

N.J. Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired (CBVI)  
**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)**

Meeting Minutes – October 5, 2018  
Joseph Kohn Training Center - 130 Livingston Avenue - New Brunswick, NJ

**Voting Members Present:** Gary Altman, Ida Behrini, Jennifer Ekelmann, Rick Fox, Jonathan Goodman, Susan Head, Charles McKenna, William Robinson, Evangelia Stone

**Present (pending appointments):** Alice Eaddy, Damian Petino, John Tkacz

**Absent:** Pamela Aasen, Bernice Davis, Lisa Killion-Smith, Clarke King, Kelly Reymann, Kris Tucker

**Ex Officio Present:** Amanda Gerson, Danielle Licari-Scorzelli

**Staff/Members of Public Present:** Eva Scott, Dr. Oursler

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The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Rick Fox, Chairperson. He announced that the meeting was being held in compliance with Section 105 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act 1973, as amended; also in compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meeting Act, NJSA 10:4-6.

Rick welcomed everyone; in particular, Damian and John, who were attending the SRC meeting for the first time.

Amanda welcomed and introduced Dr. Oursler, Rutgers School of Health Professions. Dr. Oursler oversees the entire rehabilitation counseling program at the University. She is at today's meeting to talk about a research project around soft skills training for youth with disabilities, and also a focus group project.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes & 2019 SRC Meeting Schedule**

A motion was made by Gary Altman, and seconded by Jonathan Goodman, to approve the meeting minutes of April 20, 2018; all were in favor; the minutes were approved.

With regard to the June 1, 2018, meeting minutes, an error on page 5/3<sup>rd</sup> bullet/the word "studies" should be changed to "students". A motion was made by Jonathan Goodman, and seconded by William Robinson, to approve the meeting minutes with the noted adjustment. All were in favor, with the exception of Gary Altman, who abstained from voting as he did not attend the June meeting. The minutes were approved.

**The 2019 meeting dates were approved:** Feb 1, April 26, June 7, October 4, December 6 2019

**Eva Scott, Director of Blindness Education:**

Eva thanked the SRC for inviting her to share information regarding the Blindness Education program at CBVI. Currently, she reported, there are 57 certified teachers of the vision impaired, serving 2135 students; with referrals rolling in every day. A good number of those students are going to be braille readers, or already are braille readers. In the previous school year, the Blindness Education Unit served 385 school districts, charter schools, and a few education services/commissions that provide special education services to children in non-public schools. This year there were some new referrals from school districts that the Agency never worked with before. CBVI's services are funded through an agreement with the NJ Department of Education (DOE). Eva noted that she compiles a billing report in April of every school year, and that billing report is then sent to the DOE and the funds are deducted from each district's state funding. Charter schools and education services commissions pay by check, but again, this isn't handled until the end of the school year, because services do occasionally change as children change.

Blindness Education is making an increasing amount of technology available to students, particularly with regards to accessible floor-mat materials. Currently, there are approximately 1500 students accessing electronic books, either through Bookshare or Reading Ally. If they are a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), they can also access books through Nymak, which is through American Printing House. They access these electronic books through laptop computers, mostly iPads that the Agency provides. Hard copy braille and large print will always be with us to a certain degree. We do our large print books primarily in-house at our Meyer Center in Newark; on rare occasions we contract out for a large print book. Contractors for large print books are becoming increasingly less available to us because in other states, many have all but eliminated hard copy, large print. Our philosophy is that very young readers still need hard copy; even when its large print; they need to have a book in their hand, and that contributes to their development of literacy skills. We also have another group of students for who looking at a screen is very fatiguing; for them we will make the recommendation of teaching braille; however, it's the family's choice; parental consent is needed. The braille readers transition to e-books quite nicely; either using audio or refreshable braille displays, if you're in iPad or laptop. Eva explained that for math and science we always have hard copy braille because of the special nature and simply because the technology for tactile graphics is still under developed and less available at this time.

