

N.J. Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired
State Rehabilitation Council
Meeting Minutes – March 27, 2015
Joseph Kohn Training Center
130 Livingston Avenue - New Brunswick, NJ

Jim Warnke, Chairperson, welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

Voting Members Present: Jennifer Armstrong, Al Glasgow, Susan Head, Zoraida Krell, Fran Leibner, Kelly Reymann, Kirk Lew, Otilie Lucas, Dawn Monaco, Fr. Jim Warnke

Voting Members Absent: Dorothy Doran, Rick Fox, Jamie Hilton, Kris Tucker, Titus Massey

Ex Officio Present: Dan Frye, Danielle Licari-Scorzelli, Ed Sroczynski

Staff/Members of Public Present: Amanda Gerson, Robert Paige, John Walsh

Jim announced that the meeting is being held in compliance with Section 105 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act 1973, as amended. He noted that the meeting is also in compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meeting Act, NJSA 10:4-6.

Jim asked everyone to take a few minutes to review the February 6, 2015 meeting minutes to see if any changes were needed. Everyone acknowledged reviewing the minutes and no changes were recommended. On a motion made by Al Glasgow, and seconded by Dan Frye, the minutes were accepted as received.

Dan apologized for the miscommunication that some of the members were inadvertently under the impression that this meeting was gathering in Freehold today. He promised that we will make a better effort to make sure this doesn't happen again in the future. He welcomed everyone to help themselves to the coffee, tea, and pastries that were available, and commented that he wants that to be a new part of the tradition at these meetings as it makes it a little more of a comfortable and welcoming experience.

Federal and State Update

Federal Activity

Dan noted that we continue to wait for the Department of Labor, Department of Education, and Health & Human Services to issue the regulations regarding the recently adopted Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) legislation. Title IV of the WIOA legislation is the Vocational Rehabilitation Act; the rest of WIOA deals with the other 5 core areas that congress has decided need to work more closely together. At one point the legislation that governs Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) was its own autonomous piece of legislation, but over the last 2 authorizations a real effort has been made to encourage all of the job related programs in the county to work more closely together. Prior to WIOA we had an opportunity to participate in a unified State plan; that is now a mandatory practice. And so, with the development of WIOA, and its signature last July, it went into effect immediately for VR and goes into effect in July of this year for the other titles of the Act; we are starting to cultivate

relationships with the Workforce Investment Boards. Dan noted that he serves on the State Employment Training Commission, where Kirk Lew is on staff, all in an effort to establish a closer relationship with the other entities – literacy, employment, and the like. Dan commented that the message he conveys in all of these meetings is that VR is more than just a jobs program. We are, of course, invested in making sure that blind and vision impaired people find competitive, integrated employment in the broader community; we believe that blind people, given proper training and opportunity, can achieve any goal they want. It's going to be a challenge to convey that very mainstream message to a community that knows nothing about blindness and probably believes what society has taught them about what it means to be blind; which is, generally, that we are good at being recipients of and passive under the giving of programs. Dan noted that he hopes this opportunity to partner is also a good education for others. Dan reported that he did participate in the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) meeting held in March and is looking forward to continued involvement there. Dan commented that the regs governing the VR Act are expected to be out some time in the spring. CBVI is aware that we are going to have to reserve a 15% portion of our budget for transition oriented work, pre-employment services. The Commission had already decided to invest heavily in our youngsters by creating a transition age program, which will be talked about later in this meeting. We also established an even earlier program for children in grades 1-8 with the notion that blindness, if intervened and dealt with early, can really be minimized by the time you get into post-secondary education and start to seek work, assuming that blindness is the primary disability and there aren't other significant complicating disabilities.

