expires on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The last he heard on the news, and through colleagues at NCSAB & CSAVR, is that there is hope they can reach a resolution.

Fr. Jim thanked Amanda as well for doing such a great job of putting the report together. He also encouraged those, for whom it would not be a conflict of interest, to take a couple of copies and make appointments with their local state legislators and state senators, and introduce themselves as a member of the SRC, presenting the report to them personally. Fr. Jim noted that Dan had graciously volunteered to provide SRC members with a few talking points. Dan noted he'd get that out to SRC members within the next 2 weeks. John commented that whenever Dan and he have met with senators or congressmen, they are always very interested in page 14, which is the statewide impact of CBVI services. It is based on county, broken down by all of the programs. He noted that we try to emphasize we are there as a resource for their constituents – doesn't have to be a question necessarily around blindness, vision loss, or deaf blindness; it can be around any disability question and we'll make sure to assist them.

### **Strategic Plan & Town Hall Meeting Updates:**

John Walsh reported the following information:

- The Agency is trying to either strengthen or create partnerships with some of our community partners; this is centered around educating staff of the changes under the WIOA and the greater role that a VR agency has to take in working with the business community. One of the partnerships we founded is with Mississippi State University; they run the National Technical Assistance Center around blindness and low vision. They developed a curriculum for VR counselors in blind agencies on how VR counselors can interface with the business community. During the week of June 5 our staff will get together for 4 intensive days of learning about interacting with the business community, learning techniques that are

evidence based that would best serve that community. Excited about this training, which costs us nothing; able to bring in national trainers for our VR counselors and they will also be able to get VRC continuing education credits.

- Another collaboration is with the WINTAC, which is a technical assistance center, basically around WIOA implementation. They are helping us by looking at some of our policy statements; a national partner to go to, to say, are we getting it right when we develop this policy – is it in alignment with the federal code regulations – and what can we do to make it better. In this regard, some of our policies have not made it to the SRC for review yet, as they are going through additional revisions.
- Another nice thing we are seeing on the federal level is that there is more collaboration between technical assistance centers. Under the previous system it seemed there was a bit of competition between the different technical assistance centers. WINTAC is now working with the Targeted Communities Technical Assistance Center (TCTAC). The collaboration we are looking at is actually with us; the general VR agency – DVRS – the WINTAC – GW University – and the TCTAC; looking at two communities/areas where there is a large amount of poverty in a particular community. A statistical analysis of NJ was done (we validated that data run), it showed the outcomes for employment in certain communities are hindered by other issues that lack of resources, lack of income, and poverty bring to the table. The staff from TCTAC are asking if NJ would like to enter into a project where we focus on communities in Newark and Trenton. At this point we are doing some data runs about the consumers we currently serve, and then we are going to come up with a plan of what additional services, wrap-around services, we can provide to those communities. Some of those services may be additional benefits counseling. Many times clients will not want to take the risk to go to FT work, if they fear losing their disability benefits (SSI benefits). Often times, more intensive benefits counseling will get them to that next step of wanting to take the risk, if they know the parameters around the system. In addition, many times in this community there is a low level of financial literacy skills; not having access to banking systems and other systems; knowing how to save money without impacting benefits; tapping into existing entitlement systems that would help them in that transition period. Of course, there's always the issue of health care; more than ever that's an issue, and the future is uncertain in this respect. At the Commission we have seen some changes with the Affordable Care Act, where consumers are getting on Medicaid or getting onto the navigator system, and on healthcare through some of the various plans offered. As a result, we are doing less physical restoration work. We have had many instances where we would be working with a client and they had no other resource to getting medical treatment; we've made them part of a VR plan, physical restoration. Those dollars have gone down and that allows us to keep more of our funds for our primary mission, which is around instruction and getting people skill sets; getting people connected to work. Gary Altman noted that the SETC has a monthly meeting with the directors of the workforce boards; there is one scheduled for next week. He invited the Commission to come and meet with all of them and discuss ways to interact. Dan and John thanked Gary for the invitation.
- The Commission is also looking to boost up our system for clients served in our older blind program (55+), who are not seeking work, but still need instruction on skill sets; how to get access to their community, etc. We did have cases where we had put "homemaker" as an employment goal; if a client's main job was to take care of their household we could offer VR services to do that, and that would be considered a successful employment outcome. However, we have been trending away from that for years, because we knew this would eventually go away. (No more than 2.5% of our employment outcomes were homemakers or unpaid family workers.) Under the WIOA this has now been phased out; there are no longer any outcomes that are considered legitimate if they are unpaid, or in subminimum wage. So now that population will receive services through our Independent Living (IL)

program. The Agency also wants to prepare for the aging of the baby boomer generation; that's a large population. We want to see what additional partners are out there, including the county based offices on aging, the state division on aging, and other university programs, to see what collaborative work we can do to serve that population.