Eva reported that the Meyer Center contracts with approximately 30 transcribers, and also employs an in-house transcriber, who is a fully certified transcriber through the Library of Congress. This employee was a para-educator in one of our school districts, supporting braille readers in a school. She can take a classroom teacher's hand written notes and transcribe them into braille with lovely graphics; she has a real talent for tactile graphics, which is a special talent; the text part is probably the easiest part of transcribing braille. The Agency still receives funding from American Printing House (APH) for the Blind, for accessible textbooks and materials. Currently, there are approximately 1000 students eligible to be counted on the APH Census. Congress has put aside an amount of money per student, whose name is listed on the census. However, starting last year, the federal government required we now get a parental signature/release in order for a child's name to be counted on the census. It created a problem for every state, because it relies on parents getting the form back to us; it has to be with an original signature hard copy form. Last year we received about 500; right now up to over 600, so getting close to the number of eligible students. In order to be eligible under the APH a student needs to meet the definition of legal blindness.

Student Hands-on Alternatives Reinforcement Project (SHARP) celebrated its fourth year this past summer. 93 students sign up; 89 students completed the program. Each session of the program was split according to groups; one session provides the program for 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders and the other session 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> graders. A number of parents expressed concern because 3 weeks was a bit too long; it was cutting into family activities, extended school year programs, and other obligations. Will look at some restructuring for next year. The value added for this second year was that there were 12 mentors from the EDGE program working with the SHARP students. They were spectacular; contributed and provided a wonderful positive role model to the younger students in

terms of their own skills of independence, willingness to talk with them and answer questions. Will continue to include EDGE mentors in this program.

Rick asked if caseloads are manageable for the 57 teachers to handle 2000+ students/referrals. Eva noted that the teachers are stretched as far as they can go; some teachers are covering 3 and 4 counties; they do paperwork out in the field; the vast majority do a fine job of keeping up with paperwork and meeting the needs of their students; they go above and beyond! Eva commented that she is hoping to increase their numbers. She noted that Education's caseload numbers can't be compared to VR or IL, which are 80-100 consumers per caseload. In Education, top numbers are in the 40s, and that's stretching it pretty far. Braille students are seen several times a week, so it's the intensity and frequency of service that lower the number of caseload assignments. Eva noted that one of her biggest concerns is that as the number of braille students increase, she wants to be able to meet the braille obligation. Rick offered any help the SRC can provide, and noted that the SRC is always there for advocacy assistance. Eva thanked the SRC members, and noted that she appreciates their support.

Rick commented that other than academics, the academic institutions often don't understand skills of blindness needs. He asked Eva to explain how the teachers accomplish someone needing ADL skills or other things like that. Eva noted that in the rules of state government CBVI teachers aren't allowed to do double duty; therefore, they would refer the student for IL skills instruction. Those services are provided wherever the child needs/parents prefer. The instructor will go to the school, home, and community settings to teach the skills that each individual child needs. The other thing CBVI O&M Instructors and teachers do, they conduct on-site training, professional development activities within the school settings, to help the school personnel understand what exactly the Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) is doing, and what the purpose of the Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Instructor is. This allows the school staff to be able to reinforce travel skills when the O&M Instructor isn't there. The other piece to this equation is for high school students, when a student turns 14 this signifies the need for a transition services referral. When they make a referral (technology or O&M), the service occurs immediately. But with a 14yo and transition referral, it may not need to be right away; they need to be on the books as being 14, eligible for transition services, so that then the transition counselor can go about doing what it is they need to do; it just won't happen within a day or so, the way the other services occur.

