

EXECUTIVE BOARD

COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY HANDICAPPED

January 17, 2008

MINUTES

Co-chairman, Charles Richardson called the meeting to order at 8:45 AM.

In attendance were:

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Co-chairmen

Alan R. Morse, JD, PhD

Charles Richardson

Members

John Bartimole

Carena Collura

Tara Cortes, RN, PhD

Christina Curry,

Maria Garcia

Karen Gourgey, EdD

Cantor, Dr. Mindy Jacobsen

Luis Mendez, Esq.

Julie Phillipson

Tom Robertson

David Stayer, LCSW

COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY HANDICAPPED

Brian Daniels, Associate Commissioner

Peter Crowley , Assistant Commissioner

Joseph Nye, Liaison to the Board

Mr. Richardson introduced Gladys Carrion, the Commissioner of the Office of Children and

Family Services (OCFS). She welcomed the Executive Board on the important occasion of our first meeting and explained that the Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH) falls under her jurisdiction. Brian Daniels, the Associate Commissioner of (CBVH) sits in her cabinet where he plays a significant role in its leadership. Ms. Carrion noted that one of the hallmarks of her administration is the involvement of the community in the work of OCFS so that its programs can be responsive to our needs. She and the Governor are strong proponents of transparency and attempt to reach out to as many people as possible. She asked that we consider web casting our meetings in the future, despite the fact that we do not fall under the open meetings law. OCFS is proud of the work of CBVH because this is the second year that CBVH has increased its employment placement rate, this year, by three per cent. She thanked us for our attendance and dedication.

Co-chairman Charles Richardson then introduced Brian Daniels. Brian thanked Commissioner Carrion for placing CBVH in such a significant place within the OCFS and that that it is his privilege to work with her. He thanked her for always being there to listen and ask the pertinent, and sometimes tough questions. Mr. Daniels told us that he has served New York State government for about 14 years, first as part of the Cuomo administration, and when the new administration came in he was reassigned to the Office of Regulatory reform where he investigated CBVH and the vision rehabilitation system. He then took the position of deputy Director of CBVH where he served under Tom Robertson for nine years. Brian and CBVH are eager to work with the Executive Board which he feels is extremely important, has great potential and must make change.

Brian then discussed the pressure CBVH is feeling from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), which, he said, feels that CBVH is too dependant upon the private agencies. Mr. Daniels said that RSA encouraged CBVH to decrease the involvement of the agencies in favor of the public sector, but that he explained that New York doesn't work that way.

Brian then told us that he understood that there was a sense within the community, that the bureaucracy at CBVH had grown considerably under his administration. He told us that the net growth was two staff members, one of whom had been scheduled prior to his arrival. He asserted that CBVH has maintained the line on hiring while continuing to invest in the private sector. He then addressed the report which outlined a decline of CBVH service in several places, but noted that it covered a period ending with the year 2005. In 2006 and 2007, he said that the employment placement rate had increased by ten percent -- the first time there has been an increase in that area for two consecutive years since 1999-2000.

Another issue identified in the report (up to 2005) is that CBVH was not meeting federal standards and indicators, but it has done so for the last two years. He is hoping that CBVH's

progress will be recognized and that it will officially be in full compliance soon. He thanked Commissioner Carrion, the entire CBVH staff and many of the Executive Board members for making this accomplishment possible.

BRIAN then thanked Marc Leinung for his cooperation Joe Nye for stating what was on his mind, making cogent suggestions, and being a great administrator. He also thanked Peter Crowley for being a true friend and partner and commended him for profoundly improving the Business Enterprise Program (BEP).

Co-chairman Alan Morse then introduced himself and recognized that everyone in the room was anxious to see and find ways to build a more responsive and sensitive service delivery system. All indicators point toward the economic climate in the state and country affecting this board in some way. Alan said that part of our mission is to help the community to find its voice.

Our report to the governor will be due in January, 2009. Our co-chairmen expect most of the work of this board to be done in committees. He pointed out that some answers to our questions might be found in places not obvious at first, e.g. outside the state. When we meet in the future, it will be important for each committee to report on its progress and to present evidence, based on facts rather than opinions. The committees should not rely on the opinion of the board at large in completing their reports, but rather should rely on facts.

Alan apologized profusely for the inaccessibility of the materials disseminated to the Executive Board prior to this meeting and will do everything he can to avoid this happenstance again. He assumed that any material provided by CBVH would automatically be accessible, and suggested that they make every effort to insure that future requested materials are accessible.

