

December 20, 2019

Mark Schultz, Commissioner  
Rehabilitation Services Administration  
US Department of Education  
Mary E. Switzer Building  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Commissioner Schultz:

As Chairperson of the New York State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) from October 2018 through September 2019, I am pleased to present for your consideration the FY2018-19 State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Annual Report.

Each year, the SRC produces this report to inform federal and state officials and the public about its work and accomplishments. This report highlights the SRC's activities for FY2018-19 and the goals for FY2019-20.

The SRC works in partnership with all of the key stakeholders responding to the needs of New Yorkers who are blind and/or visually impaired. Each member, as does the SRC as a whole, has a well-defined purpose, but our influence does not come merely from legal or regulatory mandates. Our influence comes from the completion of our key work. Each member serves as the voice of the constituencies which he/she represents, and with that voice, each represents the voice of many.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Respectfully submitted,



Meghan Parker

NYSCB SRC Chairperson

cc: Tonya Stellar, State Liaison, Rehabilitation Services Administration

Tracy Breslin, SRC Coordinator/Liaison, NYSCB

December 20, 2019

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo  
State of New York  
Executive Chamber  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

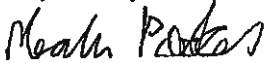
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Meghan Parker

NYSCB SRC Chairperson

cc: Mark Schultz, Commissioner, Rehabilitation Services Administration

Tonya Stellar, State Liaison, Rehabilitation Services Administration

Tracy Breslin, SRC Coordinator/Liaison, NYSCB

December 20, 2019

Dear Readers:

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services' Commission for the Blind is proud of its success and the many stakeholders and advisory bodies who support our work daily.

As our Commission continues its successful implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and moves forward with our ambitious agenda for 2020, we look forward to sharing our priorities with our Council for continued support and sound advice.

We thank our State Rehabilitation Council for its efforts in 2019.

Sincerely,



Brian S. Daniels

Associate Commissioner

New York State Office of Children & Family Services

Commission for the Blind

**State Rehabilitation Council  
to the  
New York State  
Commission for the Blind**

**Annual Report  
Fiscal Year 2018/2019**

## Introduction

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), for the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) is pleased to issue its Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2018/2019 to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and Commissioner Mark Schultz of the Rehabilitation Services Administration. This report includes a discussion of the Council's activities during FY 2018/2019 and plans for upcoming FY 2019/2020.

The SRC ("the Council") is an advisory body mandated by Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The nature and scope of the Council's deliberations and recommendations include NYSCB policies, procedures, and operations as they may affect participants of or applicants for agency services statewide. Additionally, the SRC assists in the development of federally required State plans and annual updates to those plans. Much of the Council's business has been conducted in committees focusing on the NYSCB priority issues of work force development, quality assurance, accessibility, policy, procedure and planning, and transition to adulthood. The SRC meets four (4) times each calendar year.

The Council is comprised of members representing participants who are blind, participants with multiple disabilities, parents, disability advocacy groups (National Federation of the Blind and American Council of the Blind), the Client Assistance Program (CAP), community rehabilitation program service providers, New York State Educational Department, business, industry and labor, the New York State Workforce Investment Board, Section 121 Native American Rehabilitation Programs, and New York State Independent Living Council. Ex-Officio representation on the Council includes Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR), The Justice Center and various representatives from NYSCB who provide information and assistance as requested by the Council.

Meetings are open to the public and always include a public comment segment during which individuals are invited to provide input or bring issues of concern to the Council's attention.

**Functions of the State Rehabilitation Council**  
**(as stated in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act)**

The Council shall, after consulting with the State Workforce Investment Board —

1. Review, analyze, and advise the designated State unit regarding the performance of the responsibilities of the unit under this title, particularly responsibilities related to:
  - a. eligibility (including order of selection)
  - b. the extent, scope, and effectiveness of services provided; and
  - c. functions performed by State agencies that affect or that potentially affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes under this title;
  
2. In partnership with the designated State unit —
  - a. develop, agree to, and review State goals and priorities in accordance with section 101 (a)(15) (C); and
  - b. evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and submit reports of progress to the Commissioner in accordance with section 101(a)(15)(E);
  
