



**New York State  
Office of Children and Family Services  
Commission for the Blind and Visually  
Handicapped**

**State Rehabilitation Council  
Annual Report  
2009**

December 22, 2009

Dear Readers:

As 2009 draws to a close, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services' Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped celebrates another year of success marked by extraordinary support from our esteemed State Rehabilitation Council.

As the number of CBVH consumers finding meaningful employment continues to grow annually, the presence of the Council remains a supportive mechanism whose influence and inspiration is key to the expanding opportunities for New York State residents who are legally blind.

This report is a reflection of the hard work and dedication of the Council. Its thoughtful recommendations are ones that CBVH endeavors to consider and adopt so that our shared and proud service delivery system will continue to flourish and expand.

Even as New York confronts the challenges presented by the recent economic downturn, CBVH maintains great optimism. Together with the Council, we will nurture a climate that encourages continued success and program growth so that when we look back on 2009, once again we can claim unprecedented accomplishment and historic achievement in a system defined by our supportive and forward thinking stakeholders.

Sincerely,

Brian S. Daniels  
Associate Commissioner  
New York State Office of Children & Family Services  
Commission for the Blind & Visually Handicapped

December 22, 2009

The Honorable David A. Paterson  
State of New York  
Executive Chamber  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Paterson:

As Chairperson of the New York State Rehabilitation Council for the Office of Children and Family Services, Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped from January 2009 to present, I am pleased to present for your consideration the 2009 State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Annual Report.

Each year, the SRC produces this report to inform federal and state officials and the public about its work and accomplishments. This report highlights the SRC's activities of 2009 and the goals for 2010.

The SRC works in partnership with all of the key stakeholders responding to the needs of New Yorkers who are blind and/or visually impaired. Each member, as does the SRC as a whole, has a well defined purpose, but our influence does not come merely from legal or regulatory mandates. Our influence comes from the completion of our key work. Each member serves as the voice of the constituencies which he/she represents, and with that voice, each represents the voice of many.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Respectfully submitted,

Raymond V. Wayne  
NYS CBVH SRC Chairperson

Cc: Edward Anthony, Deputy Commissioner, Rehabilitation  
Services Administration  
Joe Pepin, State Liaison, Rehabilitation Services Administration  
Mike Rose, SRC Coordinator/Liaison, NYS CBVH

December 22, 2009

Mr. Edward Anthony, Deputy Commissioner  
Rehabilitation Services Administration  
US Department of Education  
Mary E. Switzer Building  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Deputy Commissioner Anthony:

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**New York State**  
**Office of Children & Family Services**  
**Commission for the Blind & Visually Handicapped**  
**State Rehabilitation Council**  
**Annual Report**  
**2009**

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), or, (the Council) for the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH) is pleased to issue its Annual Report for the Year 2009 to Governor David A. Paterson and Deputy Commissioner Edward Anthony of the Rehabilitation Services Administration. This report includes a discussion of the Council's activities during 2009 and plans for the upcoming year.

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is an advisory body mandated by Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The nature and scope of the Council's deliberations and recommendations include CBVH policies, procedures, and operations as they may affect consumers or applicants for agency services statewide. Additionally, the SRC assists in the development of federally required State plans and annual updates to those plans. Much of the Council's business is conducted in committees focusing on the CBVH priority issues of employment, children and transition services, and consumer needs assessment. In 2009, the SRC added a committee on assistive technology.

The SRC meets once each calendar quarter. The Council is comprised of members representing blind consumers, deaf-blind consumers, parents, educators, business, industry and labor, consumer advocacy groups, the New York State Workforce Investment Board, the New York State Client Assistance Program, and the New York State Independent Living Council. Ex Officio members represent The New York State Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), the New York State Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (CQCAPAD), the New York State Office for the Aging (SOFA), and various representatives from CBVH who provide information and assistance as requested by the Council. Meetings are open to the public and always include a public comment segment on the meeting agenda for individuals to provide input or bring issues of concern to the Council's attention.

## **Functions of the Rehabilitation Advisory Council (as stated in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act)**

The Council shall, after consulting with the State Workforce Investment Board -

1. Review, analyze, and advise the designated State unit regarding the performance of the responsibilities of the unit under this title, particularly responsibilities related to:
  - a. eligibility (including order of selection)
  - b. the extent, scope, and effectiveness of services provided; and
  - c. functions performed by State agencies that affect or that potentially affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes under this title;
  
2. In partnership with the designated State unit –
  - a. develop, agree to, and review State goals and priorities in accordance with section 101 (a)(15)(C); and
  - b. evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and submit reports of progress to the Commissioner in accordance with section 101(a)(15)(E);
  
3. Advise the designated State agency and the designated State unit regarding activities authorized to be carried out under this title, and assist in the preparation of the State plan and amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations required by this title;
  