In addition, although the work of CBVH is obviously important, other agencies that touch the blind community need attention too. Alan feels that prevention of the effects of blindness is one thing for which we should do everything possible.

Detection: are we appropriately identifying blindness across the age line -- children, senior citizens (20 percent or more of those in nursing homes), in the education system, (beginning with pre-school), etc.

Are we maximizing use of technology in and out of the classroom? Lack of at least some proficiency in the use of computers is a handicap.

Vocational rehabilitation: Alan feels that the choice of eighteen agencies for the blind is far too few. There would be a hue and cry, for example, if there were only eighteen hospitals throughout the state from which patients could choose. He feels that access to vision care and

vision rehabilitation would be greatly enhanced if all health care facilities knew how to work with blind patients.

Seniors, Alan's rough estimate is that the state of New York spends approximately ten million (\$10,000,000) dollars a year serving senior citizens. This is something we should address.

The board was then asked to introduce ourselves.

Tara Cortes, RN, PhD, President and CEO of LIGHTHOUSE International. Dr. Cortes is excited about the opportunity to share in one another's knowledge and wisdom in an attempt to provide the greatest possible access to services.

Karen Gourgey, EdD, is the Director Of The Computer Center For Visually Impaired People at Baruch College and President of the Greater New York chapter of the American Council of the Blind of New York State. One of her goals is to see health care and rehabilitation begin to listen to each other. She says that blind patients do not want to be considered patients by virtue of their blindness. She believes that the two systems have a lot to tell each other. She would also like to make sure that people losing vision know that there is life, fulfillment bad jokes, etc after vision loss and that we can find ways of making that truer than ever.

Carena Collura has been a teacher of the blind and visually impaired for seven years and a certified educator for twenty. Her specialties lie in the area of children with multiple disabilities and autism. She works with The Center for Discovery, helping to provide services to children in some 65 districts across the state. She sees, every day, that people don't know where to get services – from doctors or dayhab settings and her hope is that through this board, that lack of information can be addressed.

David Stayer, LCSW, says that he is one of the seniors we're talking about. A retired social worker with a 37 year career in the hospital at which he served and blind since birth, his goal is to see that blind people have a say in the decisions about their lives and the services provided to them.

Luis Mendez, Esq. is an attorney specializing in environmental law. He has been blind since birth, and is the past president of the Syracuse chapter of the (ACB of New York state. He noted that his daughter is the past president of the Student Division of the National Federation of the Blind of New York State, which made for some interesting dinner table conversation. His goals are to provide input and recommendations to CBVH that will help to strengthen and broaden current services and expand them to more people, most of all seniors. Also, eventually, either through CBVH or another agency, he hopes we can establish an entity that would work with, for example, how the state addresses technology, promotes employment, provides and/or advocates

for transportation, provides instruction in understanding state and federal tax filing, deals with policies relating to blindness and visual impairment at the state and national levels, and promotes self-sufficiency.

John Bartimole is President of the Western New York Health Care Association and also teaches at St. Bonaventure University, where he served as Interim Dean for 22 years. He has a legally blind, seventeen year old daughter and says that finding services for her has been a struggle. His goals are to educate other parents about getting services and to see the health care and blindness and visual impairment systems integrated.

Julie Phillipson holds a Masters degree in Education from the University Of Buffalo and is an officer of the Buffalo chapter and the state affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind of New York State. She works primarily, with advocacy for the NFB. She is interested in the quality and outcome of services to the blind of New York. She lost her vision at age twelve and had a very hard time because she didn't know what services were available to her.

Maria Garcia is the parent of a blind child and the president of Parents of Blind Children of New York (POBCNY) which reaches out and advocates for parents across the state. She also sits on the national board of POBC and is the Public Advocate's appointee to the City-Wide Council on Special Education in New York City. She is particularly interested in seeing why children with some residual vision are falling through the educational cracks and why their issues are not being dealt with as diligently as she believes they could be.

Cantor, Dr. Mindy Jacobsen is concerned about the quality and outcome of services provided, particularly to seniors who are losing vision, and children. She feels that many of the senior citizens with whom she works believe that they have been thoroughly trained and that the fact that they are not comfortable traveling or cannot keep their own phone lists or appointments is their own lack. She is anxious to see their training outcomes determined by their levels of independence and regained dignity.

