**Statutory Advisory Board (SAB)**

**March 4, 2025**

**Minutes**

SAB Attendees: Blair Wong, Brian MacDonald, Kathy Petkauskos, Nancy Rumbolt-Trzcinski, Kerlyne Pacombe

MCB Staff Attendees: John Oliveira, Justine Muir, Nathan Skrocki, Lucy Evangelidis

Meeting Held via Zoom; Recordings made available to the public on MCB YouTube channel

Public invited to participate through Q&A made at end of the meeting.

Minutes

Blair motions to accept the minutes from the February meeting. Minutes accepted.

Commissioner Update: John Oliveira

Budget update. MCB is level funded. Budget testimony is coming up. Budget will be finalized sometime in July.

Preparing to roll over FY25 budget to FY26.

A project has started to make some changes to MCB’s internal fiscal system.

Continuing to watch the activities / updates from Washington DC. Continue to work with our partners at RSA. So far we have not been impacted.

Reminder to get the word out about the earmark funding that was allocated to the Carroll Center and MABVI for computer and independent living training. We want to make sure these services are used.

Continue to prepare for a future office move. There is no exact date yet.

Brian asks for the new office address. 40 Broad Street.

Kathy asks if there are links to websites with more information on the earmark services. John says the organizations are well known in the community and are spreading the word themselves through newsletters, etc. It is a good suggestion to put links on MCB’s website. Referrals are not needed from MCB.

Dashboard Update: Nathan Skrocki

870 open SR children’s cases and 3,365 open SR adult cases.

215 open VR youth cases and 759 open VR adult cases.

18 closed SR children’s cases and 387 closed SR adult cases. (calendar year)

131 successful VR closures and 76 unsuccessful VR closures. (fiscal year)

Close to 1,500 COBs, 219 MCB IDs, and 142 new registrations.

Kayley Terrat is our new Consumer Registration and Data Lead. She was previously from the registration team. She is sending out a quarterly provider newsletter.

Programs and Services Update: Justine Muir

Children’s Services quarterly meeting - the Director of the BSEA presented to our staff on dispute resolution options available through their office.

We are less than a month away from our Visions of Collaboration Conference. Registration opened last week - 88 participants signed up, along with 10 vendor/exhibit tables.

We’ve also opened registration for Harnessing Potential: An Introduction to Guide Dog Travel, happening on April 25th.

Internship Program - in the process of identifying both interns and internship sites for consumers.

Karen Hatcher, our OIB Director, just returned from the OIB Conference, where she had the opportunity to connect with OIB leaders from across the country.

Technology-related accessibility collaborations: Recently, we were contacted by two college groups—one from WPI and one from Tufts Mechanical Engineering—both working on accessibility-focused projects.

* At WPI, a team developed a project that translates environmental information—including text and images—into braille. Alexander Pooler, our AT Director, attended their showcase last week to represent MCB.
* Next week, Alexander and I will be meeting with the Tufts group, who have already developed a low-cost robot that converts typed text into braille. They are seeking our input on how to further refine and enhance its functionality.

Questions from the SAB Members

Nancy asks if Justine has contact info for these students because she is looking for presenters on assistive technology. Justine will send it.

Kerlyne asks what OIB stands for. Older independent blind. It is a federally funded program.

Blair suggests making MCB’s website the central landing spot for the blindness community and what organizations have to offer.

Blair asks for clarification on how the MCB calendar works and if other organizations can add their own events. The organizations send their updates to our communications director, and he can add them to our community events calendar. They are also posted on our social media channels.

Blair asks how soon we will know about next month’s meeting and whether it will be virtual or not. John says he will check but he believes that we will continue to offer these meetings in a virtual/hybrid manner.

Questions from the Public

Debbie M asks if you do not have to be legally blind to participate in the earmark training. John says most of the people they serve are blind, but they do also offer services to low-vision individuals. Dina Rosenbaum from the Carroll Center says that you must either be a current MCB consumer or have been an MCB consumer in the past to participate in earmark funding. However, they do have grant or scholarship money that can help low vision individuals or individuals waiting to be registered with the commission.

Nona Haroyan says that it is her understanding that the open meeting law will be extended but even if it isn’t, our board can decide what format to offer to participants.

Sharon Strzalkowski asks if the soft skills training will be offered in a hybrid way. Justine says it will be offered online but is strongly encouraged to attend in person.

Blair asks for Justine to explain the visions of collaboration conference. The focus is pre-employment transition services, and the primary audience is teachers of students with visual impairments and certified orientation and mobility specialists who work with 14–22-year-olds.

Bruce Howell shares that there is also value in covering virtual soft skills like interviewing via Zoom. Justine says they are covering that in the soft skills training.

Meeting adjourned.