3. Advise the designated State agency and the designated State unit regarding activities authorized to be carried out under this title, and assist in the preparation of the State plan and amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations required by this title;
  - a. To the extent feasible, conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with —the functions performed by the designated State agency
  - b. vocational rehabilitation services provided by State agencies and other public and private entities responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this Act; and
  - c. employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals receiving services under this title, including the availability of health and other employment benefits in connection with such employment outcomes;
  
4. Prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and the Commissioner on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs operated within the State, and make the report available to the public;
  
5. To avoid duplication of efforts and enhance the number of individuals served, coordinate activities with the activities of other councils within the State, including the Statewide Independent Living Council established under section 705, the advisory panel established under section 612(a)(21) of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (as amended by section 101 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997; Public Law 105-17, the State Developmental Disabilities Council described in section 124 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (42 U.S.C. 6024), the State Mental Health Planning Council established under section 1914 (a) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300x-4(a)), and the State workforce investment board;

6. Provide for coordination and the establishment of working relationships between the designated State agency and the Statewide Independent Living Council and centers for independent living within the state; and
7. Perform such other functions, consistent with the purpose of this title, as the State Rehabilitation Council determines to be appropriate, that are comparable to the other functions performed by the Council.

## **Meeting Highlights and Activities for FY 2018/2019**

Listed below are meeting highlights and activities for 2018/2019 including providing input toward the Combined State Plan, recommendations, public forums, communication with the NYSCB Executive Board, and presentations.

The NYSCB SRC conducts its council business at four (4) meetings each year. The meetings are held in March, June, September, and November. At each of these meetings, the Council follows an agenda created and proposed by the Council's Executive Committee. A standard agenda consists of introductions, report from the Chair, report from the Associate Commissioner, presentations, public comment, committee reports, council business, and action items. The following is a brief synopsis of the SRC business for FY 2018/2019.



## MEETING ONE: November 7 & 8, 2018

The fiscal year began with the first SRC meeting in November. The Executive Board (EB) to NYSCB attended this meeting to facilitate communication and collaboration between these two entities.

### **Presentation by the Associate Commissioner**

NYSCB Associate Commissioner, Brian Daniels reported that NYSCB continues to pursue employment opportunities in rural territories, including New York State's Southern Tier. This strategy would include collaboration with Career Centers, employers, and service providers. The Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council continues to meet and is supported both by members of the Council and NYSCB's Executive Board. NYSCB continues to support Employment First priorities including a correlated five percent increase in employment among people with disabilities and a five percent decrease in poverty rate.

### **Other Presentations/Activities**

**Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) Update, Meghan Parker, Chair & Brian S. Daniels, Associate Commissioner, NYSCB & SRC:** Chair Parker gave a brief overview of the SRC's efforts to assess the accessibility of New York State's high school equivalency exam, the TASC. This has been an ongoing project which Chair Parker reviewed for the benefit of the Executive Committee. Chair Parker also shared an update which is that Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), who is contracted to administer the TASC, reports that they are currently working to make the TASC compatible with the widely-used screen reader, JAWS. New York State Education Department (NYSED) and DRC meet quarterly. The overview was followed by a productive conversation between the members of the SRC and the Executive Board.

**Executive Board Update, Karen Gourgey, Chair & EB:** Chair Gourgey explained the general difference between the EB and SRC. The EB's job is to evaluate issues, make recommendations, report to legislature and governor on issues. The EB is not federally funded and is mandated to report every year to the governor. The EB's mandate includes people who are visually impaired, not necessarily legally blind. There is a wide range of age and areas that they can comment and/or make recommendations on legislation. Presently, Carl Jacobsen talked about the current threat to Business Enterprise Program (BEP). In 1967, BEP had 180 facilities and currently there are around 78. The Thruway Authority has an RFP out for a 32-year contract for a private company to take over rest stops as opposed to NYSCB BEP managers. The EB is working with NYSCB legislatively and will need help from everybody. Mary Lou Mendez and Carena Collura presented on education for children who are blind. Requirements of teachers should be made more supportive of the needs of the children they are teaching. In New York, requirements for providing braille to students who are blind should be the first option. Children are not being offered braille and/or are being discouraged from it. The EB would like to make sure that children who are blind have access to technologies (iPads, iPhones, etc.) There are currently recommendations to NYSED and New York State Department of Health NYSDOH regarding early intervention services: accessible parent handbook that has not been updated since 2002; expanded CORE curriculum (social, self-advocacy, O&M); cortical visual impairment issues; NYSED needs to review their search engine. Margo Downey discussed the Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC). She reported that the MISCC discussed accessible braille agendas and accessibility on websites. More people who are blind are attending meetings. Meetings consist of a guest speaker, project updates and public comments. Currently, there are three core topics: housing, transportation and employment with a linkage between the three. Local forums have been created so more public comments can be given. Karen Gourgey discussed Infant Vision Screening. A significant number of infants have some sort of visual issue which could be caused by a neurological problem. Minority groups have the highest rate of visual impairments. Legislation is being proposed that a hearing test must be done between birth and 6 months. However, there is