Tom Robertson is the Director of the Northeastern Association of the Blind in Albany, and spent 33 years working with the CBVH (For the last nine of which, he served as the Associate Commissioner.) until his retirement two years ago. If he thought the charge of this board was to take CBVH apart he would never have agreed to serve. Instead, he sees this as a rare opportunity to make the system work seamlessly through perhaps other entities who might have much to contribute. We might have the opportunity, through our collective experiences, to write on a clean sheet of paper -- to design a system that deals with the larger issues that have not been dealt with. He pointed out that the lack in the system didn't happen because well-meaning people have not tried, but believes that this board has a rare opportunity to effect change.

Christina Curry is the executive Director of the Harlem Independent Living Center. She is primarily deaf, but a few years ago began to lose some vision. She says that there are not enough services for the deaf people without vision. Some of the important issues for Ms. Curry deal with the lack of services to non-English speaking visually impaired and deaf underserved populations in the areas of domestic violence, mental health etc. She wants to remind people about deaf blind issues.

Charles Richardson is the chairman of the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Advisory Committee and is the president of the Blind Merchants Division of the NFB of New York State. Charlie lost his sight at the age of 20, due to optic neuropathy. He agrees that when blindness comes, outreach is missing. He has worked in the BEP for seventeen years. He is particularly concerned about the vocational end of service to the blind community. He says that services from which recipients exit with confidence and competence will yield people who are ready to work and therefore, a higher rate of employment.

Alan R. Morse, JD, PhD is President and Chief Executive Officer of The Jewish Guild for the Blind and its subsidiaries where he has worked since 1968. His interests include the influence of vision loss on health care utilization, optimizing the delivery of vision and healthcare services, and the implications of vision loss, particularly when combined with cognitive impairment. Dr. Morse is also an Adjunct Professor of Ophthalmology at Columbia University. He is particularly interested in removing barriers to service and in delivering services in an integrated manner, as compared to our existing fractionated system.

Dr. Morse then began a detailed review of the statute that created the Executive Board, to clarify its mission and purpose. : we are an Executive Board of CBVH consisting of a maximum of fifteen members, at least half of whom must be blind. We are currently waiting for two more appointments from Assembly Speaker Silver.

Our reason for being: Alan read from the statute that we are designed to represent "A diversity of approaches to issues facing the blind and visually impaired INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO mobility, employment, independent living skills, rehabilitative services". Alan pointed out that the magic legal words there are "including, but not limited to" which indicates that our focus is to be broadly construed.

We are entitled to be reimbursed for actual necessary expenses for the performance of our official duties. Brian will do a group voucher so we won't have to pay the hotel at all, in the future. The tax we paid this time will not be reimbursable [note: subsequent to the meeting Ken Galarneau of CBVH amended that to indicate that tax would, for the first meeting only, be reimbursed due to the confusion of how to properly use the State Tax ID). .

In order to be recognized by either chair, we will state our names. If they then say our names, we will know that we have the floor. Christina asked that we not talk over each other because it is difficult for her interpreters.

Mindy suggested that someone on the Executive Board take notes which will constitute our history. She asked if it would be all right to record the meetings for verification purposes. Luis suggested that executive sessions not be recorded. He thought that, perhaps someone from CBVH might take the notes, if the budget would allow that, so that all members of the board might participate fully in the proceedings. Brian indicated that there was no budget for a note-taker. Mindy expressed the concern that those of us on the board would have a better sense of what we needed to know and could discern more readily what we would consider important. She volunteered to take the notes.

Luis how will we access materials provided to us, either our committees or the full board, by entities other than those already equipped to produce them accessibly. Alan read us the part of the statute that spoke about the Executive Board conducting its business by and through the chairs and not needing a quorum to do so. He said that in compliance with that part of the statute, committees should direct data requests through the chairs so they can aggregate all our questions and they will consolidate the data requests. Karen suggested that information in graphs and tables might be summarized in paragraph form. Alan is concerned about materials from other sources. Karen suggested that the providers of the information be asked to take some responsibility for the accessibility of the documents they provide. Luis told us that agencies are not legally responsible for the accessibility of requested information but suggested that the state should begin to provide all public information in accessible form.

Alan then continued reading from the statute at 1 b 1, About identifying problems and deficiencies in services and programs effecting blind and visually impaired persons. We may also make recommendations regarding improvement of the coordination of state, local, public and private programs and services.

Next, We are to review various services for blind and visually impaired persons including, but not limited to vocational rehabilitation, and other services and programs such as instruction of the deaf and the blind and the New York State school for the blind at Batavia, and the sale of products made and/or processed by the blind. There is also a reference to improving existing services and programs and recommending new ones. In addition, there is a provision for reviewing and recommending resolution of differences concerning rules and regulations of state and local agencies in so far as they impact the blind and visually impaired. Alan suggests that this section is where questions of accessibility might be addressed.

