

## **CBVH State Rehabilitation Council**

### **Meeting Minutes Thursday, November 18, 2010 Albany, NY**

**Voting Members Present:** Aaron Baier, Patty Eisenhandler, Michael Godino, Dennis O'Connell, Linda Olson, Edith Prentiss, Eric Randolph, Lisa Rosano, Ray Wayne, and Jenny Santiago (Teleconference)

**Voting Members Absent:** Monica Redeye

**Ex-Officio Members Present:** Barbara Campbell (CBVH VRC), Brian Daniels (CBVH), Robert Gumson (VESID, Independent Living), and Mindy Jacobsen (Executive Board Liaison) (Teleconference)

**Ex-Officio Members Absent:** Nick Rogone (SOFA), Rosemary Lamb (CQCAPD)

**CBVH Staff Present:** Tracy Cooper, Craig Hedgecock, Laurie Munro, Janice O'Connor, Mike Rose, Shirley Rose, and Dennis Semos

**CBVH Staff Absent:** Mary Ann van Alstyne

The last quarterly meeting of the SRC for 2010 began at 8:30 AM with Chair Ray Wayne presiding. Chair Wayne took roll call and each of the SRC members identified themselves and their affiliations.

**Acceptance of September 16, 2010 Meeting Minutes:** Chair Wayne asked for the acceptance of the September 16<sup>th</sup> SRC Meeting Minutes. Mike Godino moved to approve the meeting minutes and Aaron Baier and Linda Olsen seconded the approval.

**CBVH Update** – Brian Daniels acknowledged Ray Wayne for his years of service as a member of the SRC representing Disability Advocacy Groups and for his leadership as Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council. Mr. Daniels also acknowledged two other SRC members: Dennis O'Connell for his six years of service representing Blind Veterans Association and Eric Randolph for his years of service as a consumer representative. He stated that all three will continue serving as members of the SRC until their replacements have been appointed.

Mr. Daniels thanked Barbara Campbell for her service as a member on the SRC. He recognized her years of service as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in the CBVH Harlem District Office and congratulated her on her recent promotion to Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Mr. Daniels acknowledged Edith Prentiss for her two years of service as a member of the SRC representing the SILC.

Mr. Daniels congratulated Mike Godino as incoming Chair and Aaron Baier as incoming Vice Chair of the SRC and stated he is looking forward to working with them in the coming year.

Mr. Daniels spoke about the difficult times faced by State Government. He mentioned the dwindling of resources and possible furloughs that could have impacted many state agencies and possibly caused the shutdown of State Government.

Mr. Daniels reported that the Federal Fiscal Year ends on Sept 30<sup>th</sup> and CBVH will be submitting the RSA-911 report to the RSA. He was pleased to announce that CBVH will be reporting to the RSA that the number of successful competitive employment closures, status 26, has increased approximately 12% from last year. He attributed this increase to the strength of CBVH consumers, provider agencies, and CBVH staff who have worked diligently in a struggling economy and a time of high rate of unemployment. Mr. Daniels thanked the members of the SRC for their support and recommendations over the years which allowed CBVH to continue to succeed.

Mr. Daniels reported that within the past five years, CBVH has increased its performance overall in the areas measured by RSA's Standards and Indicators. He informed the SRC that there are two parts to the Standards and Indicators issued by RSA. Mr. Daniels was pleased to report that for the first time CBVH has passed all six elements in part one of the Standards and Indicators. Mr. Daniels mentioned that CBVH will be submitting the 722 Report to the RSA which reports all the Fair Hearings held throughout the year. Mr. Daniels was pleased to announce that CBVH did not have any fair hearings to report to the RSA this year. He thanked the SRC members for their support and the services from the Client Assistance Program (CAP).

Mr. Daniels reported that in early October, Governor Paterson signed a bill that was enacted by the Legislature which will increase CBVH authorities for Business Enterprise Program (BEP) opportunities. He mentioned that CBVH BEP program will have the opportunity to expand to sites such as: SUNY, Department of Correctional Services (DOCS), Thruway Authority, Port Authority, Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA), and Airports located throughout NYS. The next step for CBVH is to draft regulations to be promulgated by 2012. He mentioned that under the State Administrative Procedure Act (SAPA), the regulations will be issued by CBVH and not by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). CBVH is anticipating a trend toward higher revenues from additional unassigned vending opportunities. These additional monies will be added to levy and could be used increase to pensions, health insurance and life insurance benefits.

