

## Minutes for May 5, 2018 CAC Meeting

The **CAC meeting** was convened at the Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services, Pittsburgh District Office located at 531 Penn Avenue on May 4, 2018, at 10:00 a.m.

In attendance:

Joe Wassermann, GTCB; Al Pietrolungo, President - GTCB; Tom Burgunder, GTCB; Lynn Fox, PATTAN; Barb Peterson, BVRSP; Rich Fischer; Chris Hunsinger, GTCB; Larry Shock, Assistant District Administrator, BBVS Pittsburgh; in the office and Mike Zaken, GTCB; Sue Lichtenfels, President – PCB; Shelly Miller and Carla Hayes, Washington County Council of the Blind, on the phone.

First item on the agenda was the STEM event in March 2018 with statistics, and a survey that some responded to. The office used Constant Contact for communications with the participants and also collected data with a survey. There were fifteen responses to the survey. The questions were as follows:

1. What day do the people want the event to be? Friday was the overwhelming choice for the event. Weekends were not preferred at all.
2. What is your primary reason for attending? Response: Exhibitors and resources was the biggest response, chosen by 80% of the people responding. Break-out sessions, networking, and speakers. The reason with the least responses was “other” with only 13%.
3. What is the most convenient time for the event? Response: Most people said all day. Very few wanted half day.
4. What was the distance people would be willing to travel for the event? Response: The biggest response was 11 to 20 miles, 20% said up to 10 miles and 13% said over 40 miles.
5. Did you attend the Carnegie Science Center Fab Lab? Responses to that event were interesting content, engaging and interactive, presenters were knowledgeable. Also, presentation was relevant to the STEM fields, presentation was long enough. The responses were fairly even across the board to all the items in this question. Tom Burgunder

- asked how many attended the Fab Lab but Larry didn't have an exact number, only knew that the sessions were filled and the event had to be closed out leaving some people wishing that they had registered earlier. The sessions were limited to 10 to 15 persons, and there were two sessions. They particularly had to limit the number of students who were getting hands-on experience, not the number of adult observers.
6. Do you want to go on a NASA mission? Deana from NASA presented this event. The responses from those who attended that session also said interactive, engaging and interesting presenter, was knowledgeable, session was long enough. Four people responded to that question. Somehow Larry went from question five about Fab Lab to question ten about going on a space mission.
  7. Did you attend NAVCOG Indoor navigation? Only two responses to that question, but they agreed the session was engaging, relevant to the STEM field, length of session was long enough.
  8. Did you attend the College and University Disability Services session? None of the responders had attended that session.
  9. Would you recommend this event to friends or colleagues? All but one said they would.
  10. What can we do to improve for next year? One said everything was great. Another said descriptions should have been available sooner to help with signing up. Disappointed not to have time to spend with exhibitors. TVIs attended break-out sessions, so didn't have time for exhibitors. Should be more time for students to meet with their BBVS workers. Need more discussion with resource people about internships, summer jobs, volunteerism, more information about how to prepare for college and STEM careers. This part could be follow-up with counselors after the events. Set up earlier, and hold it when exhibitors can be there. Could things be set up a day earlier? They are working on the date for 2019 in May. Signage issues are being worked on, and getting the date set earlier so that the availability of rooms might be better. Will need to weigh the tradeoffs of using a larger room for some events versus whether that room would be too far away for convenience.
  11. Positive feedback. Amazing for the students. Enjoyed hands-on experiences. Great conference and even more hands-on experiences from one responder. An exhibitor said that this was a good place for students and others to have hands-on experience with items. Someone

travelled 360 miles to attend and would attend again. Speakers during lunch were engaging. Another comment was that Fab Lab was very good but limited ability to attend other sessions.

12. Do you have any suggestions for other speakers or break-out sessions for the future? Have more Fab Lab.

Mike Zaken asked about how long break-out sessions were, and they were about an hour.

One of the limiting factors for this event is how the school day affects the available time. Students can't leave the school for the event before a certain time, and they can't stay longer than would allow them to get back to school at the end of the school day. One suggestion was to have the event over two days. That will be considered in the future.