The next section deals with supported programs and services, plans and proposals for new programs, and recommendations regarding the coordination of those services. Alan feels that this is a place where integration of services from multiple agencies, addressing several different needs might be covered.

We are then enjoined to do all things necessary to carry out the responsibilities of this board. Further, the Executive Board is to investigate the condition of blind and visually impaired people in the state with particular reference to those who are aged, homeless and needy and the importance of the procurement of additional means required for the care for such persons. Luis pointed out that the language regarding the homeless and needy is a throwback to the days prior to SSI but it might prove useful in researching some of the areas outlined above.

We are to submit a report and recommendations to the Governor, The temporary President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the Assembly on or before January 1, 2009. On or before January first of each year, the CBVH will report to the same entities plus the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and the Assembly Ways and Means Committee chairman that should include, but not be limited to the disposition of any recommendations of the Executive Board and the impact of those recommendations on the clients.

Mindy Jacobsen asked if it would be possible to set up microphones around the room for future meetings and Mark Leinung will work on that.

Alan's conclusion is that anything that might have an impact on blind people is fair game. Luis Asked the CBVH staff how much of a challenge it would place on them if we were to ask them to broaden their functions so that they actually served, as a focal point and coordinating role for other state agencies that have programs that impact on blind and visually impaired people. He doesn't want it to be an extraordinary burden on their resources without recommending ways of enhancing those resources. Brian says that they have this in place' but other partners will need to be willing to cooperate. Alan said that we shouldn't impose fiscal constraints on ourselves: there will be plenty of others to do that for us.

Work plan and schedule:

Dates for future meetings are 4/9, 9/10, and 11/19. By the September meeting, committees should have reports of some kind -- not just what we want to do, but what we have done so far. We can ask the board's recommendations or a sense of future direction, but there should be some kind of summary of our goals and where we are in terms of meeting them. A 40 committee page report would be too long while two pages would be too short. John Bartimole teaches writing at the college level and will work with Charlie and Alan to edit the final report. Karen asked what if there is a serious divide within committees or within the board at large -- will there be a place

for a minority report? Alan said "absolutely," no voice will be unheard. The report will not, in the end, come from a committee, but from the Board. Even if a committee agrees within itself, members of the board might disagree with its findings so minority opinions will be included in the overall report.

Committees:

Technology:

Karen Gourgey, Mindy Jacobsen, and Charles Richardson

Alan asked if we would like to talk about the areas we think the committee should cover. Karen pointed out that accessibility, not just materials presented to us but to the blind public in general, and the use of technology to support increased access are areas we might cover. We might use technology training to make governmental entities aware of the accessibility issue. She also reminded us of the huge need, among people with vision loss, to have prompt and appropriate computer training, because once they can begin to access and keep track of information, they can begin to gain parity in society. Charlie said that people need to know about what's out there and perhaps we can look at ways of reaching out to them. Luis wondered if there needed to be a state counterpart to section 508 of a federal government document that allows for the purchase of equipment for disabled employees and suggested that we explore that. He also urged the committee to look into ways of facilitating computer technology for people who aren't in the vocational rehabilitation system. He said that senior citizens are breaking through the communication barrier because of computers that allow them to shop etc. Luis feels that we should promote the Equipment Loan Fund but wonders if there are other ways -- perhaps third party intervention or tax credits, to get the technology into the hands of those whose lives would be greatly enhanced by them. He also suggested that we might promote open source accessible screen reading and magnification software. David and Julie feel that the quality of life is what's at stake for people with vision loss at any age. Julie said that people need computers just to manage their own lives. She feels too, that we need to include ways of replacing and/or repairing equipment in our recommendations to the board. Maria noted that it's becoming obvious that committees will overlap and interconnect but asks that this committee check into appropriate curricula for young children, many of whom are being taught to use the mouse today.

RANDOLPH SHEPPARD- JAVITS/WAGNER-O'DAY

Charles Richardson and Tom Robertson.