no legislation for visual screening. The Lions Club has a program in Northern New York, where they are trained to go and give visual tests at the age of 5.

**SRC Update, Meghan Parker, SRC Chair & SRC:** The committee chairs provided updates with the EB on the activities they have been working on throughout the past year. Some highlights include an update from Debbie Fiderer of the Workforce Development Committee who reported that they are focusing on access to VR services for people who are blind and visually impaired along with other disabilities for supported employment, improving DOL career centers and WIOA regulations. Chris Kchao, Chair of the Transition committee reported there are two items: transition survey results will be used to identify key recommendations and improvements and lack of involvement and awareness of consumer's and their families, school staff and the transition process.

**Open Discussion, SRC & EB:** The SRC and EB left time for an open discussion. Many important topics were discussed, including the importance of mentoring; transition; and a lengthy discussion of a current threat to BEP and the impact this will have on socialization of NYSCB's Children's programs.

**Committee Work:**

**Quality Assurance:** Erica Molina reported that QA staff at NYSCB finished the cycle of provider reviews (QA requested a narrative report of this regarding trends and fixes). Committee was reminded that Agency Performance Index/Report Card can be found on website to get any additional information. In 2019, another full cycle of reviews will begin again and Accessible Technology Centers (ATC's) will be reviewed as well. Federal regulations are calling for public comment related to WIOA and RSA 911 data.

**Workforce Development:** Debbie Fiderer reported NYSCB has increased the utilization of Supported Employment services (50% increase), informal outreach at the district office level, incorporate blindness training and require agencies and their employees complete these courses. Also, some training for career center staff. The committee plans to discuss increasing employment in rural areas.

**Transition Committee:** Chris Kchao reported the committee discussed better training for transition aged youth and advocacy.

**Public Comment:** One individual provided public comment. Aaron Baier is now the Executive Director at ILC in Cortland County. He is the first visually impaired Director at the center. His focus will be on transportation, housing and employment. Aaron expressed how upset he is regarding the current situation BEP is going through and is looking forward to working with the SRC.

**Policy Updates: Sharon Flom, Associate VRC:** Sharon Flom reported that NYSCB program unit staff along with Deputy Director Barbara Kellerman and Regional Coordinator Jason Eckert have been reviewing the VR Manual to give it a full update based on changes presented in WIOA. The plan is to complete the process by the end of the year so that edits can be finalized in January and an updated manual issued in February or March. Major changes were discussed and reviewed with the SRC in the areas of VR Process: assessments, eligibility, economic need, IPE, work experience training, comparable benefits, employment outcomes, record of services, among other changes. Much of these updates were streamlining their policies and procedures and/or updating them to conform with WIOA regulations.

**2018 SRC Annual Report, Meghan Parker, SRC Chair & SRC:** Chair Parker shared a draft of the report with the SRC prior to the meeting and solicited input from the SRC. Chair Parker stated she would insert committee goals once received and email the report to the SRC for a final review prior to submitting it to RSA in December.

## **MEETING TWO: March 20 & 21, 2019**

SRC has been invited to attend the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Council (NCSRC) biannual meeting in April. Chair Parker informed the SRC that she has been in contact with Karen Gourney from the Executive Board about the topic of E-Scooters in NYS and people who are blind.

