

**State Rehabilitation Council
Annual Report
2010**

David A. Paterson
Governor



New York State
Office of Children & Family Services
Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped
Capital View Office Park
South Building, Room 201
52 Washington Street
Rensselaer, NY 12144-2796
www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/cbvh/

Gladys Carrión, Esq.
Commissioner

December 31, 2010

Dear Friends:

As we look forward to 2011, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services' Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped acknowledges its gratitude to the success and support from our valued State Rehabilitation Council. I have enclosed for your information a copy of the SRC's 2010 Annual Report. CBVH acknowledges the SRC's efforts in making its report available.

During the Federal Fiscal Year, CBVH's administration of Vocational Rehabilitation yielded a 12 percent increase in successful outcomes and continuing satisfaction of our key federal Standards and Indicators. Support from our Council was critical to our success in 2010.

Even as we continued to confront an unpredictable fiscal climate this past year, the Council met regularly to advise CBVH and its thoughtful recommendations inspired us to maintain and approve upon our outstanding service delivery system.

We look forward to continuing to work with the SRC and an even more productive 2011.

Sincerely,

Brian S. Daniels
Associate Commissioner
New York State Office of Children & Family Services
Commission for the Blind & Visually Handicapped



An Equal Opportunity Employer

December 31, 2010

The Honorable David A. Paterson
State of New York
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Paterson:

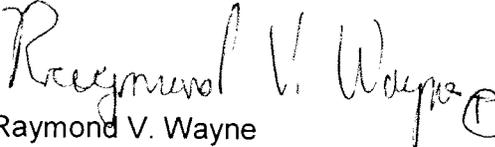
As Chairperson of the New York State Rehabilitation Council for the Office of Children and Family Services, Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped from January 2009 through December 2010, I am pleased to present for your consideration the 2010 State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Annual Report.

Each year, the SRC produces this report to inform federal and state officials and the public about its work and accomplishments. This report highlights the SRC's activities of 2010 and the goals for 2011.

The SRC works in partnership with all of the key stakeholders responding to the needs of New Yorkers who are blind and/or visually impaired. Each member, as does the SRC as a whole, has a well defined purpose, but our influence does not come merely from legal or regulatory mandates. Our influence comes from the completion of our key work. Each member serves as the voice of the constituencies which he/she represents, and with that voice, each represents the voice of many.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Respectfully submitted,


Raymond V. Wayne

NYS CBVH SRC Chairperson

Cc: Edward Anthony, Deputy Commissioner, Rehabilitation Services Administration

Joe Pepin, State Liaison, Rehabilitation Services Administration

Tracy Cooper, SRC Coordinator/Liaison, NYS CBVH

December 31, 2010

Mr. Edward Anthony, Deputy Commissioner
Rehabilitation Services Administration
US Department of Education
Mary E. Switzer Building
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Deputy Commissioner Anthony:

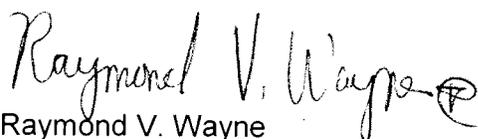
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Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond V. Wayne" followed by a small circular mark.

Raymond V. Wayne

NYS CBVH SRC Chairperson

Cc: Joe Pepin, State Liaison, Rehabilitation Services Administration

Tracy Cooper, SRC Coordinator/Liaison, NYS CBVH

State Rehabilitation Council
Annual Report
2010

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), or, (the Council) for the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH) is pleased to issue its Annual Report for the Year 2010 to Governor David A. Paterson and Deputy Commissioner Edward Anthony of the Rehabilitation Services Administration. This report includes a discussion of the Council's activities during 2010 and plans for the upcoming year.

