

**VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
State of Delaware, Division for the Visually Impaired

**MEETING MINUTES**

**May 8, 2017**

**9:30am - 1:00pm**

Smyrna Rest Area

5500 DuPont Pkwy. Smyrna, DE 19977

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Kevin McAllister called the meeting to order at 9:32am.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Kevin McAllister-Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council Chair, Blake Roberts-Vice Chair, Darryl Garner-member, Alice Coleman-Member, Carmen Carpenter- Member, Suzanne Howell-(Member, Teleconference), Genelle Fletcher-Liaison (Division for the Visually Impaired), Elisha Jenkins-Director (Division for the Visually Impaired), Shirley Bryson (Division for the Visually Impaired), Jill Morrison (Division for the Visually Impaired), Deb Bradl (Division for the Visually Impaired), Sonya Lawrence (Member), Debbie Harrington (Member), Wayne Marsh (Public), Amber Mangini (Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council Administrative Support)

**III. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council MEETING**

The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council, Chairperson stated the minutes from the previous meeting (April 2017) would be voted on and adopted at the next meeting. This would give the council members a chance to review the minutes.

#### IV. OLD BUSINESS

- A. White Cane Day – The White Cane Day has not been scheduled. Generally, October 15<sup>th</sup> is White Cane Observance Day and the event has been held in the past at Dover Downs or Modern Maturity Center. In the past the Division for the Visually Impaired and the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council have worked together on the event. The White Cane Day is not solely an assistive technology fair. The White Cane Day is a community fair.
- B. Annual Report 2016 – The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council recommends that some significant changes be made to the annual report to address some of their concerns with the report structure. The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council will work with Division for the Visually Impaired to ensure the Annual Report reflects the performance goals, and objectives met in 2016. The report will provide recommendations made by the council.
- C. Healthy Vision Month Eye Summit – The event will be held Wednesday 5/10/2017 at the Newark Public Library. The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council, Chairperson will attend to represent the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council and Chair encouraged the entire The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council to attend. Lieutenant Governor, Bethany Hall-Long would be in attendance. You must RSVP at [Healthyvision17@gmail.com](mailto:Healthyvision17@gmail.com).

#### V. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Travel Reimbursement – The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council members stated that they were concerned about travel reimbursement for the council members. The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council Chair recommended that it be researched. The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council would like retroactive travel reimbursement for the federal fiscal year. The Division for Visually Impaired Director agreed that travel reimbursement is applicable to the members and she explained

the process. The Division for the Visually Impaired Director assigned the Vocational Rehabilitation Administrative Specialist as the point of contact for any travel reimbursement needs. The Division for the Visually Impaired Administrative Specialist would ensure that the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council Members receives the necessary travel reimbursement form. It was recommended that forms be completed prior to the meetings. The Administrative Specialist would send to the fiscal office for processing.

*B.* Update on Special Education Teacher/Teacher for the Visually Impaired hiring & program acceptance for additional required coursework – The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council Chair t asked if any new Special Education Teachers or Teacher for the Visually Impaired that were hired if they had made any progress with being certified. The Division for Visually Impaired Director reported there was a new Teacher for the Visually Impaired hired (Ms. Carmen Davis) that began employment on May 1, 2017. The Division for the Visually Impaired has fifteen teachers. Seven are Teacher for the Visually Impaired and eight are Special Education Teachers. There are four vacant positions. DVI will continue to recruit for teachers and Orientation and Mobility Specialists. Two of the newly hired teachers were accepted into the University of Nebraska on full scholarships that starts in the fall of 2017. The others teachers were accepted to regional universities.

The Council asked what the deadline was for the teachers to obtain the necessary credits to maintain their employment. The response was that Delaware Code gives those teachers two years to obtain the credits. However, there has been some changes and Division for the Visually Impaired has been working with DOE to ensure compliance with the code. The Council asked what supports were the non-credentialed Teachers for the visually providing to students? The non-credential Teachers for the Visually Impaired are currently assisting students with the expanded core activities. The Council raised concerns about the non-credential Teachers for the visually impaired being at risk during the state's financial crisis.

