**State Rehabilitation Council**

**Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

**Maine**

**October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022**



# **Message from the SRC Chairs**

Message from the SRC Chairs

2022 has been a year of recovery. The recent pandemic changed the way that all of us do business. It has been devastating in so many ways, but along with that, it has encouraged all of us to think differently. We have begun to increase the in person work that we are able to do but need to be mindful first of the health and safety of all of those we work with. We continue to use remote video conferencing which in so many ways has increased access for people from remote areas, people with transportation challenges, and simply for those with time constraints where travel time would make attendance at meetings impossible. The SRC for DBVI in Maine has continued with active participation from its members. We have embraced the work we have been charged to do by strengthening the committees that have been formed to focus on areas such as Program Assessment, Transition, Membership, Policy etc. These committees spend time focusing on issues regarding their specific topic of focus and report out to the full SRC so that we can effectively advise the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

# **SRC Mission**

The mission of the Council is, in partnership with the Director of the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, to formally provide leadership and diverse viewpoints in order to effectively develop and evaluate programs, policies and services, and to influence, at the systemic and policy level, the direction of those services to the blind and visually impaired population of Maine. The Council will also partner with the Division to identify priorities that help create opportunities, increase independence, and broaden access to the workplace for citizens of all ages who are blind or visually impaired.

# **SRC Responsibilities**

The SRC is tasked to; review, analyze and advise regarding responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA (2014), particularly related to:

* Eligibility and Order of Selection
* Extent, Scope and Effectiveness of Services
* Functions Affecting Individual Achievement of Employment Outcomes
* Application, Reports and Evaluations

# **SRC Membership**

SRC Members

Nancy Moulton – Community Rehabilitation Provider, Chair

Nancy has been with Catholic Charities Maine for 34 years. She began as a teacher of students with visual impairment, then as a supervisor and currently as Program Director a position she has held for 12 years. She has a Masters in Special Education and a Certificate of Advanced Study in Educational Leadership. She loves to work with her staff to explore new and exciting ways of teaching skills to students with a visual impairment that they need to become successful, independent members of their community.

 Cheryl Peabody – SILC Representative Vice Chair

Cheryl has a BS in Psychology from the University of Maine. She worked for the Social Security Administration for 17 years as a Disability Claims Adjudicator. She is the Executive Director for the Maine Statewide Independent Living Council. She also devotes her time doing volunteer work with several Governor-appointed councils and non-profit organizations involving education and advocacy for individuals who are blind/visually impaired.

James Howard – Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (partial year, being replaced by Jessica Cavanaugh who is awaiting governors approval)

James has been working as a vocational rehabilitation counselor for 14 years, with the Maine Bureau of Rehab Services.  For nearly 10 years James worked as a counselor with a hybrid DVR transition and adult caseload.  For the past 5 years James has specialized in blind and visually impaired rehabilitation needs, and immersed into the BVI world.  James has a passion for working with transition students, collaborating with numerous agencies, who collectively have the same goal for Pre-ETS students and meeting their vocational aspirations and independent living goals.

Amber White – Community Rehabilitation Provider

Amber received her master’s degree as a Vision Rehabilitation Therapist from the University of Massachusetts at Boston.  She has been working for The Iris Network for over ten years.  Her career has spanned from Portland to Fort Kent and back.  Currently, Amber is the Program Coordinator for The Iris Network Rehabilitation Center and manages the Low Vision Center.

Mary Beth Walsh – Business, Industry, Labor

Mary Beth Walsh has worked in the state of Maine blindness system for 38 years. She is certified as an orientation and mobility specialist, a rehabilitation therapist and a low vision specialist as well as an assistive technology specialist.  Since 2004 she has been self employed under the name Mainely Access Inc. providing statewide assistive technology services.

Allen Kropp – Business, Industry, Labor

Allen Kropp is an attorney with Drummond Woodsum in Portland Maine.  He specializes in civil rights and disability law, and works with schools, colleges, and universities on a wide range of civil rights matters under federal and state laws.  Previously, Allen held several roles within the United States Department of Education, including Deputy Chief Attorney and Interim Director of the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in Boston, as well as Regional Commissioner with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), the federal oversight office for Maine DBVI and DVR.

