



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS)
COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED (CBVI)

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (SRC)
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 3, 2023 - HYBRID MEETING
130 LIVINGSTON AVE | NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ 08901

Voting Members Present: Don Campbell, Vito DeSantis, Clarke King, John O'Connell, Evangelia Stone, Lauren Weishaar, Ronda Williams, Wanda Williford

Members Awaiting Appointment Present: James Good, Steven McCoy, Gwen Orłowski, Amanda Philp

Absent: Ida Behreini, Alice Eaddy, Kathleen Spata

Ex Officio Present: Dr. Bernice Davis, Kathleen Donnellon, John Tkacz

CBVI Staff: Amanda Gerson, Pat McKenna

Members of Public Present: Haley Carney, Elisa Cohen, Susan Head, Janna Sheiman

Vito DeSantis, SRC Chairperson, welcomed everyone, calling the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Vito announced that the meeting was being held in compliance with Section 105 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act 1973 as amended; and in compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meeting Act, NJSA 10:4-6.

Vito then reminded members of the public that they are welcome to be at the meeting, to take notes, and if they have questions they can send those via email to Pat McKenna or Vito DeSantis for a response. A reminder for those participating to please announce themselves prior to speaking, and for those on Zoom to keep themselves muted until speaking.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the December 09, 2022 meeting were acknowledged and reviewed. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Wanda Williford and seconded by Lia Stone. These meeting minutes will be put into the permanent record of the SRC.

Next Meeting Date:

June 9, 2023 (hybrid)

New Business

Upcoming SRC Vacancies and Nominations

Vito asked for a review of the upcoming SRC vacancies and nominations.

Amanda Gerson reviewed these vacancies as follows:

- Gwen Orłowski, Client Assistance Program – **Pending Appointment**
- Steven McCoy, Business and Industry – **Pending Appointment**
- James Good, Business and Industry – **Pending Appointment**
- Don Campbell, State Independent Living Council (SILC)
 - First term ends 3/17/2023 – **Nomination Required**
- Vacant, Parent Trainer and Information Representative
 - **Pending Nomination from SPAN Parent Advocacy Network**
- Lia Stone, Current & Former Consumer
 - Second term ends 3/17/2023 – **New Representative Required**
- Vacant, State Workforce Investment Board
 - **Pending Nomination from State Employment and Training Commission**
- Alice Eaddy, Current & Former Consumer
 - First term ended 12/9/2022 – **Pending Reappointment**
- Ronda Williams, Business and Industry
 - First term ends 3/17/2023 – **Pending Reappointment**
- Vito DeSantis, Representing Individuals with Disabilities
 - First term ends 3/17/2023 – **Pending Reappointment**

Subcommittees: Role and Composition

Vito transitioned into the discussion of SRC subcommittees and of those who can work on them. It was explained that these subcommittees are the lifeblood of the SRC because of the work that is accomplished by them in the background. The subcommittee members would then be able to provide a report to the SRC at these meetings.

To be a member of these subcommittees you must be: **1.** Nominated and Appointed to the SRC, or **2.** Nominated and Pending Appointment to the SRC. {Nominees pending appointment would be unable to vote.} However, members of the public cannot be a member of these committees.

Vito then acknowledged that there is an opening for Chair on the Business Relations Committee. John O'Connell volunteered to be the Chair of this subcommittee.

The Core subcommittees of the SRC are: Business Relations, the SRC Annual Report, Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), Quality Assurance (QA) and Policy & Procedure.

The Policy & Procedure committee is really important because it identifies if CBVI has put any barriers to its services through its policies. Ida Behrini was confirmed as the Chair of this committee.

Gwen Orlowski asked if the core committees are stated in the bylaws, if there is a provision for ad hoc committees, and can there be a consideration to the regulation that a person must be nominated to the SRC in order to be on a committee? She explained that this is not the case in other places such as with the NJ Council of Developmental Disabilities, where their bylaws state that those who are not members of their Executive Committee could be on ad hoc committees at the very least.

In reply, it was answered that these core committees are stated in the bylaws of the SRC, there is a provision for ad hoc committees in the bylaws, and the stated regulation of only nominated members serving on the subcommittees have been previously reviewed.