Charlie suggested that, since the formation of the committees, things have changed quite a bit and we might not need to spend time on this committee. He pointed out that legislative changes are being sought and, the State Committee Of Blind Vendors advocates for, and works closely

with the Commission and with the vendors so this committee might not be necessary. Mindy felt that the board needs to review all of the programs that effect blind people anywhere in the system. Areas such as the quality of training and trainers need our attention. How soon after training are students ready to manage a facility? Are there facilities available? Charlie wondered if these questions might not be better placed in the Vocational Rehabilitation Committee? Luis said that perhaps the committee could examine how opportunities are being handled for blind people to make products. He feels that this would be particularly important for people with multiple disabilities. Tom felt that the BEP is a program that CBVH can take complete control of and as such, needs to be thoroughly reviewed along with all of the other programs and services. He recognized that, under Peter Crowley's supervision, things seem to be progressing nicely, but felt that this committee might be able to recommend checks and balances that would transcend Peter's leadership should his status with the agency ever change, making for a smoother transition to new leadership should that ever become necessary. Alan said that if the board has reviewed the program we would be in a better position to advocate its passage with the legislature when the relevant bill becomes active. It was then decided that the self employment grant program would be included in the work of this committee rather than that of the Vocational Rehabilitation committee.

Education

Maria Garcia, Carina Collura, John Bartimole, and Mindy Jacobsen.

John asked that this committee focus on the rights of parents with reference to educating their children. He also expressed concern about the education of regular classroom teachers who have a blind child assigned to them. He would like to see the committee look at ways of making use of technology so that education, through graduate school can be more accessible to blind and visually impaired students and the professionals who touch their lives. Karen had a concern about the problems getting the systems talking to each other, particularly with reference to children who are in transition -- between Jr. High and high school, or high school and college etc. Baruch College is trying to set up programs to address this population and is having difficulty finding out what incoming students have been learning and really need. Maria said that blind children need to be identified wherever they are. Many children with low vision haven't been. New York City is looking at disassembling specialized systems for blind and visually impaired children in favor of the widely accepted practice of placing the acquisition of funding and services to them in the hands of the individual school principals. She feels that the choice of approaches is extremely important for parents and teachers. She thinks we should be examining curriculums and placement options across the state. SHE would like to see the kind of focus on braille literacy as strong as it once was. Maria would like to have the committee look at the qualifications of TVIS and O and M's. Most importantly, she would like to see us look into ways of effecting the attitudes of parents, professionals who work with the children, and the children themselves. Luis said that we should examine non-educational components that need to

be developed during the formative years including orientation and mobility, social and organizational skills that make it possible for them to successfully transition from school to college, and then to the work place. He feels that when the rudimentary skills are not developed it becomes extremely difficult if not impossible for entities like CBVH to successfully place the effected individuals in employment and vocational programs. John said that another thing we need to address is the paucity of TVI's. One of his daughter's O and M instructors came from Canada and had to leave when her visa ran out. We need to look seriously at the shortage of TVI's and O and M's and at the time allotted for the completion of the courses of study for each student. JULIE added that it would be important to discern whether or not the students are on par with others. CARENA pointed out that much of the pre-school education is currently being handled by itinerant teachers in the homes but, first, they can't travel to enough students, often enough to be really effective, and secondly, working in the child's home doesn't develop any social skills. When blind students with other disabilities reach age 21 and enter dayhab centers or other such facilities, they still need the same kinds of specialized services they had in school so she feels that staff there need to be well versed in the skills necessary for working with the blind and multi-handicapped.

Regarding further need for TVI's and O and M's Alan stated that The Jewish Guild for the Blind (JGB) has a pending application to provide a model including home based and group education for pre-schoolers. He said that it is important that toddlers between the ages of sixteen months and three years participate in group activities in order to develop much needed social skills. Tara pointed out that there is a serious lack of programming for children from ages six to thirteen. It will be important to find ways of finding and serving children from birth. [Note: The JGB proposal was approved by NYC)

Karen pointed out the importance of outreach so that the blindness system is a known entity in the community. Outreach will effect all of the committees. Luis said that we do need a concerted public relations effort that will alert people to CBVH, followed by the creation of a system of prompt referral through the education of ophthalmologists and other community resources. He pointed out that the best people for that task are the clerks and technicians in the doctors' offices. Luis said that there needs to be another effort at creating an aggressive and positive campaign to teach sensitivity to the public.

Christina told us that, with reference to outreach, the Exchange Place office is not in an accessible location, and that it is hard to get into the building. Then, when you do, materials are not accessible. Alan agreed saying that even Tara and he had issues getting in. Brian told us that CBVH won't be staying there much longer because the building will soon be a condominium. Maria, suggested that the Harlem office become the default for the down state area. Brian responded that CBVH is switching home making and funding to other places so that might be possible. He wants to continue that conversation because CBVH needs to look at this issue

sooner rather than later. Christina worked in Harlem but did not know about the Harlem office. She said that the staff there needs to be trained to handle other disabilities including, but not limited to blindness. She said that the Harlem office is not accessible so lots of people needing services are not being served.

