

**GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE BLIND
STATE OF DELAWARE**

December 1, 2017 MEETING MINUTES

Welcome and Call to Order: Chair Lloyd Schmitz welcomed everyone to the meeting. Recognizing a quorum, Lloyd called the meeting to order at the Smyrna Rest Stop at 5500 Dupont Pkwy in Smyrna, DE at 10:00 am.

Roll Call

Council Members: Council Chair Lloyd Schmitz, Pat Carzo, Patti Addison, Ken Rolph, Jillian Queen, Deidre Morris. Absent: Kat Bottner.

DVI Staff: Elisha Jenkins, Director; Debbie Harrington, Deputy Director, Michele Hamilton, Jill Morrison, Debra Bradl, Shirley Bryson.

Public: Rob Keller

Minutes: Jillian Queen made a motion to accept the minutes from the Governor's Advisory Council on the Blind November 3, 2017 Meeting, seconded by Ken Rolph. Motion carried.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Report Shirley Bryson

Statistics: Fiscal Year 2017 we had 31 successful closures of individuals employed more than 90 days. As of 12/01/2017 in FY 2018, VR caseload is 276, with zero individuals employed more than 90 days and four individuals employed less than 90 days, 25 individuals ready to work, and 69 individuals in training or higher education programs. The discrepancies in numbers may be individuals in the intake process or on medical hold.

Age breakdown for school aged students: eleven 14 yr olds; fourteen 15 yr olds; eleven 16 yr olds; sixteen 17 yr olds; thirteen 18 yr olds; thirteen 19 yr olds. Total of 78 school age students. 116 individuals ages 14-24. Approximately 160 adults in VR. Accurate numbers? yes, they were retrieved from the databases. Lloyd said the accuracy of the numbers will affect the percentage of outcomes. There was a problem understanding the outcome tallies before. It looked as if the consumer was in VR for ten years. Lloyd would like to see a 20% successful closure rate next year.

Success stories. Two consumers obtained positions, one with DHSS as a Senior Social Worker/case manager, the other at Salisbury BISM in a full time sewing position. One consumer is receiving a HR certificate in addition to a Wilmington University degree. A DVI intern, recent graduate, will be developing youth and family programming in the City of Wilmington, through Public Alleys Parks and Recreation Dept. Full time, permanent position? Full time yes, permanent not sure. It's a work opportunity.

NFB Convention. Transition students attended the NFB Convention in downtown Dover, and two showed interest in NFB Membership.

Transition activities. Shirley said they will do the normal scheduled activities Transition conference, activities during Spring Break, parent information sessions, and summer activities. But there are a lot of other resources and opportunities with WIOA to make sure we are giving our transition students the career seeking potential with entities to partner with. The goal setting and annual calendar planning will be in January. Lloyd said there is a possibility the District of Columbia might be doing away with WIOA. Discussions in Delaware for criteria? Shirley felt it was too early.

Goals. What are your projections for closures? the requirement is +1 from last year which would be 32. Shirley, Elisha, and Deb are in the discussion process. In January? no, earlier than that. Shirley said they want to make sure that goals are reasonable and achievable. Lloyd would like to know what the goals are when they are determined. Agreed.

Training Center/Materials Center. Under the supervision of VR? no, under Matt Tseronis. Where do your clients get training? Dependent on the needs and the time frame, training in-house and contracted providers. Are trainers only in New Castle? Trainers are in both offices. How often are trainers at the Milford office? Elisha said the services are referral driven. Are there AT Trainers in the lower counties? the trainers are statewide. Are the needs of the residents of Kent and Sussex currently being met? yes. Is there a waiting list or order of selection? no. End of Report.

Director's Report Elisha Jenkins

Current events. Elisha said that in current events, they are watching to see what happens with the tax bill. It may eliminate some of the entitlement programs Medicaid VR as well as some of the supported employment funding. There might be an order selection of services if that is the case. Lloyd said there is a discussion about eliminating Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). Elisha had not heard that. Lloyd is trying to understand the expectations and goals that Delaware will need to have aligned to address the needs.

VR. Two additional activities internally: Looking how the pre-employment transition services are provided. In contact with NFB and Learning Ally for collaborative opportunities with Pennsylvania, NJ, and others states. Training? They offer peer mentoring and some of the five required skills, i.e. job exploration and work-based learning experience. Distance education? yes. DVI moving in that direction? yes, finally, but it is in discussion stages. DVI is meeting regularly with VR, collaborating more. Staff working with Tech Ed, work groups, career pathways, to spread the message to our students.

Transition Conference. Conference plans for staff and consumers to attend? yes. 7-8 students will attend. DVI will have an exhibit. Transition staff and O&M will attend. Attendees will receive the materials adapted? yes. The conference coordinators give DVI the materials for the conference in advance to adapt for participants. Transportation an issue? Some schools will transport. Advocacy does not always come from the agency alone. Other organizations recognize the needs of the Visually Impaired (VI) population.