Vito explained that the bylaws were reviewed through a yearlong process to develop them. The interpretation of only nominated members being on subcommittees was researched by Vito with others throughout the country. It was explained that any subcommittee can bring in expertise for additional information, but the members of that committee must be members of the SRC either nominated or already appointed. If this understanding is not correct, Vito suggests that CBVI reach out to the RSA for an interpretation. This is because the bylaws reflect the regulation under Section 105 of the Federal Regulations Act of 1973 as amended, and any State rules that are pertinent to any Councils. This doesn't mean that those who are not a nominated member of the SRC cannot provide input on a field of expertise that they have. It was agreed that CBVI will reach out to RSA for its interpretation.

Should there be any additional subcommittees?

Gwen Orlowski suggested two subcommittees for consideration:

1. A committee that is focused on Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI)
2. A committee that focuses on CBVI's responsibility regarding College and Graduate School tuition.

Vito agrees with the first committee on DEI and agrees that it is both timely and required. Regarding the second suggested committee Vito explained that this topic is actually part of a function of the Policy & Procedure committee and feels there is no need for a second ad hoc committee on this topic. The voting members of the SRC and the CBVI members agreed to both recommendations by Vito.

It was clarified that there is a policy concern for some on the funding structure for Graduate schools and different courses at Universities that have a higher cost in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), Business, Law, and Medicine that are covered under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Regulations. It is not believed that this topic has been brought to the Policy & Procedure subcommittee.

Vito asked if there is currently an open litigation on this topic between DVRS and CBVI. This was confirmed. It was then determined that because of the legal case, the SRC would need to wait until this matter was decided before making it a topic for review by the SRC.

Dr. Davis shared with the SRC that CBVI has interfaced with the RSA and the Department of Education (DOE) about their college policy and procedures as they are currently written and the RSA have confirmed that CBVI is in full compliance.

Dr. Davis then clarified that the role of the SRC is not to determine legal issues, or matters currently under litigation. CBVI works hard to be in full compliance with all regulations and all policy and procedures.

Gwen wanted to put forth that a specific topic of policy and procedure as affected by the WIOA should be open for discussion by the SRC. It was noted that the legal case is currently with the Administrative Law Judge and is in the process of being finalized.

Amanda Gerson suggested for those interested in this topic should reach out via email to Ida Behrini, Vice Chair of the SRC and Chair of the Policy and Procedure committee, to have a conversation about this and let Pat McKenna, Amanda Gerson, and Vito DeSantis know if this is something that the subcommittee is looking to take up. Amanda will also share the current policy and procedure with the SRC before the next meeting to allow for conversations between now and the next meeting.

Vito also reminded all that the role of the SRC is not to set regulations but to advise and identify where there may be problems.

John Tkacz revisited the first suggested ad hoc committee for DEI and volunteered to join, Gwen also volunteered. Don Campbell made a motion for the SRC to add DEI as an ad hoc subcommittee. John O'Connell seconded it. All were in favor. The motion was passed. Both John Tkacz and Gwen are non-voting members as they are pending appointment, and will unofficially lead the committee together. Other SRC members were encouraged to join.

SRC Members Feedback Questions

Two questions were provided to SRC Members prior to this meeting for feedback.

1. What is the purpose of the SRC?
2. What is the purpose of the agency (CBVI) and how do you think the agency goes about accomplishing its purpose?

Comments were solicited for this group discussion amongst the SRC.

Vito commented that if the SRC doesn't understand the mission of CBVI then it will affect how the SRC functions. It is important to align the SRC's purpose with the agency's purpose. As the SRC is to advise and provide information, to be involved in the CSNA, to review the policies, but also to understand that the whole purpose of the agency is to assist individuals with a significant disability to achieve integrated competitive employment. This is in the preamble of the Rehabilitation Act.

The Value and Need for SRC Members Receiving Training

A link was sent to all SRC Members that the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM) setup specifically to train SRC Members and counselors.

This training is approved by RSA and can provide credit for Certified Rehabilitation Council (CRC). The training is 4 modules long and is estimated at 1.5 hours.

The agency has the responsibility to provide formalized training to new SRC Members. Any questions that members may have when taking the training should be sent to Pat McKenna for forwarding. Also, once the training is completed, Pat McKenna should be notified.