- The Commission is always looking at ways to improve our program at the Joseph Kohn Training Center (JKTC). We recently tasked the manager, Del Basha, and also assigned one of our program employees, Kevin Harris, to really look at what we are doing at JKTC. Kevin was imbedded here for a few months, participating in all the classes as an observer; he participated in exit interviews with our consumers to gather data about what's happening. We also sent Kevin and Del to two high performing training centers in the country. One was at the New Mexico Training Center for the Blind (run by a state agency), and the other was a private agency in Minneapolis, a National Federation for the Blind operative facility. They went out for a 3-day period; interacting with staff; learning about what they are doing at those particular training centers. They came back with good ideas about some evidence based practices being done in those centers, and trying to implement them here. Del and Kevin have been charged with developing a white-paper around what changes they are proposing for the Agency to move the training center forward. This is also part of our comprehensive statewide needs assessment that we are undergoing; we'll have more data on this in the near future.
- Town Hall meeting: John thanked members for their feedback on questions to be discussed at the upcoming event. He commented that Kelly had assisted in facilitating the 2014 event and has been part of the committee developing this year's town hall meeting as well. The 2014 event was found to be a very productive exercise; 120 people attend that year, and we were able to get a lot of valuable data from our community, which we were able to include with our state plan year after year. Feedback received brought many of our current programs to fruition. This year, instead of information tables, breakout groups are being planned for the afternoon portion; there will be two 45-minute sessions; each will have a topic. We are hoping that the smaller breakout sessions can do a little bit of a deeper dive; there will be facilitators in each session to really run and drive – to plant some questions/seeds. The morning session will be a conversation session. Information on the agenda will be provided to the SRC. The application package, which will be sent out shortly, will include the questions we are going to ask; want to have 8-10 questions that will be driving this town hall meeting. "Save the date" cards went out; will also start doing email blasts. John invited SRC members to pass information about this event on to their constituents/interest groups.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation Update:**

Amanda Gerson reported on the following:

**Transitions:** Due to the dissolution of the Welcome & Evaluation (WE) Team we had 2 additional counselors on staff; those counselors have been transitioned to the role of transition counselors. This enabled us to re-allocate caseloads, which decreased our transition counselor caseload size from about 250, down to 125/150 per counselor. Amanda commented that she believes this will enable us to provide more effective, personalized, and attentive transition services.

**Programs:** The **EDGE** contract has been renewed. 76 students have been referred for this year's program so far; anticipating up to about 100 students by the time we get through to the early fall. Referrals will be accepted through Jan/Feb. Culminating activities are being done, interviews/resumes, which previous sessions had built on. In this new contract is a very exciting pilot to extend EDGE services to college freshman and

sophomores, up to age 21, still within students with disabilities category, for pre-employment transition services. Within this pilot we are welcoming 20 students; priority to those part of the EDGE program this year and last, who are going to be a freshman or sophomore next year. It will implement college success curriculum, which is a fully accessible on-line series of webinars and self-assessments, blog posts, etc., to get them to think about some key areas around technology use; integration into their greater campus community; accommodation needs and college professor relationships. In addition to that, there is going to be a college coach that will help students with the full integration and accommodations process, self-advocacy, developing the necessary skills for success; the pre-employment transition services, as well as the development of internship and paid employment opportunities – to fulfill the work base learning component of pre-employment transition services. These referrals are going to be solicited from our transition counselors and college counselors. It will largely be 1:1 in-person meetings accompanied by an on-line virtual group interaction; then approximately 2 group meetings throughout the student breaks. If they decide they want additional inputs and gatherings, we are flexible with the way that will be implemented; we can expand to fulfill the needs of the students identified. **Work Skills Prep** (at TCNJ) has full enrollment for this summer; 24 students with 7 on a waiting list. **College Prep** (at TCNJ) will have 24 students participating in the 2-week orientation; doing assistive technology, time management, writing, research skills, orientation and mobility, exploration of college readiness activities, and career exploration activities. Then, after the 2 weeks are over, 10 of those students have been recommended to continue on to the credit bearing component, which is 2 weeks in partnership with community engaged learning. This is the same program we've had for the last 2 years, just tweaking the language to be more accurate as to what the program is called. We hit our target numbers for that program as well; exciting.

Amanda reported that she has been organizing and doing a lot of training for VR counselors. It's been a good opportunity to bring our new counselors up-to-date, and make sure they have those base skills and knowledge around policy and service provision identified. Also, to refresh our existing counselors, because there have been a lot of changes over the past number of years.