Although there were only 15 responses, the number of attendees was broken out as follows: 22 TVIs, 33 students, 22 parents, 22 volunteers and 15 vendors. There were some walk-ins not counted in this list. That added up to about 115 to 120 participants, so that the response rate for the survey was around 1 in 8. Lynn thought that people shoot for a 30% completion rate for surveys, but there could have been good reasons for the rate being lower. The survey didn't capture the category for the person completing the survey, such as student, TVI or parent. They will look into attempting to capture that information in the survey in the future.

Carla had a question about how the survey was presented. The survey was sent out as a follow-up email after the event. There was no time at the end of the event for survey completion while still at the event. They might be making phone call follow-ups or email follow-ups for the surveys. Tom Burgunder gave praise to the office of BBVS for its tireless efforts and extreme helpfulness throughout the day during the STEM event. Larry pointed out that most of the staff volunteered to help in the event.

Next item on the agenda is White Cane Day which had not been firmed up completely, but will probably be on Oct. 12, 2018 in Market Square. Mike Zaken said that Cindy Smith coordinates that event for BVRs of Pittsburgh. Joe Wassermann thanked the office of BBVS for its help in the past for the

event, particularly by giving visually impaired attendees a set of eyes to help make contact with the public.

Next, we spoke a little about the employment seminar which is in conjunction with the PCB Conference. We are attempting to combine exhibitors in one exhibit area for both PCB and the employment Seminar.

The next item on the agenda was staffing for the office of BBVS report. There is a position posted for a Business Services Representative. They thought it had been filled in the past but, when the position was offered, the person declined to take the job. At the time of our meeting there were 14 responses to the position. Interviews start in June.

There is a vacancy for another Vision Rehab Therapist. They are supposed to have four of them. There are technically two vacancies, but they can only fill one of them. They are continuing to post the position, but there is no one responding. There is a Social Worker position that the office is attempting to fill. They currently have three Social Workers, and this would be the fourth Social worker. They have five slots, but they are not allowed to fill the fifth slot. They cannot fill the Social Worker position that was vacated when an employee moved to Supervisor, but they can fill the position that was left vacant when another Social Worker left. They just don't yet have the permission to go ahead with that posting from Central Office. The additional Social Worker position cannot be filled due to budgetary constraints, and the Business Services Rep was made available by swapping a Vision Rehab Therapist slot to fill this position. At this point, this office is hoping to get this position. Other BBVS offices may well handle this situation differently. This office feels that the position will help all of the employees with job placements for their clients. The office has its full complement of counselors. They don't yet know if the goal for closures will change once the Business Service Rep is on board.

Mike Zaken asked about the Assistive Technology Specialist position again. There is a pilot in another office but Pittsburgh isn't hiring one at this time. The Business Services Rep will have to be familiar to some extent with Assistive Technology in order to help businesses confront the issues that exist when hiring someone with vision loss.

The next item on the agenda was to get a report on resolving the issues involved in Shelly Miller's situation with BBVS. Joe wanted to understand what appeared to be delays in service because these issues were brought up with GTCB asking that group for Advocacy Assistance. Larry explained that budget issues entered into the decisions on availability of service. Shelly confirmed things are progressing towards a good solution. Shelly has contacted CAP on another issue. She feels that Larry and Shannon understand her questions.

Joe asked about caseloads for Counselors. The latest report available is the March 2018 report. There are 500 VR customers active at the end of March. The average per counselor is about 100, with some having more and some having less. Westmoreland County has a higher number of customers. Comparing this year to 2017, there were 618 cases at the end of March 2017 where they have 497 now. Larry didn't get an answer about what caused that difference. Chris wondered if some of the count in 2017 was old cases that had to be closed out, taking them out of the database.

Currently, ILOB has 321 clients with three Social Workers. Rather than restructuring territories when the number of clients are different per employee, they request overtime to even out the numbers.

There are 64 children's cases. There are 155 O&M clients and 212 VRT clients. There are two VRTs handling that caseload and three O&M specialists handling that caseload. Tom asked if the number of people the VR counselors have on their caseload is the same number as these other totals added up. Some people fall into a couple of categories so the numbers don't add up to the any total that has been given. There are 8 adults using Specialized Services. Specialized Services-Adult is under age 55 not work-related. That means they get service for safety issues. The budget for those services is \$10,000 but has not been used because there are so few of that category. Those adults are completely state funded.

