

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2008

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Berry
Lori Hunter
Nola McKinney
Irma Nelson
Dick Walker
Angela Franquemont

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Kara Aaron
Jim Hill
Ramona Sangalli

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

James Johnson

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Ann Moore
Sandy Rowland

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: None

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Katy Morris, Coral Virden, Carolyn Holbrook, Jim Pearson, Donna Walker, Tanya VanHouten, Chris McKenzie, Dorothy Brooks, Kandy Cayce, Ginny McWilliams, Lou Talley, Charlie Cain-Davis, Tina Shelby, Robert Lamb, Patricia Smith, Terra Patrom

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Mrs. Nola McKinney called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. Motion was made by Mrs. Sharon Berry to approve the agenda. Ms. Irma Nelson seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

APPROVAL OF 09/12/08 MINUTES. Motion was made by Mrs. Sharon Berry to approve the minutes. Mr. Dickie Walker seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT –

DSB staff are to be commended for their diligent efforts in finalizing the 2009 state plan, and addressing issues raised during the 2007 federal review. Among these are significant recruitment, tying performance to consumer outcomes and securing \$549,693 in reimbursement from the Social Security Administration with a 100% claims accuracy. The SSA initiative is a partnership of course between the individual field office personnel who serve the consumers and DSB Statistician Mrs. Cortney Browning. All involved personnel deserve recognition for DSB's success. Commendation is also in order for DSB Training Specialist Mrs. Feona Barnett, who identified an incorrect formula in the federal RSA 2008 Annual Report that not only affected data for all rehab agencies nationwide for FFY 2008, but had apparently gone undetected for several years.

National Level Issues – The renewal of ADA is now Public Law 110-325, and the most significant change regards clarification of the definition of "qualified person with a disability". Other major issues under consideration include:

- the funding of the new digital talking book player and cartridges;
- pedestrian safety related to the new hybrid "quiet cars";
- mathematical "mark-up" language for teaching math concepts to students who are blind;
- the requirement of accessibility in the initial design of communication devices;
- awarding of Randolph-Sheppard vending location contracts on military installations to persons with other disabling conditions besides blindness;
- access to televised emergency notices currently shown scrolling across the bottom of television screens;
- access to prescription labeling;
- access to online education tools;
- expansion of Workforce Center services provided to persons with disabilities beyond that of referral to vocational rehabilitation;
- elevation of the position of RSA Commissioner to that of an Assistant Secretary;
- separate and additional funding for transition services within vocational rehabilitation and for services for returning veterans;
- need for additional training funds and funds for supported employment

State Level Issues – DSB continues to advocate for accessible voting across the state, and we are very interested in feedback on voter experiences. Other statewide issues and activities include:

- Supported Employment. Field Administrator Mrs. Donna Walker is working with officials of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Developmental Disabilities, Mental health, and Aging to establish a network of sustained services meeting the long-term needs of the consumer who has multiple disabilities including vision. The goal is to obtain and keep appropriate employment with ongoing supports.
- Designation of the DSB Director position as a formal member of the Workforce Investment Board. This is planned as legislation for the upcoming session;
- Completion of RSA required Agreements with all Public Institutions of Higher Education. The latest received is from the UAMS and is under review;
- Growth in programs at the School for the Blind promises to improve outcomes for those students who later become DSB consumers;
- Communication with other state agencies is improving & staff is volunteering to train DSB staff to navigate their respective documentation systems.
- The working relationship with Lions is growing stronger and DSB is serving as a partner in the Sight Conservation programs of numerous clubs, after other eligible services are exhausted;
- DSB staff continues to participate in the statewide meetings of consumer groups. Most recently, staff attended a very successful annual meeting of the National Federation of the Blind of Arkansas in Jonesboro;

DSB Level Issues -

- The Advisory Board of the Arkansas Information Reading Services for the Blind Program within DSB recently received a \$20,000 donation from the family of long time volunteer reader Arthur Sanders; I understand the Board intends to upgrade equipment with the donation.
- DSB staff held its annual statewide meeting in October, with the Ft. Smith office playing host. By far the feedback for the agenda and the setting was very positive.
- The Committee of Licensed Blind Vendors met November 1, discussing vendor concerns for the economy, the loss of vending locations and the Randolph-Sheppard issues before Congress, mentioned previously.
- DSB defended its biennial request before the Legislative Council November 12, seeking a continuation of the expanded programming made possible by the previous (very generous) transfer of positions and appropriation from our sister DHS agencies.

