

GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND AND
VISUALLY IMPAIRED
SERVICES FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
40 FOUNTAIN STREET
FIRST FLOOR
PROVIDENCE, RI 02903

MINUTES:
6/11/2018

Members Present: Elizabeth Graves – GAC Member / SRC member; Regina Connor –GAC Member, Carmen Boucher – DOH / SILC representative; Barbara Walsh – GAC Member; Monica Dzialo- GAC Member; NFB of RI; John Pimental – Vice President of NFB of RI / GAC Member;

Members Not Present: Donna Elliott – GAC Member / Ralph Iannitelli

Staff Present: Laurie DiOrio –Administrator SBVI; Jane Cannata – Supervisor, SBVI

Staff Not Present: Melanie Sbardella – Assistant Administrator SBVI / BEP Program Administrator; Marie Morin – Acting SS / IL Supervisor

Guest: Jalen Rodriguez (studento

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Meeting started at 3:10pm with introductions.
- Minutes of March 12, 2018 -approved as quorum was completed; correction noted to acronym for GCD (mistyped as GCD)– motion by Regina to accept minutes with correction and seconded by B Walsh- passed unanimously.

CHAIRPERSON'S UPDATE

- Regina began the meeting reminding members to kindly RSVP to meeting notices/ for those who respond by email- to PLEASE reply to ALL. So that all will be aware of the status of a quorum for scheduling purposes.

SOCIAL SERVICES UPDATE – Laurie DiOrio

- Marie Morin continues as the acting SS/ILOB Supervisor
- Another retirement pending end of June 2018- caseworker position for ILOB – which will decrease staffing by 1.
- Decision regarding backfills for this position TBD- pending agency wide discussion and priorities.
- Unit doing well overall.
- Budgetary constraints- end of SFY- necessary to review and update past practices- greater use of comparable benefits.
- SS/IL continues to respond to SBVI waitlisted VR clients who need services other than VR.

ORS UPDATE – LAURIE DIORIO

- ORS remains on waitlisted and closed to all categories of OOS.
- There are approximately 2-3000 active cases agency wide- few SBVI are waitlisted.
- Focus remains on PRE- ETS and WIOA compliance and reporting on closed cases.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION UPDATE – Jane Cannata

- Region remains on target to meet goals for successful closures.
- Question to VR Supervisor – from Council Member re: types of jobs at closure- VR supervisor will get information.

BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM – Laurie DiOrio (for Melanie Sbardella)

- SITE 67 in NUWC now open again post renovation and with new vendor- however the other site at NUWC (Site 74) is now currently closed.
- Trying to recruit new individuals for BEP.

RISILC REPORT – Carmen Boucher

- SILC continues to upgrade its webpage
- Members continue to make use of ILRU on demand trainings. Internal Summer training schedule is being developed with the membership.
- Recent recruitment efforts resulted in 2 new members joining.
- Finances—the SILC is underspent in this fiscal year and continues to have the resources for the website project as well as the proposed trainings.
- Unspent funds from the Grant were reallocated to the CILn (OSCIL) in order to expand assistive technology resources/ direct service to clients.

SRC UPDATE – Liz Graves

- May 5th – Annual SRC Breakfast- well attended/nice program.
- A representative from CODAC- made a presentation about the service array.
- Council does continue to have concern of and monitor the ORS waitlist.
- Some discussion has occurred regarding VR counselor training and the need for master's degrees/ they would intend to advocate to the RSA – not to reduce the requirements for practice/ not to 'water down' the degree requirements.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

- Jalen Rodriguez who was nominated for appointment at a prior meeting- was not confirmed. According to the Governor's Office of Boards and Commissions- the current statute which established the GAC- requires that members be 'qualified electors of the state' – this is interpreted to mean that members must be of voting age. Jalen's is presently a minor- turning 17 – thus he does not meet that criteria.
- Carmen B noted that Youth may pre-register to vote and planned to investigate this option for Jalen.
- As an alternative – Jalen may serve as a committee person- representing youth.
- A Youth Advisory Committee was discussed and established at this meeting- Jalen will chair the Youth Advisory Committee. (YAC).
- Motioned by Liz G and seconded By Monica D- passed unanimously.

MISCELLANEOUS

- SBVI Admin L DiOrio- shared information from the Governor's Commission on Disabilities Legislative Letter- which listed several bills in current session that impact taxation and persons with disabilities including visually impaired persons. Such bills appear to preserve the credit but remove the stated minimum exemption amounts in law. Items presented to GAC for discussion potential advocacy.
- H 7559 and S2382 from the town of Tiverton: TEXT of BILL:
"This act would allow the Tiverton town council to grant, by ordinance, property tax credits and remove the current property assessment value-based tax exemptions for veterans, gold star parents and visually impaired persons. For veterans with a service-connected total disability the act would delete the exemption of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) and authorizing the town by ordinance to provide a tax credit of four hundred dollars (\$400) tax credit or greater. For persons who are visually impaired this act would delete the exemption for seven thousand five hundred dollars (\$7,500) and authorizing the town by ordinance to provide a tax credit of three hundred dollars (\$300) or greater. This act would take effect upon passage."
- RI H8081 from Charlestown: TEXT of BILL:
"This act would authorize the town of Charlestown, to grant, by ordinance, property tax credits and remove the current property assessment value-based tax exemptions for veterans, gold star parents, persons who are totally disabled and visually impaired persons. For veterans with a service-connected total disability the act would delete the exemption of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) and authorizing the town by ordinance to provide a tax credit (no minimum amount). For persons who are visually impaired this act would delete the exemption for six thousand dollars (\$6,000) and authorizing the town by ordinance to provide a tax credit (no minimum amount). This act would take effect upon passage."
- The above discussion led to consideration of the Council's mission- i.e. ADVISORY COUNCIL- and the extent to which it would pursue such issues (as noted above) as they relate to blind and visually impaired persons. Members will review current law of

enactment and review/develop mission statement to be presented when Council reconvenes.

- Next meeting dates confirmed as 09/10/18 and 12/10/18.
- Meeting adjourned 4:34pm

DRAFT