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is an advisory body mandated by Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The nature and scope of the Council's deliberations and recommendations include CBVH policies, procedures, and operations as they may affect consumers or applicants for agency services statewide. Additionally, the SRC assists in the development of federally required State plans and annual updates to those plans. Much of the Council's business has been conducted in committees focusing on the CBVH priority issues of employment, children and transition services, and consumer needs assessment. In 2009, the SRC added a committee on assistive technology.

In 2011, the SRC will re-organize its committee structure. The planned re-organization will be detailed later in this report. The SRC meets once each calendar quarter. The Council is comprised of members representing blind consumers, deaf-blind consumers, parents, educators, business, industry and labor, consumer advocacy groups, the New York State Workforce Investment Board, the New York State Client Assistance Program, and the New York State Independent Living Council. Ex Officio members represent The New York State Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), the New York State Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (CQCAPAD), the New York State Office for the Aging (SOFA), and various representatives from CBVH who provide information and assistance as requested by the Council. Meetings are open to the public and always include a public comment segment on the meeting agenda for individuals to provide input or bring issues of concern to the Council's attention.

Functions of the State Rehabilitation Council
(as stated in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act)

The Council shall, after consulting with the State Workforce Investment Board —

1. Review, analyze, and advise the designated State unit regarding the performance of the responsibilities of the unit under this title, particularly responsibilities related to:
 - a. eligibility (including order of selection)
 - b. the extent, scope, and effectiveness of services provided; and
 - c. functions performed by State agencies that affect or that potentially affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes under this title;

2. In partnership with the designated State unit —
 - a. develop, agree to, and review State goals and priorities in accordance with section 101 (a)(15) (C); and
 - b. evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and submit reports of progress to the Commissioner in accordance with section 101(a)(15)(E);

3. Advise the designated State agency and the designated State unit regarding activities authorized to be carried out under this title, and assist in the preparation of the State plan and amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations required by this title;

4. To the extent feasible, conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with —
 - a. the functions performed by the designated State agency
 - b. vocational rehabilitation services provided by State agencies and other public and private entities responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this Act; and
 - c. employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals receiving services under this title, including the availability of health and other employment benefits in connection with such employment outcomes;

5. Prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and the Commissioner on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs operated within the State, and make the report available to the public;

6. To avoid duplication of efforts and enhance the number of individuals served, coordinate activities with the activities of other councils within the State, including the Statewide Independent Living Council established under section 705, the advisory panel established under section 612(a)(21) of the Individuals with

Disabilities Act (as amended by section 101 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997; Public Law 105-17, the State Developmental Disabilities Council described in section 124 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (42 U.S.C. 6024), the State mental health planning council established under section 1914 (a) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300x-4(a)), and the State workforce investment board;

7. Provide for coordination and the establishment of working relationships between the designated State agency and the Statewide Independent Living Council and centers for independent living within the state; and
8. Perform such other functions, consistent with the purpose of this title, as the State Rehabilitation Council determines to be appropriate, that are comparable to the other functions performed by the Council.

ACTIVITIES AND MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

In 2009, CBVH received \$6.4 million (\$4 million for Vocational rehabilitation services; \$2.3 million for Older Blind services; and \$137,102 for Independent Living Part B services) in additional federal funding as a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). In 2010 CBVH continued to seek input from the SRC as well as from other stakeholders as to how this funding could best be utilized.

At each quarterly meeting, CBVH Associate Commissioner Brian Daniels, or his designee, provided SRC members with informational updates on key issues that could impact on CBVH programs, services, and initiatives.

At each meeting, the CBVH Executive Board liaison to the SRC updated the Council as to the activities of the Executive Board. The Executive Board, which was established in 2007, issued its first report to the Governor in mid 2009, and is currently preparing its second report. Many of the Executive Board's recommendations closely parallel the recommendations of the various SRC committees as will be detailed later in this report.

CBVH staff presented a summary of recommendations made at the three CBVH Town Meetings held in early 2010. Town Meetings are held to gain input and proposals for the State Plan. The SRC sent a representative to two of the meetings.

