

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
DECEMBER 9, 2006

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Berry  
Lori Hunter  
James Johnson  
Lindi Johnson  
Nola McKinney  
Irma Nelson

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Buddy Spivey  
Jim Hill  
Ramona Sangalli

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

AER Representative (Vacant)

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Harold Brewer  
AER Ex-officio (Vacant)

DHHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Don Barnes (interim)

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Jim Hudson, Katy Morris, Coral Virden, Carolyn Holbrook, Jim Pearson, Donna Walker, Kara Aaron, Mary Cabaniss, Kandy Cayce, Ginny McWilliams

**CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Mrs. Lindi Johnson called the meeting to order.

**INTRODUCTIONS.** All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA.** Motion was made by Mrs. Sharon Berry to approve the agenda. Mrs. Nola McKinney seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

**APPROVAL OF 09/09/06 MINUTES.** Motion was made by Mrs. Nola McKinney to approve the minutes. Mrs. Sharon Berry seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

**DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT –**

CHANGES TO THE BOARD: Congratulations to Ms. Irma Nelson, who has been appointed to the At-Large position on the board. Ms. Nelson replaces Mr. Searcy Ewell, who has experienced a long-term illness. We continue to be grateful to Mr. Ewell for his long years of service to DSB and wish him and his family well. AER Representative Bob Connell relinquished his board position in mid-September to accept employment as the DSB Rehabilitation Teacher in the Pine Bluff caseload area where he resides. AER is in the process of recommending a replacement to the Governor. Mr. Buddy Spivey, the only representative DSB has ever had from the Blinded Veteran's Association (BVA), has announced that he will be retiring from the Veteran's Administration shortly, and the BVA will need to replace him as well on the board. Mr. Tom Gay, our long time representative from the Attorney General's Office, has also retired. Mr. Gay has been very active and accessible, as counsel to this agency over the years, and he too will be sorely missed.

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT REAUTHORIZATION – The Act is still pending. Rehabilitation agencies throughout the country are greatly concerned about several issues addressed in Reauthorization. We want to be sure that the final Act will preserve the authority and integrity afforded the state rehab programs under current Authorization, particularly in the areas of recruiting and managing rehab personnel and financial decision-making. I will keep you apprised of any new information concerning the possibility of the act passing and its impact on DSB.

TRANSITION – The big focus by RSA and the Department of Education recently has been on Transition from school to work or post-secondary education for youth with disabilities. The problem that rehabilitation programs have with the new transition emphasis is that the new transition mandates are not accompanied by new transition funds. What we are trying to do nationally is to get funds dedicated specifically for transition. Field Administrator, Donna Walker, Field Supervisors Kara Aaron and Chris McKenzie and Policy Developer Kandy Cayce have been involved in formal planning with representatives of various other public agencies working on transition statewide. We were pleased that DSB was automatically included as one of the cornerstone planning entities for the statewide effort, but concerned that the group did not originally recognize the critical roles played by the Arkansas School for the Blind and Arkansas School for the Deaf. Both schools are now participating in the state transition planning effort.

UNMET NEEDS - DSB tracks the unmet needs of all consumers on the caseload each month. We ended November with a total of \$200,000 in unmet needs for individual consumers throughout Arkansas. This does not include the significant number of older blind people who DSB is unable to serve, and who must be put on a waiting list due to insufficient funding in that program. DSB has submitted a biennial budget request for the Older Blind Program of approximately a quarter million dollars the first year for four additional Rehab Teachers, associated caseload costs, and one field supervisor, and a half million the second year.

STATEWIDE PAYPLAN STUDY – Recent state law requires the Office of Personnel Management to analyze state jobs to ensure personnel are classified and compensated appropriately to allow the state to compete in today’s job market. To this end, employees throughout state government were required to complete very lengthy surveys about what they do in their positions. Then the state Office of Personnel Management reviewed the surveys and published recommendations relative to each classification within the different families of jobs. The recommendations have drawn numerous questions and formal appeals, and the OPM project has been tabled by the legislature, pending further study.

