

State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

Public Forum – St. Louis, MO

August 2, 2018

SRC Members in Attendance Brenda Whitlock, Karen Nelson, Donna Borgmeyer, Brady Clevenger, Chris Gray, Geoff Barney, Mark Bauer, Carrie Ragsdale, Shelia Wright and Clay Berry

Public Attendees: Caleb Barge, Ricardo Spence, Denny Huff, Shawna Jeremiah, Alan Houshmand, Kim Reece, Jill Kleesner, John Thompson, Bratcher Family

Phone: Danny Lawrence

RSB Attendees: Lisa Randolph, Katherine Cronin, Mark Runyan, Vickie Yovich, Patrick Egan, Katherine Spence, Sharon Silverstein, Amanda Dovin, Michael St Julien, Keith Roderick, and Kayla Cole

Open Meeting: Clay Berry, Chairman, opened with an overview of the SRC and the public forum process.

Speakers: Amanda Dovin, Ricardo Spence, Kim Reese

Amanda opened by introducing her Seeing Eye dog Sonya and explained the different mobility options available to those who are visually impaired. Amanda became a VR client in 2001 when she decided to enroll in college. From there Amanda graduated with her Masters and began the job search. Over the following years Amanda was able to experience a handful of different jobs which lead her to seek her second Master's degree, this time in education. After receiving her second Master's degree, Amanda moved back home to St. Charles. Once she moved back home she saw an opening for a Rehabilitation Teacher position within RSB at the St. Louis North office. Amanda thought this would be perfect for her so she decided to apply for it, she interviewed and was then offered the position. Amanda was happy to announce that in September of 2018 her case will close successfully.

Ricardo Spence has been a RSB Client for 10 years. Formally was an engineer until he began losing his eyesight. Ricardo is now working with his counselor and Lisa in hopes to start his own business that he can run from home as he can no longer drive. Ricardo's potential business name would be Continuous Transformation where he would work with companies to teach people how to work productively and love their jobs.

Kim Reese is an ILR Client who is struggling to receive the amount of resources she would like and initially expected. Kim explains she is not looking to go to work as she does not need to and she also does not fall into the age range to qualify for OBS. Kim would like to learn braille and cooking if possible but due to ILR limits she is unsure if she can receive these services.

Q & A Comments for RSB

Q. WIOA, what is your position on the effects of WIOA and how you view agencies like Alphapointe and Saint Louis society, what is your thinking on that and what direction are you giving people on closures?

A. WIOA has changed from a fundamental perspective how we look at everything we do. One of those things being on competitive integrated employment. WIOA has changed these classifications because of the way they define that. This is more restrictive on what RSB can do but we continue to work with them on what we can do on these issues.

Q. Should it be the responsibility of RSB to refer clients at closure to Agency's like Lighthouse and Alphapointe?

A. RSB has to look at each individual case in order to determine competitive and integrated such as each job and each position. If a client expresses they would like to go to work somewhere that is not considered competitive or integrated we can support that choice but we cannot fund that choice. People can chose that option even though we cannot fund it but RSB can explain it is an opportunity for them if they are not willing to go for the competitive and integrated route.

Q. Call in, ask what RSB's mission is and if it is to help the visually impaired become successful?

A. Our goal is to help the visually impaired improve their quality of life and that we have a handful of different programs that work towards that goal.

Q & A – Comments for the Public

Q. Clay ask John to tell other public attendees about Lighthouse for the blind and any vacancies they have.

A. John explains what lighthouse does, their locations, vacancies and opportunities for those interested.

Q. Ricardo Spence ask, Can I come by and take a tour of lighthouse sometime?

A. John responds, you can come anytime you want, we love tours. Best time is in the morning but you are welcome anytime.

Q & A – Comments for the SRC

Q. Are there any services that help Family members so that they can help their loved ones adjust to their vision loss?

A. RSB does not offer training for family members but we do have Rehab Teachers and Counselors that can come work with the individual and the family can be present when the staff member comes out to help teach these skills. In a sense the family can observe and learn that way.

Comment- Suggestion made to look into St. Louis Society for the blind

Comment- Delta Gamma suggested

Comment- MCB & NFB suggested

Comment- St. Charles County Council of the Blind as well as NFB

Comment- Chris Gray discusses the Blind Pension Settlement and what MCB is doing to help individuals receive their portion of the settlement.

Closing- Clay ask Denny to go over St. Charles County Council for the Blind upcoming events once more.

Adjourn

State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind Business Meeting – St. Louis, MO August 3rd, 2018

SRC Members in Attendance: Brenda Whitlock, Brady Clevenger, Shelia Wright, Carrie Ragsdale, Karen Nelson, Chris Gray, Donna Borgmeyer, Mark Bauer and Clay Berry.

RSB Attendees: Keith Roderick, Michael St. Julien, Mark Runyan and Kayla Cole

Open Meeting: Clay Berry

Minutes: Minutes were reviewed

District Report: Lisa Randolph explains the filling of vacancies in the North office specifically the VRC positions of Steve Schnelle and Phillip Tucker. Steve was promoted to VRC, Amanda Dovin filled his position as Rehab Teacher. North office is now full with two counselors and a Rehab Teacher. Katherine gives updates on what is going on in the south office. Katherine is happy with the case management in her office and the amount of successful closures, 45. Last March staff participated in road blocks and speed bumps which was a scavenger hunt type of event, invited those who serve transitioned age youth. This year they are focusing on apprenticeships and training for potential future jobs/fields for the transition age group. Katherine discussed practices she does for new staff such as cooking under light shade at lighthouse and how she appreciates that resource.

