

State Rehabilitation Council
Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Maine
October 1, 2020 - September 30, 2021

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The Maine Department of Labor provides equal opportunity in programs, services and employment.

Auxiliary aids and services are available to individuals with disabilities upon request.

Programs are provided as a proud partner of the American Job Center network.

Message from the SRC Chairs

2021 was the year that we began to think that working together remotely was normal. We ironed out the issues around remote meetings including developing a specific policy around remote participation in meetings. We adjusted to our new reality trying to figure out the best way to deliver services remotely. We learned that many things that came from this were actually positive. People from around the state were on the same playing field. We were all remote. We became creative around developing ways to empower people with disabilities in developing skills and programming needed for success.

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 33 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 11 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

James have 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 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 Mooney – 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 nine 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 36 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.

Kathy Bagley – Business, Industry, Labor

Kathy is an Assistive Technology Specialist and Owner-Operator of Excel Consulting, which provides services throughout the state of Maine. Kathy has worked with people who have disabilities for over twenty five years and loves assisting others in gaining skills, confidence and independence through the use of adaptive technology.

Sherry Belka – Disability Advocacy Group

Sherry has been employed by the State of Maine for over 20 years. She is currently the Senior Staff Accountant for the Treasurer's Office. Sherry believes in serving her community and, in addition to her role on the SRC, she is the current president of the American Council of the Blind of Maine. Sherry is also a member of the Augusta Age Friendly committee.

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 (pending) Julia Endicott is an advocate with Disability Rights Maine. She works across two programs at DRM – the CAP and PABSS – where her advocacy centers on employment for people with disabilities. Prior to her work at DRM, Julia worked as a paralegal in Colorado focusing on civil rights, ADA employment, and immigration cases. From Massachusetts originally, she came to Maine to attend Colby College, where she graduated with a B.A. in Global Studies in 2018.

Andrew MacLean (pending) Andrew B. MacLean is the Chief Executive Officer of the Maine Medical Association, a professional organization representing more than 4300 Maine physicians, residents, and medical students that is a component of the federation of the American Medical Association. The MMA's mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine, and promote the health of all Maine citizens. He provides executive leadership and is responsible for all operations of the organization. Before his appointment as CEO, Mr. MacLean served for twenty years in roles including Chief Operating Officer, General Counsel, and Director of Government Affairs.

Mr. MacLean has advised various health care entities and practitioners in matters of health care law, policy, and politics since 1992. Before joining the MMA, Mr. MacLean was in the private practice of law in Augusta and Portland, and on the legal staff of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Maine. From 1992-1994, he served as Assistant Legal Counsel and the principal health policy aide to Governor John R. McKernan, Jr.

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 five grandchildren.

Darcy Gentle – 121 VR Program Representative Darcy is a member of the Maliseet Community. She attended the University of Maine in Augusta, graduating with a bachelor's degree in Mental Health and Humans Services, an associate degree in Social Services, and her MHRT-C. She also graduated from the University of Southern Maine with a Master of Science in Counseling Rehabilitation.

Darcy has worked for the Maliseet Tribe for the last five years and provided Vocational Rehabilitation services to the Maliseet Tribe, The Micmaq Tribe, and the Passamaquoddy Tribes. The program has been very successful and will continue to be successful with the support and collaboration from all the programs that provide direct services to native communities.

David Emberley – State Educational Agency (pending)

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.

** 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 FY2021. 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. 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 the council adopted a conflict of interest policy outlining the process for disclosing potential conflict of interest and a voting policy. Each member of the SRC signed the policy which is kept on file.

The SRC revised the bylaws to clarify the policy on remote participation in SRC meetings. Given the necessity of remote meetings due to COVID, we clarified the voting process and amended the bylaws accordingly.

The SRC had the privilege of providing testimony for LD1733 An Act to Provide Allocations for the Distribution of State Fiscal Recovery Funds. LD1733 seeks to help jobseekers and employers recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. This Act will indirectly benefit DBVI consumers as by definition they are an underserved population, therefore allowing individuals with visual limitations to gain or regain employment.

Speakers to the SRC:

Justin Belka: Presented to the SRC on the HOPE program, which is a program that supports families in further education. They administer tuition support, tools & equipment, technology like laptops, transportation, and childcare. They also offer up to \$1500 prior tuition support, helping students pay off past debts so they can get their transcripts to enroll in other higher educational programs.

Angela Hamlin: Legal Services for the Elderly, a program that helps seniors statewide with civil litigation. LSE provides persons age 60 and over with free legal advice regarding health care, health insurance, Medicare (including Part D), MaineCare (Medicaid), Social Security and other public benefits, pension and retirement benefits, powers of attorney, consumer matters including creditor and bankruptcy problems, physical and financial abuse, guardianship defense and other issues.



