

Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Director's Report
April 16, 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. Orientation & Mobility Instructor in the Bangor office. This position became vacant in mid-March. This is the second of our three O&M positions based out of our Bangor office. This position has been posted.

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. Business Enterprise Program (BEP):

- A. A self-serve market operation has been confirmed for the new DOL/DHHS building being built by the airport in Portland.
- B. BEP Administrator has begun an effort to cultivate a relationship at the U.S. Coast Guard Station in South Portland.
- C. The spring meeting of the Blind Managers group is scheduled for Saturday, April 26. The DBVI Director will be in attendance and will be discussing the need for a member of this group to serve on the SRC.

V. Immersion Model Blindness Rehabilitation and Training Center Update:

DBVI and The Iris Network have completed the draft of answers to the questions related to this project posed by the DOL administration. There are still a couple details that need to be confirmed, which will be done by the end of this week. The draft will then go back to Jim Phipps for a final look from The Iris Network perspective. We plan to submit the document to the Bureau of Rehab. Services Director and the DOL Deputy Commissioner by the middle of next week. It will then be sent to the SRC by the end of next week.

VI. Internships:

DBVI will have two professional O&M internships taking place this summer. One of our current Portland staff who is finishing her program at UMass Boston will begin their internship the beginning of May in Portland. The second intern is coming from Western Michigan University and will begin her internship in the Bangor office on June 1. In addition, DBVI has been contacted by the University of Maine Farmington (UMF) for a professional internship. UMF has a Bachelor's program in rehabilitation and the internship will provide an opportunity for the intern to look at performing basic tasks associated the DBVI programs.

VII. Support Service Provider (SSP) program:

On March 17, DBVI, The Iris Network, and the University of Southern Maine hosted a hands-on training event for SSPs. The program was centered around a presentation by Corrina Veasart from California. Corina presented on her experiences as a deaf-blind woman traveling around Nicaragua for a month with her SSP.

VIII. College Preparation Program:

We currently have nine students signed up for this summer's College Vision Quest. We have made a number of substantive changes to this year's program. We will again be on the campus of the University of Maine, but have changed from a six-week program to a five-week program. This year the student's college course will meet five days a week instead of the four days a week format from last year. Another change is that students will be required to complete a number of community service projects during the program. Another change in this year's program is that the students will have hands-on activities to do for each of the learning labs that are being offered each day.

IX. Current VR Program Data:

At the end of the first six months of the federal fiscal year, DBVI has recorded 16 individuals closed as successfully achieving employment. This compares to 11 for this same time last year. The average hourly wage for the 16 clients is \$16.21, with the range being \$7.25-\$43.50. per hour.

The jobs fell into various categories: foodservice, social work, retail, computer systems analyst, administrative support, customer service representative, school teacher, audio/visual equipment technician and housekeeping.

Some of the employers were: UNUM, Home Depot, Anthem, TJ Maxx, Social Security Administration, Tractor Supply and Maine General.

X. Upcoming Public Education and Outreach Activities of the Director:

DBVI Director will be setting up a series of town hall style meetings in various areas of the state. This will be a sort of “meet and greet” with any interested area in a given community. He will coordinate the schedule with local staff. This could easily be made into a combined effort with the SRC to conduct some consumer forums in these same locations with at least one SRC member attending and asking some direct questions of the participants of the various meeting.

Respectfully Submitted by
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DBVI Director