

COUNCIL ON THE BLIND (COB)

November 1, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Welcome: Jillian Queen welcomed everyone to the Council Meeting at the Smyrna Rest Stop Conference Room, located at 5500 Dupont Parkway, Smyrna, Delaware, on November 1, 2019 at 10:00 am.

Roll Call: Council: Jillian Queen, Chair, Ken Rolph, Patti Addison, Lloyd Schmidt, Deidre Morris. Absent: Kat Bottner, Pat Carzo.

DVI: Sandra Miller, Acting Director, Michele Hamilton, Wayne Marsh (BEP).

Public: Mary Marsh, Robert Keller.

Minutes: Minutes to the October 2019 meeting were read. Discussion: Jillian said this Council has been referred to as the Governor's Advisory Council on the Blind, even though it was established in legislation as Council on the Blind, #0021. It was agreed, starting with the October 2019 minutes, the Council name be compliant with legislation. Deidre Morris made a motion to accept the Minutes as corrected, Ken Rolph seconded. Motion passed. Jillian will send out the corrected minutes.

Director's Report: Sandra Miller, Acting Director, presented the DVI Director's Report (attached). The following are questions, comments, and points brought up at the meeting. Refer to the report for details.

Business Enterprise Program. The DSCYF (Division of Services for Children, Youth, & Families) are opening a Micro Market on Monday. The location was moved to Churchman's Plaza. Discussion: Q: Accessibility at the Micro Markets? There are people available for assistance at the Micro Market. Accessibility technology is being explored. Q: Who is doing the research on technology? Canteen. Lloyd Schmitz shared that people who went through the facility reported accessibility concerns. More Micro Markets are being planned and opened with the same level of inaccessibility. Suggestion: Council to tour the facility. Agreed. It will be scheduled as a Council meeting at the Del Dot location. Sandi said accessibility is an important concern. It is being explored to address this area of concern. It is also early in the process. It is going to take people using the facility and offering feedback to know what is truly needed and resolve it.

Vocational Rehabilitation. 215 Served. 37 "Ready to work" status. ~75 transition 14-21 years. 59 in education or training. FY 2019 ending Sept 2019 - 36 individuals placed. Discussion: Q: Employment over 90 days? yes.

Transition. DVI has participated in the Monthly Transition Cadre since Spring, which is a Dept of Education meeting with local school districts and transition teams, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division of Developmental Disabilities Services. Coordinate with other organizations and to see what everyone is doing and getting the services they need. At the October 2019 meeting, one of the transition counselors, who is visually and not received services, shared her perspective to local schools.

The VR staff and Education Administrator have been participating in the PIPEline to Career Success for Students with Disabilities project. This project focuses on technical education for visually impaired students to make sure they have the proper accommodations in sciences and technology career paths. Jillian shared an online comment that visually impaired students were not accessing technology courses because they were guided to certain courses that are more easily adapted to their needs. Sandi said that is changing, based on irrefutable data, giving students with visual impairments the same opportunities as their peers. Sandi will update.

Sandi attended the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation Conference (CSABR). She felt the new Commissioner at Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) will make a positive shift in collaboration. Q: Is RSA coming to Delaware 2020? We do not know that, however, in the last meeting, it was discussed that RSA is going to pick only six states to monitor at a time in order to understand the difficulties and be able to provide resources and guidance. Q: Are they assigned a certain focus? Not really, however, in the past, monitoring was all about compliance, now the focus is on how this compliance results in better outcomes for individuals with disabilities when it comes to employment. RSA also now recognizes that it is really difficult to respond to a report a year and a half after the monitoring and they're working really hard to get those reports out by taking on fewer states per year to monitor. The 2013 recommendations might be antiquated

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anyway? Yes, but in some cases there are some things that have not changed a lot. But WIOA, (workforce innovation opportunity act) changed from looking at employment outcomes to wage data, i.e. are individuals getting increases in wage and promotions. It is more about employment quality. And RSC is recognizing that not all states have systems to collect the data in order to respond properly to their inquiries. Q: Review that was done in 2013, there are a lot of recommendations for DVI. Completed and followed up? They were corrected back at that time, but we know we must keep an eye on it, making sure that we've got the policies, procedures, and internal controls are in place and make sure that were implementing what we say we're implementing moving forward. Q: Is there a final report? It would be available on RSA's website. Updated? No, that has been a problem. They request us to read other programs' reports, but they don't provide them in a timely manner. Comment: Lloyd Schmitz heard from RSA that they were coming back to Delaware in 2020. That will be shared within the next few months. Q: How can the Council be assured that DVI is doing what it should be doing in terms of VR Programs? DVI has been responding to the changes. WIOA changed everything. We're all working toward the same goals to improve conditions for the visually impaired. Sandi assured the Council they will be updated. 2013 RSA monitoring included a collaboration input and it was very valuable. Sandi said RSA would let everyone know of the monitoring selection in advance.