Vito proposed 3 options to the SRC for taking this training:

1. This training could be done individually, on the member's own time.
2. The training can be made a part of the SRC Meeting.
3. A separate meeting could be created specifically for the training.

After a discussion, it was decided that the training would be done individually. During an SRC meeting, questions could be raised and answered, and if necessary an extension to the meeting or separate meeting could be scheduled for discussion of the training. The June 9th meeting will be used for this meeting extension.

John Tkacz informed the SRC that the Annual Reports and Meeting Minutes were outdated on the CBVI website and asked if this was something that should continue to be updated.

The following years and dates are currently listed on the CBVI website.

- Annual Reports: 2011 – 2017
- Meeting Minutes: February 2015 – February 2022

This will be updated on the CBVI website.

Old Business:

2023 SRC Goals and Priorities.

The 2023 SRC Goals were stated as follows:

1. SRC will meet four times as well as continue ongoing support to foster CBVI's goals.
2. SRC members will continue to participate, as appropriate, in public forums and agency programs for the benefit of consumers.
3. The SRC will work with CBVI to identify, develop, and provide an On Boarding Training for new SRC Members to ensure all members understand the scope and role of SRC membership and the VR program.
4. The SRC will work with CBVI to identify topical presentations that can be presented at each SRC Meeting related to agency performance and compliance.
5. The SRC will enhance and operationalize the role of the subcommittees to align its focus with the core requirements of the SRC, the SRC Bylaws, Federal Regulations, and the VR program.
6. The SRC will work with CBVI to enhance and improve competitive integrated employment outcomes across all VR consumer groups being served,
 - a. By assisting the Commission in identifying and partnering with apprenticeship opportunities;
 - b. By assisting the Commission in enhancing partnerships with the local One-Stops and larger workforce system.

Vito then introduced a discussion on whether or not DEI needs to be an added goal for the SRC. Don Campbell agrees that it should be a goal because it is a big part of how everything should run. He also expressed willingness to work on the DEI subcommittee with John Tkacz and Gwen. Gwen inquired if CBVI has any written policy of incorporating DEI into their goals and how they approach it, and what the SRC has done about DEI up to this point? These answers could help determine if DEI should be a goal for the SRC this year.

Dr. Davis informed the Council that CBVI does not have anything formalized. Pat and Dr. Davis are a part of CSAVR's DEI platform and had experience working with the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) prior to the pandemic. The work with ICI left off with reviewing DEI for the agency.

Vito recommended tabling the decision on making DEI a goal for the SRC, giving time to learn more about it. Clarke offered comments, questioning whether this should be a goal for the SRC.

He asked whether the SRC is looking at the DEI of the SRC or the DEI of CBVI, also reminding all in attendance that goals should be measurable. Gwen offered an answer stating she believes that the SRC should be looking at both the DEI of the SRC and the DEI of CBVI. Regarding measurable outcomes, she shared that the New Jersey Council for Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD) had an objective around looking at their own internal policies and practices of DEI. They hired an outside consultant and was able to get a number of measurable outcomes.

All agreed to table this discussion and revisit at the June meeting.

Dr. Bernice Davis – Executive Director’s Report

Dr. Davis began with a follow up point from the previous meeting, informing the SRC that CBVI did present at the Department of Human Services (DHS) Budget hearing. There were representatives from the Governor’s Office and DHS. CBVI was requesting monies for Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Instructor recruitment as well as extra monies for Braille Book funding. The budget presentation went well and CBVI should learn if the requests were approved before April 2023.

There has been continued focus on the Randolph Sheppard program across the nation and here in NJ, in terms of ideas on how to make sure the program continues and is built up. A lot of Randolph Sheppard Licensed Managers are still struggling because of the pandemic effects on the use of government buildings by employees. Dr. Davis was able to attend a conference and a phone call about the Randolph Sheppard program, where much attention was given to exploring the use of micro markets and in duplicating success, that is looking at businesses outside of the traditional venues in order to create additional partnerships. One such nontraditional venue mentioned was the US Post Office, who has just appointed a liaison for the Randolph Sheppard program in order to create more partnerships. Private industries are also being looked at for identifying businesses to create partnerships with.

A monitoring guide was recently released by the RSA for Fiscal Year 2023. The RSA will be monitoring multiple State VR agencies, however NJ is not one of them. CBVI is doing well with the last Corrective Action Plan given and Dr. Davis acknowledged the great teamwork at CBVI for its work on those action items.