In addition, for the first time, CBVH conducted town meetings in October at the state conventions of the American Council of the Blind (ACB) and the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). This was the result of the SRC's recommendation that town meetings be convened at locations where a large number of blind New Yorkers already intended to be. The result was a larger turn-out and more valuable input from consumers than has occurred over the past few years at the winter town meetings.

This year the SRC presented nine recommendations to the CBVH Proposed State Plan for Federal Fiscal Year 2011. CBVH accepted most of these recommendations, and has implemented several; including conducting a youth leadership program and holding public forums at the ACB and NFB state conventions. Briefly summarized, the SRC's recommendations included:

Creating and expanding youth leadership programs;

Exploring means of working with school districts to ensure that blind children and teens entering the vocational rehabilitation program come to CBVH with the blindness-related skills they need in order to perform competently in high school, college and beyond;

Expanding training programs specifically geared to legally blind seniors with residual vision, and other populations of legally blind persons with residual vision; and

Increasing accessibility of CBVH office locations, documents and public meetings.

This past summer CBVH conducted a youth leadership conference. Twenty-nine blind high school students attended the conference, which included leadership training, as well as development of mediation and problem-solving skills. Participants met successful college students, and met blind young adults from both the ACB and NFB. They also toured the State Capital, and met with a high-level member of the Governor's staff. CBVH expects to continue to conduct similar programs either annually or biennially. The SRC will work actively with CBVH to ensure their success, and, especially to ensure greater participation of blind adults who can serve as role models for the students throughout each program.

Thomas Golden, former Chair of the SRC for the New York State Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) gave several comprehensive presentations during CBVH SRC meetings in 2010. One concerned the history and philosophy of State Rehabilitation Councils, and the current structure and functioning of the VESID SRC. The CBVH SRC will put some of his suggestions into practice, especially with regard to committee structure.

Mr. Golden is currently the Associate Director at the Employment and Disability Institute, which is part of the Industrial and Labor Relations School at Cornell University. He gave a detailed presentation as to the mission and work of that program.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The SRC currently has four standing committees in addition to its Executive Committee. These are Assistive Technology Committee, Children and Transition Committee, Employment Committee and Needs Assessment (renamed Quality Assurance) Committee.

The primary issues discussed and recommendations made by the four standing committees in 2010 were:

Assistive Technology Committee

The Committee remains concerned as to the length of time that CBVH consumers have had to wait to receive assistive technology, often resulting in the loss of an academic or employment opportunity. The time frames in which a CBVH consumer receives equipment and/or upgrades should not exceed forty-five days. This timeframe includes all necessary approvals, as well as final acquisitions. Similarly, upgrades to software should be provided in a timely manner.

The Committee is also concerned that CBVH consumers know about all options that are available, and have the opportunity to try out the various options before making any decision. The Committee recommends that counselors refer each consumer needing assistive technology to an ATC who knows what options are available, and knows the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Finally, CBVH should consider purchasing new hardware if the manufacturer of the hardware is offering a "special," that is, a pricing option or exchange discount. Such an offer invariably indicates that the manufacturer is planning to discontinue producing or supporting the older product, thus rendering it useless to the consumer the next time it malfunctions.

Children & Transition Committee

Through 2010, the Children & Transition Committee reviewed and made recommendations to CBVH related to the following:

CBVH Youth Leadership Program

The Committee recommends that CBVH take appropriate action:

To ensure that youth and adults who are blind or visually impaired are involved in the planning and implementation of the program

To ensure that there is a "peer mentoring" component to the program whereby successful individuals have an opportunity to share their experiences and challenges.

To ensure that there is integration with other "cross-system" youth groups at some level.

To ensure that there is a rehabilitation component to the program related to assistive technology and orientation and mobility.

As to the State Plan, the Committee recommends the following:

That CBVH implement a "Youth Transition Coordination" position, based on findings from a statewide survey, to work within schools to ensure a successful transition for youth who are blind and/or visually impaired.

