

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

Meeting Minutes – June 9, 2017
Joseph Kohn Training Center - 130 Livingston Avenue - New Brunswick, NJ

Voting Members Present: Rick Fox, Jonathan Goodman, Susan Head, Zoraida Krell, Fran Leibner, Kelly Reymann

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

Voting Members Absent: Jennifer Armstrong, Dawn Monaco, Kris Tucker, Fr. James Warnke

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

Staff/Members of Public Present: Elizabeth DeShields, Chip Kenney, Sunil Parikh

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Rick Fox, Vice-Chairperson. 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. Rick welcomed everyone and thanked them for taking the time to attend this meeting and contributing their time to this organization, which in turn contributes to the welfare of the clients.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

The meeting minutes of April 21, 2017 were reviewed. A motion was made by Jonathan Goodman and seconded by Fran Leibner to approve these minutes. (Fran noted a couple of typos and edits, which she will submit for update.) All were in favor of approving the minutes with the corrections noted. The minutes were accepted and will be put into the permanent record of the SRC.

Project BEST (Better Eye Health Services Treatment):

Elizabeth DeShields and Sunil Parikh reviewed the services and screenings provided in this program. Preventative eye health care and screenings are offered to NJ residents who do not have access to eye health care. There are 5 particular screening sites: early childhood vision screening, adult vision screening, on-site eye screenings, diabetic eye screenings, and migrant eye screenings. The program goes into the areas of low economics, elderly, minorities, and individuals with special needs to perform screenings (not an exam) for those who may need it and are unable to get a yearly eye exam. It helps target if someone has an issue, where they may need services from CBVI. Doctors also work for the agency, particularly at the fixed sites. With a doctor and nurse present, the patient's eyes are dilated and they go through a screening. If they see there is a problem, they refer them first to their own doctor, if they have one and if not, they assist them in finding a doctor; they are always referred to CBVI. That could mean they get referred to our Vocational, Education, or IL departments for services. It would mean they could go through rehabilitation teaching, go through our eye health nurse educational treatment, or they could go through our orientation and mobility, or they may end up going through all of them. If someone needs services within the community; i.e. interested in housing or social services, the Project BEST team is there to be able to refer them to those areas as well.

Diabetic Eye Disease Detection Program: We get the highest amount of referrals from this program. We partner with local hospitals, ADA, Department of Health, and community based services. In this program a dilated eye exam is performed on everyone. Those found with diabetic eye disease get needed treatment/services, and if they are untrained or need educational services they are referred to CBVI. Another program, Fixed Site Monthly Eye Screening (32 sites in the State): Anyone who does not have resources, or eye health services they can get it through Project BEST, and we always have a doctor there. Again, all those people who fail the test, who do not have income or resources and become eligible for CBVI services, are referred to our agency. Early Childhood Screening Program: Staff go out to nurseries, day care programs, head-start programs, and provide early intervention childhood eye screening – anyone who fails the screening is referred to their own physicians or we find a physician for them (most are qualified to get Medicaid). Special Needs Program: we go out to special needs schools and find visually impaired children who are not registered with CBVI yet; we get a lot of referrals for education services through this program. Last, we go out to migrant farms to provide migrant eye health services to farmers, especially in southern NJ. We go with/without a doctor and provide eye services.

Between 36-40,000 people are seen every year by Project BEST. Between March and October there is work almost every weekend. Last weekend more than 200 people were seen, primarily providing eye screening services for visual acuity and glaucoma check-ups. As of June 1, 17,000 individuals have been seen in 2017. In addition to the programs done on a regular basis, health fairs and events are also done; a lot of it is word of mouth, as well as some advertising. Rick asked if the schools have eye screening programs. Elizabeth noted that a lot of schools do have programs; it's the pre-school age that we try to reach. Rick asked who actually does the screenings; Elizabeth noted that our staff perform the screenings, and then at the fixed sites there's a doctor for when the eye is dilated and they have to look further. Susan Head asked about the migrant eye screenings; she wanted to know if we are able to screen individuals who are undocumented. Elizabeth noted that we don't look into whether they are documented or not. However, follow-up services for an undocumented individual is on an emergency basis. Sunil commented on school screenings – students from grades 1-12 are screened, special needs schools. Also, in the regular schools, where the nurses are responsible for primary eye screening, a child who fails the screenings is welcome to be sent to our fixed sites where a doctor is present.