HIGHER EDUCATION AGREEMENTS. Federal regulations require state rehabilitation agencies to maintain agreements with all two year and four year public institutions of higher education to clarify the responsibilities of the college, the student and the rehab program and to facilitate the educational experience of each student. However, no law requires the same of the institutions. Currently, DSB is working with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) to develop a document acceptable to all parties, including the institutions and RSA. Hopefully this will be completed and all agreements signed with the 33 institutions within the next couple of months.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION STATE PLAN. DSB received approval of the 2007 State Plan, which is a prerequisite to federal funding for the federal fiscal year.

HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT (HAVA) - I had a pretty good experience voting in November, except it took me thirty-five minutes to vote because the machine talked too slowly and, according to the officials, the speed could not be adjusted. Also, I was not given the opportunity to vote for one race. A lot of people who are blind, many of whom are in this room, provided input to the Office of the Secretary of State regarding the selection of an accessible voting machine and responsible contractor for the machines. As you may recall, the machine (described as most accessible by the majority of the testing participants who are blind) was deemed too expensive and was not selected by the Secretary of State for use in Arkansas. Expense is not an acceptable reason for non-selection.

END OF DIRECTOR’S REPORT

**BOARD RECOGNITION** - A Certificate of Appreciation was presented to Mrs. Nola McKinney, Chairman of the 2006 DSB Employee of the Year (EOY) Committee, and committee members Mrs. Sharon Berry and Mr. James Johnson commending their efforts toward the board's annual EOY initiative.

**NATIONAL OLDER BLIND SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS** – Dr. Brenda Cavanaugh of Mississippi State University recently conducted a nationwide consumer satisfaction survey of all Older Blind Programs and provided the results to the states for Performance evaluation and comparison. DSB Case Reviewer Ginny McWilliams reported that the results indicate that overall DSB consumers were very well satisfied with the program. Details follow. Question 1: “Services were provided in a timely manner”. The Arkansas satisfaction rate was 97.4% compared to a national average of 60%. Question 2: “My telephone calls were returned promptly”. DSB consumer satisfaction was 95.4%. whereas, nationally, it averaged 47%. Question 3: “I was treated with courtesy and respect from all staff”. The satisfaction rate for Arkansas was 99.3%, and nationally it was 70.8%. Question 4: “I feel my teacher provided me with relevant information and services for my specific situation”. The DSB rate was 95.5% and nationally 60.5%. Question 5: “My teacher was attentive, concerned and interested in my well-being”. DSB showed 97.2% satisfaction, while nationally it was 62.5%. Question 6: “I am satisfied with the amount of contact I had with my teacher”. The Arkansas satisfaction rate was 94%, and nationally it was 51.6%. Question 7: “My teacher was familiar with technology and techniques used by blind and visually impaired individuals”. DSB response was 97.9% and nationally it was 61%. Question 8: “Overall, I am satisfied with how the services helped me achieve my goals for independent living. The satisfaction rate was 94.5% and nationally 53.1%. Question 9: I feel my present vision-related needs have been met. The satisfaction rate was 88.6% and nationally 43.6%.

**TRANSITION STATISTICS UPDATE** – As requested by the Board in September, Field Supervisor Kara Aaron researched Jump Start employment history and reported that most of the Jump Start students do not continue to work in their Jump Start jobs or similar jobs after the summer program. She explained that most of the students don't live in Little Rock, and the purpose of Jumpstart is to ready them to go on to college, gain other skills and be able to do more complicated things than the entry level or volunteer type jobs that they experience in Jump Start.

**LEGISLATIVE PROCESS** – DSB Assistant Director Katy Morris reported that the Legislative Council voted “Executive Recommendation” November 8 during agency budget hearings. This means no additional positions or general revenue for Older Blind, because Governor Huckabee had recommended none of the Older Blind budget request.

