

Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Director's Report
August 20, 2014

I. Staffing:

A. Vacancies:

1. Orientation & Mobility Instructor in the Bangor office. This position became vacant in early November. Recruiting through contacting various university personnel preparation programs and professional O&M organizations continue.
2. Rehab. Counselor I position (aka Independent Living Case Manager) position in Portland became vacant in July when the individual in that position took another position within DBVI. This position has already been posted and interviews are scheduled for Wednesday and Friday of this week.
3. VR Counselor position in Lewiston will become vacant on August 25 as the individual has accepted another position within the Bureau of Rehab. Services. This position has been approved to be filled and will likely be posted next week.

B. New Hires:

1. Orientation & Mobility Instructor position in the Bangor office has been filled by a transfer of Esther Carr from the IL Case Manager position in the DBVI Portland office. Ms. Carr recently completed her master's degree in O&M from
UMass Boston.

II. Employability Skills Program:

DBVI is planning to hold its third offering of the ESP in early November and VR Counselors have begun recruiting for this cohort. As a reminder, this program is designed to assist those clients who are chronically unemployed or underemployed, or are otherwise stuck in their efforts to obtain a job. To date, 10 of the 14 clients who attended previous ESPs have obtained employment (71.4% employment rate).

III. Public Education and Outreach:

Each regional office of DBVI has created a plan for public education and outreach activities. A similar plan created by The Iris Network has also been meshed into this effort so that a more coordinated effort can be implemented across the entire state. This effort is in response to a drop in the number of clients being served over the past five years.

IV. Budget:

Budget initiatives for the department for state fiscal years 2016-2017 will be completed by August 22. DBVI is currently putting in two initiatives for consideration. One is for the funding of two more Teacher of Visually Impaired Children (TVI) positions and related costs. The other is for Blindness Rehab. Specialist (BLRS). The two TVI positions are being funded by DOE for this current year and will be placed into the current contract with Catholic Charities. The BLRS position, which is a position that works specifically with parents and is the liaison between the blindness, education, and VR systems, is a position within DBVI. All three of these positions were part of the recommended additions resulting from the stakeholder resolve work group in 2009.

V. College Preparation Program:

The College Vision Quest program wrapped up on August 8. By all accounts this was an extremely successful program. Comments made by the six students who completed the entire program underscored the importance of this program, both for better preparing them for attending college, as well as for being okay with being a person with a visual impairment.

VI. Current VR Program Data:

At the end of the third quarter of the federal fiscal year, DBVI has recorded 28 individuals closed as successfully achieving competitive employment. This compares to 17 for this same time last year. Projections indicate that DBVI will reach its average number of 43 competitive employment closures by the end of September.

VII. Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment:

DBVI director has requested proposals to conduct our Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment from two sources that have experience with blindness agencies. The two sources are Mississippi State University and Dr. Karen Wolffe. Both are interested and should have proposals for us to look at soon. This assessment will include some face time in the field with consumers, as well as likely telephone surveying. Expected cost of the assessment is in the \$30,000-\$40,000 range. The assessment is expected to be completed over the upcoming winter.

VIII. State Plan:

DBVI has received notification from RSA that our 2015 State Plan has been approved.

Respectfully Submitted by
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DBVI Director