In response to a query from Dennis O'Connell, Mr. Daniels spoke about a letter sent by the communications department at Catholic Charities on Long Island. In the letter, the staff person states that "CBVH is claiming that they are unable to fund the program adequately". Mr. Daniels mentioned that he believes this is a misunderstanding on the part of Catholic Charities. He assured the committee members that CBVH has not

issued a letter terminating the Catholic Charities contract. Mr. Daniels stated that CBVH welcomes the opportunity to help Catholic Charities in any way possible and recognized them as an outstanding service provider for many years

Mr. Daniels informed the council members about the funding to support NEWSLINE, a production of the National Federation of the Blind. CBVH has supported NEWSLINE for many years, and will continue to work with the Legislature to hopefully provide funding. Mr. Daniels reported that CBVH has committed funding in the amount of \$137 thousand dollars for the contracted term of November 1<sup>st</sup> through October 31<sup>st</sup> 2011.

Ms. Prentiss questioned how NEWSLINE fits in with using VR money for dissemination. Mr. Daniels response was that the CBVH counselors suggest that their consumers use NEWSLINE because it provides classified advertisement, information on employment, and job listings. Mr. Godino mentioned that NEWSLINE does not provide Classified Ads. Chair Wayne responded that many people use NEWSLINE to get information daily. It is useful for vocational goals because some information is hard to access online. Mr. Godino stated that it seems that the high cost per year may not be in line with the number of individuals served and that there are other means to get information. He asked why a RFP is not being sent out to provide these services, and why these services are not being opened up to provide the information that should be provided to the citizens of NYS through a news line service. Mr. Daniels responded that when trying to provide a mass public service, he believes NEWSLINE is a good tool to provide information. While he agreed it preferable to seek alternative funding to support NEWSLINE, Mr. Daniels encouraged the SRC members to reach out for legislative support.

**CBVH Quality Assurance Overview – CBVH Quality Assurance Overview** – Mike Rose reviewed CBVH's Quality Assurance process. CBVH reviews two separate contracts for services to the blind: one is the Assistive Technology contract and other is a Comprehensive Service Contract. The services are contracted out to seventeen separate comprehensive service contract (CSC) providers and seven assistive technology centers across the state. The CSC includes VR and adaptive living services. The Quality Assurance program handles all reviews or audits of the programs for both contracts across the state. Mr. Rose mentioned that he has been conducting the review with Debra Lomma for the past three years. When Debra Lomma retired, Tracy Cooper assumed the responsibility of performing the reviews with Mike Rose.

CBVH's Quality Assurance team reviews the provider programs and the relationship with the local CBVH office to make sure that the services are provided appropriately. During the review, CBVH staff determine whether providers are meeting the terms and conditions of that contract in provision of those services for the consumers that they are serving. Mr. Rose reported that with the use of the Consumer Information System (CIS), an initial review can be conducted at CBVH home office. A sample of successful cases is accumulated. He reviewed that the term "successful cases" are those consumer cases that have been successfully completed under the service provision with a provider. The sample consists of ten percent of consumer cases for an 18-month

period for that provider program. Each sample case is reviewed against standards and criteria from the approved contract. Once the initial review is completed, the Quality Assurance team will complete the review at the provider location. While Mr. Rose and Ms. Cooper are at the provider's location completing the review, Maureen Duncan from CBVH home office, will conduct consumer telephone survey. The consumer satisfaction survey consists of a percentage of consumer cases from the sample taken for a particular provider. The review and the satisfaction survey are conducted at the same time for that particular provider.

After the review is complete, Mr. Rose completes the review report. The report generated is broken down in a narrative form and includes services offered by the provider, what was found in quantitative and qualitative measures, any issues found during the review, any trends (positive and/or negative), and recommendations for the provider and CBVH staff. The final report is distributed to the provider's administration, CBVH administration, and CBVH's regional and local staff. Depending on the results of the report, there may be specific issues that will need to be taken care of by the provider and/or CBVH staff.