State Activity

Dan reported that the Agency is making progress toward trying to implement a unified State plan and embrace WIOA. Many stakeholders and everyone involved in WIOA will be meeting next week (3/31 & 4/1) to go to a conference that is being sponsored by colleagues at the Department of Labor (DOL) and the SETC. Dan noted that he is happy to participate in that process, and the public VR program will have some representation on the statewide agenda. Steve Wooderson, the President of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), which is a trade organization of all of the rehab agencies in the country, will be there to speak on a panel about the role of VR as it relates to the adoption of WIOA. Dan commented that he wants to also acknowledge to this Counsel, and for the record, that CBVI plays an equal role in providing vocational rehabilitation services to blind and vision impaired people in this State, that of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS). Dan noted that he sought to be listed as a co-sponsor of this conference because our role is consistent with that of DVRS. He explained that the DOL has largely ignored the request and it is clear that the DOL wants to run this conference. Dan commented that there is too much important work to do to try to change the lives of blind and vision impaired people in this State for him to spend a disproportionate amount of time on registering that concern, but this experience is why, when WIOA was being adopted and discussed in the Senate, a lot of people have reservations about having VR federally moved to the DOL. There was a concern that Labor would indeed try to monopolize VR and if you didn't have your VR agency in a Labor Department, you could get marginalized and disenfranchised. Dan noted that it is hard to disenfranchise him, but he doesn't want the Commission not to be acknowledged and thinks it is a sad oversight that we're not listed on that; he noted that he will share that feedback with Dr. Fishner and the others who have been administering this program. All of that being said, they have certainly come to CBVI for technical assistance in an effort to try and create an accessible experience for us – and that's fine; we are happy to offer technical assistance, but we are also happy to be acknowledged for the role we play.

Dan reported that our budget for fiscal '16 looks pretty good. While it may be flat, in the time of such austerity we can feel comfortable that we are not experiencing a dramatic cut. Dan commented that

a number of departments are facing significant financial difficulty. So, he noted, it is clear that if we can maintain a flat budget, and largely under the radar screen, we will at least be able to continue to do what we do.

Also, at a State level, Dan reported that the Agency will be inaugurating new programs this summer. There will be a new college prep program that will see blind college students integrating with sighted college students in a program that will not only introduce them to rigorous academic preparation, but will also insist that they be involved in social justice community work. The other program we are initiating is a year round transition program - Employment Development Guidance and Engagement (EDGE). This program will ensure that transition age youth have access to employment prior to graduation, so they can enjoy the same benefits sighted adolescents have when they go to college. Dan commented that too often our students go to college academically prepared, but not enjoying the social benefits of having had some kind of work that is normalizing and gives them a little pocket money. This program will also focus heavily on mentorship and skills development. Dan commented that this program, and this Agency, is looking in new directions.

Dan reported that the Agency is coming to the end of the development of a strategic plan. Changes will be made in education, employment, Human Resources practices, how we communicate internally and externally with our stakeholders and partnerships with external folks, and finally, a systemic redesign. Dan explained that this is where we entirely modify the structure of the agency to deliver service. The structure redesign has now been outlined to some extent and announced to some of the Agency offices. We are planning to move to a teaming concept where every consumer of our agency that comes in will be assigned to a team of people instead of just to one counselor. The counselor on the team will be the anchoring person to coordinate services. But instead of consumers having to go through multiple eligibility determinations to decide which of our several programs they might be eligible for; instead of having them wait while we move them from one concurrent program to another, they will have a team with every representative of all of our front-line services available to them. Every person we serve will have access to all of our professionals. It's going to be quite a puzzle to figure out in terms of personnel; we have work to do in terms of how we are going to set up supervisory lines, but these changes will make a huge difference. Susan Head asked if the idea of clients being assigned to a team will only apply to new clients. Dan noted that it will apply to all clients; we will have to go back and reassign teams to the current consumers. Dan also wanted to make it clear that while we will have teams, which have the promise of really enhancing and rendering a more dynamic experience, the attention to individual consumer desire to detail and individual need will not change.

Dan also reported that the Agency has inaugurated a new statewide Education Reform Taskforce. This Taskforce consists of leadership from within the Agency, Education leaders and several teachers of the blind, and parents who represent the interest of their children and other children. He explained that the Taskforce is going to evaluate what needs changing to enhance the education services that we have. Dr. Jerry Petroff, Director of Center for Sensory and Complex Disabilities at TCNJ, is also on the team. Dr. Petroff is going to do some analysis of some of the qualitative data we have to identify themes and areas that might warrant improvement. In about 4 months the work by the taskforce is expected to yield a lot of fruit.

