

Meeting Summary  
Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped  
State Rehabilitation Council  
March 24, 2011

**SRC Members Present** – Dennis O’Connell, Ray Wayne, Lisa Rosano, Mike Godino, Aaron Baier, Jenny Santiago, Patty Eisenhandler, Bob Gumson, Linda Olson, Brian Daniels, Ken Stewart (by phone) & Mindy Jacobsen (by phone)

**CBVH Staff present:** Tracy Cooper, Mary Ann van Alstyne, Laurie Munro, Sharon Flom, Steve Moore

Chair Mike Godino started the SRC meeting with a round of introductions. He then asked the minutes from the 11/18/10 meeting be approved.

Ray Wayne indicated that he thought that the SRC had not passed a motion to support the PASS Coalition in NYC. Aaron Baier also wondered if the motion to approve the new SRC committee structures was motioned or passed. Ray motioned that both be approved and Aaron seconded the motion, which was passed.

**Public Comment** – No one asked to speak during the Public Comment period.

Mike Godino discussed his experience attending ACCES-VR's State Rehabilitation Council meeting and orientation session for new members. He reviewed ACCES-VRs orientation packet and requested that the Membership Chair, Linda Olson, replicate it. CBVH staff noted that CBVH already has a similar one that needs to be updated. Mike suggested that when the information is updated it should include a history of the blind movement up to the present.

Mike stated that the ACCES-VR SRC time frame allows time to cover more topics in greater depth. The SRC meets for an afternoon (during which committees meet for 2-3 hours) and a full day. He would like meetings to include more substantive information about what CBVH is doing and provide information about the CBVH budget.

Council members discussed extending the meeting time frame to two days. Concern was expressed that some members have to use vacation or personal time to attend meetings and this would be a hardship. Mindy suggested using our existing time better – not ending so early, covering more topics. Mike expressed concern that you couldn’t get the depth of discussion in our current time frame. For instance, he’d like to learn more about 4201 schools and CAP. Aaron also wanted more face-to-face time for committees. It was agreed that the meeting time would be extended by one hour for the time being. Tracy will e-mail the ACCES-VR SRC agenda to members so they can get a sense of what is covered in one of their meetings.

**Youth Leadership**

Laurie Munro provided information about the Youth Leadership Program to be held again this summer (August 7-12, 2011) at Union College. In 2010, 29 youth attended the program and several wanted to return. It is expected that approximately 30 youth will attend this year. Applications are due mid-May and consist of an essay and one recommendation. Transition

counselors will share information about the program with all students in the appropriate age range.

This year there will be a greater focus on blindness. There will be two new leaders: Karen Wolfe from AFB Career Connect, and Joe Strechay (AFB). Laurie is planning the agenda with the leaders with input from representatives from NFB and ACB. The program will include leadership, goal-setting, assistive technology, panel of older blind youth, Capitol tour and talent show as it did last year. Mindy requested advocacy group members have roles as general topic presenters. Laurie explained that both Karen and Joe are members of both ACB and NFB and will infuse advocacy throughout the week.

Mike brought up SRC prior recommendations that H.S. students receive technology earlier (in their junior or senior year). CBVH is still considering that recommendation. Participants in the Leadership program will receive a small note taking device which they will use to take notes from the first day of the program.

### **Pre-College Program**

Laurie reported that CBVH hopes to have a new pre-college program in place in 2012. The program will be required for all youth seeking college sponsorship, although waivers and exceptions may be done through a student's counselor. The program will run five weeks starting after July 4. The plan is to have two sessions, one upstate and one downstate, from which students may choose. She expects that 50-60 students will participate. Youth will be expected to stay on campus and not return home each weekend, but the program will allow flexibility. Another member expressed concern about the age and experience of youth. They were assured that the students will have intense supervision, while trying to balance providing the sense of a more independent college experience. In addition, Aaron urged CBVH to continue to pursue a college credit course. Bob suggested Empire College or a similar program might be able to help. Ray noted that whether or not credit was given, the experience of taking the course is what matters. Ray also stressed the importance of using blind peer mentors.

