DBVI State Rehabilitation Council Minutes – October 27, 2022

Present: Heather Allen, Sherrie Brunelle, Jerry Doody, Mackenzie Floyd, Martha Frank, Tom Frank, Karen Gravlin, Harriet Hall, Fred Jones, Rose Lucenti, Kaelyn Modrak, Charlie Murphy, Steve Pouliot, Olga Pschorr, John Spinney, Taya Tarr.

Fred Jones: DBVI team comprised of Kaelyn Modrak, Olga Pschorr, Taya Tarr had the opportunity to meet with partners in Boston regarding Rural Youth Apprenticeship Development (RYAD). Mackenzie Floyd led DBVI representation at Department of Labor Apprenticeship meetings while group was traveling out of state. One goal of October SRC meeting is to gather recommendations and input from the full council about apprenticeship and discuss with apprenticeship project leads.

Taya Tarr: RYAD Learning Collaborative is hosted by the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) through University of Massachusetts in Boston. Vermont DBVI was selected to participate in the project to create a new or advance an existing apprenticeship program for the youth with disabilities (16-24 years) in underserved rural communities. Other partners include Wyoming, Arkansas. Maine provides technical assistance and peer to peer mentorship.

5 year plan, May 2021 continue through August 2025

Peer to peer mentorship HireAbility VT and Wyoming Vocational Rehabilitation, and an advisory council

Receive guidance from RYAD Subject Expert Matters

Gain access to resources and tools

Key definitions include: Pre-apprenticeship

Program that provides training initiatives that are designed to prepare participants to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship or another high-quality apprenticeship program, and ultimately a career.

Registered Apprenticeship

Provides structured skills training developed facilitated by employers

At least 2000 hours on-the-job training and 144 hours of related instruction

Helps workers learn both the theoretical and practical aspects of an occupation

Apprentices are employees of the company providing the apprenticeship and receive mentorship

Apprentices can have access to post-secondary education, training, and certifications

Overall goal: To address the challenge of access to apprenticeships for Vermont youth who are blind and visually impaired. A key issue within this project is that many existing apprenticeships are highly visual and challenging to access. Educating ourselves on pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships, building connections with our partners and expanding our pre-apprenticeships programs.

Presenters ask SRC about connections, experiences with businesses. DBVI’s learn and earn priorities include outreach presentations, partnerships and research. Vermont’s LEAP model has been in place for 15 years and is built upon partnerships with non-profits, the original partners of Resource, VABVI, youth conservation corps, and in the early days, linking learning to life, the business education partnership based at Burlington High School and the Gibney Foundation. One priority is to increase outreach presentations like this one. We want to strengthen the LEAP model. The new partnerships that are priorities are DOL, CCV, VTC Americorps and we want to build on our relationships with HireAbility VABIR and Vermont businesses. Research, a logic model and study of other outcomes data would further strengthen the impact community inclusion for youth in the world of work.

Do you have any ideas of businesses in specific sectors that would be appropriate partners for pre-apprenticeships or apprenticeships?

John Spinney: Recommends DBVI start with the list of employers involved in the Governor’s Council on Employment of People with Disabilities.

Fred Jones: Sites example of business Accessible Web, an employer recognized by the Governor’s Committee that makes software accessible and hires people who use zoom text, dragon naturally speaking testing sites for their accessibility.

Karen Gravlin recommends certificate of librarianship program. It is a popular program that is often filled. We have access to all the public libraries and can get you connected to send out information. Often individuals are already working in libraries when they go through certificate program. Most libraries require Masters and/or certification to be hired as a librarian or library director. The certificate of librarianship program is currently offered online. If there is interest, there is the possibility that our departments could collaborate to make this training available to DBVI clients.

Martha Frank speaks to Schedule A, government jobs specifically designed for people with disabilities. Hib Doe may be a good person to connect with.

Sherrie Brunelle: Kristen Murphy from the DD Council has been working with a national program on self-employment. As far as the DD Council – customized employment, intent is to serve individuals with intellectual disabilities. Creating jobs within existing businesses.

SRC Council updates:

Karen Gravlin. Highlights ABLE’s new website, which meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. There are some updates to the ABLE application with some changes to what information is required. Any feedback would be appreciated.