Charlie said that the first blind person newly blind people encounter can make a big difference in the attitude they develop about themselves.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Tara Cortes, Julie Phillipson, Tom Robertson, Charles Richardson, and Luis Mendez.

Tara said that vocational rehabilitation is a place where quality of outcome is paramount. Everyone who comes to the table does so with different needs so an individual plan for each person is a necessity. SHE also said that employers need some education. Karen said that there is a huge nexus between vocational rehabilitation and technology in terms of competitive employment. She said that perhaps a point would come that would require the Vocational Rehabilitation and Technology committees to work as one toward some kind of systematic approach to software intervention that would make more jobs available through a more uniform approach to it. It was suggested that the committee recommend the development of vocational goals for fourteen to sixteen year olds. This would require that either specialized counselors work with the blind and visually impaired teens or that regular guidance counselors have easy paths to the options and equipment necessary for reaching various goal so blind students could get blind specific types of encouragement and preparation for the fields of their choices. Usually there is transitional planning included, but it is often too late. Charlie suggested that a good quality mentoring program can help people to make the right decisions.

SOCIAL SERVICES/HOMELESS/UNDER-SERVED

David Stayer, Luis Mendez, Julie Phillipson, and Christina Curry

Issues: People are not being identified. Julie suggested that if there are other agencies within OCFS they might be of some assistance in identifying people needing services. Luis suggested that some of the groups that are underserved might be: people in rural communities, people with more than one disability, single parents and/or families of blind children, blind parents, and people needing advocacy services such as custody cases involving blind or visually impaired relatives. David said that, like the other committees, this one will have to look into outreach and education of mainstream social workers in the social service system. Brian suggested that we look at the RSA report on the underserved and multicultural populations and expand upon it, with an eye toward going beyond some obvious ones like people with language barriers. Maria suggested looking at blind children in foster care, eligible for adoption, children abused in homes

(seemingly a higher percentage of incidents than that in the population at large) and immigrant communities. This also applies to adults as well.

OLDER BLIND SERVICES:

Tara Cortes, Mindy Jacobsen, David Stayer

Issues suggested were the time allotted for learning skills of daily living, mobility and alternative means of keeping track of personal information; enabling seniors to maintain their dignity (can happen only if they've had enough training); IEP'S for seniors; other problems that usually accompany the onset of blindness; and the fact that the outcome of provided services need to be measured. David pointed out that the devastating part of blindness is the emphasis on vision in society. It makes the emotional adjustment problem possibly worse than blindness itself. Both need to be considered.

SYSTEM INTEGRATION and DESIGN:

Alan Morse, Karen Gourgey, Tara Cortes, and Julie Phillipson

The focus of this group will be to pull together the thoughts and suggestions of the committees and to recommend as seamless a service delivery system as possible. Alan: said that there is no way, presently, to be aware of all of the services needed or being delivered to clients, and/or whether or not they are taking advantage of them. How, for example, does someone who falls into two, three or four groups get served? Many people fall between the cracks at each juncture. There is currently no system to find out if people are showing up for appointments with all of the involved agencies. Related issues were the tendency of health care facilities and other agencies not to look beyond a client's blindness when assessing their situations while the primary need might be in another area. More people in mainstream health and social services need to be trained in some of the issues of blindness. David suggested that transportation be one of this committee's issues.

Each committee will work out how to conference, either by phone or some members might meet in person. Brian said that committees will be given the moderator and conferee codes. Charlie suggested that the first name on the list for each committee submit the report. CBVH will pay for an interpreter for Christina.

Karen asked if there are any plans for getting more accurate data concerning actual numbers of blind and visually impaired New Yorkers. Alan stated that it would be impossible to get an exact count. Alan and Brian have each sought this information in different ways and came up with approximately the same statistics -- only a few thousand numbers apart. Brian's statistics were

based on the 2000 census, while Alan's were based on national prevalence data applied to New York's population, age 40 and over. Alan hopes that one of the recommendations of the board will be a system that would require medical, social service, governmental and other agencies to report instances of legal blindness to a central authority. It is impossible to plan for the needs of the community without relatively realistic numbers. Karen told us that Cornell University has a good disabilities center, but they don't work specifically with the visually impaired. She wondered if they could be persuaded to do so, or if they would be willing to share their methodologies with us. Alan suggested that we use current statistics as a starting point. He also pointed out that the difference in marking the point of legal blindness presents a problem for those gathering statistics. Peter Crowley suggested that it might be better for the Executive Board to concentrate on maximizing services and publicizing their availability than to chase down exact statistics because he felt that it would be difficult, if not impossible to get everyone on the same page. David thought that if we do our job, by virtue of our recommendations, information about services will be disseminated.

