

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES

January 8, 2018

9:30 am - 1:00 pm

Appoquinimink State Service Center

122 Silver Lake Road,

Middletown, DE

I. CALL TO ORDER

Kevin McAllister called the meeting to order at 9:56 am

II. ROLL CALL

Kevin McAllister requested a roll call for the purpose of the minutes. In attendance were: Kevin McAllister (Chair), Suzanne Howell (Co-Chair, Teleconference), Deb Bradl (DVI), Jill Morrison (DVI), Darryl Garner (Member), Shirley Bryson (DVI, Teleconference), Jacqueline Poquette (New Member, Teleconference) and Grisel Espinosa (Administrative Specialist/DVI).

III. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS VRAC MEETING

The minutes for previous meetings cannot be accepted due to lack of quorum. Kevin McAllister suggested the members review the minutes and note changes. Darryl Garner asked to leave a space between numbers and letters in order for JAWS users which allows for better translation.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment – Deborah Bradl provided an update on the focus groups that were scheduled for January 18, 2018 with Independent Living and January 29, 2018 with the veterans group. Survey monkey has been updated and

will be tested for accessibility on JAWS by Darryl Garner. Kevin McAllister suggested the council members and DVI to send the survey to their contacts to better represent the community and have a feedback from the community and consumers.

B. Kevin McAllister stated that there was a request for a conference call between VRAC, DVI, and RSA. The purpose of the conference call is to discuss a cost-effective solution for the VRAC Retreat.

C. Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council Retreat 2018 - The VRAC Retreat is generally held every year in March. Activities include a Town Hall meeting. The Department Secretary, legislators, Veterans Administration, DART, and the community comment on employment and independent living services. Darryl Garner suggested to add education. Kevin McAllister asked members to start thinking of ideas and topics for the retreat. Deb Bradl mentioned that she'll look into Francis Mary D 'Andrea to speak on the need and benefits for students to learn braille. Jacqueline Poquette will present on interviewing skills.

V. NEW SPECIAL BUSINESS

A. Joint Finance Committee- February 20, 2018 – Kevin McAllister suggested that the council attend so that they can advocate to legislators for funds. Last year two Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Counselor positions were gained. Kevin McAllister asked the council members to send comments and questions.

B. Kevin McAllister have some questions about what is happening with the open education and Orientation and Mobility positions, how is compensatory time being handle and in regards with emergency certifications-are the special teachers teaching Braille?, are there services not provided because of vacancy?, Debra Bradl added the students are getting the services from Salus University. Jill Morrison will research on these questions and keep the council posted.

VI. DVI

A. *DVI-VR Administrator Report* –Shirley Bryson reported the following:

As of 01/04/2018, the DVI Vocational Rehabilitation caseload is 280. There is a total of 10 individuals employed. The number of successful closures for FY 2018 are 10 individuals that are currently employed less than 90 days. There are 28 individuals that are ready to work. Finally, there are 72 individuals that are currently in training or in a higher education program.

Also, the Vocational Rehabilitation program has approximately 94 transition age students (age 14-21) and 116 transition age students that are (14-24).

B. *DVI Director Report* - Jill Morrison reported on behalf of Elisha Jenkins

The Division welcomes Lisa Edmonson as an Administrative Specialist to the agency.

The Division also welcomes Malvern Slawter as a Technology Trainer to the agency.

Program Updates:

Governor's Initiatives: Healthy Vending

On Friday, December 15, 2017, representatives from the Division for the Visually Impaired, the Division of Public Health, the American Heart Association and Hamilton Goodman Partners (lobbyists for the

American Heart Association), the Blind Vendors Chairperson and the Governor's Office met to discuss healthy vending and the American Heart Association's proposed healthy vending legislation. The American Heart Association is encouraging more healthy options on government campuses. The American Heart Association is requesting that all machines have 75% healthy options. Currently the pilot is at 40% healthy options with both DVI and DPH pleased with the progress made thus far.

Delaware Industries for the Blind

The Division for the Visually Impaired, on behalf of Delaware Industries for the Blind, submitted correspondence to the Commission for Statewide Contracts to Support Employment for Individuals with Disabilities of its intention to surrender any and all state set-aside contracts serviced by DVI's Delaware Industries for the Blind (DIB). DIB has not serviced any set-aside contracts since March 10, 2017. There have not been any viable offers to assume any DIB contracts received by DIB prior to or since March 10, 2017. DIB has continued to service certain open market contracts with the United States Geological Survey (USGS). However, all services under such contracts shall be completed on or about January 31, 2018, after which DIB will no longer operate.

For the reasons set forth above, the Commission for Statewide Contracts to Support Employment for Individuals with Disabilities did not have any objections and released DIB from its obligations to its prior set-aside contracts for promotional products or engraving.

Thus, no later than February 15th, Delaware Industries for the Blind will not have any remaining business obligations.

Vocational Rehabilitation

On December 18, 2017, the Division for the Visually Impaired, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the National Employment Team of the Council of State Administrators of the Blind met with Bank of America Talent Acquisition/Diversity Administrators, Mary Mackenzie and Susan Dumpy to brainstorm employment strategies to employ a talent pool of individuals with disabilities for their Newark, Delaware office.

Bank of America is interested in establishing a training program to provide an opportunity for talented individuals with disabilities to apply for various employment opportunities in Delaware. The goal is to proactively create a talent pipeline of qualified individuals that have disabilities for Bank of America's 8,000 vacant positions. Potential opportunities discussed are: **customer service, fraud prevention, collections, and financial services**. Bank of America has eleven markets and over 210,000 employees nationwide in various positions. The initial target area for the pilot program will be in Delaware before branching out to other key areas in the United States. A certificate program maybe be considered to train individuals with disabilities with business readiness skills for the workplace. This talent pool will have the opportunity to apply competitively for jobs as they become available. The goal is to fill some of the vacancies with DVI/DVR talent pool. All parties have agreed to work collectively to support Bank of America to develop a diversity inclusion program inclusive of technology, orientation & mobility, sensitivity training, and other areas identified. The next meeting will be held in mid-January to move this forward.

Independent Living Services:

ILS has drafted its 2018 Workshop Calendar to include a variety of topics and forums for participation. In addition, ILS will join forces with the Education and VR team again to host workshops for students and families throughout the year and during the summer. The workshop list will be distributed in multiple formats as well.

Communications and Outreach:

DVI released a video online highlighting its Education and Orientation and Mobility Services. The video has received more than 3,000 views.

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Kevin McAllister explained to the new member of Council Jacqueline Poquette the Meetings are schedule for the second Monday of every month. And talk about new council recruitment. Darryl Garner requested to have a better calendar to prevent having multiple activities on the same day, if possible. Darryl Garner also discussed Read Across America program from NFB, and that it should include more schools across the state.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Grisel Espinosa
Administrative Specialist I, DHSS