**NYSCB updates: Brian S. Daniels, Associate Commissioner of NYSCB:** Commissioner Daniels introduced new NYSCB staff member, Laura Murphy, and the retirement of Sharon Flom. Commissioner Daniels also reported that the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) conducted an on-site review and exit conference in April 2018 and NYSCB is still waiting for RSA's final report. Regarding placement contracts, NYSCB has about 40 active contracts. A new placement contract will be coming out for bidding soon. Commissioner Daniels reported he is focusing on the Southern Tier (Elmira, NY) for growth and employment. Two new comprehensive service contracts have started this year: Alphapointe and Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired of Northern New York (ABVINNY). Commissioner Daniels attended the opening of the new rehabilitation center at ABVINNY and will be returning on April 30<sup>th</sup>, for their Vision Loss Conference at Jefferson County Community College.

### **Other Presentations/Activities**

**New NYSCB SRC representative: Darla Miller, Buffalo District Office:** Darla Miller has been a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for 14 years out of the NYSCB Buffalo office. She spends two days a week at Career Centers throughout Western New York. The most frequent issues that she deals with are participant transportation and employment barriers in rural areas.

**Ruth Singer, High School Equivalency Director, NYSED:** Ms. Singer attended the SRC meeting to introduce herself and discuss the TASC project. Commissioner Daniels stated how important communication is between High School Equivalency office and the SRC. Ms. Singer discussed a new procedure for the TASC project. The SRC explained their interest in the accessibility of the TASC to blind and visually impaired students and their concern that many significant barriers remain, both about the test itself, as well as the application process and the prep materials. The SRC had a discussion with Ms. Singer about the underlying concerns with the new process being proposed for the TASC project.

### **SRC Committee Restructuring: Meghan Parker, Chair and SRC**

The SRC discussed whether to create a new Accessibility Committee and in doing so, to do away with the Quality Assurance Committee, as requested by Commissioner Daniels. Concerns were raised over getting rid of Quality Assurance as a committee. The SRC ultimately agreed to combine Accessibility with the Policy Committee and to put the Quality Assurance Committee on hold for the next three meetings. If the SRC had more members, there would be enough members for both. However, because so many people are still waiting to be approved, the SRC has too few members to have more than a few committees.

**TASC updates: Meghan Parker, Chair and SRC:** Chair Parker reported that several members of the SRC and NYSCB Commissioner, Brian Daniels, and SRC Liaison, Tracy Breslin, had a very productive phone call with the vendor for the TASC, DRC. DRC reported they were actively fixing accessibility issues with the TASC and the fully screen reader-compatible TASC would be available by April 2019. Several questions were raised on that phone call by the SRC, and DRC stated they would get back to the SRC with their answers. Chair Parker will forward the list of questions to the full council.

### **Committee Work**

Quality Assurance: Committee has been suspended.

Policy, Planning and Procedures: Cliff Perez reported that the policy handbook is still being updated. Procurement issues have been addressed. The committee would like to reach out to Commissioner Daniels or Julie Hovey to discuss their thoughts on accessibility and what their goals and issues are. The committee also wants to ensure all intakes are available on NLS cartridges.

Workforce Development: Debbie Fiderer welcomed Darla Miller to the Workforce Committee. Debbie Fiderer reported that they discussed Supported Employment and the increase of referrals. Also, Career centers are still in the process of getting technology and have completed training about NYSCB and the requirements under WIOA.

Transition: Chris Kchao reported they discussed data from the survey from a year ago. The committee is trying to rebuild and be more successful this year.

**WIOA Updates: Sharon Flom, AVRC & Peter Herrig, AVRC:** Peter Herrig stated that all equipment should be delivered to all Career Centers by April. An online survey is being developed regarding the feedback of this equipment. One Stop Operating System (OSOS) is the reporting site for Business Engagement and Peter will have these numbers at the next meeting. There will be joint training on Business Engagement by Cornell from April through September. Sharon informed the group that DOL introduced the universal release form and NYSCB will receive it in the next few days. The Training Assistance Workgroup has webinars set up by agencies regarding the VR process. NYSCB is hoping to make these available on their website along with a survey.

