

**Maine SRC-DBVI
Meeting Minutes
June 18, 2014
1:00 - 4:00
Frances Perkins Conference Room
Commerce Center, Augusta**

Present: Brad Strause, AlphaOne/SILC; Chris Boynton, Maine State Library; Nancy Moulton, Education Services for Blind and Visually Impaired Children; Scott Murray, SRC-DBVI Admin. Assistant; Jim Phipps, Iris Network Director; Cheryl Peabody, ACB Maine; Kathy Despres, C.A.R.E.S., Sue Fairfield, Maine Parent Federation; Lynn Merrill, PTGDU, Kelly Osborn, Executive Director GWNNE Workforce Services; Brenda Drummond, Acting DBVI Director (in John McMahon's absence, present at meeting for discussion on Establishment Grant.)

On Polycom: Carrie Brooker, DBVI-VR; Belinda Ouelette

Absent with Notice: John McMahon, DBVI Director; Michelle Mason, VA Healthcare System/Blinded Veterans Advocacy; Walter Voitasek, Deaf-Blind Rep (on vacation) ; Mark Sinclair, NEBAA (at sports camp); Cindy Bernstein, DOE; Jen Fry (withdrawing from SRC)

I. Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 1:00 by Brad Strause. Public hearing process described, will be from 2-3 during this meeting.

II. Public Comment: None.

III. Approval of Minutes: Kathy moved to approve April minutes. Jim seconded. All in favor, motion carried unanimously.

IV. Director's Report: Kathy read letter from John McMahon describing circumstances of his absence due to open heart surgery on May 15 and recovery therefrom, and expressed his thanks for the outpouring of support. Will be out through the end of July.

V. Annual Meeting Update: Kelly and Carrie met several times, dates set for October 28 and 29, location confirmed--Bath at Hampton Inn, still looking for speakers, seeking SRC input on topics, have been in touch with TACE. Brad asked for email prompt to group to elicit input. Kathy suggested coordinating future annual meetings of both SRCs and share presenters, Kelly agreed that a lot of topics pertain to both SRCs, could do one overlapping day.

Sue then reported on CSPD, not met, but planning to meet in September.

Brenda enters room at 1:20.

VI. Establishment Grant Update: DBVI and Iris Network working on blindness training center in Portland to provide immersion program for skills training. Deadline approaching, missed it two years in a row, last year DOL questions arrived too late for timely response; DBVI and DOL were not prepared to move forward last year on August 15th. Since then, much time given to respond to 26 questions, submitted in February. Since then DOL has requested business plan with program details. In response all the previously presented information repackaged into 25-page business plan with 50 pages of exhibits and submitted that to Bureau director Carolyn Lockwood and Richard Freund at the end of May. They have requested a meeting this Monday, presumably a conversation about the business plan, which is really conceptual in nature because we've not fully developed the programming to take place in this training center. The grant is for capital funds to construct a facility, but they also want to know how immersion model of vocational training would operate. We've submitted some descriptions of previous training center programming; we have a good idea of what we want to do differently to meet the evolving needs of the consumer community, as well as the requirements of DOL/DBVI/RSA.

One key element required by RSA is to focus on vocational training--money will be VR not IL, which means clients with vocational goals to get served first, then IL if slots are available. Program would be designed to meet not only the primary vision rehabilitation needs but also address vocational readiness and employment training and prepare folks to move into the job search mode on completion.

One unique feature of program is that students will be housed in the community, rather than in dorms, relying on community services (with support). Field services similar to vision rehab to be available after completion of program. Four 10-week sessions planned--fall, winter spring for adults, summer for two groups of transition-age students, college-bound and vocational--model will rely on staff from Iris, DBVI, TVIs.

Business plan open to feedback. Looking for Commissioner's approval of the grant at next Monday's meeting. Governor then has to approve the state's application, and then federal money available on August 15 (if approved) and Iris has to put up the local share; (no state money involved) Iris has raised about \$500k, federal is \$1.1M and we would have to spend \$300k by September 30th to get the federal funds. 30 to 60 days needed for state to get the authority to spend, so we're already within that 60-day window. It's hard to spend money that quickly--appropriately. Need to have a contract in place with the state that is merely lacking signatures and signoffs. Jim has not seen contract.

Looking at construction process called "construction manager at risk," where Iris hires a 3rd-party construction manager (before completion of drawings) who works with the architect to finalize the plans, hire subcontractors and actually build the project. Will find out feasibility on Monday. Brenda has emailed RSA for confirmation about checklist, no reply yet. Hoping prior public hearing on the matter is still valid, only change is higher appraisal of the building.