Dan commented that by October/November; certainly by the beginning of next year, everyone will start to see the outlines of the new Commission; a Commission that is going to be better at doing its job. He noted that change is not intended to be a negative indictment or commentary on those who have gone before, but he said, the day that he comes to work and doesn't see a need for improvement or refinement, is the day that he can retire.

WIOA Update from SETC

Kirk Lew noted that the State Employment Training Commission (SETC) is the equivalent to the State Workforce Investment Board; he explained that there are 17 local areas spread throughout NJ; each is represented by a Workforce Investment Board (WIB). The WIB is the policy arm of the public workforce system; so each of these are the local public systems that then feeds the policy into the operational arm, which is the One-Stop centers, or what may be branded as America's Job Centers; he noted that we don't know what that's going to look like yet. Regulations are supposed to come out shortly. The only regulations that have come out are some youth regs that look at carryover funds from Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to WIOA, how we look at transition, but nothing substantial. As of now there is the blueprint where Labor is looking at the operational aspects and the major concerns/issues within WIOA, which replaces WIA of 1998. We have great opportunities now. WIOA was signed by President Obama July, 2014. In December, 2014, workgroups were created to look at the Law and look at it from very specific perspectives within the system. There is a One-Stop work group that is looking at how One-Stops operate; looking at everything from competitively bidding the One-Stops, the fiscal agents within the One-Stops, and how the State employees work with local employees; basically the design of the One-Stop. He noted that they are looking at: performance, accountability, governance and planning, career pathways, business engagement, and youth disabilities. Strategic planning started in January, 2015.

The Blueprint website launched: [//lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/wioa](http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/wioa) This is a single source of information of resources for the implementation. Stakeholders are encouraged to submit feedback. The SETC website is also available to submit feedback: www.njsetc.net – phone # 609-633-0605, and Janet.Dunigan@dol.state.nj.us , WIOA Project Manager for Labor, and her # is 609-292-2101. Kirk encouraged everyone, especially from the unique perspective of employment and the populations served, to please utilize the tools and provide feedback.

With regard to the conference on 3/31 & 4/1 (Dan mentioned earlier), Kirk noted that there will be pre-conference work sessions. There will be 3 separate breakout sessions to talk about one of those particular topics of the workgroups, and the goal will be to talk about the 3 major changes, implications within the Law, which are going to really impact that system in terms of that particular area. He gave an example on disability - some of the key action items that were developed: outreaching to businesses, transitioning students to public VR programs, and ensuring youth with disabilities can achieve competitive employment prior to sheltered workshops. One of the big things is accessibility checklists; want to make sure of accessibility and better education within the One-Stop systems. One of the things you'll see within the Law is the One-Stop Center becomes the hub of the public VR system and the goal is for that hub to interact with all the major stakeholders (state agencies, our educational entities like community and state colleges, private colleges, training providers, vendors; anyone who has a stake within the public VR system). The physical as well as the virtual tools being used in the One-Stop systems will need to be accessible to all that will be utilizing the system. Then, looking at the potential challenges; looking at best practices. Kirk noted that this is an opportunity to look at what we're doing right and what we're doing wrong, and what people are doing throughout the country and the State that should either be duplicated or avoid duplicating.

The SETC has subcommittees; i.e. youth, apprenticeship, healthcare, and disabilities issues. Kirk noted that he is supposed to staff the Disabilities Issues Committee, but he stopped staffing when he came into the role because the Committee wasn't functioning the way it should be, and there were no policy discussions going on. He felt it was a bad use of experts' time. His thought was for SETC to get involved through the SRC to understand what policy was being discussed and then, over time, figure out what the role of that Disabilities Issues Committee would be. He noted that he realized that

all the players are on the SRC, so why duplicate those efforts and make another meeting. Instead he decided to use the SRC meeting to inform the SETC of the needs.

The SETC has the responsibility to interact with all stakeholders. The SETC will use all information gathered in drafting the unified State plan. The plan is going to look at how we operationalize the public workforce system in NJ. The plan is then delivered to the local areas to develop their own local plan that should coordinate with the unified State plan. As of right now, in the country, NJ is 1 of 4 States that has a unified State plan (NJ is ahead of the curve). It is very important, however, for all stakeholders to be involved in the process. CBVI was not part of the plan in the past, but we have that opportunity again and it's not in anyone's best interest to lose that part.