**Annual Client Assistance Program Report (RSA-722): Erica Molina, Disability Rights NY:** The RSA-722 report is submitted to RSA every year. The report was reviewed and discussed with the SRC in detail.

### MEETING THREE: June 20 and 21, 2019

#### **Presentation by the Associate Commissioner**

Commissioner Daniels reported all VR programs will once again be under federal standards and indicators. NYSCB is expecting goals related to them as well. NYSCB is planning for 2 statewide open forum phone calls in August to solicit information on the new Combined State Plan to be effective July 2020. Commissioner Daniels also reported that NYSCB has not yet received the draft monitoring report from RSA. Commissioner Daniels also reported NYSCB continues to look for employment opportunities statewide including in and around the Greater Elmira and Watertown, NY areas. The American Council of the Blind (ACB) national convention will convene in Rochester, NY in July. The NYSCB has been invited to present at two (2) sessions.

The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) sponsored an employment summit in New York City in May. Companies such as Google, Amazon, Walmart, Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase, PNC, and International fragrances and Flavors were in attendance and left with "a commitment to hire".

There have been no new appointments to the Council since last meeting. There are currently 6 vacancies.

Finally, Commissioner Daniels reported that the Preferred Source Program (PSP) would be soliciting input from the SRC in the fall to help inform the latest update to their 3-year strategic plan.

#### **Other Presentations/Activities**

**Legislative Priorities for National Federation of the Blind (NFB) & American Council of the Blind (ACB)**  
**Mike Robinson, NFB President & Meghan Parker, Chair:** Mike Robinson discussed NFB's priorities:

Nationally, NFB is advocating for the Access Technology Affordability Act (ATAA). It establishes a refundable tax credit for blind Americans in the amount of \$2,000 to be used over a three-year period to offset the cost of access technology. NFB is also advocating for the Greater Accessibility and Independence through Nonvisual Access Technology Act (GAIN) require Home use of medical devices, home appliances, and fitness equipment be accessible. There is currently no sponsor. The Disability Employment Act (DEA) would review the Ability One program and how they operate sheltered workshops. The Transformation to Competitive Employment Act (TCE) would eliminate the 14C's exemption for people with disabilities and ensure people will make minimum wage. See the NFB National website <https://nfb.org/programs-services/advocacy/legislative-agenda>.

NFBNY priorities: Accessible Electronic Information Act would allow funding for NFB's Newline program to be through the same means as relay service. It would grow subscribers and newspapers; Blind Persons Right to Parent Act: Blindness cannot be used against parents in a divorce; Request for proposals for state contracts purchasing- accessibility must be included in the initial process. Working with group on a state version of the federal act DEA: would eliminate 14C's and subminimum wage.

Chair Parker discussed ACB priorities: ACBNY is working with a coalition, New York Vision Rehabilitation Association (NYVRA) in advocating for licensure for Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialists and Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (VRT). It is difficult to recruit highly skilled people into the field and licensure could help with recruitment. Many people losing their vision are not aware of certain services provided to them and ophthalmologists would be more likely to make referrals to licensed professionals. ACBNY is also supporting two election bills: The first is a mandate that sample ballots be available on-line and fully accessible. The second is for absentee ballots to be available online such as is available to veterans overseas. Veterans complete them online, then print them out and mail in their ballots. This is a fully independent and private way to vote for those who must vote absentee. Finally, they are advocating to expand paratransit service past the ADA minimums. In New York, many upstate cities are cutting back their fixed bus lines, which limits where paratransit serves. This is leaving blind people without access to transportation.

**Public Comment:** Maria Mucaria provided public comment. She stated that there could be jobs behind the camera in the movie business.

**Pre-College Program 2019: Lauren Corp, Associate VRC:** There are two Pre-College programs this summer: Manhattanville College in Purchase, NY that Visions staff will oversee and the other is at Lemoyne College in Syracuse, NY overseen by staff from Aurora. It is a 4-week program. The purpose of the pre-college program is to assist participants in refining their academic, social and independent living skills before commencing to full time college studies.

The program was designed specifically for juniors who will be seniors in the fall and seniors who will be attending college in the fall. Attendance for this program is strongly recommended for anyone who plans to attend college using NYSCB sponsorship. All reports from the program will be forwarded to the participant's counselor and plans may be made for additional coursework during senior year if one or two areas need improvement.