- C.* Enclosure 3 & related Communication to Rehabilitation Services Administration – The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council Chair felt that the documentation submitted for the retreat met the requirements for Enclosure III. Mr. McAllister's opinion was that the correspondence submitted to Rehabilitation Services Administration for the retreat is going approval was misleading and did not properly convey retreat goals and intent. The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council stated they should have been included on the calls and correspondence with the Rehabilitation Services Administration
- D.* Retreat and Town Hall Meeting Reschedule Status– The guidance about the retreat was provided by the federal partners. The Director supports holding the retreat however, the guidance from Rehabilitation Services Administration requires further justification for food, lodging, or other miscellaneous expenses. The Director recommended a one day retreat at the DHSS Chapel with a lunch as an alternative.
- E.* Ongoing Communication w/Rehabilitation Services Administration including Appeal Process – The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council Chair inquired about an appeal process to support having the retreat. The Director stated that the appeal process is on a Federal level. The Division for the Visually Impaired Community Relations/Special Projects Coordinator offered to send the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council members an email containing the process to file an appeal with the Rehabilitation Services Administration at a Federal level.
- F.* MOU/ Division for the Visually Impaired -Vocational Rehabilitation /Division of Vocational Rehabilitation / Local Education Agencies The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council members also discussed the requirement or value of a psychological evaluation as a requirement for assistance. The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Committee requested a copy of the transition checklist.

Division for the Visually Impaired agreed to provide the transition checklist to the membership.

G. The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council Functions & Ongoing Meetings – It was decided that the immediate past Chair Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council Chair will work with the Division of Visually Impaired staff to finalize last year's Annual Report.

## VI. Division for the Visually Impaired

A. Division for the Visually Impaired -Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator Report – As of May 4, 2017, Division for the Visually Impaired's Vocational Rehabilitation current caseload is 277. There are 23 individuals employed. The number of successful closures in FY 2017 is 7 individuals employed more than 90 days; 16 individuals that are currently employed less than 90 days. There are 26 individuals ready to work. Finally, there are 67 individuals that are currently in training or a higher education program. Also, the Division for the Visually Impaired) - Vocational Rehabilitation has approximately 97 transition age students (age 14 – 21) and 119 transition age students that are (14-24). West Side Grows (Non-Profit Organization) – Has a "Spring Fling" every year for students. Division for the Visually Impaired Vocational Rehabilitation is hopeful that one of our students may work for the program to assist as an intern during the summer months with West Side Grows' students. During the Spring Break holiday, the Vocational Rehabilitation, O&M, ILS and Education staff provided a variety of opportunities for our transition age students. The week consisted of: Food Preparation, Cleaning (Sweeping, washing dishes, cleaning up after a meal and etc.), Meal Planning, Shopping, Arts & Crafts, Budgeting, Introduction to AT products, Advocacy & Dining Etiquette.

Lastly, Paid Internships and jobs have been established with the following organizations: Habitat for Humanity NNC, City of Milford (Parks & Recreation), Delaware IT Institute (VLS), Peter Spencer Family Life Foundation, Department of Agriculture, NCC Summer Youth Program, Wilmington Summer Youth Program.

B. Division for the Visually Impaired Director's Report –

- The Spring Break activities received very positive feedback.
- Delaware Industries for the Blind's state operation was suspended. However the federal contracts continue with the processing of USGS uniforms and products. Also the neckerchief contract through the Department of Defense with the Federal Government are being fulfilled until the contracts are completed. The contract brought four people back to work.
- Many of the DIB employees have been placed in new employment. The Vocational Rehabilitation staff worked with these individuals to find employment.
- Blind Enterprise Program has two individuals in the interview stage as candidates for BEP.
- The DHSS Secretary has a new healthy vending initiative. The Division of Public Health and Division for the Visually Impaired are working together to try and achieve this without any impact to the operator.
- There are two new employees working at the Smyrna Rest Area Gift Shop through Blind Enterprise Program.
- Division for the Visually Impaired Assisted Technology team has one full time and 1 part-time staff employee. There is also one vacant technology position. DVI continues to use other providers to support consumer's needs. The goal is to also cross train Independent Living Services employees to assist with technology referrals.

## VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no Public comments.

## VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:40pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Mangini