The Specialized Services-Children appears to be all of the children. Mike brought us back around to the budget constraints. Al asked how the budget constraints affect priorities for providing service.

The first priority is currently employed who need services to remain employed or advance in employment. Also included are the people who have new jobs pending. Those needing training or who need to increase independence are lower in priority. There is currently \$50,815 available in the budget for VR. Through June 2018 there is \$3,434 and \$47,381 to last through Sept. 30, 2018. They have dipped into the July through Sept. money already. 8.A funds are this July through Sept. money. The Federal fiscal year is different from the state fiscal year. Also, the 15% for Pre-Employment Transition is having an impact. ILOB gets some or most of the Social Security reimbursement. For example, it costs \$8,000 for two weeks of adjustment to blindness training. Four people are doing that so the \$50,000 can be spent quickly. The budget issues are making BBVS think that they might be making more decisions with financial need as part of the deciding factor. They may have to look at cost sharing as well. There is no issue when buying equipment for people in the Summer Academy because there is PETS funding for equipment in that area. The total is \$50,000 through June 2018, and the July through Sept. 2018 supplemental funding is another \$50,000. They are getting clarification about what other items can be bought with this PETS funding. This funding and budget issue should not affect the employment seminar in October 2018. There is a waiver process for people even when the financial needs test goes into effect.

Regarding Summer Academy, there are 25 students for Summer Academy. Junior Summer Academy is 15 for grades six through eight. Lynn indicated they brought the Summer Academy up to 30 students. The Overbrook program is full of students at 25.

Junior Summer Academy has been going for two years and the Overbrook program first started out as an extension of the school year program, then went state-wide in more recent years. It has been around about as long as Summer Academy. Overbrook is designed for career-bound, not college-bound children. There is a Deaf and Hard of Hearing program that starts ahead of Summer Academy. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing program is currently being used for people with only hearing issues. Student with both sensory impairments are better served in the BBVS Summer Academy.

Joe encouraged the BBVS and Education people to work on statistics for success rates changing with this exposure. Lynn pointed out that Margie Dart Durcan is a rehired annuitant who is now working on information about Summer Academy and the students served by it. This includes their alumni group that comes back for helping the current students. This is a student association. There is a more formalized study from a Penn State professor showing what the students learned in Summer Academy. This still doesn't address what happens when students go on to college and finish.

There is an Impact to Transition Planning survey through Bureau of Special Education that eventually goes to the IEP team of students who went to Summer Academy. It will collect information from the parent, district and student perspective. This information will help drive the changes needed for the future. This will give us longitudinal data through school. In the student report for Summer Academy and Junior Summer Academy, there are new scores for all students in areas: Emergent to Intermediate, Intermediate to Advanced, with Mastery as the final level. That shouldn't be given for many students in many skills. The report will show how the students moved through the skills at the Summer Program. This can go to the BBVS counselor or leads for students. The notetaking training for those filling out the reports is now stressing progress and change in knowledge or abilities because of Summer Academy.

Lynn pointed out that the school district calendars for the following school year are starting to be posted by May 2018, so we should be able to pick dates for the following school year as early as the summer.

Larry pointed out that Summer Academy is one of the better programs of its type in the country.

Mike Zaken pointed out that Larry couldn't give us feedback on what Shannon had found out about the program at Chatham. Mike also pointed out that we had not accepted the minutes yet for the February 2018 meeting. Larry said he had made some corrections to Chris Hunsinger's minutes primarily for spelling, and that is what should be approved or rejected.

Mike Zaken motioned for approval and Carla Hayes seconded. The motion was carried.

## Old Business:

A question by Joe. He asked another question about ILOB people with collaboration between BBVS and AAA from Allegheny County. There wasn't information at the time of this meeting how Donna Lambie and the Social Workers she supervises have been working with AAA to get some tasks accomplished for older blind individuals.

