

**RIVESP
Advisory Board
May 3, 2021
Minutes**

Members Present: Will Potter, Molly Faerber, Nikki McPeak, Paul Troxell, Joann Alger, Chris Butler, Kelly Charlebois

Members Absent: Lisa Colwell, Greg Waldorf, Christopher Bove

Ex Officio Members: Laurie Diorio, Heidi Munschy, Amy Grattan

The meeting was called to order at 5:30PM. Chris Butler agreed to serve as secretary and Paul Troxell agreed to serve as temporary Chair for this meeting.

The group reviewed RIGL 16-26.1, which defines RIVESP as the program housed at the Sherlock Center on Disabilities at Rhode Island College. Kelly asked about the possibility of expanding the Board's membership to include a parent whose child does not currently receive services from RIVESP so that this perspective can be incorporated into the Board's deliberations.

There was discussion regarding whether Laurie Diorio, as an employee of the Department of Human Services, is a full voting member as indicated on the Board roster or if she is ex-officio. There is also a question of whether the ex-officio members are included in the eleven-member total outlined in the law or are in addition to the eleven voting members. Clarification will be sought from RIDE.

Paul Troxell presented the guiding principles that were developed by the Advisory Board in 2011. The group agreed that the document was reflective of the elements in RIGL 16-26.1. It was recommended that the document be updated to reflect that the Board of Regents is now known as the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. Will Potter moved, Molly Faerber seconded, and all the members in attendance voted to adopt the guiding principles with the suggested edit.

Chris Butler nominated Paul Troxell to serve as Chair of the RIVESP Advisory Board. All of the members in attendance voted to approve.

Paul Troxell nominated Chris Butler to serve as Vice Chair of the RIVESP Advisory Board. All of the members in attendance voted to approve.

Paul Troxell nominated Nikki McPeak to serve as Secretary of the RIVESP Advisory Board. All of the members in attendance voted to approve.

As the law states that the Chair is appointed by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, the list of officers will be sent to RIDE so that they can be forwarded to the Council for their approval.

Paul Troxell and Chris Butler reported that earlier in the day they met with RIDE Deputy Commissioners Dr. Ana Riley and Dr. Kelvin Roldán. Paul reported that he shared with the Deputy Commissioners the Advisory Board's frustration about the events that have led to the current situation. This has included RIDE's lack of attention to their required duties as outlined in RIGL16-26.1, including maintaining a functioning Advisory Board, actively seeking their recommendations on programming and financial issues, and making annual reports to the legislature on RIVESP's progress and needs. Chris reported that he shared with the Deputy Commissioners some history of the RIVESP program and his hope that the Advisory Board could be part of creating an updated strategic plan that clearly and honestly defines the current situation and the way forward.

Paul stated that he did not feel that either of the Deputy Commissioners was willing to take responsibility for RIDE's past actions, which will make moving forward a challenge. Paul suggested that while we do not want to have an antagonistic relationship with RIDE, that there is perhaps a value in asking the Rhode Island House Oversight Committee to look at how the situation with RIVESP came to this point.

All the members in attendance voted to approve sending a request to the Chairperson of the Rhode Island House Oversight Committee asking that a hearing be conducted on these issues.

State Representative Julie Casimiro suggested that due to ongoing legislative negotiations regarding RIVESP funding that the Advisory Board should consider holding this request until the budget issues have been fully resolved.

Molly asked whether a member of the RIDE staff will serve as a liaison to the Advisory Board going forward. Chris stated that he is under the impression that Deputy Commissioner Roldán will fill that role, at least for the next few months.

RIDE's contention that members of the Advisory Board are misinformed on some of the current RIVESP issues was discussed. Kelly suggested that perhaps the Board should draft a list of questions for RIDE to provide more clarity on these issues.

The group discussed how the Advisory Board's recommendations should be submitted to RIDE and what the expectations should be for receiving a response from RIDE.

The members discussed the future meeting schedule. It was decided that the meeting scheduled for May 19 should go forward. To facilitate greater participation from working families it was suggested that the meeting start time be moved to 5:30PM. If Deputy Commissioner Roldán is not available at that time, the meeting will remain at 9AM. The agenda for the meeting should include an update on Speaker Sherkachi's May 10 RIVESP announcement as well as an update from RIDE on the status of the RIVESP program.

The members considered making a recommendation regarding RIVESP's funding. There was a discussion of Medicaid reimbursement and whether that should flow to RIVESP or to the districts. Amy Grattan from the Sherlock Center noted that this is a complicated issue and that a final resolution would need to include conversations with the Local Education Authorities (LEAs). Amy also expressed a willingness to share RIVESP's budget and service statistics with

the Advisory Board in the future, as was done at earlier meetings. Given the current legislative discussions as well as the need for more information from RIVESP and RIDE, it was decided the Advisory Board should hold off on making any financial recommendations at this time.

Paul Troxell reported that there is no formal role for the Advisory Board at the upcoming Council on Elementary and Secondary Education meeting. The Commissioner is expected to report on RIVESP and there is an opportunity for those that are interested to offer public comment.

Paul Troxell opened public comment.

