

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2012

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Gerald Carr
Teresa Doan
Sandra Edwards
Gary Hall
Irma Nelson
Dickie Walker
Anglyln Young

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Kara Aaron
Larry Dickerson
James Gatewood

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Jim Hill
AER Vacant

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Erika Gee

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Tony Brown, Kandy Cayce, Mary Douglas, Lisa Fore, Rhonda Garmon, Linda Haynes, Ginny McWilliams, Katy Morris, Scott Murphy, Tina Shelby, Lou Talley, Tanya VanHouten, Coral Virden, Larry Wayland, Cassondra Williams, Dwana Williams

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Mr. Gerald Carr called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. Motion was made by Ms. Irma Nelson to approve the agenda. Mr. Dickie Walker seconded the motion. **Motion passed.**

APPROVAL OF 06/08/12 MINUTES. Motion was made by Mr. Gary Hall to approve the minutes. Ms. Nelson seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Our thoughts and prayers are with Little Rock Field Supervisor Christy Lamas and her family. Christy's husband, Alex, was in a serious motorcycle wreck last night and airlifted to Baptist Hospital in Little Rock.

Welcome is extended to Von Daniels, Rehabilitation Teacher in the Texarkana Office; Lisa Fore, Assistant to Acting Field Administrator Ginny McWilliams; and Shayla Nelson, Rehabilitation Teacher in Pine Bluff.

NATIONAL ISSUES:

Continued Federal Funding – As forecast by Dr. Fred Schroeder, the House has passed a continuing resolution as a “stop-gap” measure on the budget deficit impasse. The measure will basically level-fund programs through March 27, 2013, and delays the \$110B cuts that are set out in the Budget Control Act to take place in January. Dr. Schroeder is the former Commissioner of federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), and the present policy consultant to the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB). From the House side, the measure (HJ117) goes to the Senate and is expected to clear next week and go to the President for signature. As yet, NCSAB has no idea what the eventual impact is going to be on rehab programs.

Subminimum Wage – We are not seeing movement on HR3086, the Fair Wages for Workers with Disabilities Act, except that the National Council on Disability did send a recommendation to the President supporting a phase out of the subminimum wage payment.

Healthcare Reform – Three things of particular interest to Rehab are currently happening: Advocacy groups are supporting 1) accessible drug labels, 2) a wider availability of low vision supplies and other devices, and 3) funded vision and mobility services provided by qualified specialists. The latter is a proposal which hasn't gone anywhere in the last several years, though we are still hopeful. The Senate version looks a bit more promising than the House version.

Randolph Sheppard – The Annual Sales Seminar last month was excellent. At the federal level, Randolph Sheppard issues are getting some serious consideration as a result of the recent Executive Order. The responsible federal agencies are now paying it the attention that it deserves.

Technical Assistance in Continuing Education Program (TACE) – TACE is formerly the Staff Development function in Region 6. We have been partnering with TACE, which now is charged with both staff development and monitoring responsibilities. When an agency has a federal monitoring finding of a program nature, TACE provides technical assistance for development of the compliance plan to be approved by RSA. Once approved, TACE provides oversight of plan progress. One specific thing resulting from our federal monitoring back in 2011 was the Supported Employment Plan now monitored by TACE.

Supported Employment – In 2007, RSA had charged DSB with growing the capacity of the state to serve Supported Employment (SE) consumers. When RSA returned in 2011, they found DSB progress insufficient in our development of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) to provide Supported Employment. TACE came forward in a consultant capacity, as part of the RSA plan, to assist DSB in improving available services.

TACE recommended that DSB concentrate on growing the SE capacity of CRP's in Arkansas which already serve blind and visually impaired persons. This limits the focus to World Services for the Blind (WSB) and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind (ALB).

We have been working with WSB Executive Director Dr. Larry Dickerson in identifying skill sets necessary for in-demand job families and developing curricula to 1) enable WSB to train DSB consumers to be job-ready and 2) train the consumer's natural support system (usually a family member, church member, etc.) to be skilled in supporting the consumer's long term employment.

Medicaid – Controlling Medicaid costs impacts everyone in Arkansas. DSB leverages its resources to partner with multiple other public and private entities to assist consumers in accessing the best overall services.

Partnerships – Along with the on-going contract for the DSB Older Blind program, DSB is expanding its partnership with World Services for the Blind to address training initiatives being pursued with Arkansas Children's Hospital to target high turnover positions. Additionally, WSB is developing a curriculum that will help the DSB Rehabilitation Teachers gain skills and related AER or other credentials for teaching technology to consumers across the state. The certification arm of AER, the professional body for Rehab Teachers, is looking at establishing national certification for rehab teachers in the area of assistive technology instruction.