Dr. Davis is anticipating attending a national conference produced by the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB). This conference is scheduled for April 15-19th, 2023 in Bethesda, MD. At this conference, there will be a focus on fiscal processes at VR Agencies. She will also be attending an International Low Vision Research and Rehabilitation conference taking place in Denver, CO this summer, July 24-27th, 2023.

Dr. Davis then opened the discussion for questions, but there were none presented.

Dr. Davis then took the opportunity to acknowledge, thank, and congratulate Lia Stone for her time being Chair of the SRC and as a member who contributed much to the council. She presented Lia with a Certificate of Appreciation.

Pat McKenna, Assistant Division Director - Vocational Rehabilitation Update:

Joseph Kohn Training Center (JKTC) Updates:

CBVI has conducted several in person tours of JKTC recently for potential future consumers. Previously the tours were virtual only, virtual is still an option, but now in person tours have resumed. JKTC referrals were low but have started to increase. Currently there are 8 residents at the JKTC. A few graduations were held in January and another graduation will be held today, February 3rd.

The LIFE101 workshop, which will be held this summer, just held an open house on February 1, 2023 with 5 families registering for that event.

JKTC continues to offer its “At Home” week for its residents. This is a portion of the curriculum where the consumer goes home for a week to practice the skills they have learned at the JKTC in their home environment. It is a great opportunity for the students to put those skills to practice, identify potential barriers, and report back to the center. This helps the students to have greater success upon completion of the JKTC program.

The independent apartment is being utilized again. One student has just completed their time using it, and another student will begin in 1 week. The independent apartment is the aspect of JKTC where a consumer can practice independent living skills. The “apartment” is arranged differently than the normal dormitory rooms. It contains a living room, bathroom, kitchen, etc. There is more opportunity to put their independent living skills to practice by cooking, cleaning, and more.

Business Enterprise of New Jersey (BENJ) Updates:

BENJ is looking into a new location at Newark Airport for TSA.

More information about this opportunity should be presented at the next meeting on June 9th.

All of the Randolph Sheppard Licensed Managers are required to have a ServSafe Certification. This was more difficult during the pandemic. Recently, a link was sent to the Licensed Managers that will provide the accommodation necessary so they can resume pursuing that required certification.

A series of Randolph Sheppard - Business Leadership And Superior Training (BLAST) virtual events, called BLAST TNT are beginning to be held. One was held yesterday, February 2, 2023 and will be held periodically throughout the year to share information, education, updates, and more. These BLAST events are a good opportunity to build and strengthen the Randolph Sheppard Program.

Amanda Gerson, Vocational Rehabilitation Coordinator - Update

Summer Programs for Transition Services

It is now the season for summer programs and open houses. The following are the new rebranded names for the summer programs.

CBVI's standing summer programs are a Work Skills Prep program designed for students with visual impairments and additional disabilities, a College Prep program, and a second Work Skills Prep program designed for students who fall between those who are definitely going to college and those who need supportive employment.

- Work Skills Prep is now the **STEPS** Program, **S**uccessful **T**ransition **E**xperiences **P**reparing **S**tudents.
- College Prep is now the **SUCCESS** Program, **S**tudents **U**nderstanding **C**ollege and **C**areer expectations for **E**xcellence in **S**chool and **S**ociety.
- Work Skills Prep 2 is now **CREATE**, **C**areer **R**esearch **E**xploration and **A**wareness for **T**ransition to **E**mployment.
 - Open House for all 3 summer programs are scheduled for February 15th

Additional programs that were adjusted or rebranded:

- LIFE 101 summer program at JKTC is now an acronym, **L**earning and **I**ndependence for **F**uture **E**mployment
- EDGE program, **E**mployment **D**evelopment **G**uidance and **E**ngagement, is now being administered by the ARC of Ocean County, effective January 1st, 2023.

Corrective Action Plan

CBVI is still pending 2 findings, the Cost Allocation Plan which has been waiting for approval by the Federal Government, and the Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) and Memorandums of Agreement (MOA). CBVI is required by WOIA to become signatories on IFAs and MOAs for all local areas, the One Stop Career Centers in the state. 3 out of 21 are still missing, Mercer County/Passaic County/Hudson County, but CBVI is continuing to push towards full compliance.

