

# State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

## Public Forum – Kansas City, MO

### November 13, 2014

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**SRC Members in Attendance:** Clay Berry, John Thompson, Brady Clevenger, Geoff Barney, and Chris Gray

**RSB Attendees:** David Bly, Rekha Nanchal, Julie Huebner, Keith Roderick, Michael St Julien, Kevin Faust, and Cindy Bitterman

**Public Attendees:** Ruby Polk, Willa Jean Patterson, Diane Yarris, Mary Kay Savage, Beck Dumski, Linda Cocovis, Carla Chyner, Jim, Jeanie Goen, Jim Carey, and Alfonzo

### Open Meeting: Clay Berry Chairman

**Speaker:** Keith Roderick, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind Policy Development Coordinator

### Question and Answers:

Q. Is transportation available to attend training?

A. If the training is a part of the VR plan and deemed necessary then it can be provided. It is limited to contractual agreements.

Q. What opportunities are available for lower cognitive kids post-secondary education.

A. We are looking into the pattern of clients coming into the program over the years. We want to look both at internal and external services. RSB has contractual Supportive Employment agreements, which assists those with multiply disabilities.

Q. What kind of jobs are available?

A. Each individual is looked at, what they want and what they are able to do. RSB also collaborates with other agencies that offer assistance. They have a Memorandum of Agreement with MO VR for the Deaf/Blind. RSB is also considering a Support Services Program and possibly working with the Department of Mental Health.

Q. How would RSB support, through an IPE, a less than conventional vocation, such as a non-profit?

A. RSB tries to keep a broad view for employment, offering support, guidance, etc. Each case would need to be evaluated.

MSB offers learning skills, sports and independent living. They can delay graduation and still participate.

Q. What is available after 21, job, Independent Living support?

A. There have been some changes to the VR program to assist those. Independent Living program provides some assistance. As parents start to make these requests we will see more opportunities come available. Part of partnering with other agencies is the starting down the path to more opportunities for those with multiply disabilities.

Q. To MSB, is there a percentage of students who go home every day?

A. Yes, if they live in an area that can be reached, usually about 20-30 miles from school. Using transportation provided by MSB.

David Bly (District Supervisor KCS) and Rekha Nanchal (District Supervisor KCN) shared briefly what has been happening in their districts.

The council presented to a Mary Kay Savage a Certificate of Appreciation for her years served on the council.

# State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind Business Meeting – Kansas City, MO November 14, 2014

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**SRC Members in Attendance:** Clay Berry, Chris Gray, Geoff Barney, Carrie Ragsdale, Brady Clevenger and John Thompson

**RSB Attendees:** David Bly, Rekha Nanchal, Kevin Faust, Michael St. Julien and Cindy Bitterman

**Minutes:** Reviewed and accepted

## **District report:**

**Kansas City North** – Currently interviewing for vacancy. The number of successful closures was above their goal. They state that salary has been an issue for hiring qualified applicants. Working with MO DVR to assist those who are Deaf/Blind. Other programs are all doing well. Everyone is working as a team to get the work done, average of 18 closures for each VRC position. One of the closures this year is a lady who is now an architect. Staff has been asked to start making business contacts. Unity Bank and Walmart are new partnerships. Unity Bank has some strict requirements. Enterprise also has some work from home positions. Enterprise requires that after training there is a cost for set up that employee had to pay. Jaws users didn't complete training because it didn't work with jaws. A client who is finishing up their degree and wants to work in the school district had an issue. During second interview her cover letter was critiqued for errors. Talent acquisition (NET) a job search website for the disabled has a lot of clients signed up.

**Kansas City South** – 43 closures this year, 6 homemakers. Only one at hired at minimum wage, average salary was \$12.82 hour. 243 VR cases open, 3 VRC assigned areas, while seeing clients in their areas they are visiting schools and community centers, getting RSB's name out there. New VRC is a former school counselor, and is working with local schools to work with transition.