### **Policy – College Remediation courses**

Sharon Flom explained changes CBVH plans to revise its policy regarding remediation during college training. In addition to seeking comments from the SRC, CBVH sought input regarding this proposed policy change at the State Plan open forums. The policy change is needed because many community colleges are now accepting students that don't have the required skills and are requiring that these students take remedial courses without credit, sometimes for multiple semesters. CBVH currently allows for 6 years to complete a four-year college program. With the added remediation, many students cannot complete their degrees in that time frame, and there is further concern that students will use up their TAP and/or PELL awards before they get their degrees.

Current policy suggests students obtain remediation prior to entering college. Remediation courses, taken while the student is taking courses for college credit, count toward the maximum time period. CBVH offers a trial semester for those who do not need remediation. The proposed policy change will allow one semester of remediation that would not count toward the maximum time allowance. After that, students will be required to take at least 9 hours of credit bearing courses in a semester to qualify for CBVH support. Mike stated he

would like the SRC to learn more about what's expected of individuals seeking college sponsorship.

## **Business Enterprise Program (BEP)**

Steve Moore, the new director of the Business Enterprise Program, introduced himself and provided information on his background. Steve started with CBVH in the 1970s, and progressed from a Small Business Consultant, to a Business Service Specialist, to a District Supervisor and then to Home Office for several years before this current position.

The recent amendment to State legislation affecting BEP (often referred to as "mini Randolph Sheppard") removed many of the limitations in the original legislation. Now the program will have access to broader opportunities including SUNY, Corrections, all state authorities including the Thruway, MTA, etc. and airports. It also removed the limitation of a minimum of 400 people in a facility. Now the program can serve State parks, motor vehicle offices and other sites with lower staff but lots of walk-through traffic.

The BEP is currently creating an inventory of all new potential opportunities. CBVH will have to identify and meet with the new players and work out arrangements with each of them. Steve and his staff have already met with the NYS Thruway and SUNY. They did a site survey of the food service in the Thruway's headquarters in Albany and are considering establishing a smaller snack stand, which may be the first established under the new law. With SUNY, the plan is to do a pilot project in which they will focus on one of the 32 campuses, define services and involved contracts, and work with SUNY to define which enterprises might provide the level of revenue needed to support a facility manager. CBVH is also looking at developing a partnering capacity so that the BEP could take advantage of Department of Defense contract and other larger opportunities.

Aaron asked how the BEP benefits individuals. Steve explained how Randolph Sheppard provides priority to develop newsstands and food operations in federal buildings. State law allows the same for state buildings. Additional facilities are in county, municipal and private buildings. VR consumers are trained by the BEP then licensed to run a business as sole proprietor. The BEP provides the location, equipment, maintenance, on a rent-free basis. The profit from the business is their only income.

Bob asked if there is currently a waiting list for the program and asked about the process to sort out new opportunities. Is there comparable need and interest in consumer base? Who sponsored the legislation?

The group was informed that the legislation was sponsored by Breslin and Weisenberg. Mindy noted there is a need with the current level of unemployment and that CBVH will need to make a big public relations effort to promote the program.

In response to Bob, Steve replied BEP is always trying to balance training managers with site availability but there is no schedule for when sites become open. The program does have a couple of trained managers waiting, but also has sites with temporary managers that they are trying to replace with blind managers. BEP is looking at the potential of developing temporary employment opportunities to keep graduates' skills up while they await placement opportunities. The BEP is developing a DVD to use as a marketing tool with potential new host agencies. The BEP legislation does not allow them to breach existing contracts, for example all

current thruway highway rest area sites are under contract through 2015 and 2016, so there should be time to plan ahead for new facilities. In reviewing new opportunities the aim is to carve out locations that can generate solid incomes (maybe \$50,000 as a minimum). The BEP will continue to work with the State Committee of Blind Vendors in making these assessments.

When asked about the average salary, Steve replied it is about \$40,000/year - some earn six figures while some earn under \$20,000. Managers have to be able to do physical labor daily, work long hours, be able to use business math, be self-reliant and responsible, and have good people skills to relate to the public

Patty asked how many managers the program has - 92. There are plans for managers to move into some of the locations currently operated by temporary managers.

When asked the length of training, Steve replied that it can vary depending on the individual's abilities. It is generally about six weeks.