Once the conference is done, the draft regs come out. This information will be put into the reports and presented to the SETC for consideration in June of 2015. In July most provisions will take effect.

Then there will be one year of let's see what happens. There are some programs using WIA dollars in this program year and we are going to still look at that performance based on WIA and then we are implementing WIOA programs July, 2015. Federal government also understands that it is going to take some time to implement. So 2015 is ultimately a push; plan is due January, 2016, performance measures for WIOA, which are very specific, very different then what we are doing currently; will then be fully implemented in July of 2016. Kirk commented that this is a great exercise to engage with stakeholders and look at this in a real holistic way; he will be reporting to the SRC on how that goes.

Jim Warnke asked about the criteria for determining what is or is not accessible; who makes that determination? Kirk noted that there is a checklist, a tool that has to be developed; there is an equal opportunity officer that looks at discriminatory practices that cloud the system and that's all part of it; there is some federal regs that state these are the things that need to be accessible and that will be looked at too; some monitoring and auditing in terms of financial and fiscal accountability; all these different aspects that are coming together; developing tools that are a little more comprehensive.

Susan Head asked if there were any One-Stop clients or DVR clients providing feedback to the workgroups. Kirk noted that as of now, those work groups are not made up of clients; they are made up of the State agencies, vendors, and the people that are operationalizing them. Looking at it from the financial perspectives and logistical parts of the law. Individuals will get more involved in the plan as it comes together; that's when the stakeholders will come together to operationalize. It was mentioned that Nicole Pratt, former SRC chair, is on one of those committees, so there is representation in terms of the consumer at this point. There will also be public forums for the consumers; it will be rolled out to all stakeholders; there will be tons of opportunity then.

Jim requested that some blind individuals be included when they get to the accessibility part.

Strategic Planning Update:

Dan introduced Joe Skiba, CBVI consultant, who was on the speaker phone to update the SRC on strategic planning. Dan informed everyone that Joe has led a VR agency in Michigan, as well as decades of work as a consultant in helping VR agencies get to the point where they have a defined and measurable way to assess their progress and improve their service. Dan noted that CBVI has genuinely enjoyed Joe's involvement in the planning process. He further commented that Joe has given ideas and facilitated conversations that will stay with CBVI as we move forward for years to come. Dan noted that he thought it would be appropriate for Joe to offer an update as we get to the end of this strategic planning exercise, which we hope to have published shortly; certainly in time to share at the next SRC meeting.

Joe commented that he was happy for the opportunity to speak to the SRC. He commented that his work began in April, 2013, to develop the strategic plan with the Commission. The Last CBVI comprehensive strategic planning was 9-10 yrs ago. He acknowledged that it is relatively easy to produce a product; however, that doesn't really motivate & innovate the changes needed. His perspective is to produce strategic thinking in the organization, so that the lessons learned throughout

the process carry forward over a several year period. It is the emphasis on strategic thinking environment/culture that enables the agency to meet challenges that are ever-evolving. He noted that in the last 20-24 months things have changed within the organization – internal and external climate. A strategic planning design team was formed, which becomes the vehicle for developing the perspectives on change and the strategic planning. The team essentially becomes the formal/informal leaders of the future. This is a group of 18-20 staff; different division levels. When Dan came on as the Executive Director of CBVI he added 8 or 9 consumers/advocates to the design team. This produced a much more robust series of conversation and a tremendous added value. Joe explained that he reviewed the previous strategic planning, a consumer satisfaction survey that had been done, performance information, some of the agencies MOUs (which are agreements with partners or stakeholders, and a host of other information. The second thing he did was develop and conduct stakeholder interviews and focused interviews. These occurred to get a perspective of stakeholders and what kind of relationship exists with the agency; candid impressions of strengths/weaknesses of the agency. All of this culminated in a report to Dan, which capsulated those impressions and ideas, and recommendations for the future. What are the unmet needs – that data was very important as well. Joe explained that approximately every 2-3 months he was meeting with the expanded strategic design team; they were pivotal regarding internal analysis of agency processes. The CBVI staff survey: this reinforced that the agency's top management was taking a candid view of the future and reframing and repositioning; result of that was digested by the executive director, as well as the strategic design team – to take a look at what the internal staff's perspective was – again on the strength/weaknesses; how well and effective consumers are served from their perspective, and what gaps exist and how we can improve services to consumers. Joe explained that he brought in quality management type tools and approaches, and used what is called process mapping to take a look at the numerous services the agency offers and how consumers receive VR services. What it is like for a consumer to go from point A to point B to gain the necessary services of supports and counseling. This went on for months, and produced very productive insights for staff and the whole design team, as well as the strategic planning process. Joe explained that Dan, as the Director of the Agency, framed a vision statement; a game plan or blueprint for where the agency needs to go over the next 3-4 yrs. What evolved with the vision statement, all the data collected and the design teams input, was a series of 6 areas to work on:

- How to improve and enhance the service delivery system.
- What enhancements are needed to provide employment exploration services for consumers.
- How to improve CBVI's interaction in the education arena. How to we reposition ourselves to do a better job in the education arena.
- Partnerships/alliances – what is needed – effective/quality services are dependent on a series of relationships with stakeholders, providers, and others. So what do we need to do to enhance those relationships to produce more effective outcomes.
- Human Resources systems of the agency; recruitment of quality staff, bring them in and provide real training so they can do the best job possible – and how to we address and evaluate performance. Also extensive discussion on training for existing staff.
- Public Information communications - best effective job in terms of external branding and communication of the agency's message to citizens across NJ, and families of consumers who need to know about availability of services and how to access them. Second aspect certainly is internal communication – how do we use the technology available more effectively to secure a strong message across all sectors of the agency.

Joe explained that the design team is now working on a document that will reflect recommendations for future changes. The design team was re-distributed over the 6 areas; each team has had co-chairs and work teams; they have deliberated quite extensively every month in terms of developing their recommendations. This has proven to be very effective and a real growth producing process.

Joe noted that it is exciting to work with people who know the system and come into their own in recognizing they can re-create the future. Joe also noted that CBVI has a very unusual repertoire of services it can provide; i.e. education, independent living, voc rehab, technology. JKTC provides a lot of great services also. He commented that the Agency tends to operate like stovepipes though. If a consumer needs 3 of 5 services there should be no need to tell their story over and over; joint planning is needed.

Joe commented that it was a real joy to work with everyone.

Workgroups Overview

John Walsh reported on the workgroups of the strategic design team. He noted that the workgroups are in the final phase of producing version "1.0" of the plan; working on the premise of not achieving finality; will continue to refine as we move along. John noted that he and Dan are expecting final drafts from each of the 6 workgroups by April 17; distinct products, outcomes, strategies, timelines, and what it is going to look like with these products. Also going to have to start addressing what are the metrics for success of performance. Need to define day to day/month to month how we are doing, and giving feedback to everyone in the organization. They need to look at policies and procedures, implications associated with their work products, and what resources they need from administration; i.e. time, money, etc. They also need to decide if they want to pilot or is it something they want to fully implement. Example: EDGE came out of a workgroup; this program will be fully implemented. The groups have to identify how are we going to sustain our work efforts, and who's going to be the primary custodian for the particular project. John noted that there is a broad diversity in each of the workgroups. This has proved to be a good chance for staff to work in different roles.

John noted that the Education Reform Taskforce came out of what one of the workgroups was doing; it was felt that we needed to expand the level of involvement. The taskforce is looking at many data items about those we serve, and how it interfaces with other systems.

John reported that customized approach training for staff is being arranged; from June-October intensive meetings will be arranged periodically. During these training sessions will start to form the teams discussed earlier. Focus will be on person-centered training. When the teams identify needs of the consumers it will be a collaborative process; not done in isolation. Consumers will go through multiple levels of assessment to gain entry to various pieces of our program. It is the hope that through teaming the clients will avoid having to answer the same questions over and over when going from education to independent living, to voc rehab, etc. With regard to the staff training sessions John commented that we don't want to take the train-and-hope approach; there will be homework assignments and reporting on benefits/barriers.

John promised to get documents out to the SRC members on the service delivery redesign. He noted that Dan had done a nice article for the Commission Edition, which gives a broad overview of where we're going with various team pieces. Also, Amanda put together a document of the best thinking from the large service delivery group – that will be the starting piece as we move forward to actually design these teams.