Committees' vacancies. Is the VRAC Committee fully staffed? no. Vacancies are being promoted. SRC also has vacancies. List of these vacancies? Deb Bradl will find out for Lloyd.

DIB: Producing for USGS contract. Working with NFB for the transition. Goal is January 31, 2018. The entity taking over has not been disclosed. Stop accepting orders at the end of December 2017. Start to finalize the remaining items. Dept of Agriculture? no dealings with them. Earliest follow up discussion about equipment? February. Lloyd still wants to be involved in that discussion. Elisha said he will be informed. Lloyd said that DIB funds were used for some of that equipment. Elisha agrees, but counsel states it was purchased with state funds. How much has been paid back? nothing was paid back, paying operational expenses. Once finalized more info will be available. DVI staff was sharing time with DIB and paid from DIB funds? yes. Do you have a plan when those funds are no longer available? yes.

Direct Service. Lloyd said his concern is the number of staff for the size of the Agency. He would like to see more direct service to VI. There are staff that do not provide direct services at all. Lloyd feels there are more Fiscal personnel than necessary. Debbie Harrington said not all staff in an agency will provide direct services, but their actions support the consumer, such as procurement of an assistive technology. Jillian Queen said she transcribes braille, sends it over the internet where it gets embossed and given to the student. She never sees the consumer. Administrative roles do provide real services to the VI consumer without face-to-face contact. Elisha said, additionally, efforts have been made for some administration roles to crossover to direct services as well.

System improvements. Deb Bradl said she and Debbie are working on a better system to get the tech out faster, doing Statewide needs assessments, analyzing the data to see common themes and where improvements are needed. Lloyd said it sounds like you are moving forward.

BEP: The Food Truck vendors on the Herman Holloway Campus have seen a significant drop in business since DHSS went to the blog announcement system. Deidre Morris is helping with the communication. In speaking with patrons, feedback suggests that employees are not aware of the trucks presence on Campus nor of any daily menu offerings. Still on campus five days a week? yes. Del Tech has been working through some personnel issues in conjunction with College staff. Held interviews for new staff and retraining current staff.

Locations. How many locations are available for new or transferring Blind Vendors? Lloyd clarified that satellite means that it is available to a blind vendor. Lloyd was not happy when Carvel and Del State locations were annexed. When annexed, that opportunity is gone. It takes opportunities away from VI people. Randolph Shepherd was supposed to be a business learning opportunity, a process to learn business management skills, not a permanent support system, which creates an environment of learned dependency. Elisha said required criteria is in place that everyone must fulfill to move forward. Lloyd was told that a BEP director is paid the same amount regardless of whether he administrates a program with 5 blind vendors or 10 blind vendors. That isn't an incentive to have more blind vendors. Elisha said the BEP set up is constantly being re-evaluated. The

priorities of the plan were to increase the operators' income and modernization of the program. Strategic plan was posted to the website? yes. Lloyd asked for a copy to be sent to him and he will send it to the Council for their review. Agreed. **Open House.** Criteria of the program is explained twice a year. 8-10 attended the Open House. Actual locations vs. the applicants at Open House. Currently, there is one in training, who will be moving to on the job training (OJT). Are there open locations? The strategic plan is that we need to do more to produce more opportunities. **BEP Audit.** Three proposals obtained. Updating the scope of services for the auditing of the program. It is anticipated the rules of engagement with a vendor will begin in the spring of 2018 due to the tax season. Auditing the operators? yes, it is required every two years. Lloyd said that is a good thing that protects the operators. **Vending Machines.** Deidre Morris asked if the vending machines had speech output. The machines have speech capability. Jill M. reported Rob said it was cost prohibitive. Lloyd said that price is not the issue. The program has over \$200,000 in set aside money. vending machine with speech costs around \$3000. For the DVI Agency to purchase equipment that is not accessible, without speech output, produces dependency of blind operators on sighted contractors, is unconscionable. Debbie Harrington said that it was discussed. Lloyd said the vending machines are new and should be returned. Debbie said they will talk to the Blind Vendors Committee (BVC). Lloyd said the final decision is made by DVI, the State Licensing Agency. All that is required is that DVI can justify the reason for additional cost to the BEP program. It is the purpose of the program and it should be done. Debbie said Lloyd's point is well taken and she agrees. Lloyd said minimally, any future purchases should be accessible machines that can be utilized independently.

Independent Living Unit:

Delaware Diabetes Coalition on Nov 14. The expo combined health screenings, break away sessions, and exhibits to increase awareness of the ways to manage this chronic disease. Partnered with the local chapter of the NFB to cost-share exhibit space. Melodye May, ILS Social Services Administrator, was the emcee.