- The budget also reflects recommendations of the statewide personnel study, which result in significant structural problems for DSB. The study recommends that several staff (with area wide responsibilities) be upgraded to the same level as their direct supervisors (who have statewide responsibilities). Obviously, DSB does not want to impede the upgrade of area staff, but rather to ensure that appropriate upgrades are also implemented for staff responsible for the entire state.
- DSB submitted general legislation to establish the Qualified Blind Apprentice (QBA) program to fully prepare and place college graduates who are blind or severely visually impaired in paid apprenticeship positions throughout state government. The goal is to give consumers customized training and the opportunity to perform so that the experience may lead to permanent employment.
- Thanks again to position transfers from other DHS agencies, DSB is preparing to increase the number of Rehabilitation Teachers. This will permit more time for Teacher interaction with our Older Blind consumers, even though Rehab Teachers will continue to provide services to Vocational Rehabilitation consumers as well.
- Jump Start 2009 is in the planning stages. We look forward to our continued partnership with the School for the Blind on this initiative.
- Mentoring of DSB staff by our long-experienced professionals is taking on more and more importance as we experience anticipated personnel turnover. The distance between offices makes this difficult, but staff members are working closely together, using e-mail, etc., to communicate often.
- Each spring, DSB sends a letter to the Governor alerting him to any board positions that expire June 30th. We will double check the status of the Lions Representative with the Attorney General and advise the Governor and the board of any action needed for this position as well.

END OF COMMENTS BY DIRECTOR

GUIDELINES FOR JIM HUDSON ADVOCACY AWARD – On behalf of the planning committee for the Jim Hudson Advocacy Award, Mrs. Berry announced that the committee recommended that the award be given to an individual, sighted or blind, who has made a substantial contribution to the quality of life of blind or visually impaired people in Arkansas. Mrs. Berry made a motion that the Board adopt the guidelines for the Jim Hudson Advocacy Award. Ms. Irma Nelson seconded the motion. *Motion passed.* Ms. Lori Hunter made a motion that the award be made no more than once in a 12 month period. Mrs. Berry seconded the motion. *Motion Passed.*

JIM HUDSON ADVOCACY AWARD COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT.

In addition to herself, Chairman McKinney named Ms. Angyln Franquemont, Ms. Lori Hunter, Ms. Irma Nelson and Mrs. Ramona Sangalli to the Jim Hudson Advocacy Award Committee for the coming year. The board chairman will contact these individuals prior to each meeting to see if there are any considerations for the award.

VOTING ACCESS DURING NOVEMBER ELECTIONS. A discussion of voting experience indicated that some locations were accessible to blind and visually impaired voters and other locations were inaccessible, dependent, not only upon equipment, but upon the training of poll workers.

APPOINTMENT OF 2009 LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE and APPOINTMENT OF 2009 NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE – The Board chairman will appoint the Legislative committee and the Needs Assessment committee via telephone. Each committee must consist of 3 people. RSA is designing a needs assessment instrument for the committee to follow. The plan is to follow the same general process as last time, but to utilize the RSA instrument.

FFY 2007 CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS FOR THE INDEPENDENT LIVING FOR OLDER BLIND PROGRAM. - DSB Case Reviewer Mrs. Ginny McWilliams gave the following summary: A total of 726 surveys were mailed to older blind consumers served in FFY 2007. The survey contained nine questions where consumers were asked to choose between strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. **The overall satisfaction rate was 91.4 %.** [Editor's note – A detailed report by each individual survey question is attached as a formal part of these minutes.

FFY 2007 CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS FOR THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM - Mrs. McWilliams gave the following summary: A total of 1,345 surveys were mailed to the Vocational Rehabilitation consumers served during FFY 2007. The survey contained ten questions where consumers were asked to choose between strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. **The overall satisfaction rate was 92.2 %.** [Editor's note – A detailed report by each individual survey question is attached as a formal part of these minutes].

COMPARISON OF RESPONSES FOR 2005, 2006 AND 2007 BY PROGRAM.

Mrs. McWilliams also gave a summary comparing responses received on the same annual satisfaction surveys from 2005, 2006 and 2007 for each program. [Editor's note – A detailed report by each individual survey question is attached as a formal part of these minutes.

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT (DRC) – No representative was present and no report submitted.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC) - No representative was present. A report was submitted with the board packet and is attached as a formal part of these minutes.

CONSUMER INPUT - Ms. Jerree Harris of Paragould is the new state president of National Federation of the Blind of Arkansas. Members of President-elect Obama's legislative team met with NFB national president Mark Maurer and ACB national president Mitch Pomerantz and their respective legislative teams recently to discuss national issues affecting persons who are blind. Topics included Quiet Cars, Randolph Shepherd, bills concerning broadcasting and others. Angels of the Blind, (the auxiliary group supporting LWSB), has agreed to allow LWSB to utilize their scholarship money for outreach services to help supplement LWSB training, particularly the needs of older blind individuals in the central Arkansas.

NEXT MEETING. The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, March 13, 2009, at 1:00 p.m. at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, First Floor, Conference Rooms A & B.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF DSB CONSUMER OF THE YEAR 2008 –
Committee Chairman, Ms. Lori Hunter, announced that Ms. Nancy Turley has been named the first annual DSB Employee of the Year.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Irma Nelson
Secretary