

**GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY
IMPAIRED**

SERVICES FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

40 FOUNTAIN STREET

THIRD FLOOR

PROVIDENCE, RI 02903

MINUTES

March 21, 2005

**Members Present: Donald Deignan, Deborah Barton, Richard Gaffney,
Raymond Dettore, Barbara Walsh, Elizabeth Graves and Ralph
Iannitelli Quorum requirements were met.**

Staff Present: Susan Silva and Gary Wier

Guests Present: None

Approval of Minutes:

**The minutes of the December 13, 2004 meeting had been previously
distributed. A motion to accept the minutes as presented was made
by Ralph Iannitelli and seconded by Elizabeth Graves. The minutes**

were accepted and approved.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Update:

Susan Silva offered some information on personnel. A new secretary has been hired for the VR Unit, Virginia Porter. She has experience in working in a team environment and is currently working on her Associates Degree. In addition, a new VR Counselor, Paul Hughett, was hired on 12/26/04. Paul came with substantial experience in the field of rehabilitation and has adapted quickly.

Information was provided on a new CCTV that her staff has evaluated and found to provide good results. Called MY Reader it allows reading without an X-Y table.

Susan provided a sample listing of successful outcomes this year for the VR unit. Jobs included customer service representative, librarian, stock clerk, fast food manager, vending facility operators, clinical psychologist and administrative assistant.

Referrals to the VR unit have been low and the staff has met to determine approaches to be used to attract more consumers. Several staff are part of a committee that will work with the Department of Education, Vision Services and SBVI to review referrals. The staff is developing a bookmark that will summarize the services we offer and be placed at libraries, bookstores and other locations. They plan to mail applications for VR to students 14 and over. They will be

outreaching to rehabilitation facilities, medical clinics and treatment centers. They also plan to outreach to the Urban League, Progreso Latino and interpreters. The unit will also be taking steps to be included in local newsletters and other general referral data sources. Outreach information could also be provided to the Registry of Motor Vehicles.

Members of the GAC suggested that an announcement might be placed in local free newspapers such as Valley breeze and Neighbors.

The medical licensing boards and professional organizations of ophthalmologists and optometrists along with pharmacies could be contacted.

Social Services/IL Update:

Gary Wier offered information in conjunction with notes provided by Linda Hughes, Casework Supervisor. Gary noted that Linda is currently in Washington, DC at the IL Project Director's Meeting. Project Directors for the IL for Older Blind programs from each state are expected to attend. They will discuss program, policies and statistical reporting requirements. A national satisfaction survey was conducted. A random selection of consumers (N=26) from each state were polled by telephone and the results will be presented at the conference.

Both administration and the program have been working on a

proposal to address the needs in children's services at SBVI. There is a serious lack of services in the birth-to three age range before children are involved with their local school districts. SBVI has been working with a new service provider and a fee-for service basis. The provider is available to provide functional vision screening and services in this age range. There are approximately 43 individuals in this area to be evaluated.

The Social Services Unit will be having an annual planning meeting on March 28th to review current services and plan for SFY 2006. The meeting will be used to plan for summer camp and most issues are expected to be resolved by the conclusion of the meeting. Another multi-cultural arts week is planned and an application will again be made to the State Council on the Arts. The campers will be producing their own CD this year as a souvenir of their camp experience.

Vision Screening:

Saving Sight has screened 17,000 children so far this fiscal year and will be halting the vision screening program until funding is available in July. There has been an effort to concentrate more on children three to five through the Child Outreach programs. We will have a full report on this year's results in July, 2005.

In conjunction with our Independent Living Program for Older Blind, RI Saving Sight will be conducting an adult vision screening program in minority areas. The screenings will check acuity and screen for glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and macular degeneration. It is estimated that this program will screen 2,000 individuals over the next year.

Newsline:

Gary Wier noted that statistics for this new program continue to improve. Registrations have risen from 79 individuals in November, 2004 to 168 individuals in February, 2005. SBVI rehabilitation teachers will be providing orientation to this service in order that registered members are more comfortable in using the program. The Providence Journal will soon be available to all readers, following its passing of current trials with selected readers. Richard Gaffney noted that the outgoing message to new readers should be changed. Gary Wier noted that he had participated in the on-site training provided by NFB and thought that this had been addressed at that time. It will be modified as proposed by SBVI as soon as possible.

Vision Services Update:

Donald Deignan reported that the Commission to Promote and Develop a Comprehensive System of Education for Visually Impaired

Children continues to meet. A final report is currently being prepared using four workgroups. Don, who serves as Secretary to the Commission, has the responsibility to wordsmith the final document in preparation for dissemination to legislators and the general public.

Planning Committee for 75th SBVI Anniversary:

Gary Wier noted that plans continue for an event to be held to commemorate the agency's 75 year history. Several planning meetings have been held with another scheduled for April 5th at 10:00am. A full day seminar is planned and participants will include consumers, parents, community partners, professionals and advocates. Part of day will be devoted to presentations using local actors to demonstrate periods of service and techniques applied during the past 75 years. GAC members offered that, in addition to Trinity Square Playhouse staff, Brown University and RI College's Rose Weaver might also serve as resources for this activity.

As mentioned previously, GAC Chairperson Donald Deignan is currently working on a pamphlet that will document the Agency's 75-year period of service to the community. This will be made available as part of an exhibit that will reflect the progression of services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired in RI. The event will be held at the Radisson in Warwick on September 15, 2005.

ORS/SBVI Update:

Gary Wier reported that SBVI is currently at full staff, with all available FTE's filled. The efforts that the Administrator of ORS, Raymond Carroll, has made to assist the agency in this regard are appreciated. Gary has been working closely with the administration of ORS and DHS in an effort to build support for additional personnel resources to improve children's services at SBVI. This effort parallels efforts currently being made at the Commission level to improve the service delivery system used for children who are blind or visually impaired.

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and State Rehabilitation Council (SRC):

Elizabeth Graves will provide her reports to the Council on the above by the end of the week. One of the issues that has been discussed at the SRC meetings is the revamping of parking currently being considered by the City of Providence. There is the fear that less parking will result in less handicapped parking spaces. It was suggested that a letter be sent to the Mayor and the traffic engineer, Bill Bombard, to express concern.

Liz also noted that the SRC members have received appointment letters from the Governor. There had been significant delays but this has now been resolved.

Miscellaneous:

Gary Wier noted that Deborah Barton's position was due for re-appointment. Gary will follow-up with her to determine her intentions in this regard. Don Deignan has followed up with Robert Connor who has informed the agency that he is resigning. Several possibilities were discussed as individuals that have experience and might be interested in serving on the GAC. Efforts will be made to recommend individuals and fill vacancies as soon as possible.

Next Meeting(s):

The following remaining meeting dates have discussed and agreed upon for 2005:

Monday, June 13, 2005

Monday, September 26, 2005

Monday, December 5, 2005

Unless notified otherwise, all meetings will be held at 4:00PM at Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, 40 Fountain Street, Third Floor Training Room C, Providence, Rhode Island.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:15pm