Performance Metrics

Amanda posed a question to Vito regarding if there will be a desire to report on quarterly performance metrics to the SRC or to the Quality Assurance committee. Vito acknowledged that some performance metrics can be helpful to report on.

Subcommittee Reports

CSNA - Vito DeSantis, Chair

Vito, Clarke, Amanda, and Pat has come up with a request for a proposal (RFP) for a third-party vendor to interpret the answers to a survey that will be sent out regarding the needs of CBVIs consumers. It is important to hear from the SRC, consumers, and third party vendors about what the needs of consumers are.

- No responses received yet on this RFP.
- Needs Assessment must be completed by the end of the year.

Business Engagement - John O'Connell, Chair

John O'Connell is the new chair and will review training materials on Business Engagement for VR Agencies.

- James Goode also agreed to work on the Business Engagement subcommittee
- Anyone else from the SRC who would like to work with John O'Connell on the Business Engagement subcommittee can get in contact with John directly via email or phone call.
 - joconnel9@gmail.com (732) 300-5524

Policy & Procedure - Ida Behreini, Chair

Updates from this subcommittee were not given in Ida's absence.

Quality Assurance - Clarke King, Chair

Last report reviewed for Quality Assurance showed CBVI was in compliance. There are 3 primary measurables under Quality Assurance to be in compliance with RSA standards. Two of those measurables needed remediation to be in compliance, which was completed.

Dr. Michelle Whitmore will be contacted for the latest Quality Assurance report to review.

Anything that comes under the scope of the SRC should have measurables reviewed; how is success to be measured and what are the reasons for changes made. If there are other aspects regarding Quality Assurance that the SRC would like this subcommittee to review, Clarke acknowledged that he is available for such. Currently, Clarke is the only member of this subcommittee. Previous subcommittee members are no longer appointed to the SRC. Amanda is open to having conversations regarding additional variables of performance and not just variables of compliance that the SRC would like to look at.

Dr. Davis informed the SRC that Dr. Whitmore is still responsible for Quality Assurance aspects but is serving as one of the 2 Assistant Division Directors. CBVI recently brought on Nikki Tabron as the new Quality Assurance Coordinator. She is a Registered Nurse for 25 years, has a strong supervisory background and experience with the Department of Health (DOH) with a focus on Medicaid.

SRC Annual Report - Katie Donnellon, Chair

In the absence of Katie Donnellon, Amanda confirmed to the SRC that the Annual Report was submitted to the RSA and the Governor's Office. CBVI is now beginning work on putting together the version that will be public facing and Amanda opened up the opportunity for other members to contribute to the creativity of the look and feel of the final annual report.

- Vito suggested adding a QR code on the report that would take persons to videos of successful consumers.

Member Updates:

Members are reminded that updates in the form of bullet points are to be emailed to Bryan McClain prior to, or, immediately following each meeting, so as to be included in the meeting minutes. There were no SRC Member Reports received.

The following requests/decisions were made during the member updates portion of the meeting:

Don Campbell

- Don has a podcast and would like a member of the SRC to be a guest on the podcast.

Steven McCoy

- In his role with the SRC, Steven wants to help make connections between the Business community and the SRC. Steven spoke to a friend who is one of the choreographers for Beyonce's Coachella Music Festival and he is willing to visit some of CBVI's summer camps to teach the children dance.
 - Vito recommended Steven to work with John O'Connell with the Business Engagement subcommittee. Steven agreed and accepts a role on the committee.
 - Amanda suggested the choreographer would be good for the CREATE Program.
 - Amanda will also put Steven in contact with the new Director for the EDGE Program, who often looks for guest speakers for their monthly workshops.

Clarke King

- Clarke was speaking with a parent of a blind teenager recently about her frustration with there not being enough TVIs and O&M Instructors available. Clarke then suggested that one area for the Quality Assurance subcommittee to monitor is how well CBVI is doing with recruitment.

Announcements

Dr. Davis - It is Low Vision Awareness Month with a focus on age-related macular degeneration.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30pm.

The next SRC meeting is scheduled for June 9, 2023.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bryan McClain

Bryan McClain

Executive Secretarial Assistant