- March 1<sup>st</sup>: TCTAC did a wonderful presentation about work incentives; SSI, SSDI, Medicaid/care, and the wonderfully confusing and complex system that enables our consumers to work for quite a period of time, and stabilize their work experience, without fear or risk of losing benefits.
- March 22: Disability Rights, as well as Business Enterprise gave refresher classes. John and Amanda also did a training on individualized plan for employment development, and goal development. Amanda noted that they went over what a smart goal is – so it is – measurable, obtainable, and realistic. She noted that they also went over changes to supported employment and subminimum wage under WIOA.
- April 1: full day training on pre-employment transition services, as well as general transition and college services with transition college counselors and supervisors.
- May 11: John, Amanda, and MIS are holding a training on documentation data integrity, performance indicators, and federal reporting.
- Mississippi State will be in to do a 4-day training on business engagement on June 5-8.

Amanda noted that she is hoping for a fall implementation of WINTAC's Career Index Plus, which is an on-line tool developed for counselors and consumers to explore various careers, using labor market information.

She also mentioned to Gary that she would like to talk to him regarding having someone from Labor talk to staff about the different workforce systems. Gary commented that he would be willing to help in this regard.

Amanda commented that she also is soliciting the counselors to see if there are any topics they want to train on.

**Business Relations Unit (BRU):** 1) The contract with the Institute for Community Inclusion ends in October; that's when our technical assistance plan ends too. We have a final on-site meeting in June. Amanda reported

she has been asked to present on 2 topics at a national culminating conference in August; the topics include the labor market information training that we did last year, as well as assistive technology for business engagement. She commented that this will be a great opportunity. Those involved in technical assistance have been invited and some have been asked to present also, and other state agencies have been invited to attend too. 2) The Career Exploration Center, being piloted at the Newark Service Center, is offering their first monthly interview preparation workshop for consumers. 3) We are collaborating with DVRS to do a targeted disability specific hiring in Camden, on May 10; similar to a Schedule A event, but with private industry as opposed to federal agencies and contractors. 4) We are also offering a business summit; inviting business partners that we've developed; to come in to hear a presentation on blindness and services we provide to consumers, as well as the services we have available to business around the hiring and working with individuals who are blind and vision impaired. This program is scheduled for May 10, and will take place at Rutgers Scotch Plains. Amanda thanked Dr. Oursler; explaining that the VR counselors program offered to let us use their space, and we are excited to do so. Dr. Oursler noted she was pleased to have the BRU program at the Rutgers' site. 5) We also have the northern regional Schedule A event, working with DVRS; this is scheduled for June 28 and is being held at the Lyndhurst campus of Bergen County Community College. 6) The BRU is also hosting a reverse job fair on June 29. The concept is that instead of businesses and employers sitting at their tables, providing information and recruiting potential employees, our consumers will be the ones sitting at the table and presenting their resumes. Clients will be going through a full day training to prepare for this; there will be resume development; interview preparation; elevator pitch, and what to do on their visual board or some other type of presentation. The employers will be going from table to table to seek out who might be a good fit, and do interviews. A different concept; borrowed it from Oklahoma and decided to give it a shot. Kelly asked how the consumers are picked to participate in this event. Amanda commented that the BRU staff met with the Cherry Hill Counselors to see who was job seeking and what type of employment they were seeking. They identified individuals who are looking to going into customer service and retail at this point; keeping the job fields similar for each of these opportunities, so that we can offer businesses the greatest amount of candidates that would match their needs.

Amanda reported that we are continuing a partnership with Prudential; single point of contact to hopefully deepen the relationship there. We've been doing monthly accessibility trainings with Princeton University, and ongoing relationship with businesses such as Unilever, Colgate Palmolive, Bank of America, CVS, as well as some smaller businesses.

### **Sub-Committee Reports**

**Evaluation:** Amanda reported that we ran into a problem with the survey Eagleton has been working on; the on-line survey component is not fully accessible with Jaws; therefore, the surveys have not gone out yet. One of our technology specialists has been consulting and giving suggestions to Eagleton's tech person. Within the next couple of days we should know whether or not it can be coded and the timeline for completing this. If all goes well, Amanda noted she is hoping for a final report from Eagleton by the June 9 SRC meeting; however, if accessibility delays go on for more than a week or two; don't know if we'll have time for a robust report in June.

**Resource:** Danielle commented that she was thinking about getting the resource list brailled and handed out to the counselors to distribute to their consumers. She pointed out that a lot of our consumers, especially new ones, do not have access to the website. John noted that the Meyer Center now has a braille production capacity; they can be contacted to move forward with this idea. Kelly suggested another partnership with the PR intern could be to take the resource list and make it more of a document to disseminate to staff and consumers.

**SRC Annual Report:** Amanda commented that she was excited that the annual report was ready for Dan and John to take to Washington; that was the ultimate goal. For next year she noted that she will start the process a

little bit earlier, in September; reminding counselors to send success stories along the way. Amanda noted that Bernice, Pam, and the other coordinators were invaluable in getting her the product. Fr. Jim thanked Amanda, and requested that she please bring all of them the Council's gratitude; he noted that this is the primary tool for the SRC to use when they go back to constituencies and officials.