Mike Zaken asked about the PNC two-day event for this year similar to last year's event. No date has been determined. Shannon would prefer to have that program at some time other than Oct. Although October is a month which lends itself to such a program because people focus on hiring disabled people, too much is going on for it to be easily done.

Planning to make it possible for as many people as can participate is important, and that means dates for events probably should be coordinated as early as possible. There are so many security issues for having a program with outsiders at PNC, it is possible the next time they are involved in something like this, it may be at a different facility.

Chris Hunsinger asked who were the STEM event possible employers. Larry clarified that Google didn't come to the STEM event. The vendors were ALCOSAN, Gus Laffey from Central Office was there talking about IOS products. Also represented were BVRSP, Bold Blind and Beautiful, Carnegie Library, Carnegie Mellon University (with their robot), and another project as well as NAVCOG. Mike Zaken asked if there were corporate sponsors as well, the way that PNC sponsors the Work Matters event. Larry didn't have any information about whether feelers had been put out for such sponsorships. Even though this is not a work or employment event, it is important that students see likely jobs at the end of such studies as are required when concentrating on STEM. There was a STEM professional panel that included an occupational therapist, a pharmacist, someone from Bender Consulting, and Ren Wang.

In February 2018, we talked about a combined CAC meeting with OVR and BBVS. Rich Fischer wanted to know if any progress has been made on that



front. Nothing has been decided. Shannon has sent our CAC meeting schedule to OVR.

#### New Business:

Larry said their office had gone to Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children to meet with staff to talk about forming a closer relationship. They met on April 12, 2018 with Rebecca Renshaw, Rochelle Rechtenwald, Craig Williams and two other people. Larry felt the conversation developed a strategy for a single point of contact between BBVS and WPSBC. The School will probably have questions for BBVS about WIOA, PETS and how their students could possibly be involved. The school has 190 students covering 33 counties and 80 school districts. Some of these students are being assisted by staff from WPSBC in their own school district. There may be only 20 students at the School who would benefit from employment-related services offered by BBVS. BBVS encouraged the School to make referrals for students with Social Workers for evaluations. BBVS might be able to locate potentially eligible customers they had never focused on before. The single point of contact for Social Workers is Michelle Mccurdy and the point of contact for counselors is Koji Matsuda.

The meeting stressed that Discovery and Customized Employment might well be a valuable approach with this particular student population, as pointed out by Lynn Fox. Regarding extra training being given by VRTs in the summers to those students while on vacation, the problem is there aren't enough VRTs to reasonably offer that kind of service with the other clients they have. Tom asked if the meeting had also covered the students the School serves with its outreach program. They didn't talk about outreach students.

The School does outreach through Parent Teacher groups. That is probably more a familiarity with services outreach and not actually teaching the students. Lynn clarified that WPSBC is now in some cases providing O&M and TVI services for students in districts where there is no available provider or the school district has brought WPSBC in to replace other services. In any case, the school district is still in control of the student's activities.

Lynn was encouraged that WPSBC has been made aware that the services of BBVS could be used both for their current students and for those who will continue in adult day programs at the School. We asked about the issue of a director of Deaf-Blind Services for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Larry was not aware there was such a director, but he and Rich agreed there is a new director of the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The information about the SSP program was discussed a bit.

Lynn was asked to talk about a Pennlink item that came out. Pennlink is an email distribution system for people to get information from the Department of Education and the Bureau of Special Education. When announcements are made and policies or procedures are being specified by the State, Pennlink is the mechanism for distribution. They also distribute job postings and school district information about materials they no longer have a need for in case another district wants it. Joe had forwarded a message sent out on April 4 to Lynn for her information and take on what was sent out. The message was about IDEA where state regulations exceed federal requirements. Chapter 14, which is Pennsylvania implementation of Special Education, goes above the federal requirements both in State schools under Special Education as part of Chapter 14, and Charter Schools under special education as part of Chapter 711.

On the Department of Education website, ask for a side-by-side comparison on Chapter 14. The left-hand column will show the Pennsylvania regulation and the right-hand column will show the Federal regulation. Pennsylvania goes above and beyond the Federal regulations.

Rich Fischer made the motion to adjourn and Chris Hunsinger seconded. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by Chris Hunsinger