

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, JUNE 11, 2010

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Berry
Gerald Carr
Larry Dickerson
Sandra Edwards
Gary Hall
Irma Nelson
Dickie Walker

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Jim Hill
Ann Moore

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Anglyn Young

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Kara Aaron
Thomas Bradford (James Gatewood,
attended as alternate)

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Erika Gee

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Shajuana Brown, Mary Cabaniss, Charlie Cain-Davis, Kandy Cayce, Rhonda Garmon, Ginny McWilliams, Robert Lamb, Mona Mason, Katy Morris, Judith Renick, Kena Sabb, Tina Shelby, Lou Talley, Jessie Thomas, Wally Thomas, Tanya VanHouten, Coral Virden, Donna Walker, Dwana Williams

CALL TO ORDER. *Chairman Mrs. Sharon Berry called the meeting to order.*

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. *Motion was made by Mr. Dickie Walker to approve the agenda. Mrs. Ann Moore seconded the motion. **Motion passed.***

APPROVAL OF 03/12/10 MINUTES. Motion was made by Mr. Gary Hall to approve the minutes. Mr. Dickie Walker seconded the motion. **Motion passed.**

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT.

Mr. Paul Graziani, former Administrator in the DSB Vending Facility Program, passed away in May. Paul was a very passionate advocate for improved services to persons who are blind, and his passing is a great loss to the blindness community.

NATIONAL ISSUES:

Quiet Cars. Congress is making some progress on issues of interest to persons with vision problems. The House and Senate are each considering their versions of the motor vehicle safety Act of 2010, which address the dangers of "Quiet Cars". HR734, which was the original legislation by Representative Towns and S841 which is the companion bill by Senator Kerry have been considered. S3302 was introduced this session and is moving along, and may replace these other bills in moving toward passage. **Tech Access.** HR 3101, The 21st century communications and Video Accessibility Act has been progressing. Senator Pryor also just submitted S3304, which is referred to as the Equal Access to the 21st Century Communications Act. It has moved forward rapidly all the way to hearings, and has received great response from both the blind and the deaf communities.

Reauthorization. HR4271, Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Improvement Act, was filed in December and has not shown much movement. As in past years, the proposed legislation downgrades the role of the RSA Commissioner, currently Lynnae Rutledge, from Commissioner to Director status, effectively lessening her immediate access to the President. The bill also designates the head of the general or combined agency in each state to represent all persons with disabilities on the State Workforce Investment Board, regardless of the existence of a separate state agency for the blind.

NCSAB. Assistant Director, Cassondra Williams, and I attended the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) semiannual meeting in April. Ms. Williams is attending the national Randolph-Sheppard Conference today, as is Vending Committee Chairman, Tom Bradford, which is why they are absent from today's meeting. Vending Committee Vice Chairman, James Gatewood, is representing the vendors today on Mr. Bradford's behalf.

National Recognition for DSB Consumer of the Year Nominees. The National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) website is featuring several articles on DSB Consumer of the Year Nominees, written by Ms. Kandy Cayce of our staff.

STATE ISSUES:

Arkansas School for the Blind. ASB was the setting May 4th for the announcement by Senator Pryor that he was filing S3304, the Tech Access Act discussed earlier. The school also celebrated the 6th grade and senior high graduation recently, promoting students that offer great promise to DSB as a vocational rehab agency.

It is our pleasure to monitor their progress and assist as they move through the education experience and on to the world of work.

Helen Keller Deaf/Blind Awareness Day will be held the last week in June. The Proclamation will be awarded by Governor Beebe to a representative of the deaf/blind community in the next few days. We will get the date out as soon as we know, so that anyone who wants to attend can.

Arkansas Youth Leadership Forum. Due to renovation construction, the School for the Blind was not an available setting this year for the Jump Start Summer Transition program. Instead DSB will expand its participation in the Youth Leadership Forum sponsored by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services on the campus of the University of Central Arkansas.

State Rehab Conference. Several DSB Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff participated in the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association annual meeting in Hot Springs in late May. The agenda was excellent and enabled personnel needing continuing education units (CEUs) for recertification in Rehabilitation Counseling to acquire several units. Federal regulations require VR Counselors and their supervisors to be certified.

International Conference of AER. DSB is planning strong participation in the international conference for AER in Little Rock in late July. The international Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of persons who are Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) has never occurred in Little Rock before and offers the Rehab Teaching staff exposure to an agenda they will likely never experience again in their careers. The conference is expensive, but we have budgeted it over the two fiscal years and expect it to prove to be a good investment.

State Aging Conference. As always, DSB will participate in the upcoming state aging conference. We are particularly interested in increasing our partnership with stakeholder organizations that serve persons with vision problems who are age 55 and older.

Practicum Agreements. DSB has entered into agreement recently with Arkansas State University (ASU) to support the practicum of two ASU rehabilitation students. We have done this frequently over the years with UALR and U of A. It is good for growing the number of qualified professionals that we may be able to hire at some time in the future, and it is good experience for our staff.