Rick asked Eva to comment on the TVIs and classroom teachers/assistants interaction with the parents. He noted a need for the students to be more independent. Eva noted, that particularly for braille readers, there needs to be a person – not to guide that child around the school, and not to assist them in a way that a child with another type of disability might be assisted in the classroom, but the primary purpose for someone who uses braille is to support the braille materials. So when a child is using braille the Commission provides a braille production system that is housed at the school. The school's obligation is to provide a safe place for the equipment, where it won't be damaged, and where the embosser won't disturb a class because of the noise factor. CBVI's teachers train the para-educators that support those students to use that system, to make braille translations, and also to make tactile materials; the basic things that aren't done professionally. Our teachers are very clear to say, you don't need to guide, unless a child doesn't yet have safe travel skills. You don't need to be a guide because we want our students to be independent as they move around their school. What you do need to do is, you are the gate keeper of the braille and you assist the classroom teacher by taking a look at the lesson for tomorrow, or next week, and say, we might have an accessibility issue; I may need to take this and make something that makes it accessible. Also, any classroom materials, any worksheets, teacher test materials, things like that, that's their priority role. It's not much different for those who use large print; they are sometimes the gate keepers; again of accessibility/color contrast/technology. Those who support any of our students have to become versed in the technology, so they can troubleshoot if something goes wrong; that's the para-educator. Our teachers watch this; they want our students to be independent. The cafeteria is the big place where they always like to help more than they should; we try to address that as well.

Rick thanked Eva for her report, and thanked her and the Blindness Education staff for providing a good foundation for the students.

## **Federal & State Update:**

Amanda shared Bernice Davis's Acting Executive Director's report.

- Thank You to SRC's Policy Subcommittee for their assistance in preparing for the RSA Audit.
- The Commissioner visited the Northern Service Center following the recent audit to thank staff, and inquire as to how her office can assist with challenges. Bernice and Deputy Commissioner Elisa Neira visited the Atlantic City office this past Wednesday to express their appreciation to staff as well, and they will visit the other agency locations in the coming weeks.
- Update on Executive Director position search: posting closed on September 30; there has been no indication that the posting will be extended any further.
- Update on Newark/Cherry Hill Service Center management position search: there were over 100 applicants, of which 21 were interviewed by the first panel. 6 finalists were interviewed last week by the second panel. A final decision is underway for both service centers and should be reached next week.
- During the month of July, Bernice visited each of the Service Centers, JKTC, and the Meyer Center to meet with staff. Overall feedback:
  - ✓ Increase internship opportunities in social work, communications, etc. to enhance new ideas, introduce people to the field of blindness
  - ✓ Hire more vocational assistants to ensure VR counselors are counseling
  - ✓ Create fun intra-agency activities and learning opportunities
  - ✓ Invite staff to have more input into Center operations
  - ✓ Resume staff training in computer lab at Meyer Center
  - ✓ Create transportation resource guide for consumers
  - ✓ Create a Prison Braille program in NJ to decrease current production costs
- Status of Alliance – Aware System. DHS is having an objective agency evaluate both systems; one is active the other is proposed. There has been some positive feedback on the Aware system.
- Dip in referrals to the Agency (IL and VR); focus will be on outreach; a need to get back to grassroots community efforts to reach people in their neighborhoods, as the Agency has seen a continuous downtrend in referrals outside of Education services, which are going up. DHS currently working on outreach materials. Welcome recommendations from the SRC.

Evangelia asked about the prison braille project; she wanted to know if the prisoners who are doing the transcribing would be paid for their work. Eva explained that the prison will have fees, just like the private transcribers do; however, the rates will be lower. The State's bidding system will be followed. There is an entity within the Department of Correction, Deptcor, they make business cards for state government workers, license plates for everyone, and other things. This program will be part of the Deptcor service when it is up and running. The inmates will probably go through the Library of Congress's transcription program the way other transcribers receive training; it's an on-line program. Eva noted she also has a group of teachers who are interested in going into the prison system to do training.

With regard to outreach, Susan asked what the Commission is doing in terms of educating ophthalmologists and ophthalmology practices. At the point of diagnosis, it would be helpful to give people a recommendation for Commission services. Amanda noted that we had been doing more of that in the past, and intend to go back to that practice. One of the things we are looking at is whether or not we can get into the NJ conventions for these primary vision related fields and have a table/workshop, something like that, to be able to reach this group. Amanda pointed out that we still have our low vision panel, who work very closely with us as a referral vendor/source. Also looking at returning to postcards; used to keep a supply in the optometrist/ophthalmologist offices. Looking into other outreach materials as well.