Jim thanked Brenda for providing data on DBVI's statistics about length of time through program, as Iris doesn't always work with clients throughout rehab process in all areas, (only in York and Cumberland county.) Brad commented on clear cost savings and enhanced quality of service.

Paul Cote enters at 1:48.

Lynn made motion to dismiss the meeting. Nancy seconded. All in favor. Five-minute break followed.

VII. State Plan Public Hearing: Paul Cote, Assistant Director of DBVI started public hearing regarding the state plan submission we send to RSA with opportunity for people to give input. Previous years seen little comment, but trying to engage people in conversation.

Discussion ensued about distribution of copies of state plan to group, public distribution channels reviewed--usually available on request, should be on line, Paul is usual contact person for comments. Jim concerned that if there's an obligation to obtain public comment we need a plan B and implement it between now and September 30th. Newspaper ads went out but relevant public have limited access to the print media, DOL web site state plan copy is from 2010. Lynn cited last year's recommendation about improvement in public notification. Review process clarified: submission on June 30th gets reviewed, but public comment can be incorporated up to September 30th. Kelly reminded that SRC is required to comment, today's discussion should be included.

Members should send comments Kathy, who, as CAP rep, will review and assemble them, send back to Brenda for final review and then submit as one document under SRC.

Paul then read a list of comments (some from state plan) from Nancy Matulis (not an SRC member) which included support of the center-based delivery program, issues of pedestrian safety, the need for rebuilding of statewide collaboration with diabetes control project, need for regional meetings to determine VR eligibility on all students, the need for DBVI to provide in-service trainings to other providers in their region, to make staff and public aware of unique blindness needs, redesign the Registry of Blindness cards and follow up

with in-person outreach, explore collaboration with VA blindness services to streamline the process between 22 agencies, and encourage staff to go to Lion's Club meetings. Nancy's comments then detailed progress to date on the above suggestions and note that available staff time is limited due to high caseloads. Comments closed with an expression of support for DBVI moving to DOE.

Paul then commented that Registry of Blindness cards have been around for a long time and are sent to doctors' offices to identify persons legally blind to DBVI so they can be contacted about services. Brad asked about the need for a release form and cited how historically eye doctors have been a poor source of support.

Review of Attachments: Attachments purpose described, basically a description, like CSPD: where do you get staff from, how much turnover will you have? How do you keep staff engaged? Answers should include salary ranges, recruitment, advertisement, public awareness and outreach. Key is goals and strategies, level of goals they want you to reach percentage-wise. Failure to meet standards and indicators results in request for corrective action plan, (happened 3-4 years ago, more related to financial management,) specific plans to remediate, where your emphasis is going to change, quarterly reporting required.

Jim then asked about SRC scheduling another public hearing at the August meeting. Paul in support; comment period is more than just the one-hour hearing, can come in any time. Empowerment Forum in August mentioned. Some people approach the CAP, and their comments are included in the state plan. But in general, people unclear on state plan, so can't comment on it. We need to collect data on how to improve and we should be involved in writing the state plan, there is a structure in place, we just need to initiate it. Jim stressed the need to reach out to the organized blindness community, NFB, ACB, GDU, Blinded Veterans Association, etc., and offer to do presentations and get their attention, also condense the state plan into a understandable form, focus on the goals and what is relevant to the people you're talking about. Brad cited past problem was that window is very narrow for commenting; could make previous copy available if current one isn't.

Nancy then read Indiana statement about their Registry of Blindness to the group, citing Maine's should be similar. Some doctors leave it up to the patient, but reporting of blindness is mandatory with the driving program. If you don't report and something happens you're going to be legally liable and insurance won't cover it. Jim then clarified that blindness is unusual because it has a legal definition, federal HIPPA law preempts state law, which means that in Indiana HIPPA would make it illegal for physicians to send anything to the government without patient consent. Maine may have a similar law but doctors are not legally required to disclose and they cannot disclose without patient consent.

The legislative website has 1418-B and describes mandatory reporting.

Paul in favor of another public hearing, but wondered if the term throws people off-"forum" better?

Public session concluded at 2:52.

Brad reopened SRC meeting at 2:53.

Report on the meeting with SRC commissioner, Janet--RSA.

Brad reported very interesting and fruitful meeting with Janet Labreck at DVR state-wide training. (Janet was former director of the Division for the Blind in Massachusetts, and is herself a guide dog user.) Janet invited us to come to DC and meet, already sent us electronic form to submit--should accept her offer. Kathy commented that the strength of the 5 Councils is what impressed Janet--does not happen in other states. She wants us to talk about our collaborative nature on a national level. Lynn observed that Kelly's term as Chair of General SRC soon to be up. Discussion ensued about challenge of 1-year chair term--should be a 2-year position. Brad cited advantage of shorter period--if someone is not doing well you can vote them out, but should be discussed.