On behalf of the SRC, Rick commended Elizabeth and Sunil for the work done by Project BEST. He noted his amazement at how this program is able to affect so many eyes – thank you!

State/Federal Update:

Dan reported that work continues on: 1) the migration from one case management system to another; 2) the adoption of new administrative codes; 3) revamping/reviewing how services are delivered at JKTC; 4) our summer programs. (Details below)

Dan commented that instead of doing the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment ourselves, which we did in 2014, the Agency decided it would be helpful to contract a few additional hands and objective eyes, to come in and give us a sense of how we are doing.

The Governor's office has approved NJAC 10:97, which is our Administrative Code for our Randolph Sheppard Program. We anticipate that it will be published within the next few weeks, and adopted for the next 7 yrs. in the NJ Register. Dan explained that the biggest change is that we are going to take the priority that exists on state and federal properties and expand it to private locations that are interested in agreeing to the terms of Randolph Sheppard. There have also been some changes in the way we interview and train for our program. Dan noted that it's a pretty comprehensive rule change, but he thinks it is going to bring the program into a

modern existence, and really help it grow and thrive. Dan noted that the rules were developed in concert with an elected committee and have been adopted with relatively minimal controversy.

Similarly, NJAC 10:92, which modifies our blindness educational services, those rules are right behind 10:97, but still waiting Governor approval; we anticipate that in the next few weeks.

Additionally, we just finished Stage 2 of migration from the Fully Accessible Client Tracking System (FACTS) to the Aware system; where we'll be moving from Libera to Alliance's case management system. From January to May we engaged in a dialog with both companies to identify what our system currently does, what the new system will do, and what differences exist between those systems so any customizations or adaptations can be made. It also facilitated an opportunity to evaluate our own business rules. Changing systems has given us a chance to evaluate what we can do differently, more efficiently, in terms of business operations. We developed a differences list and now we'll go through the procurement process, which should take a few months. Then, the moving of data from one system to another will take place, and making modifications to make Alliance Aware work for us. Estimate between 12-18 months before we go live with the new system.

Summer programs: **SHARP** - third summer running this program and filled to capacity with 90 students (Grades 1-8); served in two 3 week sessions to provide blindness skills that supplement what the students may not get during the academic year. Recognizing all students are challenged to get as much education as they can during the year; we know blindness skills have to be an integral part of that process. We're making sure blindness skills are inherent in what is taught in terms of blindness education. Then, when they go into 9th grade they can become part of the **EDGE** program, which just concluded its 2nd year of operation. This is a year-round program that provides employment, guidance and skills development, and advocacy techniques. **Life 101** will be occurring in July for students in grades 9 and 10. **Work Skills Prep** for students that are likely bound to be employed through supported or customized employment. Our **College Prep** Program, done in concert with the Bonner program at TCNJ, will put students through a comprehensive college prep course; the first 2 weeks of which will be run by the Commission and concentrate on academics, study, and blindness skills. Then, those who are part of the Bonner program will take an actual college course, which is distinguished from other programs because they use community based learning; they are in class for a half day and out doing civic engagement, working in a food shelter, food pantry, or local school – doing something valued to the community.

Dan noted that the Agency is in the midst of working on the preparation for activities that will lead to the regular review of NJAC 10:95, which is the Administrative Code for Vocational Rehabilitation. We are working hard to make sure our Code is mirroring and doing things in enhancement of the new WIOA; a lot of work going on to make sure we blend and braid WIOA rules and regulations into the State regulations.

To follow through with his promise to be a learning organization, Dan reported a lot of staff training is taking place. A 101 course to all of our Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors has been done, where they were trained on the new rules regarding the 911 Case Services Report, and new WIOA reporting requirements. Customized employment training has occurred. There has been training on the new rules for Section 511 (part of the Rehab Act that deals with subminimum wage employment). We decided to make one of our supervisors the primary point person for Section 511 case management in the Agency; so we've done a lot of training. This fall we have Dr. Edward Bell from Louisiana Tech University coming to prep our teachers for the national competency literacy exam in the Uniform English braille Code. Yesterday we had Jennifer Clayton here to work with us on adopting the Career Index Plus Program, which will be a useful tool for our rehab counselors, to help people find jobs, using live intelligence about work opportunities and the like.