**Questions for DS's** – The council asked RSB to look at job retention, wage, and if new job or same job.

**Director Report:** expenditures for VR salary and E & E is where it should be. DFAS-has put some reserves against our programs (as well as other programs). Has promised that will be released if needed. Fact sheet contains year end data. When working with job retention, it is a process that requires quick and perhaps a lot of work. Each case is lot work. Kevin was called before **House of Committee** to testify concerning all RSB programs. Kevin put together an information packet for this. RSB is fortunate to have the kind of return RSB does, in 3.3 years successfully employed clients will pay back through taxes what it cost Federal and State government to assist them. RSB has 18 VRS's, averaging 113 cases per counselor. RSB's vacancies include – Rehabilitation Teacher in KCN and KCS, an Orientation and Mobility Specialist in SW, an Admin. Office Support Assistant in SLN. Upcoming conference in Miami, CSVAR-Workforce Innovation Act, purpose to be aware of things coming regarding

this new act. MVR will bring back information for us, they sent 3 representatives. Discussed Standards and Indicators.

### **Fiscal Report:**

**Fact Sheet:** Discussed Fact Sheet, New Eligible vs. New IPE – applications that have been determined eligible but not gone through IPE completion yet. Discussed closures and homemakers. Discussed how we can do more to get what services are available known to those who need them, to teachers, schools, and parents. Less than 1% available in funding. How do we educate the school in the needs of the students with multiple disabilities? Knowing the impact of the disability to the student.

Continues to get calls on Blind Pension, monthly cuts coming. Blind Pension is funded through a small amount of property taxes, revenue has gone down. Not enough money to carry the fund through the whole year. A reduction would have to be implemented as soon as possible to create as little impact as possible. If you receive Blind Pension and Medicare you are asked to move prescriptions to Medicare part D.

### **Committee Reports**

**Evaluation Committee:** Will meet for annual report.

**Government affair:** Getting geared up for next leg session.

**Program policy:** Nothing to report.

**Planning Committee:** Has not met.

**Status of Council Members:** Clay will contact SILC, Cindy will contact MIB. Chris will talk with Nixon's chief of staff.

**Blind Task Force/ Children's Vision Summit:** Children Summit, choosing a date, looking at mid-May. Working out details, to get more people, shifting to more parents fewer providers. UEB-new changes to Braille system what is the plan for helping it roll out in MO? Blind Task Force will meet in Feb on that. Vacancies on Task Force, 3 students, a parent, an employer. There are 2 blind skills specialist that cover MO and one vacancy. Regarding new Braille code, they will be working with the schools. They said if you know the old code you'll be good, will teach both so there won't be a struggle with old books and new books.

Getting feedback from parents that schools aren't allowing the resources to help the student and also that Children's Specialist aren't doing anything. Not accepting the recommendation. Looking for a solution.

**Mpact transition summit:** Almost 300 youth, kids in transition, and school services providers. Guest speaker employed at Meril.

### **Statewide events:**

**MCB**-state convention in Springfield new president Denny Huff. They will meet next year in KC. MCB has concerns UEB and what the transition to new Braille means. Member of alliance for Braille literacy has a different view of what needs to happen. UEB is good enough for general reader, for STEM it is a complete disaster.

**MSB**-pilot of a new Braille app., gives teachers feedback on where they need to focus their skills. Visit from 34 new Legislator at the school. 2<sup>nd</sup> place in track competition, sports compete against other states with schools for the blind. They're getting a wrestling dummy for practice. In Goal Ball, got a goal ball thrower.

**Lighthouse**-nothing happening

**Impact**-hired new director Carrissa Rupp. Want to develop some training for blind/visually impaired. Number counts are going out. Trainings are free to parents with students. Always recruiting mentors. Homeless shelter project, Displaced Area Regional Network (DARN) getting the agency to go to them.

**Alphapointe**-new youth service coordinator. New initiative, starting a parent group.

**Survey Results:** Reviewed the survey results and comments. Data will be presented a little different next time.

**Old Business:** Transition best practice manual, met a few times. What are we currently doing, what do we need to be doing? What is our goal with transition, regulations etc. They are using the feedback. They are going to start diving into specifics, would like to get educators and clients involved at a further date.

**New Business:** Bylaws; question last meeting of what changes are needed., succession of officer, number system, proxy.

Meetings 2015 – Feb 5/6 – Joplin Association, April 30/May 1 – Jeff City, speaker Janet Moore.

RSB salary issue: HR is looking at wages.

Position requirements: VRC requires Masters, OM requires 4 years in related field, RT requires 4 years in related field.

**Motion to adjourn:** All in favor. Meeting adjourned.