Two classes will be offered during the program: a non-credit, Intro to College Life course and an online Developmental Writing/Technology Seminar. The non-credit Introduction to College Life will be conducted by college staff. It covers areas such as: the development of note taking skills; working with the disability office; learning self-advocacy skills; study and communication skills; time and stress management skills; identifying important resources on campus and other college life related topics. The Developmental Writing/Technology Seminar will have students participate in online webinars with required weekly web-based reading and assigned projects. The class focuses on internet skills and tools, as well as organizational strategies to prepare for class. Students will also participate in skill building writing exercises. The class will be taught live, via distance learning using fully accessible teleconferencing systems and web-based materials. Students will

meet virtually with peer role models.

**NYSCB Quality Assurance Update: Julie Hovey, Associate VRC-** In 2018, nine agencies were reviewed. The reviews included CSC and placement services. The Quality Assurance team's goal was to see all agencies by December 2018 and complete the contract cycle. Since January 2019, two more agencies have been reviewed. As planned, in January 2019, NYSCB began ATC services. There are 3 parts to every review: Off-site electronic review, face to face visit with agency to interview staff and review any additional information. Consumer satisfaction surveys are done via telephone. The report cards and performance are on NYSCB's website.

**TASC Update: Meghan Parker, Chair & SRC:** Chair Parker reported that she recruited about 8 people to test the TASC, many from ACB. Volunteers began with the application process and it is not accessible. It was a PDF that was not fillable. One volunteer made it through the entire process and is signed up to take the TASC in braille this summer. Chair Parker has written a letter to Kevin Smith of ACCES-VR to inform him of all the experiences relating to the TASC and has yet to receive a response. It was suggested that Comptroller audit the TASC.

### **Committee Work**

**Accessibility, Policy, Planning and Procedures:** Cliff Perez reported that Laura Murphy from NYSCB home office discussed making the intake process more accessible by July 1<sup>st</sup>. Forms will start to be recorded. There is a need for more individuals to join the Policy and Accessibility committee.

**Workforce Development:** Debbie Fiderer discussed supported employment. NYSCB is providing training for all NYSCB staff about supported employment- background, steps to make a referral with provider agencies and how to identify the extended services funding source. Career centers are also trying to increase the ability to provide services to job seekers who are blind. Two-thirds of the career centers have equipment. Both NYSCB and ACCES-VR are engaged at career centers.

**Transition:** Chris Kchao reported that they discussed Family & Community Engagement Centers (FACEC) and the issues of transition counselors attending.

**Home Office updates: Peter Herrig AVRC:** The Albany, Syracuse, and White Plains District Offices have completed Supported Employment Training. Training for all offices should be complete by early August. Cornell Diversity Partners training will be taking place in our district offices as well. Placement contracts are currently in the internal clearance process. Comprehensive Services contract (CSC) started on January 1, 2019. The Vocational Rehabilitation Manual is currently in Legal and Public Information Office (PIO) and needs to go through these channels to be approved.

**Executive Board Update-Tracy Breslin:** E-Scooter legislation update- Was passed and signed by the Governor. E-scooters are silent and go up to 20 mph. If the bill passes, there will need to be advocacy done locally to ensure that they don't operate on sidewalks, which would be a safety hazard for blind people.

### **MEETING FOUR: September 18 and 19, 2019**

#### **Presentation by the Associate Commissioner**

Commissioner Daniels announced the annual town hall meetings: They held a town hall during NFB's convention on 10/18/2019 from 9:00-11:00 am; ACB's convention on 10/25/19 from 10:00-12:00 pm. Commissioner Daniels encouraged the SRC to attend and NYSCB can assist in transportation support, if needed.

Commissioner Daniels reported that a draft monitoring report was received from RSA. RSA reflected a healthy system in NYS. The only other item was that NYSCB needs to improve their cost allocation system. This will not have a negative impact on NYSCB's services regarding vision rehabilitation. NYSCB is waiting on the final report that includes numbers from 2017 thru 2018.