Vocational Rehabilitation Update:

Amanda Gerson reported on the following:

As part of a research study with partners from Mississippi State University, a 3.5 day training was provided for our counselors on business engagement; specifically tailored as a blindness agency working with the business world. We wanted to give our counselors the tools to be able to competently and skillfully engage with the business community to develop opportunities, develop relationships, and facilitate better integration into the workforce for our consumers. They will be following us and surveying our counselors for the next 18 months to check in on the effectiveness of this training as part of the study.

Amanda updated the SRC on the status of the Advancing Opportunities survey, which went out into the field about 3 weeks ago. Out of the 400-500 letters that were mailed out, only 18 were returned with no forwarding address. There was a tiny glitch in the printing, the formatting was slightly modified and a question was cut off in the large print copy that went out; will be sending out a corrected copy to all of the participants and follow up with consumers who already sent responses to re-ask that question. Reminder emails have gone out on a weekly basis in various formats. In the last phase, will be calling all consumers who did not respond. As of yesterday we received 56 mailed responses; 5 completed on-line surveys; 5 surveys by phone and 5 additional are in the process of scheduling. Overall, a total of 66 completed surveys. Our target is approximately 200; will tie up all responses by July 4. At that point all of the data will be synthesized, reviewed, and analyzed. The Commission will then be briefed. Amanda noted that at formal presentation on the results of the study will be scheduled for the October SRC meeting.

Needs Assessment Focus Group:

Dan noted that the SRC will serve as the first focus group in what is the Commission's Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). He welcomed Chip Kenney, Interwork Institute at San Diego State University, in facilitating this session. Dan noted the fact that our federal partners at the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) at the Department of Education (DOE) require every VR agency (80 across the country), every 3 years, to do a CSNA to evaluate the services being provided, with a particular emphasis to those that are un-served or underserved. The events happening today and tomorrow are all calculated to allow Chip to observe our agency to get a sense of what we are doing, and a full understanding of the programs we offer. This afternoon Chip will speak to our mid-level management team, and then later, to our staff at JKTC. At tomorrow's statewide townhall meeting we anticipate approximately 100-115 consumers to come to a day-long session, where the agency is able to inform the community about what it's been doing, and most important, where the agency leadership can listen to the community's perspective. In addition to having some breakout groups at tomorrow's event, the keynote speaker is Kirk Adams, President/CEO of the American Foundation for the Blind in NYC. AFB is undergoing a number of strategic shifts, and where they are a neighboring service provider it seemed appropriate to have Kirk come and talk to the consumers. Tomorrow's townhall meeting will be run in concert with this SRC as an example of the collaborative work we are doing. Jonathan and Kelly will be playing particular formal roles on behalf of SRC; Will is planning to come; everyone else on the SRC is welcome to also attend. Dan reviewed tomorrow's agenda. He explained that the CART transcript from the meeting will be used by Chip's team to do a quantitative analysis of feedback. Dan also commented that another member of Chip's team, Debbie Greene, will be coming out within the next week or two, and we will have different focus groups throughout that week. At the end of the summer, after Chip and Debbie have spent time with us and are able to analyze our work, they will be contracted to help write up a narrative that will go to RSA and be accepted as our Needs Assessment; the work of the CSNA will complement the State Plan that already exists. Dan noted that programs like SHARP, EDGE, and ASPIRE are the direct result of the 2014

CSNA. We are now at the beginning of a new cycle that promises to identify other needs. Dan noted that he is optimistic that the result of the CSNA will be worthwhile.

Rick introduced Chip Kenney by sharing his bio. Mr. Kenney is with the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University, where he is the Co-Project Director of the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC). Previously, he was a Senior Project Advisor for the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring project, funded by the US Department of Labor. His past experience includes: Project Director of South East Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center at Syracuse University; he was the Director of the Regional Continuing Education Program for Community Rehabilitation Providers at Georgia State University, and the Bureau of Chief of Client Services for the Florida Division of Blind Services. Mr. Kenney has been in the field of VR for over 35 years, with over 30 years of experience in leadership and management positions. He has a Master's Degree in Educational Research, specializing in Program Evaluation, as well as other graduate and post graduate work in organizational psychology. He is a graduate of the National Executive Leadership Institute and is a Certified Public Manager. Among his areas of interest are: strategic planning, organizational development, leadership, partnership development, HIPAC evaluation, project management, and management of virtual teams.