Kathleen Bagley – Business, Industry, Labor

Kathleen is an Assistive Technology Instructional Specialist and Owner-Operator of Excel Consulting, which provides services throughout the state of Maine. Kathleen has worked with people who have a broad spectrum of disabilities, specializing in visual impairment and blindness, for over twenty-eight years. She is certified as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist, a Vision Rehabilitation Therapist and an Assistive Technology Specialist.

Sherry Belka – Disability Advocacy Group

Sherry Belka holds a BS in Business Administration and a BS in Rehabilitation Services. Sherry is the Sr. staff Accountant for the State of Maine where she has been employed for over 22 years. Sherry volunteers her time in a variety of nonprofit organizations within the blindness community serving most recently as vice president of ACB of Maine.

Walter Woitasek – Disability Advocacy Group

Walter has been active in the work of the National Federation of the Blind for over 40 years and has also served as Pastoral leader for many United Methodist and United Church of Christ congregations. Walter has also served on the Iris Network Board of Directors, a private agency serving the needs of blind people in Maine. At present he represents the National Federation of the Blind as a member of the State Rehabilitation Council.

Joel McQuade – Disability Advocacy Group

Julia Endicott Julia Endicott joined DRM in 2020 as an advocate working on employment access matters. Julia grew up in Rockport, MA and attended Colby College, where she graduated with a B.A. in Global Studies. She then moved to Colorado, where she worked as a paralegal focusing on civil rights, employment discrimination, and immigration cases. In 2022, she became the Communications Director for Disability Rights Maine.

 Andrew MacLean: Andrew MacLean.   Andrew MacLean serves on the SRC representing individuals who have received services from DBVI. He is a health care attorney and is the Chief Executive Officer of the Maine Medical Association, a professional organization representing more than 4300 Maine physicians, residents, and medical students. The MMA’s mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine, and promote the health of all Maine people. Mr. MacLean also serves on the Board of Directors of The Iris Network.

Patricia Sarchi – Dual Sensory Impaired

Roger Fuller – Current/Former VR Client

Roger is a retired educator with 42 years of experience as an English teacher, department chair, and principal - in various places.  He served as a state representative for one term, retiring in 2018.  He is married and has two children, both teachers, and six grandchildren.

Darcy Gentle – 121 VR Program Representative

Darcy is the Director of the 121 American Indian Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation Program. She is member of the Maliseet Tribal Nation and has been providing vocational rehabilitation services to the Native communities in Maine for the last 12+ years.

David Emberley – State Educational Agency

David Emberley is a Due Process Consultant in the Effective Dispute Resolution Office and also serves on the ESBVIC QA.  David brings 30+ years of experience in the field of special education including administration, case management, evaluation and teaching.

Joshua Howe – State Workforce Development

Joshua is a Program Coordinator with the State Workforce Board. He holds a BA in Psychology and English Literature from Clark University and an MA in Rehabilitation Counseling from Assumption College. He has spent most of his career working with and for people with disabilities in mental health and rehabilitation and has been with the State for 18 years.

Brenda Drummond – VR Agency Director

Brenda Drummond became the Director of the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) in June 2017.  She holds a BA in Psychology and a master’s in Business Administration. She has been with the division for many years in various positions, including Assistant Director, Rehabilitation Consultant and for many years the Administrator of the Business Enterprise Program.

Members Pending appointment:

Jessica Cavanaugh- Transition Consultant- VRC Jessica Cavanaugh is a Blindness Rehabilitation Specialist/Transition Consultant with the Division for the Blind & visually Impaired. She holds a B.A. in Psychology and an M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling. She has spent nearly 10 years working with individuals with visual impairments in a variety of roles, including at Perkins School for the Blind, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, and Maine DBVI. She is passionate about the work she does and promoting high expectations, independence, and inclusion of individuals she serves.

Isaac Gingras State Workforce Development Board

Nathaneal Batson Disability Advocate

Kathy Despres Director of Workforce Services, Goodwill Northern New England

\*\* 8 of our appointed 15 members are individuals who are blind or visually impaired or 53%. Our membership Committee is working diligently to recruit new members.