## Vocational Rehabilitation Update, by Amanda Gerson:

- Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) monitoring began in June with a series of phone calls, and ended in September with a week-long on-site visit. We had to share many documents with them in advance of the audit. The calls began around the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations and compliance, to make sure we've been making all the changes, updating programs and policies. The calls went very well. The RSA team was very good; friendly and approachable; technical assistance approach. When they came on-site for 4 days in September they did a deeper dive into all of the focused areas; i.e. supported employment programs, the pre-employment transition and transition services; the joint WIOA measures, which is how we work with the rest of the workforce system; our performance and obviously the fiscal and contracting side of everything that we do, as well as internal controls. Amanda reported that a major recommendation was for a transition supervisor, someone besides her, to oversee the entire VR policy and program, to specialize in transition services to support the transition programs and transition staff. Amanda explained that this would be a return to a previous way the Agency was organized; something she has been advocating for. They spent an entire day doing case reviews; went through 30 cases and looked at compliance; were consumers moved through the process in a timely manner (there are rules around how long everyone should stay in a particular stage of the VR process). It was observed that there were some delays to service; some aspects where the documentation was not the way it needed to be (we knew this would be a weakness). In anticipation of this, a new case review and supervision policy had been created, which was implemented in July, so they were happy with the fact that we acknowledged that, and were working towards adjusting it. In addition, there were some minor recommendations to our Pre-Employment Transition Services policy. Amanda thanked the SRC's subcommittee for their help with this policy as well. There was a discussion about our supported employment services. Amanda commented that it's been on our agenda to enhance these services. For 2 sessions they met with a couple of our VR counselors, who provided feedback. Also talked about the blindness learning community, where we provided training and technical assistance to some of our supported employment agencies. We are going to be doing a request for information to get feedback from our supported employment agencies around the State, and then probably do some sort of contracting process to work with a smaller group of agencies, probably raise the rate, to recognize the more specialized skill set that those job developers and coaches will need, and then provide a closer, higher level of technical assistance and collaboration to make sure that the smaller number of agencies are maintaining the expertise. Amanda noted she will provide an update on that at the next SRC meeting. Finally, one of the biggest recommendations was our partnership with the rest of the workforce system; we have not been at the table for the Memorandums Of Understanding (MOUs) with the one-stops and also with infrastructure of funding agreements, which we did not realize we were hired to be a part of since we were not co-located. However, we were told that it doesn't matter, we need to be signatories on the MOUs and IFAs, regardless of whether or not we are physically co-located; need to be a part of those discussions. We'll need to form partnerships more closely; looking to form a closer relationship with the one-stops, workforce development boards across the board, to make sure we're part of the conversation and that there is no wrong-door. That's really the big philosophy, that people can come into the workforce system at any point, and be connected with the whole range of workforce programs that exist and can benefit them.

Rick congratulated the Commission, and all who were involved, including the policy committee, on the success of the RSA audit; it's a tremendous milestone.