The Council's recommendation will be drafted into an appropriation bill, introduced during the 2007 legislative session, and sent to the Joint Budget Committee for consideration. At that time, Mr. Hudson can provide information to the Committee regarding the budget requested, but is prohibited, as a state employee, from actively lobbying on behalf of the program. Conversely, the Board, recognized federally as a Commission, is established expressly to monitor the performance and assess the needs of the consumers of the rehabilitation programs and to report such information to the Secretary of Education, the Governor and the public, "through appropriate modes of communication". With the existing waiting list for older blind services, and a projected population growth of 17% through 2010, it is both the Board's right and their duty to make those needs known to Governor Beebe and the General Assembly. During the session, information regarding the DSB budget bill and other blindness-related issues or general legislative actions can be accessed via the Radio Reading Service (now termed the "Arkansas Information Reading Services for the Blind" (AIRS), and its Telephone Reader section. You can call DSB at 68-BLIND (682-5463) or go to the General Assembly web site ([www.arkleg.state.ar.us](http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us)).

**CLIENT OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT** – Chairman Johnson stated that during the federal visit last June, RSA Representative, Melodie Johnson, had encouraged the board to add a 'Client of the Year' celebration to its existing initiatives. She further suggested that contact be made with some of the states that already have such an event. Chairman Johnson appointed Board Members James Johnson and Lori Hunter to this committee and will forward information regarding other state experiences for the committee members to consider, and to recommend like action, if feasible, to the board at the March 10, 2007 Board meeting.

**NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCESS** – Mrs. Katy Morris reported that the Federal Regulations require the DSB Board and staff to conduct a Comprehensive Needs Assessment every three years with the next one due September 30, 2007. The Assessment must be statewide and include opportunity for input by all Arkansans who are blind or severely visually impaired. To this end, DSB proposes to review previous public forums to identify the top five to ten needs expressed by those consumers participating either in person, by phone, on the web or otherwise, and list those needs as a starting point for discussion during the 2007 Needs Assessment Process at public forums held around the state. The forums would be advertised in various media with opportunity for input in several ways both during the forums and for a prescribed time thereafter.

**NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT** – Chairman Johnson appointed Mrs. Sharon Berry and Ms. Irma Nelson to the 2007 Needs Assessment Committee. Mrs. Berry will serve as Chairman. The Committee will plan the public forum process for the needs assessment, determine appropriate locations and recommend the schedule to the Board at the March 10, 2007 Board meeting. Mrs. Katy Morris will serve as staff to the committee, along with other staff as needed.

**DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT (DRC)** - Mr. Eddie Miller reported that the Disability Rights Center has been very involved recently in the Youth Services Center Investigation. In other areas, Transition is the key topic right now and it is going to happen whether affected organizations are ready or not. From the standpoint of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Mr. Hudson and I serve on a committee regarding state efforts to provide persons with disabilities access to services under the WIA. Another issue of particular importance is state services to the neediest youth. DRC has ensured that youth with disabilities are a part of that overall group because that population was originally left out. DSB Transition leaders need to get involved in this committee to ensure things being developed are accessible and that persons who are blind are not left out. The same holds true for the Arkansas Youth Development Collaborative (AYDC) that has Education, Labor, Mental Health, ARS and everyone in it, except DSB. Contact me for details.

**ARKANSAS ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE.** Mr. Don Barnes from the Attorney General's Office introduced himself to the board. He is assigned to DSB temporarily.

**ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC)** – No representative was present. A report was submitted with the board packet.

**CONSUMER INPUT** – Ms. Lori Hunter informed the board that she would be unable to attend the March 10, 2007 Board meeting.

**QUARTERLY SUCCESS REPORT** – On November 4, Ms. Irma Nelson of District 70 in Jacksonville was one of Two Hundred people nationwide who received a Leadership of the Month Award.

**SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING** - March 10, 2007 at the Department of Health and Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, 700 Main Street, First floor Conference Rooms A & B at 10:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Berry  
Secretary