Field Report: Michael St. Julien- RSB production exceeded state goal of 183 successful closures, RSB had 187 successful closures. Explains setting goals higher than the year prior is expected but not to set the goal so much higher it is unrealistic to reach. Discusses vacancies in the DO's starting with KC and the 3 openings with an RA, VRC and rehab teacher. Mid Mo office has a mobility position open. SE district is seeking a new DS and Travis Smith has left, there is also a mobility opening they are actively working to fill. Also a CS position open. Employment 1st, held in KC, Mid MO and STL, staff was very happy with that training. Currently in benefits planning stage of the webinars and in person training. 12 staff participating currently. 150 people in the state as a whole participating, ODEP present and put on the trainings. Michael discusses the helping in veterans seeking employment, reviewing issues, improvements that can be made. Gives update on Aware, the adaptation team and the process we have been following to move on to testing. Regional leadership Academy currently taking place in Kansas City, Merryville University puts this on. Lots of interest in this. Last thing, SE office going through a brief move for a couple weeks as renovations are taking place in the office. Work should not be interrupted but move could affect small things here. Michael will be the interim contact until the DS position is filled.

Director's Report: Keith Roderick- Discusses changes to the merit system and new employees in state office. Introduces the name of Angie and her new role as the contract manager. RSB is happy with these vacancies being filled and the people in them to further our success as an agency. Explains RSA regulations, Steven's amendment states no funding for conferences that has any type of lobbying.

Issues with blanket approvals and time for the approval on the amendment/exception. Needing a quicker turn around on answers to request to get clients equipment for them to do their job successfully. Keith explains and gives examples of issues we have had with BEP facility equipment such as refrigerators, replacing and working on, how detailed questions we receive as to why this needs replaced. Can be a long frustrating process but working on improving this for the approving staff to in turn benefit our staff to get these items to them in a timely manner to keep their business and the work running smoothly and efficiently. Keith discusses the “promotional items” issues and how we are under the microscope on those and not allowed to give them out. The dangers of listing our federal grant amount on things such as calendars and other items that list all of our programs. RSB must stay in compliance with these rules and regulations so we are working to insure this is done. Keith touches on Aware project and how we are moving along with this and explains where we are now which is data conversion. Complex process but running smooth. Supported Employment grant last year was not funded but they did decide to fund it again this year. Working with core partners to improve and work with clients with multiple disabilities. Working with the School for the blind, Ian and Keith, on contract for PETS for classroom and employment training. Hopeful this will be up and running sometime in September. The availability of transportation is a huge benefit as this is hard to come by as an offered service. RSB would like this to be a classroom, group setting, looking into an individualized program to best benefit our clients.

Fact Sheet: VR closure goal of 183, for PY 17. VR had 187. 334 in application status, 175 in status 22.

Fiscal Report: This year no funding decreases which is a good sign. Half of Aware cost have been paid in last year’s expenditures but the other half will come out of this years. On top of the system cost other cost come as well such as updating computers to windows 10 as well as providing new computers for some staff as well. Libra will have to come in and work with Aware to make sure data is converting accurately and not duplicating. Fiscally we are doing fine with these cost and staying within what we budgeted. The 15% youth reserve and the struggle RSB has in meeting this as the services are limited as well as client numbers that fit into this category. Terminology is key in these standards as job coaching, assessment and others are not allowed but a trainer and other equivalent people and processes are.

WIOA Update: Discussed with purchases with prior approval, submitted state plan. RSA added a piece, just asking for names. No further guidance from RSA at the moment.

Blind Task Force\Children’s Vision Summit - Donna explains they meet next Tuesday to discuss.

Survey Report: Reviewed the results.

Committee Reports: Blind pension matters. Bill 2171 increased blind pension and created an account where you can put money aside and use that towards your disability. Clarification on what that means, criteria, housing, adaptive technology and a lot more of a broad aspect outside standard needs. Language added to the bill that allows FSD to recommend Blind pension. Concerns with blind pension

qualifications. Creates a lot of confusion within their definition as to who meets those qualifications and criteria.

Old Business: Appointments to the council and filling vacancies discussed. Letter to Mark Gutchen being worked on for outreach to potentially new council members. Once Mark Gutchen gives update, council will be informed.

New Business: Discussed Year plans on future Council meetings.

November 1st, 2nd- to be in KC, Where?

Find hotel close to meeting room.

February 7th, 8th- Joplin (Independent Living Center)

May 2nd, 3rd- Jefferson City

August 1st, 2nd- St. Louis

October 9th MPACT conference.

Consumer Group meetings in the fall. October 4th- 7th. MCB, NFB will be held in March.

Mo Assistive tech September 14th in Kirksville.

Donna Borgmeyer- Holding Fundraiser 24th of August Rheinhardt center.

Meeting adjourned: Motion by Carrie, 2nd Chris, all were in favor