4. To the extent feasible, conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with –
  - a. the functions performed by the designated State agency
  - b. vocational rehabilitation services provided by State agencies and other public and private entities responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this Act; and
  - c. employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals receiving services under this title, including the availability of health and other employment benefits in connection with such employment outcomes;
  
5. Prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and the Commissioner on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs operated within the State, and make the report available to the public;

6. To avoid duplication of efforts and enhance the number of individuals served, coordinate activities with the activities of other councils within the State, including the Statewide Independent Living Council established under section 705, the advisory panel established under section 612(a)(21) of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (as amended by section 101 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997; Public Law 105-17), the State Developmental Disabilities Council described in section 124 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (42 U.S.C. 6024), the State mental health planning council established under section 1914 (a) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300x-4(a)), and the State workforce investment board;
7. Provide for coordination and the establishment of working relationships between the designated State agency and the Statewide Independent Living Council and centers for independent living within the state; and
8. Perform such other functions, consistent with the purpose of this title, as the State Rehabilitation Council determines to be appropriate, that are comparable to the other functions performed by the Council.

## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

In early 2009, seven new members were appointed to the SRC, bringing it almost to its full membership compliment. More than half of its voting members are blind. The first quarterly meeting was devoted almost entirely to orientation of these new members. These are dynamic individuals who have already provided invaluable input to the Council.

Sadly, on May 19, 2009, we lost our Coordinator/Liaison, Todd Eggert, who passed away. Todd worked with the SRC for over nine years, first as a voting member, then as its primary liaison with CBVH. He is deeply missed. CBVH promptly appointed a new Coordinator/Liaison, Mike Rose, who has done an outstanding job.

This year, CBVH received \$6.4 million (\$4 million for Vocational rehabilitation services; \$2.3 million for Older Blind services; and \$137,102 for Independent Living Part B services) in additional federal funding as a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). CBVH sought input from the SRC as well as from other stakeholders as to how this funding could best be utilized.

At each quarterly meeting, CBVH Associate Commissioner Brian Daniels, or his designee, provided SRC members with informational updates on key issues that could impact on CBVH programs, services, and initiatives.

At each meeting, the CBVH Executive Board liaison to the SRC updated the Council as to the activities of the Executive Board. The Executive Board, which was established in 2007, issued its first report to the Governor in mid 2009. The Executive Board liaison provided the Council with a copy of the report and summarized its recommendations. Many of those recommendations closely parallel the recommendations of the various SRC committees as will be detailed later in this Report.

CBVH staff presented a summary of recommendations made at the three CBVH Town Meetings held in early 2009. Town Meetings are held to gain input and proposals for the State Plan. The SRC sent a representative to two of the meetings. Staff also provided SRC members with a copy of the State Plan and CBVH Information Booklet and asked for comments.

In addition, Barbara Campbell, a CBVH VR counselor recently appointed as an Ex-Officio member of the Council, reported on an exciting medical initiative in which she is participating. In mid 2009, Ms. Campbell, who has Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP), was fitted with an artificial retina called the Argos 2 Implant, manufactured by Second Sight Medical Products. With this device, Ms. Campbell has been able to distinguish light and dark more precisely, and, in some instances, read large print on a computer screen. This technology is in its early stages, but offers promise in the case of individuals with certain eye conditions.

## COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

For the past several years the SRC has maintained three standing committees to parallel the CBVH strategic plan priorities of employment services, children and transition services, and needs assessment. This year, in response to members' and staff's suggestions, we added an Assistive Technology Committee.

The primary issues discussed and recommendations made by the four standing committees in 2009 were:

Assistive Technology Committee - The Assistive Technology Committee has studied the process by which consumers are referred for and receive adaptive technology, including hardware, software, and upgrades. The Committee emphasizes that CBVH needs to work to reduce the turn-around time, that is, the time it takes for equipment or upgrades to be delivered to a consumer after a need for such equipment or upgrades has been found to exist. The goal should be that the consumer receives the needed equipment or upgrade within forty-five days of the beginning of the process. The Committee further recommends that in order to improve performance of vendors of equipment, CBVH needs to encourage competition among vendors. At present only one or two vendors provide these goods and services throughout New York State. The Committee will look into the State's and CBVH's contracting process in order to determine how it may be modified to encourage competition, and thereby improve performance and improve service to consumers. The Committee is also concerned that consumers be kept informed during the recommendation and approval process, especially as to modifications in recommendations for equipment or upgrades. It may be desirable to develop a form to be signed by the consumer indicating that he or she knew what was recommended and what was ultimately approved. Finally, the Committee intends to explore how consumer choice is being implemented, that is, whether consumers are being fully informed as to what equipment or upgrades may be available to them.