DIVISION ISSUES

Jonesboro DSB Office. The Arkansas Services Center, which houses Jonesboro DSB is owned by various state agencies. Our ownership ratio is miniscule (1.6 percent), but we are still an owner, which offers pros and cons.

The center's technology is dated and bringing it up to standard could be extremely expensive. All the owners and the state's realtor, Arkansas Building Authority, are looking at options to upgrade the facility or relocate. Nothing concrete has been proposed at this stage.

Committee of Licensed Blind Vendors Quarterly Meeting. Federal law charges the state agency with facilitating the active participation of the Committee of Licensed Blind Vendors in the Vending Facility Program. Part of that active participation is the design and execution of the annual vendor's meeting, which will be held August 6-7, 2010. The Committee and staff are finalizing those plans now and 2010 promises to be a good meeting.

2011 State Plan. The 2011 VR and Supported Employment State Plan is in the final stages of completion. The Needs Assessment has been conducted, the plan formulated and the design considered at public forum. Field Services Administrator Donna Walker will speak in detail regarding the state plan later on the agenda.

Year End Closeout. Field Services and Finance have been working on the year end close out to make sure we are utilizing every dollar of general revenue to qualify DSB to buy down as many federal dollars as possible for overall benefit to the consumers.

Recruitment and On-going Services. At the same time that veteran staff and supervisors are managing closeout duties, and mentoring the new DSB staff, they are still dealing with the duties of recruiting additional new staff to fill vacancies. Meanwhile, DSB field services serves consumers, based on the goals and strategies outlined by the board at this time last year. Part of what we committed to in last years' strategies is an expansion of **small business activities**. One such small business will have a Grand opening in El Dorado next Friday for consumer Larry Woods. Mr. Woods has released a CD, and will be opening a small business teaching piano lessons and selling music.

Economic Stimulus

The Economic Stimulus Initiatives are developing well, particularly the 5 Job Developers and 5 Job Coaches. DSB cannot continue the positions permanently under stimulus guidelines, but fully intends to continue the function and transition the service to on-going status either on DSB payroll or that of a stakeholder organization.

Web Update for BSIS. DSB is at the bid development stage for the Blind Services Information System.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) is subject to the same legislation and statistical services data as DSB and we are examining the recent bid that they developed for needs,

design, etc. to minimize DSB development costs and learn from the ARS process what DSB may wish to do differently.

Newsline. DSB continues to work with NEWSLINE staff to eliminate some of the recurring problems readers are experiencing. Delays in service initiation and sporadic availability of certain features in the Democrat Gazette are the chief concerns, and are expected to improve in coming months.

Case Audit/Training Project. This part of the Stimulus Initiatives is rolling to a close. We have many case record reviews that have been done and put us in much better shape when the Feds do come in for Annual Review. It is my understanding that the review will be in February of 2011.

Vending Equipment Upgrade. The vending equipment upgrade was finalized early this fiscal year and secured various large equipment such as double door refrigerators.

Purchase of Service. DSB continues purchase of services for individual consumers under Stimulus Funding. Approximately \$130,000 remains of the original \$197,000 reserved for this purpose, and will be available to expend for another year and a half.

Workforce Center Kiosks. This initiative is funded from DHS stimulus funds through DHS Director, John Selig. We are seeing increased usage of the Kiosks, basically because of the Job Development and Coach activities. The Tech Lab has completed training for the Workforce Navigators, who act as facilitators of Workforce Services for their customers who are individuals with disabilities.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

DISCUSSION/APPROVAL OF STATE PLAN.

DSB Field Services Administrator Mrs. Donna Walker presented a synopsis of the discussion of the state plan held at the March board meeting, and outlined the preliminary goals approved by the board at that time. The final recommended goals for federal fiscal year 2011, consider the results of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment conducted by the board committee, but are very similar those of 2010 because the needs identified have not changed noticeably.

It is the strategies to implement those goals that change each year. The goals recommended for FFY 2011 are:

- DSB will increase employment opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired.
- DSB will increase its services to transition students.
- DSB will continue to reach out to minorities and stakeholders.

The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment was distributed on a wider scale this year than in the past. We received 356 responses by the deadline compared to 195 last year and responses are still coming, including at least 50 received since the cut off. Responses were received from DSB consumers and stakeholders, doctor's offices, colleges, vendors and the general public. Their responses echoed the Board's input and emphasized the continued need for services to promote employment, transition, education, finding jobs and outreach. Mr. Dickie Walker made a motion to approve the 2011 state plan and Mr. Gary Hall seconded. *Motion passed.*

Receipt of State Vehicles. Mrs. Walker noted that DSB has received 10 new state cars, purchased with Stimulus funds valued at \$185,000.00. This is significant because most DSB offices have not had state cars available for their use for more than a year, and DSB has been attempting to obtain approval to purchase them for the last three years. There is a legal CAP to the number of vehicles each department is permitted, and if DSB is authorized to purchase additional cars, another DHS agency must purchase fewer. The Harrison and El Dorado staff will be the first to take their new state cars home today.