ABLE has a new accessible youth collection which includes high contrast picture books and wonderbooks that can be found by going to the regular catalog search. You can also call ABLE and get a list. This is not BARD – these are physical books that can be mailed to patrons. This is Vermont’s own collection. The Department of Libraries has added more books to its existing large print collection that has filled in the gaps. The iOS app for BARD mobile has been updated. Patrons can search and download within the app instead of having to visit the BARD website to find a book first. The search functionality is supposed to be better.

ABLE contracts with Perkins to get Braille eReaders out to folks, and several ABLE patrons already have them. NLS is piloting a new digital book machine with a wifi connection so that patrons can download books from BARD directly to their digital machine. Braille on demand service of National Library Service allows patrons to request one book per month to be brailled at no cost to the patron. The braille book will be mailed to the patron, who can keep the book – it does not need to be returned to the library. Patrons can request a book through NLS themselves, or we can put the request in for specific individuals.

Jerry Doody: Vermont Council of the Blind will have will have a holiday party in Newport and are scheduling an annual tree shopping event. VCB hope to have drivers. VCB is planning a trip in the spring, possibly a bus day trip.

John Spinney’s role at the Agency of Education includes training high school special educators to comply with IEPs and transition plans. John references a new tool for monitoring, an LEA rubric self-assessment tool directly from peers. 12 supervisory unions and 400 IEPs were found to be 100 percent compliant; this is up from 6 last year. We have a lot more districts that are in the 80% range.

Steve Pouliot: VABVI numbers of individuals served has increased gradually from 178 to over 200. Partnering with DBVI and the Ambassador program have supported priority outreach efforts. We train our clients, and they could be a good peer support for others in the region. We encourage attendance at PALS (peer support) groups and believe that will lead to increased referrals. VABVI will participate in the DBVI technology fair at the Great Expectations event in Montpelier at the Capitol Plaza on April 14th. VABVI children’s services are fully staffed. The numbers of youth in extended school year programming has jumped from 12 to 20 this past year. Adults and TVIs are involved in professional development opportunities. Their work is recognized in New England and throughout the country. The Waterfront Accessibility project continues, and VABVI hopes to get funding from the city of Burlington for the project.

Martha Frank Vermont Family Network (VFN) is thrilled to have Dr. Jacqueline Kelleher join the team as the new Executive Director. Dr. Kelleher brings a wealth of experience and knowledge about the needs of families of children with a disability, special health need or mental health issue. She is also the parent of four now-adult children with developmental disabilities and disorders. VFN encourages the group to identify young people to be on the Youth Advisory Council. It is a great leadership opportunity. Some of the youth who present at the Transition Core Team conference have participated in the youth council. The application is located on the VFN website at the Core Transition Teams link. Candidates are ages 14 to 24 years old (both in and out of school), who have some type of disability. Members connect with other students in Vermont, advocate for youth resources, and lead while providing community service. Newest workshops will be on the main VFN page.

Sherrie Brunelle encourages the group (HireAbility, DBVI, and VABVI) to contact her to conduct outreach presentations about the Client Assistance Program (CAP). Sherrie highlights general VR program will be part of a five state initiative on self-employment.

Fred Jones. DAIL is finalizing contract with VANCRO to help people who are deaf and deafblind. The project will create a Support Specialist Program that includes navigation and tactile communication components that are critical for social integration. VANCRO was selected for the contract, and it is in its final stages of review by attorneys.

DBVI staff are working to establish a team to review customer satisfaction results and moving forward with strategy to increase outreach. LEAP will create a virtual event for ages 25-55 age consumers. The DBVI team is reviewing self-esteem and self-confidence for consumers and DAIL Competency Priorities (Customer Focus, Innovation, and Collaboration).

SRC Council approves June minutes.

Harriet Hall announces the all day Great Expectations event. THEME: Reconnecting to the World of Work and Each Other

DATE: Friday, April 14, 2023

PLACE: Capital Plaza, Governor’s and Ethan Allen rooms.

TARGET AUDIENCE: All inclusive, high school and college students, adults, agency staff, retirees, family, friends, and mentors.

Adjourn.