The Agency is currently reviewing policy with regard to medical restoration. The Commission has historically played a role with clients who do not have health care insurance and present with emergency eye conditions. With changes in the law regarding the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid expansion in N.J., and limitation in dollars the Agency is getting, it seems appropriate to begin to gradually move away (responsibly) from being a medical provider. Getting consumers connected into health care systems would serve them better, instead of dealing with crisis to crisis and not looking at

the holistic large picture. Every organization has a purpose – CBVI's is to make sure blind people are well trained and know how to live. That doesn't mean retaining vision isn't helpful – it is and should be done, but it is inherently medical. CBVI needs to devote resources to making sure blind people are well trained blind people. It would be more appropriate to provide health education. We can also do a better job to navigate systems through ACA navigators, through MOUs with our Education Division, etc.

Transition Program Update

Ed Sroczyński reported that the Agency continues to look at ways to improve transition programs for the high school students we serve. The following 3 programs address issues in career awareness and employment, and independent skills, giving our students opportunities to move forward in life and flourish.

Work Skills Prep: Kelly Reymann noted that this program will mark its tenth year this summer. It is a 2-week residential program held at The College of NJ (TCNJ) for high school age students, who are blind or visually impaired with additional intellectual developmental disabilities. This program consists of academic assessment and training; more on the functional academic side; assessing what skills are needed in order to be successful and independent in the community. During this period students will also work on a work portfolio, to include a resume, so they have something tangible to take with them when the program is completed. Assistive technology is also introduced during this program. Sometimes this is the first time students are on computers, and sometimes they are shown technology they were unaware of. The first half of the day is academics, and the second half is working 2-3 hour shifts with community partners. Currently there are 15 partners, and growing, based on student interest and preference. Some work for Sodexo on/off campus. Students work with job coaches and employment specialists. Then, in the evening, independent living skills are addressed. Activities for daily living/community based instruction is offered. Kelly commented that we want students to learn how to access their own communities, and how to replicate when they go home. Kelly reported that she meets regularly with transition counselors, with support from Ed and Amanda. This year so many people are interested in the program; they had to turn some away. 22 students were selected to attend 2 group sessions.

Bonner Summer College Prep Program: Kelly noted that this 2-week program is for college bound students who are blind or vision impaired. 15 students attended the Open House on March 7; all clearly could do well; however, only 10 students could be selected to participate in the first year of this program. Parent training was held during the Open House; representatives from the Office of Disability Services, Parents of Blind Children, and Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) spoke to parents to explain processes in preparing for college. While parents were involved with all of that, the students were involved in a variety of activities to informally access skills; i.e. team building, personality type, critical thinking. Then, 1:1 interview with teams from the Commission were held. And from there, 10 students were chosen. The Director of the Bonner program also attended to explain the program; interestingly, there are 70 other Bonner programs throughout the country; community and civic learning program.

The 10 students in the program this summer will live on campus; they will be part of the 30 total students that make up this program at TCNJ. The CBVI students will be doing everything the rest of the Bonner students are doing. CBVI students will move into the dorms a week earlier in order to learn day-to-day things. The program will consist of ½ day community service and afternoon choice of taking a sociology or history course (receiving 4 college credits). Kelly noted that another ½ day session of orientation will be held tomorrow – more of a debriefing session, and then the week before the program actually begins. John commented that this brings the college prep program to the next level and he has high hopes for this impressive group of young people.

Employment Development Guidance and Engagement (EDGE): Amanda Gerson noted that in an attempt to revamp the LEAD program and focus on pre-employment/employment skills, the EDGE program was designed. The contract was recently awarded to The Family Resource Network (FRN); this company has been very responsive, passionate, and has a long history of serving individuals. While they don't have very much experience with blindness, they are very eager to learn, and passionate about expanding into the population that we serve. The overall program design has multiple components: one is parent education; how can you help your child grow into independent adults. It presents the goals of independence, self-advocacy; having parents engage in discussions with their children, encouraging them to help maintain the house, their clothes, and assist with chores; promoting responsibility and independence. Will also be partnering with Advancing Opportunities to do some assistive technology training; i.e. using the computer for networking, shopping, information retrieval; learning to be a full, functional, independent individual. Then there is a series of self-discovery classes to learn skills; i.e. independent skills, social skills; be aware of relationships; vocational goals, as well as social opportunities to engage with mentors and peers. The big cornerstone of this program is actual employment as the end goal. Depending on the age of the student, their level of development, what their goals are, at the very lowest level there will be job shadowing opportunities with mentors and others; volunteering in community centers; opportunities with connections in the agency and out in community. Summer, part-time, whatever schedules allow.