Sensitivity Presentation on Nov 14. Deidre Morris worked with Melodye on the presentation. Deidre reported this was an Awareness Training focused on tips working with the blind and visually impaired with everyday things. For instance, Deidre had some things moved on her shared desk. When she returned, she couldn't find anything. Deidre said Melodye did an excellent job. Feedback showed the presentation was well received and informative. Deidre would like to see the presentation provided statewide to agencies other than those for visually impaired. Next session scheduled on 12/6 at the DHSS Campus. Can it be expanded to a training in each county? it is by request. Are agencies aware that you have the training available? yes. Elisha said that, as this Council requested, the workshops are promoted on the schedule. In addition the communications groups meet on a regular basis and also promote the workshops. Are the workshops all offered at the Biggs Building? no. Last month it was agreed that the workshops will be offered statewide and virtually. Lloyd did not know it was already getting started. He said that is great. **Virtual Participation:** Planned for mid-December. Deb Bradl said she is involved in the training research process on both consumers' need driven courses, and other state agency trainings, that will be available in the Delaware Learning Center, online and face-to-face training. DVI said ADA, O&M, and Sensitivity trainings would be most appropriate. Lloyd said that is great. He suggested contacting Hadley School for the Blind to utilize their resources for online training and videos. Elisha said they are aware of their training. Lloyd said that iPads, kindle, Fire, etc. are all completely accessible and affordable. Lloyd said this topic would be an excellent opportunity for training and meeting the needs of the consumer.

Funding Update: ILS Part B Grant: The Administration on Community Living previously reported possibly combining programs into a single statewide, cross-disability, entity. That is no longer in discussion for the budget. ILS programs to provide services to individuals from 18-54 will remain intact. DVI will be informed if this situation changes.

Events: DVI attended **Open for Business** on Nov 7, 2017. Number of attendees? no one specified total number of attendees. Sponsored by NC county Government and Commerce, Emerging Enterprise Center, Technically Delaware, the State of Delaware's Office of Supplier Diversity, and the Delaware Banking Community. Goal: to learn how to do business with government agencies and large businesses. A VR Business Consultant has one consumer that is interested in working in the IT field who was able to meet a contact that hires in that field.

Annual Mental Health Conference. DVI exhibited at the conference on “Opioid Epidemic.” A VR Business Consultant was a panel member on the topic of "Impact of Addictions & Mental Illness on Our Communities." **Annual Woman's Business Expo** provided an opportunity to network and see what other businesses are doing and connect with representatives from PNC, Dana, SCORE, TD Bank, and the Hilton. Follow-up for additional information and possible partnerships are planned. Did DVI have a table and share the services provided? yes Interest? yes. Exploring other opportunities on social media, as well as advertising the Delaware Tech Service Manager position which provided 21 contacts of interest and 3 applicants. **Upcoming event:** ILS Holiday Baking was announced and the automated calling system was enacted.

Education Services:

Staff: A fully certified Teacher for the Visually Impaired (TVI) resigned at the end of October. One employee is on extended leave. Currently 14 TVIs. Recruiting currently for TVI and Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialists positions. Also seeking outside agencies for O&M staff to fill gaps, but we may be approaching a wait list. Lloyd asked if ILS Staff could give general O&M instructions? yes, in home and safe trailing. Some more review of these services will be done.

Technology. Smart glasses, where the technology is connected to a live person, are we informing our consumers of this technology is available at the consumers' expense? no, that hasn't been brought up. One of the functions of DVI is to inform VI people of the available resources in technology. Some of it is very affordable. There are solutions with technology. At least providing the information about the technology that is available. The Education staff can share the information.

Old Business: None.

New Business

Chair election: Lloyd said it the Council Chair position is up for election. Deidre Morris nominated Lloyd Schmitz to continue as Chair, seconded by Jillian Queen. Motion carried.

Schedule: Lloyd said we will be meeting at the Smyrna Rest Stop in 2018, 1st Fri 10-12:30, except in July.

Department Reports. Each department report once a quarter to the Council? Elisha said that is fine.

Jan: BEP. Feb: VR. Mar: Ed. April: ILS. May: BEP, MC. June: VR. Aug: Ed. Sep: ILS. Oct: BEP, MC. Nov: VR. Dec: Ed.

Public Comments

Patti Addison said BlindSight has been working diligently and partnering with DHSS. Statewide peer support providing services in Brandywine and Selbyville. Cokesberry Village, Stonegate, and Country Methodist presentations are planned. BlindSight mailed the invitations for the three District 22-D Lions Club Regions for Christmas Parties for the Visually Impaired. Technology. Patti encourages and informs people to use technology. She reported the older community is expanding and needs technology support. How do you share technology? When possible, have the equipment for clients to try. Serve Sussex and NC? nothing in Kent? not at this time. Kent is under another grant as is Modern Maturity. They are open to collaborate. She refers clients to Ken Rolph at Independent Resources, consults with DATI, and refers to DVI training center. Peer support coordinator and another position will be posted. Contact DVI? it is planned. Is this information advertised? The newsletter has the peer support calendar and they also get the information during the intake process. Lloyd didn't realize that was a part of the intake process.

Motion to adjourn: Ken Rolph made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Deidre Morris. Motion carried.

Adjournment: Lloyd Schmitz adjourned the meeting at 11:50 am.

Respectfully submitted by,

Jillian H. Queen

Jillian Queen, Council Member