In the last four years, Mr. Rose has completed one full review of all the comprehensive service and assistive technology contracts. Recently, Mr. Rose completed a second review of all the assistive technology contracts and will be starting the comprehensive service contract review in the spring. He mentioned that the end result of these reviews varies. Some provider programs have outstanding reviews, while others receive specific recommendations and CBVH staff returns to the provider to reevaluate the program and confirm that the provider is following the standards of the contract. Some provider programs have needed corrective action. For those programs, CBVH staff schedule an interim review to ensure that the provider has corrected the issues found during the review and is complying with the standards of the contract. If a provider is unable to comply with the terms of the contract, that provider will be taken off the contract and be unable to continue services as a CBVH provider.

Janice O'Connor added that CBVH has instituted an internal Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor review process. She mentioned that this process includes a review of what the assigned counselor has done with the consumer case. She reported that the Quality Assurance reviews conducted by Mr. Rose reviews the authorizations provided by a counselor and how the provider agency is implementing the counselor's referrals.

Robert Gumson requested examples of where corrective action was needed and examples of trends in quality of service categories. Mr. Rose mentioned that during one provider agency review, in the majority of cases sampled, the provider agency did not provide the certification of legal blindness as required by contract. When the report was filed, CBVH issued a corrective action plan to the provider's director. The agency needed to come into compliance for the cases sampled and any other case submitted to the provider that is out of compliance. After a month, CBVH staff returned to the provider agency to ensure that the agency provided the certification of legal blindness

on the sampled cases. Mr. Rose conducted another review of a different group of sample of cases. He reported that after six months he conducted an interim review to ensure that the provider agency was still in compliance of the contract. He mentioned that the trend found was that the providers are following the contract standards and interact with CBVH staff on a regular basis and are providing the best service to consumers.

Mr. Rose reported on the Open Forums conducted by CBVH. The announcement for the Open Forums mentioned that CBVH was preparing for the State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment for fiscal year 2012 and requested input on CBVH services. Mr. Rose thanked the SRC members for their work, and working with Mr. Daniels to make the Open Forums happen in conjunction with the NFB and ACB Conventions. Mr. Rose mentioned that participation at the Open Forums has diminished over the years. The scheduling of the Open Forums along with the conventions gave a greater outcome with approximately 25 to 30 people attending. CBVH received a tremendous amount of input. CBVH staff answered question on services and received input on assistive technology services, services for consumers with mental health issues, and services for consumers that are preparing for college. The information gathered is then developed into attachments for the State Plan and distributed to the SRC members in February. The members review the attachments and provide input to be included into the attachments for the State Plan before being submitted for internal and external clearance before going out to RSA. The state plan and all the attachments and amendments will be available via the CBVH website, by email, and mail. He reminded the Council that making the state plan available on the web was a recommendation from the SRC members last year.

**Executive Board Update** - Mindy Jacobsen presented a summary of the topics that were discussed by the Executive Board. She mentioned that the Executive Board's meetings have been held by conference calls.

The Executive Board has been discussing a complaint received concerning a change of teaching certification requirements for Teachers of Visually Impaired Students (TVI) dropping from 15 hours in the specialty to 9 hours. The board had submitted a letter to the State Department of Education concerning the requirements changes. They have received a response from Commissioner Steiner indicating that there has been no change in the requirements for Teaching Certification. The board plans to continue researching the complaint.

She mentioned that as a fairly new board, many departments that touch blindness do not know about the Executive Board. This year, the board is planning to raise the focus on concerns with blindness in children.

The board has discussed the recently enacted Law which enhances the CBVH Business Enterprise Program. They acknowledged that this legislation will create a huge opportunity for self-employment and an enormous job for CBVH. Thomas Robertson and Carl Jacobson met with Brian Daniels in an effort to determine what

steps will be taken to maximize this opportunity and develop a timeline for implementation. The Executive Board was excited about the news of the new Law and will continue to work with CBVH to help determine the best ways to implement.