Q: Lloyd said although DVI has come a long way in VR up through Transition, he is concerned with services for adults. He was contacted by an individual. An adult, in college, is struggling to keep up with her studies. He learned that she does not have equipment he would expect and also repaired what equipment she has at her own expense. He explained about DATI (Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative). The person said she was not provided any services or equipment from VR. How do we address that as an issue? A: Individualized services are case based, but if you are meeting people in the community that do not feel they have been served, have them call Shirley Bryson, and also Sandi who will connect them to the proper services. They need to educate the individual with the services that are available. Q: Didn't DVI received a technology grant? That was for Education. The focus has been Education, but certainly it's not at the exclusion of the adults. Starting early is important, absolutely. Jillian had heard from another individual with multiple disabilities, including visual impairments. Does DVI collaborate with other agencies or entities that would assist with learning disabilities and attention deficit, among others. As an adult, how does DVI approach the barriers to education or no, I can't help you? The person is addressed as a whole. They should be evaluated. Sometimes individuals go to the wrong agency and sometimes, it comes out in evaluation, they have the wrong goal in mind. VR is about employment, not college. Guidance to the right agency division as well as guidance to how to determine and achieve the individual's goals and match those services. Q: Who is the first person to approach? DVI is the first step for intake for a visually impaired question. Q: Since VR is a federal program, they can go to any state for VR services? Yes, that is true. Unless there is a residential requirement. That state agency provides services for the individual. Is there a requirement that a visually impaired person must go through DVI? Do they have the option of going through generally VR? That is an individual decision. Q: Dr. Baruffi still providing services? Yes, he is a low-vision specialist. Q: Are individuals assessed? Yes, but on an individual needs-basis. The client Lloyd mentioned is active and unaware of these services. It may be an issue Shirley may want to address. Sandi said it would be helpful to refer the client back to their counselor. Consumers may not know what they don't know. Patti Addison said within her referrals to DVI, when referring people, it should be written down somewhere which is the proper division. That ultimately falls back on DVI intake process, but Patti's experience is that intake is very thorough. People call back to Patti to say how much information was shared and thanked her. Perhaps, it is a previous client. That's a good point. Previous clients' vision and needs change, and services need updates. The client won't know what they don't know. So, it is a cycle. Lloyd said in this case, it is best for this person to talk to Sandi.

Q: Goals for this year? It is not determined yet. Sandi will update the Council.

Education:

A DVI/VR employee recorded a YouTube video for National Disability Employment Awareness Month with the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN). Sandi will share the video link with the Council.

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Staff: Teachers for the Visually Impaired: 15 out of 19 position; 4 emergency certificates. Two should complete Summer 2020, and two in December 2020. Tuition assistance is a huge difference. Is this new? Yes. That makes the difference.

Sunset Task Force co-chairs will be compiling all the collected information to develop their report to the Sunset Committee in January. Last date to provide feedback is November 8, 2019.

Nov 6 Legislators All the Divisions will give an overview of their agencies. Q: Time? All day.

The Education & Orientation/Mobility team provided training, including sensitivity training, to a University of Delaware class, Adapted Physical Education. Q: Deidre asked who presented the sensitivity training? Usually coordinated with Independent Living and VR. Q: What frequency is the training offered? As the need arises. It is usually requested by businesses, schools and presented anywhere. It's also done in general as informational. Q: Not Quarterly? They might, but Sandi is not aware of it. The community doesn't realize it is available to the public. It is more geared for the sighted that works with a person that is visually impaired. Visually impaired people can learn some things as well. That would look like a different focus. Patti said that individual can receive that level of assistance through Peer Support. Sensitivity training can be received, even one on one training, as transition to sight to low vision to no vision. Lloyd asked if it would it be possible to do a workshop on low vision adaptation. Q: Sighted people that work within companies, take their own prospective of what they see and take for granted. They need training to understand how to deal with visually impaired people more often. They need to relate and interact with visually impaired not just blind. A lot of people do not know how to deal with it. Great points here. Using conferences, i.e. the Life Conference, as opportunities to provide sensitivity training in the community. Q: Mandatory training? Can't make anything mandatory. Ken Rolph shared that in August DVI spent the whole day at IRI, and it was very beneficial. Families of visually impaired individuals? There may be programs available in the Agency for this with the active client.

Additional Questions:

Lloyd asked if there has been any progress making its DVI offices accessible? Municipalities will be meeting. It is important to bring technology into Kent County.

Deidre asked for the specific number of older visually impaired people are served? Sandi can email that number on registry. Nationally, they projected 9-12,000 that are visually impaired. DVI 3000? Closer to 3500. Deidre wants the 55 and older. Sandi can pull the information. She will check and send.

Public Comments: Patti said to have a Happy Thanksgiving.

Jillian will send the current contact information and 2020 schedule to Council members.

Adjournment: With no more questions or comments, Jillian asked for a motion to adjourn.

Ken Rolph made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Patti Addison. Motion passed.

Jillian Queen adjourned the meeting at 11:51 am

Respectfully submitted by,
Jillian Queen, Council Member