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
BUREAU REHABILITATION SERVICES
DIVISION FOR THE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED
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AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0150

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

LAURA FORTMAN
COMMISSIONER

Director's Message

This was another year full of celebrations for the great work and successes of the VR program. DBVI was able to sponsor four summer programs that offered pre-employment transition services to several DBVI consumers. There was greater participation in expanded core curriculum events as they were offered virtually allowing students to participate from anywhere across the state.

It was also another challenging year as we continued to work within the constraints and impacts of the pandemic. Staff were able to use what they had learned about remote work and continue to provide hybrid services – meeting the interests/needs of the consumer. Like many other organizations, DBVI also experienced a higher number of vacancies over the past year. Staff again rose to the challenge and provided coverage until vacancies could be filled with qualified staff.

Over this past year, DBVI contracted with a company to complete the triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. The SRC and DBVI will use the results of this survey as well as the comments from the consumer satisfaction surveys to assess the needs of Maine consumers.

The SRC and DBVI worked well together during another unprecedented year. The SRC was well-informed on the DBVI events, programs, and success stories within the VR program. DBVI appreciated the support and advocacy from the members and looks forward to our continued collaboration on behalf of Maine consumers who are blind or visually impaired.

Sincerely,
Brenda Drummond
Director, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired

BEP Annual Update: FFY2021:

Maine's Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

When State and Federal facilities sent employees home to telework in March 2020, self-employed blind and visually impaired managers were all significantly impacted due to BEP facilities, including cafeterias, snack bars, Micro Markets and vending operations either shutting down food service operations completely or keeping the Micro Markets open for the few who continued to work onsite. Many of us, not only in the BEP world, believed and hoped that things would return to “normal” in 2021. We now know that this has not been the case, therefore, BEP resolved to explore innovative solutions to the continuing impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. As many of us discovered, challenges can propel us in directions and cause us to forge new paths resulting in positive and productive ventures. This happened with the BEP. Over the past 18 months, one BEP manager utilized his facility to provide “take out” and “grab and go” services to customers. This facility also provided fresh food to a few Micro Markets in the area. In other locations, the BEP began the process of converting snack bars with customer facing services into 24/7 self-service Micro Markets. To thrive and continue to provide meaningful self-employment opportunities for individuals who are blind and visually impaired, the BEP must adapt to our ever-changing work environments and the world around us. 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 the benefit of others, themselves, and this program.

As of September 30, the status of BEP Facilities are as follows:

CAFETERIAS; SNACK BARS – 6

Cross Café – plan to discontinue customer facing service until occupancy levels of employees reach a level that can support BEP Manager and employees on site;

DMV – open and operated by BEP manager;

DOT – still closed;

DEP – still closed;

Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (PNS) – still closed;

Camp Chamberlain – open, however, facility is not fully occupied (sub-contractor);

MICRO MARKETS – 8

Presque Isle (1); Bangor (2); Fairfield and Alford campuses – plans to open 2 Micro Markets at Community College; Augusta (4 with plans to open 2 additional at State Office locations with snack bars in place); Portland (1). In all these locations occupancy levels of staff vary significantly and in general the numbers continue to be much lower than pre-pandemic.

VENDING ROUTE – 1

Bangor – Court house; EMPF; OHI; Career Center; Job Corps; EMCC; Fort Knox – locations are open, however, occupancy levels vary and are still lower than pre-pandemic.

NEW LOCATIONS AND VACANCIES – projections for FY22

KVCC – Micro Market (2)

DOT – add Micro Market

Cross Café – add Micro Market

Portsmouth Naval Shipyard – plans to reopen in 2022

RFP FOR VENDING (SNACK AND BEVERAGE) AT UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEMS (UMS)

Continued to work with the UMS on a draft MOU that will include BEP related concerns and statutory considerations prior to the release of a vending RFP.

BEP RULES

BEP Rules – Amended and sent to RSA for approval. Once we receive this, we will start process in State to Repeal existing and Replace with amended Rules.

BEP TRAINING AND UPWARD MOBILITY

Virtual BLAST training, Webinars and Conferences were held during the Spring and Summer, providing BEP managers and SLA staff with opportunities to gain skills, knowledge and stay connected with Randolph-Sheppard partners.