Ms. Jacobsen mentioned that the board has been discussing their plans to meet with representatives from the State Department of Education and Industries for the Blind of NYS. The board has gone on record in support of the NYC Pedestrian for Access to Safe Street Coalition.

The Executive board has been reviewing their report for the coming year and has been discussing its contents and plans for implementation.

Mr. Godino questioned who was funding the meetings for the Executive Board and if Carl Jacobsen was appointed as a member of the Executive Board. Ms. Jacobsen responded that OCFS was funding the teleconference meeting for the Executive Board. She mentioned that Carl Jacobsen was appointed by Governor Paterson a few months ago. Mr. Daniels mentioned that this was a new seat created from the Speaker of the Assembly nomination.

**Accessible Signs and Traffic Pattern Modification in NYC** – Ray Wayne reported on the NYC Department of Transportation's plans to improve pedestrian safety on the streets and sidewalks throughout the five boroughs of New York City. The enhancements suggested include alterations in the street geometry, creation of different types of traffic patterns, and alterations in traffic light schedules. These modifications will alter the environment and will make it difficult for people with visual impairments and blindness to travel safely. Mr. Wayne pointed out that blind people rely on the sounds of traffic in traveling independently. With the addition of the Lead Pedestrian Intervals (LPI's), bike lanes, and pedestrian malls, it has become difficult for blind people to determine whether it is safe to cross the street. The PASS Coalition (Pedestrians for Accessible Safe Streets) consists of 25 or more organizations representing the blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind in New York. The PASS Coalition includes members from the American Council of the Blind (ACB), National Federation of the Blind (NFB), the Harlem Independent Living Center, Disabled in Action (DIA), Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled (BCID), Lighthouse International, and Vision Services. Mr. Wayne reported that the PASS Coalition has requested a meeting with the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT), but only recently received a response. At this time there has been no meeting scheduled. He reported that there is a need for NYC DOT to communicate with the blind and disabled community to determine what effects these changes will have on that community.

Mr. Godino added that the PASS Coalition was created when the mayor of NYC announced the installation of 1,200 countdown signals. The Coalition members were asked to participate in the meeting dealing with this change. He stated that under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), when a facility is upgraded, in this case an intersection, it must be made accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. Mr. Godino made a motion for the SRC to support the work being done by the PASS Coalition in NYC. Linda Olson seconded the motion.

SRC members expressed additional concerns regarding traffic. Mr. Semos mentioned that in other areas outside of NYC, transportation agencies have removed signal lights and replaced them with roundabouts. Mr. Godino mentioned that the PASS Coalition has not taken a position on this yet. Ms. Olson commented that a concern in Batavia is the replacement of signal lights with four way stop signs. She mentioned that drivers sometimes signal to her dog to cross the street.

Mr. Godino asked Brian Daniels if these changes have impacted CBVH and asked for the support of CBVH. Mr. Daniels stated that this was also a concern of the Executive Board and that an Executive Board resolution has been passed. He indicated that CBVH will work in any way it can to make people aware of these issues, and to provide other assistance.

**Public Comments** - Chair Ray Wayne asked if there is anyone wishing to make any comments. Robert Gumson reported that VESID has reorganized. He mentioned a proposal has been submitted to change their name to Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR). The proposal will be voted on at the next Regents meeting in December that will officially change the agency name. The reorganization will provide a full range of services that may be needed by persons with disabilities throughout their lives. Services such as: Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living, and proprietary schools.

Patty Eisenhandler stated that the State Education Department, Office of Special Education has been renamed to the Office of P-12 Education.

Dennis O'Connell informed members that Suffolk County does not have the monies available for the Talking Book Program which covers both Nassau and Suffolk Counties. There has been talk of moving the program to Manhattan.

**2011 SRC Restructured Committee System** – Aaron Baier reported on the proposed restructure of the SRC committees. He provided a handout of the suggested restructure to the SRC members listing the proposed system of five committees consisting of: Executive Committee, Membership Committee, Policy, Procedure and Planning Committee, Quality Assurance Committee, and Workforce Development Committee. The handout illustrated the key functions for each proposed committee. He reviewed the outline of the proposed changes and requested feedback from the SRC members. During the review, committee members asked for clarification of key functions. If adopted, the proposed changes will take effect in January.

