

**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 12, 2007

Members Present: Donald Deignan – Chairperson GAC; Raymond Detorre – Board Member, Elizabeth Graves - CIL; Charles Brown – Board Member; Richard Gafney – President NFB of RI Barbara Walsh; Alan Williams

**Staff Present: Ronald Racine – Deputy Administrator SBVI; Linda Hughes - Director Early Intervention Services, Social Services & Independent Living Services for the Blind
Rebecca Cloutier – Clerical**

Members Not Present: A. Alfred Williams; Ralph Iannitelli; Robert Kinder

Guests: None

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of the last meeting were moved and approved. Show absentees from meeting. Discussion was brought and motion to add absentees to minutes was approved by the counsel.

Chairman Donald Deignan began with introductions. Linda Hughes spoke on several topics and gave the following statistics:

Independent Living for Older Blind

- Provided services to 720 individuals, completing case plans for 380. 73% were 80 years and older.**
- 73% were female**
- 83% lived in a private residence.**
- 92% had additional health problems, including cardiac conditions, arthritis, hearing impairments and diabetes.**
- Overwhelming cause of vision impairment was macular degeneration (78%)**
- Second was glaucoma (14%), then diabetic retinopathy (9%)**
- Highest source of referrals, 34%, were from eye doctors.**
- Services provided included low vision aids to 343, rehabilitation and equipment to 268, support groups to 212, counseling to 163, mobility and white canes to 147, and scanner evaluations to 129.**
- Consumer satisfaction survey indicated 98.3% agree with the**

statement that “as the result of my participation in the rehabilitation program for independent living, I feel more confident in my ability to perform activities I had given up.” 81.5% indicated they were better able to read their mail, and manage their paperwork, such as checking and correspondence, with the use of low vision aids.

- 16.7%, or 120 clients, indicated they had considered nursing home placement prior to the receipt of agency services**
- Cost analysis: Program costs: \$380,000. Cost of nursing home placement for 120 would be \$4,320,000**
- Other states have replicated the program evaluation form which is used tri-fold.**
- Average wait period is 2 weeks**
- Due to expenses, large expensive items are not dispensed**

Legislative Statistics age 55 – older; SBVI standards age 70+ - older. Friendly visitors or Readers to read mail will be supplied. Policy on leisure is ok. People do not have to go to work.

Early Intervention

- Services provided to 92 children ages birth through 3 years old**
- Case management by Eileen Cermak**
- Orientation and mobility instructions by Lelia Giuttari**
- Functional vision evaluations by Dr. Greg Waldorf**
- Itinerant teaching by Enid Ford**
- Problems have included transitional issues related to the lack of**

services at the RIVESP Program

- **Agreement with Sherlock Center for Janet Salek to do transitional evaluations**
- **Addition of social caseworker, who will work with the children from the age of 3 to 14**
- **Issues that have come up have included proof of liability insurance, and the provision of a state license as a medical facility.**
- **Problem lies with the school budgeting system.**
- **Sherlock Center is trying to charge school systems for rehabilitation teachers**
- **4 teachers have been hired in past 2 years; still 2 positions advertised but unfilled**
- **Adaptive equipment is not “recycled” and used for other students after client is done with it.**
- **Letter will be written by Chairman Deignan to Rep. Norton to reconvene commission for school-age children.**
- **Services are not being paid for by Insurance Companies**
- **Regulations to qualify state as whatever necessary to receive reimbursement for services**

Winter Camp

- **Camp Hofman**
- **18 campers (6-12), 12 junior counselors with vision impairments (13-17), and 2 head counselors**
- **Children all participated**

- **Good experience**
- **Summer camp being planned (7/30 – 8/3); expect about 50 kids**

Deputy Administrator of SBVI, Ron Racine gave the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) overview with the following points:

- **Site back from Superior Court – vendor problem**
- **Closed Harris Avenue – Convert to a dry stand with coffee etc. at the new tribunal**
- **Wakefield Courts – new sites**
- **Beepers on doors – vendors are aware of people walking in**
- **Registers with Scanners – being looked into – will need a test site**
 - o **Scanners good for inventory management**
- **Test site needed for scanners.**
- **Not moving stand at 40 Fountain Street – renovating/upgrading instead**
- **Completed RSA-15. Last FFY total Gross Sales \$1,815, 369.00; total net profit to vendors \$530,532.00.**
- **Redefining the internal referral process/selection criteria to improve quality of program.**
- **BEP establishing relationship with Johnson & Wales University/ Small Business Development Center for training targeting small business topics.**
- **DLT New Vendor – Pastore Complex**
- **Lower Level Stands – low income – closed depending on bids**

Airport facilities should be approached – owned by the Airport Corporation

Convention Center may be approached

Train Stations in Wakefield, Warwick, & Wickford – may be an alternative

Rehabilitation/Business – combination of both – guaranteed fair minimum. Guaranteed to make minimum wage at the end of the week – Not subsidized

When site gets closed – Is it the site or the Vendor?

Suggestion by board member:

Allow less profitable sites to be run by SSDI individuals. Could be worked into schedule of \$1500 monthly.

Deputy Administrator of SBVI, Ron Racine gave the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) overview with the following points:

- New Referrals Last year: 51 This year: 57**
- Plans: Last year: 54 This year: 51**
- Working Employees: Last year: 16 This year: 38**
- Successful Closures: Last year: 14 This year: 19**
- Total Cases: Last year: 320 This year: 332**

Successful Closures – case closes within 90 days of Employment

**Regina Conner – new director of Rehabilitation Services @ Insight
Eligibilities within 60 days**

**Laurie DiOrio, supervisor of BEP program now has full staff and is
able to do some outreach to different sites for new vendors**

Elizabeth Graves gave the following presentation for SILC:

- **State Plan Committee meeting regularly**
- **Washington will be monitoring RI for this year**
 - o **Need to focus on Access to Transportation**
 - o **Need to focus on Assistive Technology and Modifications**
 - o **Need to focus on Health Care**
- **They will be looking at the outcome**
- **Mentoring meetings resumed for volunteers**
- **Rick Costa – new member of SILC**
- **Mary Wambach – from Corliss Institute new member**
- **Jane Slade – from Northern RI Collaborative new member**
- **Council worked to develop proactive legislative agenda**
- **James deBoer – joined Leadership Development & Advocacy
Committee**
- **Youth Leadership Forum – Marika Terlecky and Mary Wambach
volunteered as speakers**

- **Heidi Showstead – coordinating efforts at the schools**
- **Independent Living conference will be held 9/21**
- **RISILC Annual meeting 9/26**
- **Quarterly meeting is scheduled for 3/16**

Miscellaneous Items brought to Attention:

- **Rep. Mollos & Associates speak a special meeting or a regular GAC meeting to address concerns**
- **Clear up concerns with the associates before meeting with the representative (Sec. of State)**
 - **Can we be assured of a solution to the problems that were addresses in this meeting?**
- **Problem with voting machines & cartridges – many malfunctions**
- **4/4 – Founding Convention of Disability Project @ Warwick Public Library**
 - **What has the State requested of the Vendors**
 - **What is offered by the Vendors**
- **Cutting Teachers**
 - **Emergency Meeting of Commission – Don Deignan will call Eileen Naughton and set up a meeting.**

- o Motion for emergency meeting made and approved by all members**
- o Promotion of Legislation must be made.**

Moved to adjourn and next meeting was set for June 11, 2007 at either 3:30 or 4:00 depending on guest availability. More information will follow.