- Amanda reported that the first quarter 911 report had 176 errors statewide, which is amazing. She explained that when we first started this reporting, a year ago, there were approximately 10,000 errors; kudos to VR counselors for giving their reports the detail and attention needed. She explained that it is a lot of documentation and takes a lot of time; time away from them actually being able to do their counseling services. Similarly, we just submitted our first annual report with The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS); it required calculations of our training services, expenditures, and career services expenditures, cost per consumer; 5 different data points. We were able to meet with DVRS, combining our numbers, and submitted it on time. Also, regarding reporting, quarterly post exit reporting, at 6 and 12 month's post exit, after a consumer is closed and done with VR services. We have to follow up and ask them if they've gotten any credentials; if they've enrolled in any training programs; and if they are still employed/how much they are making. Response to our attempts to gather this information often goes un-responded. We do have access to the unemployment insurance wage database; however, one of the things we've found is that a lot our consumers are not showing up on this database. One theory is that because the wage data base only captures non-state, non-federal employees who pay into unemployment, that we're not capturing a good number of people because of how many people in the State of NJ are employed as a contract 1099 employee; you don't pay into the unemployment insurance system unless you choose to do so independently, which most people don't do. We're looking at ways that we can better capture that information; encourage consumer participation in self reporting, and providing the documentation about their wages and employment up to a year after they exit our system.
- DVRS and CBVI created components of a draft for an MOU with the DOE. Submitted to DOE in early September; they are working on incorporating their aspects of it; hope to hear back from them soon. Damian to follow up for us.
- Staffing challenges: 2 supervisor vacancies and 3 VR counsellor vacancies. Supervisor positions have been posted. Once that has been resolved, will then post for the VR counsellor vacancies.
- Business Relations Unit now has brochures. Amanda noted she will send out to SRC via email; anyone wanting a hard copy mailed, will be happy to do so. These trifold brochures now provide marketing materials to distribute to businesses, supported employment agencies, counselors, and for consumers to give to their employer.
- The Department of Human Services (DHS) is very supportive of our public relations marketing and outreach. Also working with DHS on updating our website; working on the accessibility of it; taking a look at the content, as we now have the ability to review/revise/create content to make sure it is up-to-date. Amanda thanked Kelly, who has volunteered to assist her with reviewing the content of programs. Should have updated site within the next month.
- Increasing the supervision and training for transition counselors; recognizing they need more support. Amanda noted she is planning to meet with the entire transition unit and provide targeted group supervision to make sure they have the reinforcement on pre-employment transition services, as well as bringing in any relevant speakers and training topics.
- Amanda reported that the Employment, Development, Guidance, and Engagement (EDGE) program had their first couple of activities/workshop of the school year. Enrollment is good; increased enrollment for EDGE 2, and still welcoming referrals on an ongoing basis. Amanda noted that this is also recruitment and referral time for summer programs (Workskills Prep and College Prep); having counsellors identify who is a good fit for these programs and sending that information out. Making some changes to the College Prep program for next year, based on experience over the last couple of years, as well as feedback from students, counselors, and families. Will not be partnering with the Bonner pre college program next year; however, will be expanding the college prep orientation component; the part that is more preparation and blindness skills oriented; expanding that to 2 weeks; again inviting one of the professors to do a reading, writing, and research workshop with our students, which was also one of the

most positively reviewed aspects of our college prep orientation program, as well as do some more in-depth career and college exploration. It will be open to approximately 25 students who want to participate in the college prep orientation program; it'll be like a freshman floor – a full cohort – redesigning that.

- College fair was held 2 weeks ago; John was there as well with DVR. There were approximately 86 students statewide; it was held in New Brunswick at the DCF Training Center. Both CBVI and DVR consumers in attendance. There were a couple of breakout groups from college students with disabilities, parents, and counselors to talk about adult services and the adjustment to college life. Some of the feedback we received was they want more student panels. Also received some feedback about the DCF training center - half of the lights in the cafeteria were burnt out and not replaced. The other challenge was that we had a couple of colleges drop out/no-show the day of event, or pull out the last week (20 had confirmed and 7 canceled/did not show). Next year will start planning earlier and hope to have more colleges attend. Overall, good feedback.
- Amanda noted she will be attending the CSAVR and NCSAB conferences in Long Beach, California at the end of this month. She will be a presenter on a panel at NCSAB regarding the EDGE 2.0 program.
- A plan for an Order of Selection (explained to the SRC at the last meeting) continues to be discussed. Amanda noted she had a conversation about it last month with RSA, and they are going to send some additional resources, which she'll share with the SRC. Will be added to the next meeting agenda.
- Amanda reported that the Agency did get the full amount of the re-allotment dollars asked for. This provides us the cushion we enjoy; to not have to worry; to be creative and try new things; and also to help us prepare for purchasing our new software system. Will still continue to pay attention to our fiscal responsibilities, and make sure we are doing our financial needs testing and eligibility, to make sure we're not spending money we shouldn't.
- Amanda reported she met with other staff to start the process of redoing NJAC 10:91, which is CBVI's general agency administrative code; hope to have a solid draft by the end of the calendar year. Seeking departmental feedback around eligibility; particularly important for IL. Currently, there is a fee schedule in the code, which has made it impossible to change the fee schedule since the last time this code was adopted. Will remove the fee schedule from the code; referencing that we'll review it every certain amount of years and post publicly elsewhere. It's been a challenge to continue to keep vendors happy with the fee schedule quite out of date.