There has been a significant focus on the area of Elmira and the Southern Tier. Commissioner Daniels has worked with Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment (AVRE) and there are resources being found in Elmira, however with a series of limitations. Maria Mucaria stated that since this area is where she resides, she is aware of the lack of public transportation and limitations on employment. She expressed how grateful she is that there is a lot of focus on this area. Theresa Drum offered to speak with the parent center in that community and obtain some feedback. Commissioner Daniels stated that the Elmira school district was working with service providers.

Commissioner Daniels recognized Chair Parker and the award she has recently received from National Council on Independent Living (NCIL). She was awarded with the advocacy award. It was also announced that Cliff Perez was named Vice President of NCIL.

Commissioner Daniels also reported Margo Downey took the TASC in Braille and he read her review to the SRC.

#### **Other Presentations/Activities**

**Carrie Laney: New York State Preferred Source Program for People who are Blind (NYSPSP):** Ms. Laney presented a PowerPoint (that was also handed out/emailed) to the SRC about NYSPSP and what has been going on over the past year.

**Election of Officers, Nominating Committee:** Maria Mucaria, of the Nominating committee reported the slate for elections-Cliff Perez was nominated Vice Chair and he accepted the nomination. Meghan Parker was nominated for Chair and she accepted the nomination. Since there were no other members selected to run, Maria Mucaria made a motion that Meghan Parker continue as Chair and Theresa Drum second the motion. The SRC voted and Meghan Parker will continue as Chair of the SRC. Chair Parker made a motion for Cliff Perez to be Vice Chair and Chris Kchao seconded. The SRC voted and Cliff Perez will be Vice Chair.

**Combined Plan Discussion, Julie Venneman:** Commissioner Daniels introduced Julie Venneman and announced her promotion to Associate Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Ms. Venneman discussed the current work NYSCB has been doing to update and revise the required vocational rehabilitation sections of the Combined State Plan. The SRC is required to comment on the state plan at each submission point. Comments provided by the SRC will appear on the DRAFT NYSCB VR portion of the plan. Once comments are provided to NYSCB, they are required to respond to each comment made as part of this description of the State Plan. Any rejections of the input or recommendations will be explained to the council.  
SRC Comments to NYSCB's VR Portion of the NYS Combined State Plan, 9/19/19:

- SRC Comment 1: In the Supported Employment goals section, description f, the hourly salary is listed as \$8.95/hour, this should be updated to reflect at least the goal of minimum hourly wage.
- SRC Comment 2: Description c mentions that NYSCB remain a member of the Interagency Council for Services to Persons who are deaf, deaf-blind or hard of hearing. The SRC noted that this council is no longer active, and this should be researched and updated in the plan.
- SRC Comment 3: The SRC noted that the dates indicated for new placement contracts and vocational evaluation contracts is a date in the future from the time of the comments, 2020.

- SRC Comment 4: The SRC notes that at times, the responses and information seem to be repetitive.
- SRC Comment 5: The SRC inquired why in description m: Order of Selection, the same response is listed, that NYSCB is not implementing an Order of Selection.
- SRC Comment 6: The SRC noted the track changes carry over in description l, regarding the number of staffs employed by NYSCB.
- SRC Comment 7: The SRC noted the staff of NYSCB tend to be on the older side, as listed in description i.
- SRC Comment 8: In description c, under the section on the NYS Promise Initiative, NYSCB indicates that NYSCB is on the steering committee and the language as written indicates that the initiative ended in July 2019. The SRC would like this to be updated with definitive information on the end of this initiative as well as any updates on the data results.
- SRC Comment 9: In description p, there was a typo regarding the spelling of LaGuardia Community College.
- SRC Comment 10: In description f, the SRC would like to have added language, including the Supported Employment in-person office by office training and follow up webinars to the last section of the paragraph containing the four SE goals for 2020.

### **Committee Work**

**Accessibility, Policy, Planning and Procedures:** Cliff Perez and Chair Parker reported that the process of the NLS cartridges has started and there will be professional readers hired to record these cartridges.

**Workforce Development:** Debbie Fiderer reported that their goals are still in progress. They are setting vocational goals and training programs that need to be available and accessible.