When asked how many go through the program each year, Steve replied approximately a dozen.

Linda asked where/how training takes place. Training starts with a week or two of on the job assessment to help orient the trainee and allow them to experience the requirements of a BEP store. If they choose to continue they move on to the classroom academics, mixed with on-site training. The last step is to work a multi-week internship in which they essentially run an existing store. The program has a broad spectrum of applicants, from young adults to retirees looking for a second career. There is no standard age to start training – applicants just have to meet the entry requirements.

Mike asked if legislation is limited to folks who are blind? Yes.

Bob asked where state hospitals and clinics fit in although they are not named in the legislation specifically: if they are State-funded or established under State authority they will come under the BEP state legislation. In private locations, BEP is there by invitation or agreement. Roswell Park is under a MOU, but for their new facility currently under construction, they could fall under the new priority. While managers are supervised, they must work independently. This program is not the same as "supported employment".

## **Executive Board Report**

Mindy reported that the Executive Board is concerned about making itself more accessible to the blind population and agencies in NYS. Scheduling board meetings is difficult because they have no budget and they never know if they will be able to meet in person. The Board made suggestions toward implementation of new BEP legislation, seeing it as the greatest opportunity for growth - conservatively estimated at over 300 jobs. They also discussed rate increases for providers, referral on one:one rather than guaranteed referral rates. A mobile rehabilitation center was offered as a solution to inconsistent referral patterns. A group of rehabilitation professionals would travel to a region needing services, and be based in a church or hospital for a few weeks to a few months.

The 2010 Executive Board Report to the legislature is available on the CBVH web-site and Mindy can share copies. The report documents several board resolutions: adoption of

certification requirements for VRT/O&M; adoption of audio warning device in silent running vehicles; review of NYS policies re: acquisition and use of electronic equipment and technology to assure accessibility; and supporting the work of the Pedestrian Access Coalition to assure crossings have appropriate audible devices and incorporate pedestrian safety, including blind and deaf blind, in standards of design. In addition, the Board recommended that BEP should dedicate at least 2 staff members to research expansion. They also recommended that State Education needs specific competencies goals for blind students to be assessed through periodic assessments with outcome based milestones... like curriculum of TX state school for the blind. When asked if the Executive Board has taken a position on money being taken away from schools for the blind, Mindy replied "Not yet, but we will." Laurie noted that parent groups are also involved in this issue. Mindy suggested that the SRC can also take a stand.

### **Peter Herrig, Transition Counselor**

Peter Herrig, the newest counselor representative to the SRC explained his role as a Transition Counselor. He works with youth age 14-21, which provides time for him to build a relationship with the students and develop a solid plan. In his role he collaborates with family, school, providers. He generally receives his referrals from the Children's Consultant. The ultimate goal of transition is to make the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) support the future Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). As a transition counselor, Peter offers pre-vocational services, and then offers work experiences typical to other youth. Older teens focus on internships related to what they want to do in the future. Services are very student driven. He tries to match desires with work opportunities. Peter prefers the students stay in school until they are 21 so that they can achieve a local or Regents diploma instead of an IEP diploma. He encourages students to get involved in social activities and summer camps where they can meet other kids who are blind. Kids exiting school typically seek more education, a job, or supported employment. Peter is working with about 66 youth. Following his presentation there was a discussion about Braille notetakers and Braille instruction being needed. Braille isn't getting enough focus in schools because many schools and perhaps families think technology is sufficient. Decisions are made at the actual IPE meeting. Peter tries to flesh out the recommendation for Braille in pre-meetings with the teachers of the visually impaired (TVI). The TVI or family has to recommend the service to the school. Peter focuses on what student wants.

To arrange summer employment, Peter meets with providers to match the student's interests with available jobs. He also hires job coaches to work with the students. Job coaches can make or break experience – have to avoid a bad match or a coach who will try to do too much for the student.

The term for the counselor position was confirmed as being for one year.