Rick thanked Amanda for her concise and thorough report. He thanked her for all her hard work, and asked that she extend the thanks of the SRC to all of the VR counselors for the hard work being done.

### **Dr. Oursler - Rutgers School of Health Professions:**

In partnership with Rutgers, Amanda reported that CBVI will be participating in a pilot/research study in which Rutgers will do a soft skills workshop at the Joseph Kohn Training Center (JKTC) for our consumers. It will address all of the typical things talked about when we mention soft skills; i.e. being able to interact appropriately and socially with supervisors, colleagues, etc. A meeting was held recently with JKTC managers to identify concerns and logistics; will be meeting soon with Rutgers to start the process.

Dr. Oursler commented that a major issue for many people getting along at work, whether people have a disability or not, is the inter-personal aspect; not so much actually doing the job. There will be 4 sessions for participants during this study: 1) presenting qualifications on an interview; 2) making conversation – this is directed towards the lunch hour and towards coffee breaks, when people who are new to the workplace often don't know what to say or don't know how to engage; 3) soft skills – asking for help – when and how do you

ask for help, and who do you ask; 4) responding to feedback; when a boss tells you that you need to do something different, or you're not doing things the way that your supposed to on the job; what is it that you say. Dr. Oursler noted that a mock interview will take place; there they ask people to dress as they would if they went on an interview. Dr. Oursler explained that they focus on one thing at a time; to what they hope will be behavioral change. The curriculum is written in such a way that a practitioner could pick up it up and use it without special training; it has complete directions. If you had a person that only needed one of these workshops you could do just one; it doesn't have to be a group. The counselor can address that one critical skill, rather than having to have all this curriculum, much of which doesn't apply to that person's particular situation. Dr. Oursler commented that she is very pleased the Commission is willing to do this study; it has been directed towards youth because that is such an important area now under the new legislation. Dr. Oursler answered questions raised by the SRC members.

In addition, Dr. Oursler asked the SRC members to take part in a focus group to get their input on which soft-skills they think are important for people with disabilities to have mastered when they go into the workforce. She explained that her faculty would lead the discussion and it could take place during an upcoming SRC meeting; wouldn't take more than an hour. They would present an extensive list of soft-skills, getting everyone's opinion on which are most important for them to focus on within a training curriculum, in order to get people to be successful on the job. Gary Altman made a motion for the SRC members to take part in this focus group; Jonathan Goodman seconded the motion; all were in favor. Amanda noted this could be scheduled for the next meeting.

Rick thanked Dr. Oursler for her time, and the valuable contribution her group is making. Dr. Oursler thanked the SRC members and the Commission for their help in their various projects.

### **Sub-Committees**

Rick encouraged anyone that is not currently on a sub-committee to contact him to be assigned to one.

### **Annual Report – Amanda, Ida, Jennifer, Kelly, and Pat**

Amanda reported that the 2017 Annual Report will not physically be published, but it will be digitally available; the Department is making final tweaks to the format. Amanda noted she will start working on the 2018 report shortly. Anyone else who would like to be a part of this committee was encouraged to do so.

### **Resource/Business Relations – Danielle, Kelly, Jon, William, Clarke, and Gary**

Jonathan reported that this sub-committee continues to work on the review and update of the current resource list for the consumers. Will also be reviewing the resources listed on CBVI's website, as well as the information obtained at the Townhall with the families, consumers and people in the community. Kelly will be in touch with sub-committee members to schedule a meeting. Will have something more concrete to report on at the December meeting.

### **Policy & Evaluation sub-committee – Pat, Rick, Susan, Jon, and Lia**

Pat reported that this sub-committee receives and reviews different policies & procedures from the Commission. Suggestions/updates/feedback have been relayed to Amanda on the most recent policies they reviewed. Involvement on this sub-committee entails a lot of reading and then conference calls to discuss. Amanda noted that the sub-committee will be receiving 10:91 and 10:95 (administrative codes) for review as updates are completed.