**Transition:** Chris Kchao reported they are discussing success stories, looking at data counselors reported about the lack of programs outside of NYC. Also, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) transition classifications need to be updated. Schools are still not aware of services and benefits. Last item was to encourage NYSED to complete the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NYSCB.

**Planned Goals and Activities for FY2019/2020:** The SRC is scheduled to meet quarterly in FY 2019/20. In addition, the Executive Committee and each of the three standing committees will meet via conference call throughout the year. The standing committees are: Accessibility, Policy, Procedure and Planning; Workforce Development; and Transition. In addition, the Quality Assurance Committee has been put on hold, and the SRC will reevaluate in early 2020 whether to bring this committee back. If the six people who have been waiting to be appointed finally get their appointments, this will be more achievable. Chair Parker will appoint the Chairs and members of each committee and will give each its charge. The Executive Committee will ensure that membership will continue to include qualified, diverse candidates to fill new positions or vacancies on the State Rehabilitation Council.

Below are several goals the Council plans to work on during the next year through its committees, in keeping with its mandated requirements.

### **Accessibility, Policy, Procedures, and Planning Committee**

**Goal 1:** Work with NYSCB to complete the ongoing project to make intake materials available on National Library Service (NLS) cartridges.

**Goal 2:** Work with NYSCB in their efforts to increase the focus on braille literacy among NYSCB participants. Help raise awareness among the blind community of this initiative.

**Goal 3:** Work with NYSCB to help raise awareness within New York State agencies of new procurement



policies meant to ensure full accessibility. Explore ways to advocate for state agencies to work with the State's preferred source provider for accessibility to address access barriers for blind people.

### **Workforce Development Committee**

**Goal 4:** Continue to work with NYSCB to further enhance strategies to increase utilization of Supported Employment services for eligible blind and visually impaired job seekers.

**Goal 5:** Provide feedback and recommendations on training curriculum for Department of Labor workforce center staff to improve efficacy in serving the blind and visually impaired community

**Goal 6:** Work with NYSCB to explore strategies for expanding the diversity of career goals for participants in NYSCB programming by identifying both industry-informed regionally based high growth job sectors and any real or perceived barriers to employment in these sectors for blind and low vision participants

### **Transition Committee**

**Goal 7:** Identify ways to improve on the dissemination of information about transition-related programs, events, services and other area resources to participants and/or families.

**Goal 8:** Ensure participants and/or families remain involved and aware throughout the transition process.

**Goal 9:** Strategize ways to increase the participation of schools in the transition process.

**Goal 10:** Conduct new survey for transition counselors, using results to identify areas for improvement in the transition process and make recommendations for ensuring effective transition planning.

**Goal 11:** Strengthen understanding of the current landscape as it pertains to the increase in multiply-disabled participants in the system and the potential implications.

**Goal 12:** Identify barriers preventing transition-age youth from making effective use of technology

### **Other Planned Activities in FY 2019/2020**

The SRC will participate with NYSCB in revising the combined State Plan for Federal Fiscal Year 2020/2021. The participation will include information gathering from its members' respective constituencies.

The 2020/2021 State Plan will incorporate information obtained at the public forums held at the ACB and NFB state conventions as well as any other public hearings held by NYSCB.

The SRC will continue to support and advise NYSCB in its collaboration with ACCES-VR to ensure full accessibility in test preparation, application, and test-taking for the high school equivalency test (TASC).

The SRC will re-examine its current by-laws to determine whether any amendments or restructuring may be needed.

The SRC will continue the orientation and new member training in the future at one of the four (4) yearly meetings, based on the timeliness of appointment each Fiscal Year hereafter.

The SRC and its committees will collaborate with the ACCES-VR SRC to ensure the implementation of the vocational rehabilitation services goals of the combined State Plan.

In addition, the SRC will work to strengthen connections with other SRC's outside New York State, as well as with the National Coalition of SRC's and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind.

Finally, the SRC will work with NYSCB to bring about implementation of the various recommendations made by the committees and Council as a whole. Many of the recommendations of the committees overlap with each other as well as with those of the NYSCB Executive Board. Communication and brainstorming among the

members of all these bodies will further refine their recommendations, and thereby result in an across-the-board improvement in services and opportunities for New Yorkers who are blind.