

**Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped  
State Rehabilitation Council  
September 22, 2011**

**SRC Members Present** – Mike Godino, Aaron Baier, Patty Eisenhandler, Jenny Santiago, Lisa Rosano, Linda Olson, Eric Randolph, Monica Redeye, and Bob Gumson. Ken Stewart (by phone)

**CBVH Staff present:** Tracy Cooper, Peter Herrig, Mary Ann van Alstyne, Mike Rose, Sharon Flom, & Brian S. Daniels

SRC members absent: Ray Wayne, Mindy Jacobsen & Dennis O'Connell

**Chair's Comments**

Mike started his comments about the "Newsline" bill that was passed by the Senate and the Assembly. The Governor still has the option of vetoing it on Friday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>. He has a concern about the controversy surrounding the funding stream in the bill. As it stands right now, Newsline would get its funding from a one cent tax added to every New Yorker's phone bill, which adds up to about \$400,000 a year. This is substantially more than is needed to run Newsline. The American Council of the Blind of New York (ACBNY) would like the Governor to veto this bill, have the government give CBVH enough money to fund Newsline (or be funded through the State's library system, as they do in Massachusetts), Mike would like to get action items identified for the SRC Annual Report and pass it at the next meeting in December. The deadline is December 31<sup>st</sup> for the Annual Report.

Mike asked if the Council could approve the June 2011 minutes. Linda motioned that the minutes be approved and Jenny seconded the motion. Minutes were passed. The minutes were approved after two errors were fixed:

1. ACB stands for American Council of the Blind, not for the Blind
2. deaf/blind attendees of meetings are provided with sign language interpreters (by ACB), but not with Support Service Provider (SSP's). Attendees must bring their own SSP's.

**Brian Daniels' Presentation**

Brian reported that CBVH continues to do very well in meeting the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration Standards and Indicators (RSA). Status 26 closures, representing remunerative employment closures, have increased from last year. Projections clearly indicate that CBVH will meet all six Standards and Indicators in Part 1, meaning that CBVH remains free from a Program Improvement Plan as well as a Corrective Action Plan. Early next year, the RSA will be on site to for its periodic Monitoring of CBVH activity.

CBVH is down by about 15% in staff (from 150 to 130). Support and Management staff will be furloughed for 5 days in State Fiscal Year 2011 and 4 days in 2012.

Brian stated that the RSA noted that our Council is not fully constituted and required an insertion into the State Plan, assuring compliance. The Office of Children and Family Services is working with the appointing authority to prioritize these fills. The SUNY/CUNY seat is not a requirement for the Council. All other seats are required from the RSA. Mike Godino may have a candidate for the SUNY/CUNY seat.

Brian indicated that the Business Enterprise Program expansion is moving quicker than planned. A meeting with both SUNY institutions in Buffalo to discuss potential opportunities is scheduled for October. Training for BEP has been occurring "in-house" with the BEP program. BEP referrals can be made through the BEP office or through the consumer's vocational rehabilitation counselor.

Patty asked "How much does CBVH contribute to Newline annually?" Brian reported \$137,000.

### **Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**Monica Redeye's presentation about Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation-**Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation is part of Section 121 in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It's 1% of the top federal allotment of vocational rehabilitation program funding. 78 tribes nationwide have this grant. Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation is similar to Access VR. It provides the same services except for tribal healing.

The Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation Inc. (CANAR) mission is to serve as an avenue for collaboration and cooperation between Administrators of rehabilitation projects serving Native American persons with disabilities, to increase and enhance the quality of services, resulting in positive outcomes for Native American persons with disabilities. CANAR's June 2012 conference will be held at the Niagara Falls /Seneca Hotel & Casino. Monica extended an invitation to the SRC members

Back in the 70's, the Navajo nation (which is one of the largest tribes with over 100,000 members) began providing VR services for tribal members with disabilities. The program was funded by the state. Although amendments to the rehabilitation legislation were enacted in 1978, funds were not appropriated to carry over into Section 138 (currently, the Section 121 program) until 1981. They received \$650,000. In 1984, an amendment occurred to set up the Client Assistance Program (CAP) in each state and also part of tribal vocational rehabilitation.

The counseling portion for tribal rehabilitation has additional culture-related aspects. For example, counseling is sensitive to the consumer's tribe's culture, and this often includes things like going to a healing lodge, or first providing some basic unmet needs, such as food and clothing.