## Old/New Business:

SRC appointments: all applications have been submitted to the Governor's office; awaiting approval. Jennifer Ekemann commented that someone had contacted her with regard to her appointment. Amanda offered to contact Lynn Kotch to see if they need additional information or something else on Jennifer. Amanda reminded all candidates awaiting appointment to refrain from voting on anything that may come up during a meeting until their appointment is finalized.

Amanda relayed the following report from Chris Tucker regarding NJT initiatives/Access Link on-line updates:

*The updates are in direct result to feedback that we have received from our customers. We value your feedback and appreciate when you help us understand how we can serve you better. Your feedback has resulted in the following changes:*

- *Interactive voice response. Customers who use touchtone phones are able to cancel rides; check the status of rides; confirm rides for future dates; and receive the estimated arrival time of an Access Link Vehicle.*
- *Access Link on-line updates: customers can check the status of, and cancel upcoming rides, view house rides; request a ride; view and update customer account information.*
- *Easy Wallet – customers can now pre-pay access link fares using our electronic option easy wallet.*
- *Push notifications - customers can now receive text, email, or phone call notifications about the status of their Access Link ride, window reduction as of June 30, 2018, the window was reduced to 0-30 minutes.*
- *In addition, we will be working with 28 current Access Link customers during the User Acceptance Testing phase of the project.*

*We were scheduled to start testing, but this is on hold. We hope to prepare the customers to start helping us test during the week of October 15.*

*Chris asked to be put on the agenda for the next meeting for an Access Link update.*

Amanda noted that Chris is also working directly with CBVI and identified 4 employees that regularly use Access Link. They are going to test for any feedback with regard to accessibility and use ability. She will do training with a handful of our staff. Alice asked if the testing will include evaluating how well they will be used by the deaf/blind population. Amanda noted that Tiffany Jessen, one of our TSSs, is on the assessment team; she is specialized in working with individuals with deaf blindness.

All of the above noted features are still in development phase; adjustments are being made to some technical issues.

## Recommendations for future SRC presentations:

- Technological services (to include artificial intelligence and how that may impact services, as well as technology)
- JKTC
- Support groups
- BENJ (Business Enterprise of NJ)

John commented that he is aware that the Centers for Independent Living have equipment for people with low vision, and he wondered if maybe the NJ Association of Centers for IL would like to share the usage and involvement in their centers. Amanda commented that other than 1 or 2 of the centers we've partnered with, she wasn't aware of any center to have a well-established assistive technology resource for individuals of low vision. She wasn't sure how valuable that would be to the SRC, because we don't have an established relationship for that purpose. She commented that Lisa Killion Smith, who is on the SRC; however, has not attending a meeting yet, is a representative from the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). Amanda asked John if he could provide her with a contact at SILC, she would explore how CBVI can connect better with them.

William Robinson updated members, as a representative of the disabled business community. He noted that he is a member of the National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA), which keeps him involved in issues that affect small businesses across the country, especially here in NJ. Some current issues include: a 1% or more increase in employer related taxes; pushing for at least a minimum wage increase of up to \$15. There is also a new sick leave law, effective 10/29. Also, trying to create a balance with the American Heart Association's recommendations regarding appropriate vending machine products. William noted he attended a trade show recently and there are a lot of new, interesting, healthy products coming out. He pointed out that vendors still need to make money, as that's what they're are in business for. Also, the opinion that people should have a choice should not be overlooked. William also reported on the ongoing fight to keep disabled businesses running and keep blind operators employed in NJ, and throughout the country. On a national level, he is also a member of the Emerging Leaders; a current issue is the rise in soda tax.

### **Adjournment**

A motion was made by Jonathan Goodman, and seconded by William Robinson, to adjourn the meeting; all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

The next SRC meeting is scheduled for December 7, 2018.

Respectfully Submitted,



Christine Cooper  
CBVI – Administrative Assistant