Business Relations (BR): Kelly piggy-backed on what she reported at the last meeting; as the BRU is fairly new and getting underway, this sub-committee has not necessarily engaged; however, the committee did facilitate a training for a supported employment agency that wanted to learn more about how they can better support consumers affiliated with CBVI. She commented, we learned that once businesses are engaged in collaborating with CBVI, to some degree, especially those that are taking on consumers who use supported employment services, we need to better educate our community partners; that we really share a philosophy for supporting our consumers. Kelly reported that similar training will be scheduled with a few other agencies as well.

Policy Committee: Fr. Jim reported that this sub-committee met with a phone conference a couple of times. In addition, he also consulted with Dan and John about a couple of questions and tweaks the committee has. The committee will be interacting with Dan and John, hopefully by phone again, to discuss further, and before bringing to the larger group.

### Old Business, New Business, Comments:

Fr. Jim announced that Rick Fox will chair the next SRC meeting, as he, unfortunately, will not be in attendance.

Fr. Jim commented on a problem he has repeatedly encountered, where individuals contact him with the complaint that they are not getting their calls returned by the Commission. Fr. Jim requested something be included in ongoing staff training about returning phone calls. He suggested that even if the phone call says that they don't have anything to tell the caller; at least this would show the caller they were not forgotten. Dan commented that a first point of contact protocol has recently been established, which does require that people be acknowledged and have their calls returned within a 48-hour period of time. This protocol is being implemented uniformly across the state. Dan asked that if anyone does hear of calls not getting returned, it's helpful to let his office or John know, as they want to make sure this new system is doing what it is intended to do. John commented that the Agency is also looking at a refresh training of customer service to remind staff of some basic concepts; suggesting a quick email or text is usually enough to let an individual know they are not being ignored.

Kelly shared information on an event being held on May 18, Educational Testing Service, Princeton. She noted she would share additional information once she receives a flyer. Dan commented that the Commission has, through our TSS and BRU collaborative, met on a monthly basis with Princeton to give them information on assistive technology and blindness etiquette, as well as a variety of other things. DVRS is supplementing our work with some other additional work; so there is a connection there. He didn't know if there was any way to leverage what we are doing with this May 18 event, but possibly there could be. John commented, yes, that's servicing the employer and business community. He noted that our technical service specialists did such a fabulous job with Princeton; this is a service we offer to the business community at no charge; real value added because they have all their IT professionals working with our technology staff about making the college experience more usable and accessible. Business community - biggest points they want - etiquette around working with people with disabilities and understanding the technology. We can help ETS with that as well. Amanda commented that May 18 is open, and suggested that Kelly have her contact call to set this up.

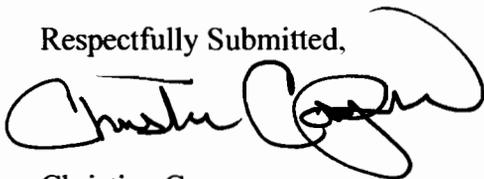
Janice Oursler, Program Director for the Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling Program at Rutgers University, introduced herself and thanked the SRC for inviting her to attend this meeting. She noted that a number of graduates from their program are now employees of CBVI. She shared the following information: 1) The NJ Rehabilitation Association is having a conference on June 9 at the Scotch Plains campus, CRC credits being given. Patricia Leahy of the National Rehabilitation Association is scheduled to speak on federal legislation on WIOA implementation. Dan asked Janice to send details to either him, John, or Amanda, so if there are counselors that are not engaged already, they may want to attend. 2) There are currently 3 grants for the rehab services administration for long term training in rehab counseling available; she commented that the Commission was a big supporter. It provides a lot of students in rehab counseling with opportunities to have a substantial amount of tuition paid, provided they work afterwards in the field. 3) Hoping to form a relationship with TCNJ now with more faculty at the Stratford campus, which is moving to Blackwood, Camden County College; letting you know about our Masters program in case any graduates are interested. She noted that the entire program is on-line, if people can't come to campus. 4) NJ Counseling Association is having a conference on May 5-7; CRC credits are being offered; 5 faculty members doing work at that conference. For the future, Janice suggested to have some staff begin to put in workshops for some of these conferences that take place in NJ, so that people can begin to learn more about CBVI services; she noted that she thinks there is a lack of awareness outside of our small community about what services are available. The NJ Counseling Association Conference usually has about 300 people attending; it will be held at Brookdale Community College.

### **Adjournment**

A motion was made by John Goodman, and seconded by Gary Altman, to adjourn the meeting; all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

The next SRC meeting is scheduled for Friday, June 9, 2017.

Respectfully Submitted,



Christine Cooper  
CBVI – Administrative Assistant