

SRC-DBVI Emergency Meeting

Phone Conference

9-10 AM

Tuesday September 8, 2015

Present:

SRC-DBVI Members: Kathy Despres, Walter Voitasek, Kelly Osborne, Carrie Brooker, Cheryl Peabody, Nancy Moulton, Annette Tillsley, Darcy Gentle, Lynn Merrill, Brad Strause

Others: Mark Tardiff, Jane Powers, Judy Wolffe, Steve Freeman, Mel Clarridge, Diane Frigon, Karen Fraser, Carolyn Beebe, Samantha Fenderson, James Howard, Leon Proctor, Leanne Nelson, Rabih Dow, Patty Sarchi, Jenn Ardito, Mary Ellen Frost, Gene Monahan, Rose Marie Houghton, Leona McKenna, James Phipps, Nancy Matulis, Pauline Lamontagne, Deon Lyons, Carson Wood, Scott Murray

1. **Call to Order:** Meeting called to order at 9:13.
2. **Agenda Review:** Kathy started with review list of SRC members present and then set goals—to review events and prep for full SRC meeting next week, determine what to request of BRS in response to recent events. Kathy requested limiting public to submissions via email to her or Scott; will address at 9/16 meeting.
3. **Summary of Events/Concerns:** CARES received client calls regarding interruption of fee-based services, opened a case on a client's behalf, no response from John McMahon. Numerous additional calls revealed news of meeting on 7/15 where fee-for-service (FFS) providers were told DBVI was out of money and a process of prioritizing client services had begun forcing service delays until either re-allotment or for the new fiscal year—significant issue for CAP--requires certain protocols which do not appear to have been followed. Also, FFS providers meeting was on the same day as (and prior to) the most recent SRC-DBVI meeting where DBVI Director's report was given without mention of budgetary concerns.

CAP staff then requested a meeting with BRS Director Karen Fraser and DOL Commissioner Jean Paquette, which was granted the next day. This meeting also included Kelly Osborn, Steve Beam, Kathy Despres, Julie Rabinowitz and the assistant commissioner, and Richard Freund. Meeting included reassurances that DBVI is not out of money, and DOL/BRS were not aware that FFS providers had been cut. They immediately offered to rectify the situation and we were assured the services would be resumed.

Other questions were raised regarding John McMahon's whereabouts. He is officially on leave but no further details were offered. Kathy also asked for clarification of why some DBVI staff salaries are being paid by DVR, and were told that DVR was responding to a staffing shortage by paying DBVI staff to provide DVR services. Discussion included

concerns circulating within the blindness community that there may be plans to roll DBVI into the general (DVR) program. Nothing was confirmed but there was talk of consolidating, and references to generally widespread interest in consolidation of departments in state government.

Kathy then described the concept of re-allotment funds and how they are used, both generally and by DBVI, where it has become a practice to depend on re-allotment funds for services. There was overspending this year and DBVI will be modifying their budgeting going forward. Rumored amount of overspending was \$90K per month, which became apparent in June; BRS and DOL still figuring it out, no definite numbers yet, not sure how 2016 budget will be affected. No acting director has been assigned during John's leave, but Karen Fraser is addressing the fee-for-service issue and has offered to answer questions until John returns. Kathy concerned as SRC chair that no mention was made of any of this at 7/15 SRC-DBVI meeting--more budgetary data needed from DBVI, supposed to be a partnership with SRC.

Jim then addressed Walter's question about impact on new training center - little to none expected. Most Iris services contracted in DBVI in advance, none were targeted in 7/15 FFS providers' meeting. At separate meeting (after 7/15) DBVI did request budget cuts from Iris, who proposed \$125-130K cut for the contract encumbered in June, DBVI has not responded with amended contract yet, but services continuing.

Re: upcoming 9/16 SRC-DBVI meeting, suggestions to invite BRS, DBVI, and a rep from DOL; Kathy will make calls, also wants reckoning of budget numbers. Location also questioned, 9/16 meeting had been planned for Maine State Library, Walter made motion to relocate back to Frances Perkins C.R. at DOL. Lynn seconded. Discussion: Brad urged that group ensure best conference phone equipment, since there will be many people dialing in. Vote taken, all in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

Lynn then asked about resumption of FFS providers. Kathy reported 30 to 45 clients affected, DOL and BRS responded promptly--Karen Fraser contacted regional managers to get instructions about how to get FFS providers back, have been meetings with responsible VR counselors, Kathy will check in with them on progress. Lynn wants status report of that from DBVI at 9/16 SRC meeting.

4. **Next SRC-DBVI Meeting:** confirmed at Frances Perkins C.R. at DOL at 1:00 on Wednesday 9/16. Kathy will send out call-in number and will collect public comment/questions via email in the mean time, either to her directly at KATHY.DESPRES@CARESINC.ORG or to Scott Murray at SRCSCRIBE@GMAIL.COM. Kathy also offered CARES phone number: 1-800-773-7055 (v/tty).

Agenda additions included: Nancy Moulton - discussion of timeframe for John McMahon's return and/or if an interim director will be appointed. Kelly - how will DOL and BRS involve the SRC as mandated partner in resolving these issues?

5. **Adjournment:** Walter moved to adjourn meeting. Unidentified second. All in favor.
Meeting adjourned at 9:56 AM.