Chip thanked Dan and Rick for their introductions, and thanked the Council for their participation in this focus group. He noted that he appreciates the opportunity to have representatives from education, business, the workforce system, and partners at the university level also. He spoke about how SDSU approaches a Needs Assessment; he explained that it is embedded in their definition of need, which isn't something that somebody wants or would be useful for them; we use need in the strategic research orientation of being a gap between what the current results are and what the desired results are. He commented that it also serves as a real strategic platform for the Commission to take the gap, need information, and say what strategies do we need to develop to close the gap – knowing you will never reach the ultimate – moving closer and setting milestones is attainable. Chip commented that he and his colleagues will provide a snapshot of the Agency as it is now; how it's serving individuals as opposed to where it wants to be, and where the Counsel wants it to be. He explained that they will also be doing surveys with staff, businesses, education partners, and with community rehab partners. The surveys, data collection, and focus groups are the 3 main avenues of data collection. What we are looking at and what's required under the law for us to look at is who are under served, un-served; the needs of people with most significant disabilities; whether the needs of youth and transition from school to post-secondary education for careers; whether needs with people with disabilities engaging in the workforce; whether the needs of businesses as they interact with VR; how well does VR meet those needs. Chip commented that the RSA intends that CSNAs are a joint effort between the agency and the SRC. He again thanked Dan for having this forum to involve the SRC, and commented that the Council will be involved in every step of the way. Chip commented that no names or represented organizations will be noted in the report; may use quotes that help emphasize the points being made, but won't ascribe them to individuals.

For the remainder of the meeting Chip asked a series of Questions (examples below), and the SRC members shared their answers/thoughts.

- Who do you consider to be un-served and under served in New Jersey ?
- What are the challenges of the agency in serving these populations?
- What recommendations do you have to address these challenges?
- How well does the agency currently work with the required Workforce System partners (DD, MH, Medicaid, Workforce Centers)?
- What do you see are the biggest gaps in services for Transition Age youth?
- What other recommendations do you have to improve the services of this agency?
- How well does this agency work with Education partners on a state and local level?
- What are your expectations of this CSNA?

Rick thanked Chip, and noted that he hoped this all leads to improvement.

Sub-Committees:

Amanda commented that John had shared the college policy with the Policy Committee. Also expecting to have the 511 Subminimum Wage policy ready soon, as well as the new Supported Employment policy and will share with this subcommittee. Amanda noted they will reach out within the next month or so to organize a phone call in acknowledgement that we want to put these policies in place, but with consultation and agreement of the SRC. Susan commented that she and Fr. Jim had a phone conference regarding their review of NJAC 10:95 and put together recommendations for this policy. Dan noted that he, John, and Amanda will get together with Fr. Jim to review those recommendations.

Rick and Amanda reviewed the responsibilities of each of the sub-committees and identified who the chairpersons are. All members of the SRC are encouraged to participate in a committee. Contact Amanda if interested.

Old/New Business:

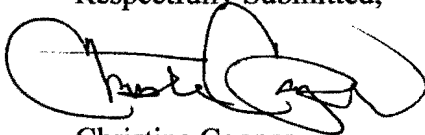
Chris Cooper will be asked to resend contact/email listing of SRC members to everyone on the Council.

Dan thanked everyone for participating in a slightly different type of meeting; fun, fruitful, insightful conversation. He commented that there are a number of graduation events occurring with the transition programs. They are usually fairly informal, but opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate the successes of the younger consumer community we have. If the Council is interested, Dan noted he would share a calendar of upcoming graduation events. If interested, Dan welcomed anyone that would like to participate and observe some of the transformative work that happens. Dan also encouraged members to read the Commission Edition each month; it gives a real sense of what's happening at the granular level. Finally, he thanked everyone for deciding that the interest of blind, vision impaired and deaf blind consumers is a priority that they want to positively influence; he expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the work done by the SRC. Dan commented to the Council members that his office is available for them to call and talk to him, if they have any questions or consumer concerns.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.. The next SRC meeting is scheduled for Friday, October 6, 2017.

Respectfully Submitted,



Christine Cooper
CBVI – Administrative Assistant