Children & Transition Committee - The Children & Transition Committee is reviewing information distribution, Website development, and career development for children's services. The Committee emphasizes that CBVH needs to attract youths and redesign its marketing strategies to improve awareness in the community. The Committee recommends development of a marketing packet to inform people of career opportunities within the blindness community. The Committee also recommends that CBVH update its Website to include youth geared Web pages. These Web pages need to be accessible, interactive, and attractive to youth groups. The Committee recommends that the CBVH Website include access to Facebook and Twitter groups for youths that could list CBVH and/or community events. Access to these groups can be limited to people invited to join. The purpose of these groups would be to connect people with friends and others who live around them. Also, the groups would be used to list events, distribute information to more people in less time

and at lower cost, keep people informed of news, and gather information. The Committee also recommends that the CBVH Website include a listing of career opportunities. Finally, the Committee recommends that CBVH redesign the appearance of its literature to make it more appealing to youths.

Employment Services Committee - During the past year, Employment Committee members have continued to review CBVH's activities to increase employment outcomes. The Committee is looking into ways to provide more and better placement of individuals. The committee reviewed the 2008 CBVH statistics for placement and the committee will be trying to analyze how people are being counted in comparison to the non blind community. The committee discussed ways of building relationships between placement counselors and people who are seeking jobs; building relationships with placement counselors and potential employers; and ways to help foster employer and employee relationships. They reviewed the relationship between timely technology and increasing positive employment outcomes. The committee discussed agency placement and the work they are doing and CBVH projects. There are currently four placement contracts with Independent Living Centers to provide placement services. The IRS, Social Security, and "USAJobs" website have also posted employment opportunities; however, it remains difficult to get people through the approval process. The committee would like to see CBVH investigate "interest" or "aptitude" testing to help determine job interest of their clients. The committee will be requesting more information concerning the testing process from CBVH during 2010. The committee looked into client work experiences and they feel more youth participation is critical. Programs such as this go a long way in offering participants real work experiences with real goals. The committee began to investigate 55B status for state employment based on the great potential state employment offers.

Recommendations:

1. CBVH should begin to offer "interest testing" at the regional offices,
2. CBVH should look into more placements in 55a, b and c positions in local and state jobs, as well as placement in analogues federal programs.

Needs Assessment Committee - In 2008 the Needs Assessment Committee worked with CBVH to develop five surveys -one to assess overall consumer satisfaction with CBVH and contractor agency services, and, four to assess consumer competency. In 2008, the Center for Essential Management Services (CEMS) conducted surveys to assess consumer competency in four specific skill areas. CEMS surveyed individuals whose cases had been closed in status 26, 28 or 30 in Fiscal Year 2007. The surveys explored four skill areas: Placement; Communication; Orientation and Mobility (O & M); and Daily Living. CEMS analyzed the data according to the three types of closures: Successful Closure (26); Unsuccessful Closure after provision of services (28); and Unsuccessful Closure before a plan of services was completed (30). When CEMS reviewed the findings it made several observations as to the differences between

Successful Closures (26) and Unsuccessful Closures (28) and (30). First, consumers in the (26) category were more confident, independent, and capable of using public transportation. Further, many consumers were reluctant to use public transportation even when it was available. Many consumers were taught mobility one route at a time, and thus, did not develop the skills to work out an unfamiliar route when the need arose to do so. Finally, very few of the consumers surveyed were Braille literate; but those who read and wrote Braille were more likely to be gainfully employed. The committee recommends that mobility training needs to be structured to include learning how to deal with new situations as they arise. The consumer should not have to depend on the mobility instructor to retrain him or her to get to a new destination; he or she should be able to acquire the needed information. The committee further emphasizes that Braille needs to be taught to more consumers. We have all talked the talk, but most blind and visually impaired New Yorkers are still unnecessarily limited in their ability to read and write. The Needs Assessment Committee will work to put the information acquired from the surveys to use in determining in what respects and in what programs services are being provided well, and to determine where improvement is needed.

## **2010 GOALS AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES**

The SRC is scheduled to meet quarterly in 2010. The Council will participate with CBVH in development of the State Plan for Federal Fiscal Year 2011 including information gathering from its members' respective constituencies. In addition, the SRC will work to strengthen its connections with other SRC's outside New York State, as well as with the National Council of SRC's and the National Council of Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies. Further, the SRC will work with CBVH to develop one or more mentoring programs, as well as other mechanisms to bring blind New Yorkers together so that they may learn from and support one another. Finally, the four standing committees will work with CBVH to bring about implementation of their various recommendations. Many of the recommendations of the committees overlap with one another as well as with those of the CBVH Executive Board. Communication and brainstorming among the members of all of these bodies will further refine their recommendations, and thereby result in an across the board improvement in services and opportunities for blind and visually impaired New Yorkers.