State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind Report

August 11 & 12, 2016

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NFB of Missouri Representative on the SRC

The Missouri State Rehabilitation Council met in Springfield August11 & 12, 2016. A public forum was conducted on Thursday evening and featured a presentation from the Southwest Independent Living Center which outlined its programs, transitions to new leadership, and new facilities. Collaboration throughout the community was a recurring theme. The Director extended an invitation to the SRC to visit their center the next time we are in the area and offered their community as a site for our meeting.

There were several former clients of RSB in the audience that shared how RSB services had helped them to get a job. One individual talked about starting her business and the way it has taken off. There were a couple of listeners via conference call and one who expressed much frustration with the lack of progress she has been able to make despite her persistence. Michael St. Julian will follow up with her on Monday.

The business meeting took place on Friday.

There was a report from the District Supervisor for Southwest Missouri. The Springfield office is fully staff and attributed their offices continued success to the staff.

 New Positions filled: Katherine Cronan, District Supervisor – St Louis South Office and Ian Shadrick, Transition Coordinator/Program Manager. Katheryn has been a VR Counselor in the St. Louis area until recently and Ian worked for RSB as both a teacher, counselor and Missouri State. Recently he has been working in Washington D.C.

Vacancies continue to be a problem. There were, I believe, 9 vacancies at the time of the SRC meeting. It continues to be extremely difficult for RSB to attract qualified candidates. The salaries are extremely low compared to other states, Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation, and jobs requiring similar qualifications. Brady Clevenger reported on some of his efforts to get a reclassification for RSB’s Counselors to help with hiring and retaining qualified staff. This is becoming a critical problem for the agency.

Kevin Faust announce that RSB has gotten approval to offer a limited number of paid internships. Hopefully this will draw both interest and potential employees to RSB.

There was a report on the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the release of the final regulations. Some of the changes anticipated are coming about. One discussion was about the addition of over a hundred data elements that was provided to agencies to track. RSA had indicated these were the final list and the System 7 programmers had made the changes. Then a number of additional data items were passed down by RSA that will need to be tracked. As a result, the System Seven folks have notified state VR agencies using the program that they will no longer be offering their case management program for the federal VR Program. Therefore, RSB will need to select a new case management program. This will be a big expense for the agency. Also this will require staff training.

The last of the RSB homemaker cases have now been closed. RSB will not be able to serve homemakers through the VR Program. These blind individuals will need to be served under Independent Living Rehabilitation funds that are very limited.

Empowering Yourself to Employment and Success, our upcoming seminar was included in the Director’s report and I was asked to share what would be happening.

Elections were held. There were no changes resulting from the election. Clay Berry will continue as Chair and Geoffrey Barney as the Vice Chair. Gene Fleeman will continue as Secretary and Betty Farley and Chris Gray as Board members.

Most members currently serving on the SRC terms have expired and the Governor has not given any indication as to his plans for reappointments or new appointments. Though this is true for most state councils that require gubernatorial appointments it is a concern. There is at least one current or former RSB client position for which there have been no nominations.