Some of the challenges faced by the Seneca Nation are historical, such as when children were first sent to boarding school, they were beaten for speaking their own language. At home, they grew up without affection or what we now call social skills. Anyone with a disability was just considered unique and part of everyday life. There was no certain cause to their disability.

Another drawback that CANAR counselors face is that annuities are received by each tribe member in the amount of \$2000 every three months. The Seneca Nation gives people with a disability who live on the reservation, an additional \$500 per month. People use this money to live on and don't see the incentive to look for a job to earn money. A number of people don't consider themselves disabled, even though they are. Other tribes that have 500 people and if there is a casino on their land, they receive up to \$20,000 and there is a high drug and alcohol abuse. Tribal members are not using VR services enough.

There is an advisory board with the Tribal VR program. Members include: CBVH, ACCES-VR, Allegany Regional Development Committee (ARDC), Client Assistance Program (CAP), and Neighborhood Legal Committee of Buffalo.

If there is a complaint with services, CAP will meet with a member and assist in filing their grievance. The next step is to meet with the Program Manager, Monica to see if they can resolve the issue. If the issue is not resolved, then the Director of Employment Training will attempt to resolve the grievance. Once all avenues have attempted and nothing has been resolved, then the Nation Council will review the case.

Currently, there are 43 active cases. The goal is to serve 35 people and to have 8 people employed. Currently, 6 consumers have jobs. The Seneca Nation has two reservations: Alleghany/Cattaraugus reservation closer to Pennsylvania and Seneca. Tribal VR also covers Alleghany, Erie, Chautauqua and Cattaraugus counties. A 20 mile radius outside the county boundaries has also been included for services in case there are tribal members living outside the area. The Seneca's VR service area has recently been expanded to include the Buffalo and Niagara Falls area. There are also three school districts that work with the Seneca tribal vocational program: Gowanda, Silver Creek, and Lakeshore.

ACCES-VR and CBVH participate with Tribal VR by "client-sharing," wherein both agencies contribute services and funding. Funding is decided between the two agency counselors. This allows both agencies to get a successful 26 closure.

The OAHIIO Club, meaning "good mind.", also works with Monica's program. Based on the Western New York Independent Living Center website, "OAHIIO provides "walls free" mobile services on and off Western New York's Native territories to Native's with disabilities, who wish to improve their quality of life and ability to live independently. All requests for Native American Independent Living Services NAILS services, communication and information regarding services received from participants is kept strictly confidential and used only for meeting participant needs and achieving participant goals". For more information, please go to, <http://www.wnyil.org/departments.php#OAHIIO>.

Monica mentioned that some outreach activities include: Disability Mentoring Day, tribal socials (songs, dances, and food), presentations with other tribal department programs, and other community events.

Brian reported that in the future, cultural competence training will include more of what Monica spoke about, including differences and similarities among various Native American tribes and Nations. Technical Assistance & Continuing Education (TACE) will be doing this training, rather than a private vendor.

### **Executive Board Report**

Mindy Jacobsen was not present. She reported to the SRC liaison that there is no news to report. Also, the Executive Board has not met since our SRC meeting in June.

## **Report of Nominating Committee**

Linda Olson represented the Nominating Committee. She reported that the Chair, Mike Godino and Vice Chair, Aaron Baier were up for reelection. Linda asked three times for other nominations, no one else expressed an interest. Lisa Rosano motioned to keep Mike as Chair and Aaron as Vice Chair. Jenny Santiago seconded the motion and each one kept their positions.

## **Committee Reports**

**Policy, Procedures, & Planning Committee members:** Lisa, Aaron, Peter, and Sharon. It was reported that the CBVH home office and district offices are reviewing the Assistive Technology policies. The committee has requested that they get a copy of the policy to make comments. Another topic was reviewing existing policies. The committee would like to review and provide input in order to get them updated "for the current economic climate." (Such as the VR manual). The committee would like to participate more in the state plan during the beginning phases.

**Quality Assurance Committee Members:** Bob, Mike and Mike. The SRC wants info on the "whys" for statuses 28 and 30. The definition of Status 28 and 30 are listed below from the CBVH Vocational Rehabilitation Manual.

### **Status 28**

A consumer closed in Status 28 has not achieved his/her vocational goal after having received at least one planned VR service.

A consumer moves into Status 28 when the following criteria have been met:

1. The consumer has been determined eligible;
2. The consumer has received an assessment to determine vocational rehabilitation needs;
3. An IPE has been completed;
4. At least one service planned in the IPE has been initiated; and
5. for some reason the consumer was unable to achieve the vocational goal.

