MEETING MINUTES FOR February 15, 2013

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

Present: Titus Massey, Alwin Glasgow, Dorothy Doran, Nicole Pratt, Kelly Richards, (DRNJ representative), Ed Kawalec, Rob Paige,

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

Bruce Kastner, Diana Cortez, Lisa Lehman

Member of the Public, Fran Liebner

In Kathy Wood’s absence, Lauren Casey called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Lauren read the following:

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.

 Since a quorum was not present Lauren asked for approval of the minutes of December 7, 2012 by consensus which was approved unanimously.

Vito DeSantis introduced Diana Cortez who was selected as the new Manager of the JKTC. Vito asked for the SRC membership to provide input to help initiate changes to improve the Center and better serve CBVI consumers. Diana spoke briefly about her VR background, nursing experience and collaboration with her husband to start up a successful IT business.

**Federal and State Updates**, Vito DeSantis

Vito reported that on the Federal level, the budget cuts resulting from the Sequestration is pushed back to March 1, 2013. Under Sequestration cuts in disgressionary spending was reduced from 8% to 5.1%. VR’s Consumer Price Index of 3% will reduce the impact on the VR program to a cut of 1.6%, retroactive to 10/1/2012. The CBVI budget would not be affected due to funds carried over from the previous year. Vito mentioned that the continuing resolution

of the Workforce Investment Act, (WIA) is up for a vote in Congress on March 27, 2013. Changes in WIA would impact on the VR program which is designated under WIA as a work training program. Vito announced that Janet LaBreck was nominated to be the next Commissioner for the Rehab Services Administration, (RSA). MS LaBreck has served as the Director for the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and is a key leader in the field of blindness.

On the State level, the Governor is expected to announce a budget at the beginning of March, 2013. Vito added that cuts in the State budget may occur due to recovery expenses resulting from Hurricane Sandy. CBVI currently has no outstanding issues with State funding.

**O/M Services Update:**

Lisa Lehman provided an overview of O/M services as they apply to the provision of VR services. Lisa reported that consumers referred for O.M services include individuals with goals of returning to work, referrals for job training and college students. O/M training initially includes orientation to sighted guide techniques and the basics for navigating with the cane. Guidelines for responding to a member of the general public offering sighted guide, and the maintenance and resources for accessing a cane are covered. Lisa touched on the fundamentals of navigating safely with the cane such as proper grip aligning the cane with the body, arc coverage, navigating in step with the cane, navigating a straight line of travel, differentiating a cue and a landmark for learning a route, navigating around objects, negotiating street corners, attending to traffic patterns and techniques for using other senses. Lisa added that the cane serves to alert the public that an individual has a visual impairment. Lisa discussed public transportation, Access Link and county transportation services and the procedure for accessing and reading a public transit schedule.

Orientation to the workplace includes assisting a consumer to locate entrances and exits, negotiating elevators and revolving doors, locating security checkpoints, the main office and negotiating the work area. Lisa suggested that practical language is useful when asking directions from sighted peers in the workplace.

Quiet intersections are initially selected for learning the layout and how to negotiate street crossings, how the intersection is managed, (traffic light, stop sign), listening and analyzing the traffic cycle, negotiating alternative routes. Lisa stated that she provides resources and information so consumers can make informed choices.

Lisa mentioned that an applicant requesting a guide dog is required to have advanced O/M skills and cane techniques. She covered protocols for selection and proper care of guide dogs.

**VR Update:**

John Walsh announced that the year-long Learning Collaborative grant through the Institute for Community Inclusion, (ICI) is complete. Development of the new quality assurance, (Q&A) system has significantly advanced through collaboration with seven other state VR agencies under the grant. A quality assurance policy, case review protocols for VR supervisors and performance metrics have been developed. The major focus of the Q&A initiative is to provide feedback and set targets for improvement agency wide. MIS is working with Libera to create a dashboard for displaying performance metrics in the FACTS system. Through the Learning Collaborative, the administrative staff expanded the focus of the project from Q&A, data management and performance metrics to long term strategic planning. Vito added that the agency will work in partnership with the SRC to move the strategic plan forward. The Technical Assistance and Continuing Education, (TACE II) will supplement the balance of the grant funds to hire a consultant to aid the agency to further develop and implement the strategic plan. The consultant is slated to come onboard in April or May prior to Vito’s retirement on June 1st. This will allow Vito to help lay the ground work for the strategic plan before the new Director arrives. John reinforced Vito’s central message that CBVI is primarily a VR agency with the goal of preparing individuals served by the agency for employment.

**SRC Annual Report Update:**

The SRC membership is reviewing the Annual Report and feedback from the members is incorporated in the report. The report will be forward to RSA and the Governor’s Office for approval for publication.

**Summer Programs Update:**

For the past few months preparation has been underway for the Work Skills Program, (WSP) and the College Prep Experience, (CPE) Program. A full enrollment of students is expected for both programs. WSP will incorporate a parent training session and CPE will add a component to make the program more employment focused. Diana Cortez added that the CPE program provides a college bound student with a reality check and the opportunity to earn five college credits for transfer to the college of their choice.

**Public Forum Update:**

CBVI in collaboration with the SRC are holding three public forums to gather input to assist with the development of the 2014 State Plan which will be submitted to RSA. The forums will be held at the Newark Central Office, at the JKTC and the Regional Office in Cherry Hill. For individuals who can not be present, a conference line will be available. Written comments can be submitted via regular mail and e-mail. The forums will take place in early April.

**New Business:**

Vito announce that he will retire on June 1st. He added that it has been a privilege and an honor to have led the agency for the past 11 years. Vito expressed his gratitude to the SRC for it’s increased involvement in helping the agency move forward. He acknowledged that the SRC is an integral part of the agency and praised the SRC members for their dedication to help CBVI to better serve individuals who are blind and visually impaired.

It was agreed that the agenda for the SRC meeting of April 5th include new initiatives at the JKTC and a tour of the facility.

**Open Forum and Announcements:**

Nicole Pratt announced that the Statewide Parent Advocacy and Training Network, (SPAN) will hold a conference in Atlantic City on April 20,2013. Nicole will forward a formal announcement to CBVI for distribution.

**Adjournment:**

Titus Massey made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Dorothy Doran at 12:00 noon.

**Next meeting:**

The next SRC meeting is scheduled for **Friday, April 5, 2013** at the Joseph Kohn Training Center.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ed Sroczynski

CBVI Liaison to the Board