The RSA report will be covered in committees. Requests for information from committees are to be facilitated by the chairs.

A discussion then ensued in which it was pointed out that most ophthalmologists and optometrists aren't aware of the availability of services to blind and visually impaired people. How many people, then, leave the doctors' offices and fall "between the cracks"? Alan commented that many people with severe vision loss, living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, are receiving little or no service. If vision deficits in new borns are not detected in the hospital, before babies are released, they are not required to reenter the system until age five. There are so many gaps into which people can fall so hopefully this board will be able to recommend ways of plugging people of all ages into the system. In answer to Maria's question, Brian estimated that the figures CBVH is working with are 110,000 legally blind people in the state, based on the 2000 census. Tara said that the Lighthouse estimates that 1 out of 10 are totally blind, leaving 90 percent with some residual vision. The discussion moved, for a moment, to the need for accurate reporting in order to have adequate funds allocated. Luis said that Sun Micro Systems tried to make Java Script more accessible to blind computer users but they dropped the initiative after concluding that there wouldn't be enough people to support it.

The Jewish Guild for the Blind has been setting up parent support groups, nation wide, with 26 states responding, grouped according to the conditions causing the children's vision deficiencies. Maria asked if multiply handicapped people, for whom blindness is not the primary disability, are included in the statistics. Alan said that, because of the difficulty of diagnosing blindness at birth, (Mental retardation, autism, MS, etc were reported as blind births because of their ease of detection.) we need to find ways of cross-classifying. Maria would like to see us make some kind of recommendation addressing the inclusion of blindness in the neo-natal reporting. This

would, of course raise the number of occurrences of blindness in the population.

Julie asked if we will be collecting raw data? Alan explained that actually collecting raw data would require greater resources than we currently have available and that the Board is not equipped nor staffed to do that kind of research project. Mindy asked how we could use the current available data and get results, other than the ones we always see. The discussion revolved around analyzing existing data in perhaps a new way. Our charge would be to use available data to see the real level of services to the blind in the state and not simply to paint an already decided upon picture. The collection of new data was seen to be time consuming and costly and would substantially delay our deliberations.

Web casting: A lively discussion then ensued, a summary of which follows.

Luis: The issue isn't one of legal necessity, but rather the price tag. The question is, will web casting promote more public access and participation, and will it give us more input and insight as we attempt to discharge our functions? If we decide to try web casting and only have a handful of participants, it will probably not prove worth our while. He would like to see us give it a try.

Maria thought it would be recorded (streamed) not interactive.

Luis: We might do either, but interactivity would facilitate public input.

Karen: We might not need to get into the issue of interactivity, for the moment, as long as people have the opportunity to comment in written form.

Julie: Can people have access to our contact information through the CBVH site?

Peter suggested that members might not want personal contact info posted.

Maria: links to our websites might work better.

Karen: How about a tool that would allow us all to know the public responses without our needing to respond individually.

Luis: If people can listen in, they might have ideas or information we don't, and it could help us. He would like to see us promote some level of public input that would enhance our deliberations.

Charlie: Responses could go to the chairs and they would email them to us.

Carina: Will people really listen for 7 hours? How about publishing our notes and seeing what kind of response we get?

Luis: If we do that the notes would have to be quite detailed.

Karen moved that we web cast the next meeting, with a procedure in place for people to respond, via email, and then evaluate its effectiveness through the number of hits and responses we receive. She then modified the motion to include a provision to establish an email address so that responses would be funneled to the Executive Board through the chairs.

Maria sought and received clarification that web casting is like listening to live radio, streaming is like listening to a pre-recorded program, and web conferencing would add an interactive component.

Luis: What will people be commenting on?

Charlie: If I were John Q Public and wanted to know what was discussed I would call CBVH. So Brian and Peter, has anyone ever called? They said no. Charlie then asked if we should go to an expensive tool if we are unsure whether or not there is real interest out there? Perhaps we should seek data prior to web casting.

Karen: web casting would give people the opportunity to listen and respond which is important. She said that it was wrong to say that no one is really interested.