Movement into Status 28 can occur only from Statuses 18, 20 or 22.

### **Status 30**

A consumer closed in Status 30 has been determined eligible for VR services but is unable to achieve the vocational goal and has not received any planned VR services.

A consumer will enter Status 30 if:

1. No IPE has been developed, or
2. No service planned in an IPE has been provided, and
3. For some reason, circumstances preclude participation in the VR program as outlined in the IPE.

Movement into Status 30 can occur only from Status 10. Is there anything else that could/should be done, besides what's already being done? Background data is needed from each consumer to see if there's a trend, or perhaps something like "10 Top Reasons for Unsuccessful Closures" Mary Ann indicated that ACCESS-VR's reviewed this issue a few years ago. Lisa Van Ryn would be the VR Access contact person to find out more information.

**Workforce Development Committee members:** Jenny, Linda, Patty, Monica, Eric and Mary Ann. The committee would like to explore the feasibility and/or make recommendations for Transition programming. Are there enough programs? How about having a centralized database (where there have been WET's, prevocational programs, and where there are special programs of shorter durations) of what they are and where they are? Another topic

discussed was the non college-bound students (vocational school or job training). Another issue is that was brought up is why have Supported Employment Closures declined this year?

**Membership Committee members:** Jenny, Tracy, Linda, Patty. It was reported that the committee will compile a list of members complete with contact information and the areas they cover. The committee is also working on the writing the history of blindness services. The bylaws have not been updated since 2007 and Membership committee would like to review and make recommendations. Next year's schedule will be done (update: scheduling will occur in January 2012, along with committee descriptions and scopes. These will be made available electronically and a draft should be ready by our December 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

### **Youth Leadership Program Overview**

The second Leadership Program was held in August and was a huge success. Laurie reported that it was even better than last year's program. Twenty-seven youth attended, six of whom were Braille users. Students were housed in two separate dorms this year which worked much better than housing the youth in one dorm. This year five residential assistants were hired which helped tremendously with morning and evening activities. There was a security guard in each dorm from 11 PM – 7 AM each night.

The Leadership Program had excellent leaders: Dr. Karen Wolffe (a well known international consultant who is a member of both ACB and NFB) and Joe Strechay from the American Foundation of the Blind. One very popular session was the panel discussion which featured four current and previous consumers discussing their individual stories. SRC Vice-Chair Aaron Baier participated on the panel and was very well received. Many students approached the panel members after the session and continued the discussion. Laurie reported that the session highlighting the two New York State Advocacy groups, ACB and NFB, was also well received.

Each student was provided an Olympus digital recorder at the beginning of the week, enabling them to take notes during classroom hours and refer to them during the evenings.

Dr. Wolffe will be meeting electronically with all students every two months for a year, reviewing individual action plans and providing advice. It is anticipated that this will be the last leadership program, as it was funded with ARRA dollars. CBVH expects to incorporate the best parts of the program into the Pre-College Program. It is expected than an RFP (request for proposals) will be issued by the end of the year.

### **Updates on ACB and NFB Forums in Albany and Utica, NY**

Mike Rose reported that both forums were held on the same day. He stated that they were very lively and interactive. About 30 people were present at each forum. Mike will edit notes before forwarding them to the SRC members. The NFB forum had more people bringing up personal issues than ACB; both cities had lots of questions regarding what the state agencies can do for them, including providing more types of training. Janice and Brian were present at the forums.

### **Action Items for 2011 Report, & Deliberation and Discussion, Wrap-up & Agenda planning for December meeting & Adjourn Agenda planning for December –**

Mike Godino reported that he has a good idea of what items will be in the 2011 annual report.

Ray Cebula will be attending the next meeting in December. It is also planned that Molly Rimer of Helen Keller Center will discuss the results of the deaf-blind needs assessment. At the next meeting, which will be in March 2012, a training retreat was presented. The online SRC training was a topic discussed and members will be receiving the link in an email. The SRC would like to add a half day of training from Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute's Tom Golden (if he is available), perhaps three or four hours in the morning of the second day (arrangements will be made with the hotel for an additional night's stay). This would be very beneficial and informative not only for new SRC members, but for the older ones as well. Social security benefits will also be discussed in March. We look forward to getting lots of practical, usable information.

Aaron motioned to adjourn the meeting and Jenny seconded. Meeting adjourned at 2:05 pm. The next SRC meeting will be held on Friday, December 2, 2011 in Albany, NY.

Minutes respectfully submitted by CBVH staff.