Employment Services Committee

The Employment Committee has discussed the State's Civil Service Section 55b program regarding employment of persons with disabilities in state government. CBVH must have greater participation in all aspects of the 55b program.

The NY Makes Work Pay program presentations have better informed consumers on the benefits of employment. CBVH participated actively in the major NY Makes Work Pay event. However, future events should include a greater focus on employment of blind and visually impaired persons, along with the employment of persons with other physical disabilities and those with mental disabilities or illness. Toward that end, CBVH must participate even more actively in such events.

The Committee recognizes that one of the difficulties that CBVH has faced relates to the funding stream for these events. The funds are coming from the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) and CBVH is not a part of that funding stream. Accordingly, the Committee recommends passage of the New York State Licensure legislation regarding services to blind and visually impaired persons, which the SRC voted in support of in 2007. Passage of this legislation will open the door to third party reimbursement for services.

Finally, the Committee recommends that CBVH develop a brochure explaining the benefits of employment. It is common knowledge that CBVH services are provided if employment is the goal of the consumer seeking such services. However, many consumers are misinformed as to the possibility of losing disability benefits if they obtain employment. The brochure must fully explain existing work incentives and other means by which legally blind consumers can accumulate assets and improve their quality of life through employment.

Needs Assessment (Quality Assurance) Committee

The data collected in the course of the preparation of CBVH's last Needs Assessment, submitted in 2009, demonstrated that there continues to be a lack of adequate training, especially in Braille and in orientation and mobility, throughout the state. Those lacking in these skills are more likely to be unemployed.

It is imperative that the Quality Assurance Committee work with CBVH's quality assurance specialists to determine the root causes for the existing lack of adequate training. CBVH should determine which service providers are turning out consumers with good skills, and which are not, and should take this data into account in determining to which providers it will refer its consumers.

The Committee also recommends that CBVH use the portion of ARRA money ear-marked for older blind services to increase outreach to this population, and to provide blind seniors with physical items such as magnifiers and label makers (tool kits) that will assist them in functioning more independently.

The Committee further recommends that information as to resources for obtaining computers, such as a currently existing program in Texas, be included on CBVH's Website, and be publicized through other media.

Finally, the Committee members discussed the possibility of including information about pending state legislation which may be of interest to blind New Yorkers on the SRC link to the CBVH Website.

2011 GOALS AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES

The Council elected Mike Godino and Aaron Baier to serve as its Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively, for 2011. Both are experienced advocates in the blind community.

The SRC is scheduled to meet quarterly in 2011. In addition, the Executive Committee and each of the four standing Committees will meet via conference call throughout the year.

The four standing committees will be: Membership; Policy, Procedure and Planning; Quality Assurance; and Workforce Development. Incoming Chair Godino will appoint the Chairs and members of each Committee, and will give each its charge.

The Council will participate with CBVH in development of the State Plan for Federal Fiscal Year 2012 including information gathering from its members' respective constituencies. The 2012 State Plan will incorporate information obtained at the public forums held at the recent ACB and NFB state conventions.

The SRC will re-examine its current by-laws to determine whether any amendments or restructuring may be appropriate.

In addition, the SRC will work to strengthen its connections with other SRC's outside New York State, as well as with the National Council of SRC's and the National Council of Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies. Further, the SRC will work with CBVH to develop one or more mentoring programs, as well as other mechanisms to bring blind New Yorkers together so that they may learn from and support one another. Finally the SRC will work with CBVH to bring about implementation of the various recommendations made by the Committees and by the Council as a whole in 2010. Many of the recommendations of the committees overlap with one another as well as with those of the CBVH Executive Board. Communication and brainstorming among the members of all of these bodies will further refine their recommendations, and thereby result in an across the board improvement in services and opportunities for blind and visually impaired New Yorkers.