### **State Plan Review**

Sharon Flom opened discussion of the CBVH State Plan. She stated it was great to have the SRC Policy Committee working with CBVH and welcomed the collaboration. As part of the State Plan development process, CBVH holds three open forums to discuss the State Plan, typically in February. Due to the impact of winter weather, the forums this year were held earlier in the Fall in conjunction with ACB and NFB conferences. These forums were

conducted prior to the development of a draft State plan. To provide the opportunity for people to give input on the draft State Plan, CBVH also held a State Plan teleconference in March.– Twelve people provided testimony and approximately 20-30 others listened in during the teleconference. A significant number of comments during the teleconference focused on assistive technology throughout the rehabilitation process, and expanding opportunities for access during training, education and placement. The teleconference format provided greater access to the forum and was very well received. Aaron Baier suggested that we expand publicity about future public meetings and that we hold multiple teleconferences next year. It was noted that people also have the option to mail written comments to CBVH. Mike Godino suggested that CBVH get the State Plan out earlier (end of January). Sharon noted the recommendation.

In starting the review of the State Plan attachments, Sharon explained that the State Plan consists of pre-printed assurances and narrative attachments that are prescribed by RSA. Several attachments must be updated annually, others only as needed. This year's State Plan is a combination of both.

The following comments and/or recommended changes were made by the SRC:

Attachment 4.11(d) – the language in the first strategy for Goal #1 should be revised to say that CBVH will assess and replicate best practices not just monitor the six ARRA contracts for innovative and creative approaches to job training and placement; the word “generic” should be deleted in the fourth strategy for Goal #1; CBVH should include a new strategy for Goal #2 to develop working relationships with culturally specific organizations that provide human services; CBVH should include a description of the Standards and Indicators in Goal #3; CBVH should add a strategy to Goal #4 regarding working closely with the NYS Interagency Coordinating Council for Services for People Who Are Deaf, Deafblind or Hard of Hearing; CBVH should expand the use of the ARRA funded loan closets and should include this as a strategy in Goal #5; CBVH should add a new goal supporting teaching adults the use of functional Braille for employment and daily living use. CBVH should track the number of hours of Braille instruction provided to consumers.

4.11(B) –CBVH should correct the typographical error in the total estimated cost of Title I services

### **Brian Daniels' Presentation**

Brian welcomed Peter Herrig as the new counselor representative, and Mike Godino and Aaron Baier in their new roles with the SRC. He informed the SRC that he had spoken to Esther Strachman in the Governor's appointments office about the proposed new members. Based on his conversation with her, he perceives that there will be new members in June.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration has informed CBVH that they will be monitoring CBVH in 2012. CBVH has passed all standards and indicators in Part 1 of the Standards and Indicators.

Brian informed the SRC about the Spending and Government Efficiency (SAGE) Commission. Brian had a 1:1 interview with the Commission, providing his point of view on transition and the future of CBVH. Peter was on a SAGE focus group which explored how OCFS/CBVH could be

most efficient. Sharon participated in a group discussing diversity issues. Mike pointed out that he received an initial letter stating he would be part of a group of stakeholders, but he never received an actual invitation to participate on a focus group. Brian stated that he is confident that CBVH issues have been listened to and heard. He is especially optimistic about the future of CBVH and feels that those critical of the agency should focus more on how they can coordinate with CBVH. Brian does not see anything in the current budget request which would impede how CBVH provides services. He expects that the budget may be on time this year.

### **Old Business – None**

### **New Business**

Issue - The current calendar year of the SRC does not coordinate with the reporting period.

**Motion** by Aaron Baier - "Change the reporting year of the SRC to match the Federal Fiscal Year, starting in October 2011." Motion seconded by Mike Godino . **The Council voted and passed the motion.**

Issue – 4201, State supported schools will no longer have a separate funding stream, and will now have to rely on the local school district funding. There are eleven schools affected by this change.

**Motion** by Aaron Baier – "The SRC will show its support for 4201 schools by writing a letter stating that level funding to 4201 schools should be maintained." The motion was seconded by Jenny Santiago. **The Council voted and passed the motion.**

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will run until 3:30 and members should plan accordingly. Mike Godino will be sharing a list he prepared for the Executive Committee with all members. Through Lisa, Rosemary Lamb asked for an hour on the agenda to discuss the plan from the NYS Interagency Coordinating Council for Services for People Who Are Deaf, Deafblind or Hard of Hearing.