Luis: It is important to broaden our reach. We should all go out and let our constituents know that this opportunity might be created.

Alan: Charlie and Luis have good points so why not start out by setting up an email address and asking the Executive Board to solicit interest from our constituents before deciding whether or not to web cast. He suggested that everyone who has a website post an announcement and direct all responses to a particular email address. In this way we could determine whether or not there is sufficient interest to web cast. He asked Karen to withdraw her motion in favor of his, which was, after some discussion, that we do a one month trial, with members informing our constituents that the Executive Board is in session, is pleased to accept emails regarding any facet of blindness, and would like to discern the level of interest in web casts of our meetings. Karen agreed to withdraw her original motion in the interest of getting something accomplished on this issue. She amended the motion on the floor to include a two, rather than a one month trial period, and the provision that members might post the announcement on their sites in their own styles so as to attract the most possible interest from their constituencies.

Luis: Can CBVH post the announcement? Joe Nye said that they would if possible. Alan asked again that everyone who could, post it on our own sites. He also said that we would create boiler plate language that could be used or modified by our organizations.

Julie: Would town meetings help to give people more input?

Brian and Joe: Thousands of letters go out every year advertising them.

Charlie: People, in general, don't get involved.

Brian outlined the locations and times of the town meetings scheduled for this year.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Godino - President of the American Council of the Blind wished the Executive Board. He wanted web casting, commenting for himself and on behalf of the ACB of New York. He said that every board should be making web casts available as of January, 2008, but this board is not subject to the Public Meeting law of New York State, because no quorum is required in order to make decisions. He isn't sure whether or not this is true but will let us know. He said that if our meetings were web cast, they would be reachable through web search engines and that any agency serving the blind would be better informed. Mr. Godino said that the action of the Executive Board, when we did not accept a motion to web cast our meetings was a "severe injustice" to the blind and visually impaired of New York. He is very upset that that action was taken. He said that he had sat here all day and had heard nothing new – nothing that hasn't been talked about for years. He said that we said the "same stuff" over and over again and web casting might have broken the chain. He said that the 70 percent unemployment rate to which we referred didn't refer to blind people alone but to disabled people in general. He said that we could concentrate on better services, but until we can remove barriers the employment rate will remain at 30 percent. He said that that 30 percent would be employed with or without services. He hopes we can reduce the 70 percent unemployment rate. He wished us well, hopes to work with us in his capacity as ACB NY President, was sorry he missed out on the opportunity to serve on this board, and offered us his services.

Jerald Bojczuk

Mr. Bojczuk was in quality assurance management and manufacturing and signed up with CBVH in Albany in November, 1999. He would like to address education. There are no course materials or curricula. He has discussed this with counselors at NABA and CBVH, but was told that there was such a diverse community that neither standard curricula nor course materials could be written. He feels that since there are certain skills that everyone in the CBVH Vocational Rehabilitation program must learn, such as Screen Reading technology, it should be

possible and would be cost effective to have course materials written. Addressing our discussion about data he said that in his experience, you judge your progress by breaking things down -- what leads to what and then evaluate each section. His example was how long from point of contact with CBVH to training? How long does training take? Then how long from training to work?

Dian Weiss - VISIONS Services for the Blind:

Ms. Weiss thinks it is good that we will put information on the web, because although she looked for us on the Internet, she couldn't find anything about this meeting. She said that, on the other hand, if we want to reach out we need to use something other than the internet because most underserved populations don't have access to it. Ms. Weiss would also like to see us make information about our meetings available in other languages in order to accommodate non-English speakers who constitute a large part of the underserved population.

Carl Jacobsen – President, National Federation of the Blind of New York State Mr. Jacobsen said that it is no secret that he has had more than a passing interest in this Executive Board. He said that our mission had been summed up this morning in four words -- but not limited to. He is excited about the new things undertaken by this board because, for the first time, under one roof, items from education to services to the elderly, VR services, services to underserved populations, transportation, housing, etc will be evaluated and addressed. Mr. Jacobsen said that we won't find all the answers by the time we submit our first report, but he expects that it will include some things that have not been dealt with and some serious charges to the Administration, the legislature, to CBVH, the public at large, and to blind people in general. He asks that we take nothing off the table, even if it only touches blind people minutely. Mr. Jacobsen thinks that the board has a good mandate and is excited to be in the "labor and delivery room" with it. He thinks we're off to a good start. He hopes that "this baby grows to be a good toddler and a more obnoxious teenager. He then wished us "good luck".

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mindy Jacobsen