Apprenticeship Program: Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)

Throughout the pandemic of 2020-2021, the Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), in partnership with the Bureau of Employment Services (BES) and the Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP), continued to work with Maine workforce partners to help increase and engage employer sponsors and apprentices in Maine. Despite the pandemic's impact on the economy and apprenticeship opportunities, much was accomplished:

- Produced two statewide remote “Employer Spotlights” where VR staff, VR clients, and the general public were invited to join Reed & Reed, Inc., and Paradigm Windows, apprenticeship employer sponsors noted for hiring inclusivity, as they discussed their business platforms, apprenticeship programs, and hiring practices.
- Participated in the nationally recognized Windmills Training Program, a program that addresses working with employers around disability and specifically the fears, biases and myths that create hiring barriers.
- Collaborated with the Mountain View Correctional Facility to help develop and support apprenticeship pathways for residents re-entering Maine communities and economies.
- Sponsored a statewide remote “Apprenticeship Townhall” providing an opportunity for VR clients, VR staff, and the public to ask questions and provide input regarding apprenticeship to expand knowledge of apprenticeship as a career pathway.
- Joined the Rural Youth Apprenticeship Advisory Council, a national initiative sponsored by the Institute for Community Inclusion, to identify and develop best practices and platforms to increase youth apprenticeship across the country.
- Met with staff from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy to discuss how Maine is approaching inclusion in apprenticeship and also with SAFAL Partners to help increase the hiring of persons with disabilities in Information Technology and Cyber Security.
- Helped BRS clients enter several new apprenticeships with employers, such as Bath Iron Works, Revision Energy, St. Mary’s Healthcare, and the Limerick Supermarket.
- Continued to meet quarterly with Maine workforce partners, including Eastern Maine Development Corporation, Coastal Counties

Workforce, Inc., the Cutler Institute, the Urban Institute, and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services.

Transition Programs:

Mission Fit, a new fitness program, included 12 students who participated in the program from March through mid-June 2021 to learn about nutrition and healthy eating habits. A fitness trainer, who also has a visual impairment, taught program students to look beyond their fears, to take ownership, and to develop good habits. Staff from the Education Services for Blind and Visually Impaired Children's (ESBVIC) program and DBVI supported the students as they established and embraced their fitness goals. Participants met virtually every two weeks and were taught how to establish performance and procedural goals, which provided them with an understanding of the frequency and duration of the exercises. The trainer met with students monthly to provide motivation and resources for continued success in their fitness programs. Guest speakers spoke with the students about being active and the many activities and sports that can be adapted for individuals with visual impairments. These speakers were individuals with a visual impairment who participate in adaptive sports, such as skiing, ice hockey, hiking and rowing.

No Barriers An educational experience empowering students to overcome barriers and ultimately share that light with others was held from August 27-29, 2021. 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 Weißenmayer, 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.

DBVI College Prep Program in the past was a program that lasted five weeks, but due to COVID and the desire to have a residential program, the 2021 program was held for three weeks. Seven students completed the program where they were involved in an intensive three-credit college

course while they lived on the University of Maine campus and participated in blindness rehabilitation instruction, such as Orientation and Mobility and Vision Rehabilitation Therapy. The students were able to experience new things, such as what it was like to live away from home, to have a roommate, and to learn the expectations of a college level course. Students also participated in a paid work experience.

Life Camp 2021 was offered 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 2021, hosted by the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI), brought families together who have children ages birth to 24 with visual impairments. The goal of the event was to help students and their families make connections with other families experiencing vision loss and to participate in a variety of accessible indoor and outdoor activities adapted for individuals with visual impairments. The event also addressed areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum and Pre-Employment Transition Services, including Independent Living Skills; Orientation and Mobility; Recreation and Leisure; Self-Determination; Social Interaction Skills; Self-Advocacy; and Work Readiness Training. These areas are critical for successful employment outcomes for people with visual impairments.

DBVI continues to observe COVID protocols which change according to current guidance from the Maine CDC. Staff continue to pivot and be flexible in service delivery while ensuring clients get the services they need for success.

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

Consumer Satisfaction and Comprehensive Needs:

In July we reviewed with DBVI the Comprehensive Needs Assessment that was conducted by Market Decisions Research. This company was used to conduct the needs assessment for the general VR program and for the Division for the Blind. Though they used a similar framework and questions, each program was evaluated separately. Some of the key results include

Overall Satisfaction and Expectations Maine DBVI

- 89% of consumers are satisfied with the DBVI's program.
- 89% of consumers are satisfied with the services provided by DBVI.
- 85% of consumers feel that DBVI services met their expectations.

Experience with Services Provided by DBVI

- 94% of consumers are satisfied with the choice of services offered.
- 91% of consumers are satisfied with the choice of service providers.

Experience with DBVI Staff and Counselors

- 97% of consumers feel the staff of DBVI is helping them achieve their VR goal.

- Nearly all consumers (99%) feel the DBVI staff treats them with dignity and respect.
- 67% of consumers agree that the DBVI services they receive help or will help them become more financially independent.
- 87% of consumers feel that the DBVI services they receive help them or will help them become more independent, in general.
- 80% of consumers feel the DBVI helps them reach their job goal.
- 81% indicate DBVI helps them achieve personal goals.

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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