Kathy moved to review the elected position for SRC-DBVI and length of terms and how many reelections can happen, for the August meeting. Kelly seconded motion that the bylaws committee look at that and present to us in August. All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

Brenda appeared and passed out hard copy of the state plan draft.

Kelly recommended developing slate of officers at August meeting to be voted on in October--Brad and Jim are terming off. MPF is mandated so Sue can term off. Darcy Gentle is new so Scott will add her to list for DBVI as well. CAP has talked about switching seat every 6 years (Kathy and Jenn Ardito would swap); has not happened, but can if group wants.

Kathy and Kelly in favor of prompt response to Labreck invitation, maybe offer presentation at next CSAVR. Kelly will follow up--5 Councils to meet tomorrow.

Treasure's Report: (Lynn). Just two expenses this 2-month period. \$222.89 left for administrative support. Renewed October first. Haven't touched the website. JEB will be billing for his work. \$1257 left in meals traveling and lodging. Could move to administrative. Have \$1,000 targeted for Empowerment Forum; Kelly will submit invoice. Kathy proposed adding to budget a second training a second SRC member could attend, maybe NSCSRC. Kelly went last

year for DVR-SRC, learned a lot about SRCs in other states, maybe vice chair should be encouraged to go, get up to speed on chair role. Brad affirmed that bylaws clear on preparatory nature of vice chair role and expectation of being backup for chair, so needs to know how to run the SRC. Jim clarified that some organizations have an exception to the term-limit rule--automatic extension to term but the 2-term limit is a federal requirement.

121 Grant Update: Grant is in federal registry as of July 14th, Kelly fairly certain that the Maliseets will submit the grant as prepared and hopefully be refunded. Darcy Gentle is Kelly's successor, will be asking Brad to write a letter to support their submittal.

CAP Report: Resubmitted RFP; might have a new person on CAP seat on 10/1, will know presumably in July. Brad and Kelly as SRC chairs are part of the process but cannot confirm or deny anything.

CSPD: No Report.

Accessibility and Technology: Most of the website is up, now just a matter of fine-tuning and making corrections. Brad has been involved heavily but work responsibilities have interfered. Scott has sent meeting times to JEB will now send annual meeting dates, too: October 28-29 at Bath Hampton Inn. Could also post state plan draft on website.

Goal is to make info easy to find. Discussion followed about whether to post links to other sites versus local copies of other sites' content. Both approaches require monitoring, JEB recommended local copies for CAP web site rather than links. CAP web site gets a lot of hits, lots of calls and letters from around the nation as a result of web visibility.

Steering Committee: Personal commitments prevented meeting.

Legislative Committee: Labor Committee Presentation redundant on agenda. Legislature adjourned in early May, laws take effect 8/1; nothing else that affects us directly, no official action on report submitted to Appropriations on BEP; could show up in budget proposal in January, though. John McMahon had conversation with Jim about the opportunity to work with DOL to identify needs for additional funding. (Sequestration impact much harder in 2nd year) John suggested two components: TVIs/other services, TVIs funded 100% with state money versus other programs which bring a federal match.

Jim concerned about John's extended absence, not sure what's being done, suggests conversation with Brenda about DOL budgeting process and possible SRC involvement in identifying additional needs. Proposition would only cover

one year, though. It will be a lot easier if it's in DOE's budget proposal. Jim detailed the shortfall as \$30k. Discussion followed about sequester impact on various agencies--second cut is smaller but it hurts more, all the easy stuff is already cut and DBVI budget is less to start with.

It's hard to recruit for positions if year two funding not identified. DOE willing to look at additional funding because shortage identified in 2010 not completely resolved. SRC is supposed to focus on Title I, but ensuring resources for students throughout has high impact--need to ensure educational services for blind children state-wide. Strategies discussed for how to bill for services: innovation and expansion funds, listing it as prevocational services and take education out of it, early intervention for pre-vocational services for blind clients. Nancy cautious about creative funding; education services are mandated through DOE--school's responsibility but DOE not strong on enforcement of funding.

Jim then recounted previous complaint process. SRC DOE rep used to be Due Process Officer, replaced on SRC by Cindy, who is now liaison to special-purpose schools. Pauline Lamontagne, who is also visually impaired, is the due process person at DOE. Jan Breton has been supportive and we have potentially a short opportunity to try to address some of these issues.

Second Public Comment Period: None.

Adjournment: Nancy made motion to adjourn, Kathy seconded, all in favor.
Meeting adjourned at 4:00