Mr. Baier motioned to accept the adoption of the new restructured committee system effective January 2011. Ms. Olsen seconded. Patty Eisenhandler was opposed and requested the vote be proposed until additional information is provided.

**CBVH's Proposed changes to the policy on Pre-College Recommendations** - Laurie Munro discussed the proposed CBVH Pre-College Program and the changes that would be needed to the College Policy. The major change is that every student who

requests CBVH college sponsorship will be required to attend a pre-college program. Laurie has received a great deal of input about the proposal from district managers, senior counselors and transition counselors. A Request for Proposals will be sent out seeking proposals from blindness organizations to develop a pre-college program to be held on a college campus, with youth living in dormitories, eating in dining halls and participating in a college course. The blindness organization will need to collaborate closely with a college campus in the development of this program. It is expected that approximately 50 youth will be sponsored each year. There was a great deal of discussion about whether all youth should take the same class, or be assimilated into college courses.

The three areas of training that will be included in the program include:

- 1) Adaptive Skills: orientation and mobility, daily living skills, working with the college disability office, keyboarding skills, accessing information online and self-advocacy skills;
- 2) Academic Skills: note taking skills, good study habits, utilizing the library, use of readers, stress/time management;
- 3) Socialization Skills: living in the dorm, planning activities for evening and weekends and participating in the social environment of college life.

SRC members were excited about the program and provided feedback about the proposal. SRC members had differing opinions about whether youth should be expected to take individual college classes or take one class as a whole. Laurie agreed to share their opinions with the planning committee.

Dennis Semos mentioned that he took part in the ATC renewal process that recommended having all students in their junior or senior year of high school assessed and trained on ATC equipment. Laurie responded that this was something that was being reviewed and would eventually be an upper management decision.

**Presentation of Certificate of Appreciation-** Ray Wayne announced the presentation of a Certificate of Appreciation to Dennis O'Connell, Eric Randolph, and Edith Prentiss. Tracy Cooper presented the three members with a plaque in recognition of their valuable contribution of service as a SRC member.

**Review Outline of Annual Report** - Ray Wayne provided each member with an outline of the Annual Report. The annual report will include:

- I. Cover page;
- II. An introduction, description, and summary of the purpose of the State Rehabilitation Council;
- III. Activities for 2010 including, participation in the development of the 2011 State Plan, recommendations, public forums, communication with CBVH Executive Board, and presentations given by Thomas Golden;

- IV. SRC Committee work, including a description of what each committee has been working on and its recommendations, as well as, restructuring of the committees;
- V. Goals and Activities for 2011, including new officers and goals for the upcoming year.

Mr. Wayne asked members if there were anything that needs to be added or changed in the proposed report. Mr. Godino mentioned that the report should include the council's participation in the planning of the pre-college program and the discussion on assistive technology and on educating the community and employers. He further stated that the guiding principles should be incorporated in the section of the report regarding restructuring of the committees. Mr. Baier suggested that the report should include a list of members and the category each represents. The members discussed that the process of appointment of SRC members takes too long. Mr. Godino asked when the final report will be available for the SRC members to review. Mr. Wayne responded that the report is due by December 31st and requested that the committee chairs provide their recommendations to him by November 30th.

Mr. Wayne asked members if there were any suggestions or concerns that they would like discussed at the March 2011 meeting. The members suggested a discussion on tax credits and/or benefits for employers and committee orientation. Another suggestion was to have guest speakers at the meetings to provide more knowledge of current issues affecting blind New Yorkers.

The members discussed the meeting dates for the next year. The revised dates for the SRC meeting for the next year are: June 23, 2011, September 22, 2011, December 2, 2011 and March 22, 2012.

In closing, Chair Wayne thanked the members for their support for the past two years, and will be looking forward to continuing working on the SRC.

Meeting adjourned at 2:15 pm.

The next SRC meeting will be held on Thursday, March 24, 2011 in Albany, NY.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Shirley Rose and CBVH Staff