# **SRC Activities - A Year in Review FY2021:**

The DBVI-SRC met six times during FY2022. The SRC met via zoom bimonthly with committee work done between full Council meetings. At the annual training, the SRC put a work plan in place for the coming year, including going over tasks the SRC is mandated to do, with committee assignments. New leadership was elected for the coming year. Committee reports and updates on agencies/organizations represented on the Council by members were given at each meeting. Order of Selection (OOS) was not addressed because DBVI did not have a wait list for VR services in FY2020.

This year much of the work of the SRC was done within committees. Some of this work is still ongoing but includes activities such as providing input into the State Plan, the DBVI consumer handbook which the Division is in the process of revising, developing one page cards that explain DBVI services, and one particularly for transition. We have continued conversations around recruitment of new members onto the council with a focus on attracting those who either have a visual impairment themselves or are the parent of a child with a visual impairment. Each committee takes responsibility for in depth discussion of issues and then brings topics to the full council for further discussion and action if necessary. An example of this work is the review of the state plan by the Program Assessment Committee who then brought specific suggestions to the SRC who then provided feedback to the Division for the Blind.

# **BEP Annual Update: FFY2022**

December 21,2022

**Maine’s Business Enterprise Program (BEP)** is showing signs of recovery from the 2020-21 pandemic. Though the numbers of State and Federal employees at various locations are not at the previous levels (and may never be), BEP has made necessary adjustments to the way food and beverage services are provided in this changing environment. For example, BEP has added Micro Markets to two of the Snack Bars, which will allow for a greater flexibility in meeting fluctuations in the work force presence due to teleworking. These Micro Markets also provide managers with real time inventory changes, trends, customer preferences and much more in a matter of moments. The dashboards are accessible and available anytime the manager wants this information. At another one of our facilities, the BEP Manager has developed a partnership with a Vendor who has Smart Vending machines. This vendor provides high quality freshly made sandwiches and salads in a refrigerator style machine with items that can be purchased with a swipe of a credit or debit card. The machines are placed at a BEP facility and the agreement is between the BEP manager and the Vendor. As mentioned in previous years, however, it bears repeating, BEP managers get into this business because they thoroughly enjoy the food and vending industry, serving and interacting with customers and being self-employed.  They are committed to persevering through adversity for everyone’s benefit. This has certainly been our experience in 2022 and we look forward to creating more opportunities in the future.

**CAFETERIAS; SNACK BARS; SNACK BAR/MICRO MARKET (Hybrid) –**

Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV)

DEP – Renovations scheduled for completion in June of 2023

Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (PNS) – expected to reopen in January 2023

Camp Chamberlain

DOT – hybrid

Cross Café - hybrid

**MICRO MARKETS – 8**

Bangor (2); Fairfield (2); Augusta (5); Portland (1)

**VENDING ROUTE – 1**

Bangor – Court house; EMPF; OHI; Career Center; Job Corps; EMCC; Fort Knox

**NEW LOCATIONS AND VACANCIES**

KVCC Fairfield and Alfond campuses – opened Micro Markets;

Bangor Motor Vehicles - vending

BMV – BEP Manager is on a leave of absence

**RFP FOR VENDING (SNACK AND BEVERAGE) AT UMS**

UMS awarded vending contracts to Pepsi and Casco Bay Vending. BEP will be negotiating agreements with both companies for commissions.

**BEP RULES**

BEP Rules – Amended and sent to RSA for review.

**BEP TRAINING**

Spring training for BEP Managers – April

Fall training for BEP Managers – September

**ANNUAL GROSS SALES**

 $710,015.00

 **TOTAL NUMBER EMPLOYED IN THE BEP PROGRAM (Not including Managers)**

5

# **Apprenticeship Program: Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)**

The year 2022 was highlighted by a number of exciting and transformational accomplishments which helped to shape how the Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), in partnership with the Bureau of Employment Services (BES) and the Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP), worked to help increase and to engage apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship in the Maine workforce.   Some of these accomplishments include:

* Participated as part of the selection committee in awarding over $12 million to 14 apprenticeship sponsors through the Maine Jobs and Recovery Act.  Additionally, BRS helped shape the language used in the contracts of these awards to ensure inclusive and accessible hiring practices be established in recruitment of pre-apprentices and apprentices statewide as well as an expectation that apprenticeship sponsors receive “Windmills Disability Awareness” training offered by BRS.
* With funds from the State Apprenticeship Expansion, Equity, and Inclusion Grant, was able to hire a full-time, BRS dedicated Apprenticeship Navigator who works directly with BRS staff and as part of the MAP team .
* Maine BRS worked with the Institute for Community Inclusion in producing training videos for their “Innovative Guided Rehabilitation Employer Engagement Training (iGREET) series” offered to VR employment engagement staff nationwide.
* Identified as an Apprenticeship Mentor State, presented at the Rural Youth Apprenticeship Development (RYAD) Learning Collaborative sponsored by ICI.  Wyoming and Vermont VR programs, recipients of RYAD technical assistance,  were able to learn about the Maine BRS apprenticeship program and processes as they seek to expand their own apprenticeship programs.
* BRS, in partnership with MAP, produced a two-part webinar to assist apprenticeship sponsors in expanding their understanding of disability awareness and inclusive hiring practices, better understanding how to promote access to persons with disabilities in their recruitment process including provision of reasonable accommodations and disability resources, and how BRS can help in their apprenticeship recruitment efforts to achieve their apprenticeship goals.
* Met with staff from the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University who are working with Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSVAR) programs to identify State Vocational Rehabilitation Apprenticeship “doing interesting work in apprenticeships”.
* Continued to meet quarterly with Maine workforce partners, including Eastern Maine Development Corporations, Coastal Communities, the Urban Institute, and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services.

# **Transition Programs:**

**No Barriers** An educational experience empowering students to overcome barriers and ultimately share that light with others was held from August 26-28, 2022. This was the second time this program has been offered in Maine for transition age youth. 12 students attended this program focused on empowering students to move beyond their comfort zone, collaborate with one another, and persevere through challenges. This program was facilitated by ASPPIRE, a nonprofit organization in Michigan. The group was joined virtually by Erik Weihenmayer, an American athlete, adventurer, author, activist and motivational speaker. He was the first blind person to reach the summit of Mount Everest, on May 25, 2001.

**Robotics**  This program was a week long program offered to students by DBVI in conjunction with Cyber.org. The program was held at the University of Southern Maine in Gorham Maine. There were 4 students from DBVI and one from general VR, with one of the DBVI students withdrawing after the first night away from home. Students built robots and programmed them to perform a variety of different tasks. 2 students in the group collaborated with one programming their robot to dance, while the other programmed the robot to sing. They were synchronized to perform together. Students worked on computer coding skills while also working on organization, social skills etc. in order to complete the task at hand. The last day they presented their projects to family and staff along with the DBVI and Bureau of Rehabilitation Services directors.

**Life Camp 2022** wasoffered as a two-week program focused on Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) activities for students with low vision and additional disabilities. Pre-ETS activities included workplace readiness; job exploration; instruction in self-advocacy; work-based learning; and counseling on post-secondary opportunities. Five students stayed in a Portland neighborhood in housing used for residential rehabilitation at the Iris Network. Students were introduced to adaptive home and personal management skills, as well as workplace readiness skills. Students also attended a panel presentation of successfully employed adults who were blind or had low vision and visited the Portland Career Center where they engaged in simulated work activities. This program was a great way to introduce students to independence, employment, and empowerment!

**DBVI Family Field Day 2022**, DBVI hosted its 2nd annual Family Fun Day on June 18th at the Alfond Youth & Community Center in Waterville. Eight families attended the event, with a total of 25 participants. Family Fun Day brings students with visual impairments and their families together for a day of fun, learning, and networking. Families had the opportunity to learn about resources and participate in activities such as adapting board games to make them accessible, experience an occluded obstacle course, listen to a braille book read aloud, participate in accessible crafts and table activities, and a session for parents to share their experiences and insights with one another.

**College Bus Tours:** This was coordinated by DVR and they invited DBVI participation. Students of transition age visited 7 University of Maine campuses and 6 community colleges. There were 14 students who participated, one from DBVI.

DBVI has an online application for clients which has proved successful with multiple applications being received in this manner.

Contact Information

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DBVI-SRC

October 2020 – Present

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Cheryl Peabody, Vice Chair,

DBVI-SRC

October 2020 – Present

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