# Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

Rehabilitation Council Minutes

For June 1, 2022

The quarterly Meeting of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind Rehabilitation Council was called to order by Chair DeAnn Elliott at 1:02 p.m. The meeting was held remotely using the Zoom conferencing platform.

The number of attendees was not recorded.

Members in attendance: DeAnn Elliott (Chair); Jennifer Harnish (Secretary); Jerry Berrier; Naomi Goldberg; Cheryl Scott; Rebecca Davis; Brian Switzer

Regrets: Jenifer Whitmore; Filomena Tripp; Devon Myer; Martha Daigle

Attending Ex officio Non-voting RC members: Deputy Commissioner John Oliveira; Priscilla Ngome

MCB guests: Patricia Hart; Loran Lang; Regina DiMarzo (Zoom host); Inez Canada; Nathan Skrocki

Guests: Robert Jones (from Health and Human Services) and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission guests: Michelle Banks; David Sykes; Kathleen Biebel; Joan Phillips

There were seven voting members in attendance which does not meet quorum.

No discussion of the minutes from the March 2, 2022, RC meeting. Past minutes will be reviewed for approval at the next meeting when we next meet quorum.

## Update on membership:

The Chair requested resumes of the two new members, Filomena Tripp, and Devon Myer. She had not received them, and no replies have been received by e-mail. Mr. Jones will send their resumes to the Chair. The resumes also include telephone contact information.

## Massachusetts Rehabilitation Council NextGen Careers Presentation

As part of its intention to prioritize youth in the Combined State Plan, and to act on its interest in partnering with other rehabilitation agencies, a presentation was provided by Michelle Banks and David Sykes of the MRC NextGen Careers initiative. A power point presentation was provided in both visual and an accessible electronic version. The latter is available as an attachment to the e-mail sent by DeAnn on May 31, 2022. Details on the initiative are available in that document. To summarize, the NextGen Careers initiative is a five-year demonstration project to identify and support career development of young adults (18-30 years old) with disabilities. MCB is part of the initiative. The SRC offered its support of this initiative.

Nathan Skrocki (MCB) shared that MCB has begun to develop recruitment and marketing strategies to reach potential participants for the NextGen Careers program. He is estimating 40-50 MCB participants in the program. Consumers will have the choice of traditional VR services or the NextGen program.

## Commissioner’s Update

The Commissioner was unable to attend the meeting, so Deputy Commissioner Oliveira presented MCB updates.

## Deputy Commissioner’s Update

John Oliveira shared recent activities of MCB including the annual TVI training held virtually. The Internship program has begun with MCB clients placed at a variety of internship sites. He also shared that training has begun for the online E-Commerce program as a new venture of the National Industries of the Blind. In addition, the new MCB Phone system project has included focus groups held and recommendations have been composed. He described Checkbook, a new financial system for vendors to submit invoices online.

## Vocational Rehabilitation Statistics for MCB

Nathan Skrocki, Director of Policy and Compliance at MCB, shared a working draft of a statistical spreadsheet (referred to as a “dashboard”) that the RC requested. The spreadsheet provided demographic and other information about vocational rehabilitation clients and will ideally be available every quarter. It is hoped that it will allow RC members to provide advice to MCB based on more detailed statistical information. The Combined State Plan had highlighted this as a goal.

The RC provided feedback on the format and the information to be shared. These included:

A year to date and per quarter number for applications or new VR cases

A glossary of the Definitions of the various terms on the sheet

Comparative year by year stats (using fiscal year rather than calendar year was suggested to be in sync with the way in which RSA; fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30)

Add a total for closures

Closures broken down by Category of jobs consumers are getting such as health care, retail

For race, include percentages and also comparisons to State and/or National population numbers

Revisit use of the word “other” when defining race, though the way in which race is broken down needs to match RSA definition

Report by county to assess diversity

Percentages rather than or in addition to numbers such as within age groups

In glossary, include explanation of why the given categories for race are used and what is included in the other category

Breakdown of numbers of students served in public schools, Perkins, other types of education setting for pre-Ets age group

How many involved in the Next Gen project

Under the Registration page, Nate noted that knowing the number of applications is less useful than knowing the overall number of cases

Report how long it takes to go from application to services

Identify most helpful way to report registration numbers in order for RC to be able to check in on potential delays; proposal to share reason for delays was proposed as well

Reporting total VR case totals by geographic regions

Add gender numbers

Add SAB Dashboard numbers as a separate page.

Also, a page with financial numbers

## Other business

Gov. Baker’s order permitting boards to meet remotely by Zoom during COVID is scheduled to end July 15. There are bills in the legislature to address virtual meetings. We’ll know more at the September meeting about how the RC will conduct meetings in 2023.

The Carroll awards will be held June 9 at 3pm at the Carroll Center and on Facebook Live. The Carroll Awards are a joint project of CCB and MCB to recognize blind and low vision individuals who are working successfully in their jobs.

Jerry Berrier summarize the BSCB panel discussion at their Spring Convention that included role of the RC, and he thanked the commissioner for attending.

## Public Comment Period

No public comments

## The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 PM

Next RC meeting: Wednesday, September 7, 2022, 1:00 to 3:00 PM

Minutes submitted by Jennifer Harnish, Secretary.