Hilary Conners thanked the Advisory Board for their hard work, asked about why RIVESP was not billing Medicaid directly for its services, raised a concern about RIDE asking LEAs for student information, and expressed concern about the current master price agreement solicitation creating a difficult situation for RIVESP in the future.

Diane and Ryan Lukowicz thanked the Advisory Board for their efforts and encouraged the members to continuing advocating on RIVSEP's behalf.

Bethany Carpenter thanked Paul and Chris for the update from RIDE. She also noted that while she understood the need to allow the legislative process to move forward, that she is apprehensive about the continuing master price agreement process for these services and that it could set a precedent that will diminish RIVESP in the future.

Angie Stabile expressed concern about the continuum of care if funding is not made available to support RIVESP. As a member of the legislative commission, she also expressed dismay that the program is back in this situation.

Sarah Shaffer echoed the concerns about the master price agreement setting a precedent that will diminish RIVESP in the future. She also raised concerns about why RIDE's and the Advisory Board's interpretations of the law are so far apart.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:20PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Christopher Butler

Rhode Island Vision Education and Services Program Advisory Board (RIVESP AB) Guiding Principles

NAME: The name of the body is the Rhode Island Vision Education and Services Program Advisory Board, referenced as RIVESP AB.

PURPOSE: The mission of the RIVESP Advisory Board is to make recommendations to the Rhode Island Vision Education & Services Program. The Rhode Island Vision Education and Services Program Advisory Board (RIVESP) is an advisory body that was established through a Rhode Island state statute in 2008.

ADVISORY BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES: The RIVESP Advisory Board shall make recommendations regarding the following to the Rhode Island Vision Education & Services Program:

1. The needs of the blind and visually impaired children in the state of Rhode Island;
2. The educational and service policies required to meet the needs of the blind and visually impaired children served by the RIVESP;
3. Policy guidance and suggestions for budget development;
4. Methods which ensure that all students are taught by educators of the highest possible quality;
5. Appropriate committees and/or workgroups as needed, to provide guidance and feedback on the goals and outcomes of the RIVESP;
6. Make themselves available to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education as well as the Departments of Education, Health, Human Services and to the RIVESP to provide a link between these agencies. The Advisory Board shall utilize as a guiding document to advise policy, and annually update, the "Special House Commission to Promote and Develop a Comprehensive System of Education for Visually Impaired Children, The Final Report, November 2005"; and
7. The educational policies to meet the needs of the blind and visually impaired children and to advise on implementation of policies established by the board of regents, and the RIVESP.

ADVISORY BOARD REQUIREMENTS:

1. The advisory board shall be comprised of eleven (11) individuals; not less than six (6) who shall be persons or parents of persons who are blind or visually impaired
2. The Commissioner may seek input on nominations of persons or parents, guardians of persons who are blind and visually impaired from organizations whose membership is primarily made up of parents of blind and visually impaired

individuals, individuals who are blind and visually impaired, or organizations whose purpose is advocacy for individuals who are blind and visually impaired, as well as from other sources.

3. The Department of Education, Health, Human Services, and the RIVESP shall serve ex-officio and be non voting members.
4. Meet no less than quarterly
5. Five (5) members of the Advisory Board shall be required for a quorum
6. Keep records of all meetings and report annually the educational progress of RIVESP to the Commissioner, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, the General Assembly, and the State Library

ADVISORY BOARD STRUCTURE AND PROTOCOLS:

1. A minimum of one Chair and/or Co-Chairs with shared responsibilities that serves a (1) year term) no more than three (3) consecutive terms
2. A minimum of one recording secretary that serves a (1) year term, no more than three (3) consecutive terms
3. Each member of RIVESP Advisory Board, other than the required representatives listed above, shall be called to serve for a minimum of a two year term and be eligible for re-election to serve at the end of each term. Expiration of this term may occur upon the request of the resigning members for any reason or for reasons found appropriate by the RIVESP Advisory Board.
4. The RIVESP Advisory Board shall review the core membership annually for any changes
5. All members shall participate in an annual orientation to the RIVESP Advisory Board to establish a work plan and timeline for decided priorities.
6. Any member of RIVESP Advisory Board who has three (3) consecutive non-excused absences shall be considered to have submitted a DeFacto resignation. Absences are considered excused if the Co-Chairs and/or Technical Support Staff for RIVESP Advisory Board are notified of the absence in advance of the scheduled meetings.
7. Vacancies shall be filled in a timely manner by the RIVESP AB presenting the Commissioner with the name of the recommended candidate for approval and appointment.
8. Members shall utilize an issue/operation form to present ideas for action steps to the AB
9. Membership Committee shall be identified each year and inclusive of one chair
10. Ad-Hoc Committees shall be created as needed at the discretion of the RIVESP AB
11. Robert's Rules, revised, shall govern the RIVESP AB and its committees in all cases in which they are applicable and in which they are not in conflict with these guidelines or RI statute, federal law or related rules and regulations
12. The RIVESP Advisory Board shall be representative of the state and reflect the diversity of the state and population served with respect to age (birth to adult), race, ethnicity and socio-economic status.