Mr. Dickie Walker made a motion to approve the 2011 State Plan. Mr. Gary Hall seconded the motion. Motion passed.

APPOINTMENT OF EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE 2010.

Chairman Berry appointed Mrs. Ann Moore to chair the committee and Mr. Dickie Walker and Ms. Sandra Edwards to serve as committee members. Cassandra Williams will staff the committee. Mrs. Berry reminded everyone that all areas of the nomination form must be complete to be eligible for consideration. The call for nominations will begin July 20 and the nomination packets should be to the committee by August 10. The committee members will review nominations independently and individually score each nomination, then the committee will get together and discuss the scores and come to a consensus. The chair of the committee will consolidate the results and announce the categorical winners and the overall winner recommended for board approval at the September Board meeting.

APPOINTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE 2011.

Chairman Berry appointed Dr. Larry Dickerson to chair the DSB 2011 Legislative Committee. Mr. Jim Hill and Mr. Gerald Carr will serve as committee members. Mrs. Katy Morris will staff the committee.

DISCUSSION/APPROVAL 2011 BUDGET DESIGN

Federal RSA conducted the Annual Review of DSB in 2007. The report RSA presented to the Board indicated that DSB organizational structure needed strengthening to increase the ratio of supervisors to caseload staff, to provide for unavoidable turnover due to retirement, and to increase the capacity to effectively manage caseload funds. DHS assisted DSB greatly by transferring 5 positions to the division to enact this restructuring, giving DSB a total of 75 full-time positions. The Biennial Budget developed for 2011-2013 reflects a continuation of that structure and appropriation to permit on-going services. Additionally, we have again turned to the department to seek **transfer of ten vacant positions** to allow absorption of DSB temporary Job Developers and Coaches as permanent staff. We are also requesting increase in the OJT "On the job training" opportunities for consumers by the addition of **26 extra help positions**, to extend for three weeks, six weeks, or up to one thousand hours a year, as appropriate to the consumer situation. Requests for appropriation for **Maintenance & Operating Costs** will follow the travel and equipment needs of the staff. The Social Security **matching request** corresponds mathematically to salaries. **Conference fees** are budgeted at \$40,000 to enable DSB to respond to the needs of staff as training opportunities become available. Emphasis will be upon strengthening capacity for succession, because we know we are going to be facing tremendous turnover, especially at the supervisor level. **Contract** appropriation is requested at \$350,000 for current and anticipated contracts and flexibility to utilize available funding responsibly. **Equipment** is requested at a basic \$25,000. We are looking at the cost effectiveness of video conferencing or teleconferencing to cut down on some of the travel for meetings that require the attendance of multiple people and extensive travel time. The remainder of the available funding is budgeted in purchased services for consumers. The budget proposal is due July 6, 2010, based on guidelines released recently by DFA and DHS. With your approval of this master plan, we will start inputting the details. *Mr. Gerald Carr made a motion to accept the budget. Mr. Dickie Walker seconded the motion.*

DISCUSSION/APPROVAL 2011 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The only special language DSB seeks this session is designed to enable DSB to pay individual membership dues in the respective professional associations of staff members required by federal regulations to be certified. This provides year-long unique professional information to those staff members, but also offers the Division a much lower registration cost when assigning these individuals to attend sponsored training. *Ms. Irma Nelson made a motion to accept the legislative agenda. Mr. Dickie Walker seconded the motion. Motion passed.*

PAULINE ESTHER BERRY PARAPROFESSIONAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM PROPOSAL

The Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) requires DSB to establish a training priority for professional staff to secure and retain certification. This does not address the development of a career path for Paraprofessionals who are seeking a degree to eventually become certified caseload personnel. I am proposing that, in the event federal RSA cannot approve VR academic support for paraprofessionals seeking professional status, the Board establish a paraprofessional scholarship, to be paid from the Pauline Esther Berry fund to support the efforts of DSB veteran paraprofessionals who aspire to become certified caseload staff. Even two scholarships at five hundred dollars a piece per semester for tuition, books, fees and associated academic costs, is far more than what the paraprofessionals receive now. **The guidelines will be presented to the board at the September board meeting.**

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT - No representative was present.
No Report was 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 – The American Council of the Blind (ACB) national convention will be held July 9-17, 2010 in Phoenix Arizona. The National Federal of the Blind (NFB) national convention will be held July 3-8, 2010 in Dallas, Texas. The state NFB convention is tentatively scheduled for North Little Rock in October. The state ACB convention is scheduled for April at the Austin hotel in Hot Springs.

SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING. The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, September 10, 2010, at 1:00 p.m. at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, First Floor, Conference Rooms A & B.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Irma Nelson
Secretary