Amanda noted that to support the program FRN is hiring positions. A coordinator of the program will be hired; there will also be employment coordinators to work in each of the different regions of the State to plan activities, administer the parent education classes, student discovery classes, as well as assist with finding employment opportunities. Another position being sought are blind mentors for each region. There will be 2 permanent mentor positions. Mentors need to be willing to commit to the program; they would go to events, classes, facilitating discussions, and welcoming into job site if appropriate to shadow/mentor. Those positions will be compensated about \$25-30 per hour. Also, additional volunteer mentors will be welcomed to participate; serving by talking about their unique path/career, or providing support in other ways. FRN will welcome those individuals to come in on a cameo basis, if a full commitment isn't possible. Amanda commented that if anyone is interested in this, to contact Greg Makely at FRN. The full-time positions are posted on their website. Amanda noted that FRN is actively looking to recruit qualified, blind/vision impaired individuals for the full-time paid positions; it's not a requirement, but definitely something that he wants to provide the opportunity for. Fran Leibner asked how the schools will learn more about these transition programs; what is the connection in updating colleagues at the DOE on all the different programs. She offered the possibility of Bill Freeman coming in to talk about transition in general, and if there are questions of needs, he can counsel regarding transition for all students with disabilities and what should schools be doing. Another colleague, Dan Baker, could also provide information on community based instruction if needed. Amanda noted that the program will provide reports on student progress and goals, so the student can share with their school, and transition counselors will help facilitate. Dan Frye commented that another way we can interact is that he is on the statewide Special Education Advisory Council and will emphasize EDGE as a new transition alternative. That will theoretically trickle down to the Special Ed Advisory Councils in each district, which are generally parent administered. Dan noted that we will make sure EDGE is known; will also pass along to Peggy McDonald when it is up and running, so she is aware and can share also.

Amanda noted that a barbeque event will be planned for the beginning of June; will be accepting referrals shortly, and then look forward to a full kick-off in late summer/early fall of the program actually starting.

Life 101: Ed reported that this 2-week program for freshman/sophomore high school students assists them in preparing for life after high school graduation. The program has been modified this year and students participating will now live at JKTC during that time. The program has been designed for them to gain skills around four core instructional areas: career exploration, skills of independence, college preparation, and information technology. The program is staffed by Commission employees who have expertise in the subject matter of that particular area. Ed commented that the residential portion is going to be a very good addition – during the evening students will be able to practice and reinforce skills they learned during the day. Also going to have built-in recreational activities; enabling students to socialize with peers. Ed noted that this program acts as a feeder to other transition programs. He explained that there is a report documenting student participation, summary of activities, and recommendations for their next steps; this report goes into the Commission's computerized system. Ed noted that 10 students have applied so far; looking to have 14-16.

Announcements/Comments:

Al Glasgow, who is a photographer by profession, shared his professional website:
www.alwynstudio.fineartamerica.com

John announced that a copy of the annual SRC report was available at this meeting for anyone interested in reviewing it.

Dan reported that the Agency has instituted a one-way dissemination system. This was developed to give anyone the opportunity to get information from the Commission about any new information, announcements, and Agency rules. Individuals can register on the Commission website; there is a link to register, by supplying name, address, and e-mail address.

Ed reported that he had submitted all paperwork to the Department of Human Services for those recently appointed to the SRC and those going on to a second term. Once it is approved at the Department level, the paperwork will be forwarded to the Governor's office for signature.

Adjournment:

At 12 noon a motion was made, and seconded, to adjourn the meeting.

Next Meeting:

The next SRC meeting is scheduled for Friday, June 5, 2015, at the Joseph Kohn Training Center.

Respectfully Submitted,



Christine Cooper
CBVI – Administrative Assistant