

Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)

Legislative and Public Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

July 17, 2023

Attendance

Members Present

Amy Porterfield, Chair
Bob Kresmer
Ed House
John McCann
Ted Chittenden
Donald Porterfield

Members Absent

Jonathan Pringle

Guests Present

Julie Oliver

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Minutes

Call to Order and Introductions

Amy Porterfield, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:04 pm. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

Approval of May 9, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Ted Chittenden motioned to approve the May 9, 2023 minutes. John McCann seconded the motion. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

Legislative Updates

This item was tabled.

Policy Discussion

Amy Porterfield stated the committee members had received the most recent Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Policy Manual and the changes that had been made for review and inquired regarding the members' thoughts. Ed House stated the policies were well organized and easy to find, although he did not see a lot of policy language related to blindness services. Donald Porterfield stated that changes had been made to the VR Policy Manual within the past couple of years. Amy Porterfield stated that some of the changes were minor or technical and some changes were moderate changes made for clarity. Ms. Porterfield stated the manual previously had sections related to blindness comprehensive services, which were not included in the current manual. Amy Porterfield stated that if major changes were made to a policy, it would go out for public review, although if the changes were minor, it might not go out for review. Ed House agreed that information related to blindness services would be helpful for new Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC)s. Ted Chittenden inquired whether VRCs would be hired if they did not have experience working with blind or visually impaired individuals. Amy Porterfield stated her understanding that Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) would seek VRCs with experience working with blind and visually impaired individuals but would hire someone without experience if necessary.

Amy Porterfield stated that when reviewing the VR Policy Manual, she had questions regarding comparable benefits and that they must address the disability need. Ms. Porterfield stated the manual used to discuss choosing the lowest cost services unless the services were related to disability-related needs. Amy Porterfield stated the manual used to include information regarding comprehensive blindness services, which had been removed. Amy Porterfield stated the section regarding economic need was also not clear. She noted the manual mentioned use of One Stop locations, which included accommodations for blind or visually impaired individuals, although they did not provide sufficient training for individuals utilizing the technology. Ed House stated the manual did not include discussion regarding measurable skills gains related to blindness services, which would be a great example of a skills gain. Ed House stated the manual did not include information regarding vision assessments. Mr. House stated the section regarding technology did not indicate whether cell phones would be considered an aid, and that could be clarified. Ed House inquired regarding the Managed Services Provider (MSP). Amy Porterfield stated the MSP was a company that subcontracted with all service providers, to create a more streamlined process for counselors. She noted that Assistive Technology (AT) services were managed through the MSP. Amy Porterfield

stated the document listing all the policy changes indicated that policy language had been changed to match the Procurement language, although it should be the opposite. Bob Kresmer stated he did not notice mention of services to blind and visually impaired individuals with other disabilities such as a head injury. Ted Chittenden inquired how a new VRC that was not trained to work with blind and visually impaired individuals would learn more about those services. Bob Kresmer stated he had been in conversations with RSA leadership regarding training to VRCs. Ed House stated he did not see a section identifying which VRC would serve a client when the client had multiple disabilities.

Bob Kresmer inquired what the committee intended to do with the feedback and suggestions raised during the meeting. Amy Porterfield stated that she would compile the information into a letter that would be shared with RSA leadership. Ms. Porterfield stated she would share the letter with the committee members for feedback prior to sharing it with RSA.

Agenda and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Legislative and Public Policy Committee was scheduled for August 14. Agenda items are as follows:

- Policy Discussion

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Public Comment

Julie Oliver stated that she would review the VR Policy Manual and send any comments or feedback to Amy Porterfield.

Adjournment of Meeting

Bob Kresmer moved to adjourn the meeting. Ted Chittenden seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.