DSB is also partnering with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI) in reconciling the transition student databases of DSB with ESVI. In the past there has been a wide discrepancy between records in ESVI's database which includes transition-aged students who may be eligible for DSB caseload, and DSB's transition database.

DSB continues to work closely with the DHS Division of County Operations (DCO) to explore the possibility of reserving certain positions for specifically trained DSB consumers to work in the DCO Call Center in Batesville. DCO has been experiencing very high turnover and is interested in how DSB might be able to help lower that turnover.

STATE ISSUES:

Recruitment – DSB Assistant Director Cassondra Williams and I have been working through DHS Human Resources to aggressively recruit applicants for Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) positions in compliance with federal regulations. Recently, we found that the OPM job specification had been altered to require licensure other than CRC, and that the CRC credentials required by federal RSA had been deleted from the job specification. This explained why qualified CRCs were not applying for the positions recruited, and why those who did apply failed to show on the eligibility lists. Having identified the problem, I met with DHS and approached OPM officials who immediately corrected the error, allowing DHS to add previously rejected applicants to eligible lists for interview.

Field Services Report – Ginny McWilliams reported that Field Services was making rapid progress lately. VR has served 37 more clients in 2012 than in FFY 2011, with the caseload now up to 1,528 clients served this year. Closures are up 24 from this time last year, and successful closures will exceed the original projection of 305 closures projected in the state plan. Next year DSB has set the goal at 350.

Service statistics also are favorable for this past year. Traditionally, DSB serves a considerably higher percentage of minority individuals than is represented in the population. Currently, the previous 34% minority service rate has risen to 37%. We have 284 closures to date, and we need 21 more (305) to meet our 2012 goal. We are down to 15% homemaker closures statewide, which conversely shows a high percentage in competitive employment. DSB will be participating in our second Arkansas Employer Expo on September 25th, in partnership with ARS and Workforce Services in Fort Smith. Tina Shelby and the Fort Smith staff will be there. The first Expo was very successful in Jonesboro.

Beginning last July 1, DSB established a statewide Case Audit Team, which was comprised of all area supervisors and the Quality Assurance Coordinator. Selected team members reviewed cases in offices they did not supervise, using the federally approved review instrument, and recommended corrective actions. The responsible supervisors then follow up on the corrective actions, for the offices they do supervise, to make sure they are resolved.

The Extreme Manual Makeover Team-EMMT (pronounced ‘EMMIT’) includes staff representatives from each discipline and level in field services, with other staff serving as support. The group discusses major policy problems that have arisen. They have updated the field manual and are still addressing other policy issues. The new manual is on-line, searchable and accessible. Next, EMMT moves to review the functional job descriptions for all field staff and to set equitable performance standards statewide for field personnel.

This week, Dr. Brenda Cavanaugh from Mississippi State University conducted a follow-up on-site review of the OIB services delivered by World Services for the Blind. Her previous review showed various items in need of correction, but she had strong praise for the improvements made and the services being provided currently.

Wicked Innovations for Next Generation Solutions (WINGS) – Tanya VanHouten reported that DSB currently has three staff participating in the WINGS leadership training, JoAnn McAdoo, Amy Jackson and herself. WINGS is a five-part leadership program offered through the CURRENTS training program in conjunction with the Oklahoma Rehab agency. Part of the program includes developing a project that will enhance the services that DSB provides to consumers or improve how the agency does things.

The WINGS group decided that since technology is such a key part of success for people who are blind and visually impaired, it would be good to take a look at how DSB provides technology services to see if there is anything that we need to add, adapt or modify. The plan is to poll the consumers who have participated in tech services within the last year, and poll the counselors to see if they have any suggestions. Other staff will also be contacted. The team will gather all the information, come up with a suggested service model, try it out, and see how it works. The team will be going back to the next component of WINGS November 12-16. Ms. VanHouten expressed the team appreciation for the opportunity to participate in this leadership program.

(Continuation of Director's Report)

Blind Services Information System (BSIS) – Mrs. Morris continued that a major initiative for DSB is the conversion of the Blind Services Information System (BSIS) to an internet based program. BSIS is the data system that DSB has utilized for decades. DSB is looking at purchasing a net-based program from some of the companies that specialize in those databases for rehab agencies across the nation. DSB Assistant Director Cassandra Williams has worked with staff to develop the net-based contract and is in the analysis phase of working with team members to evaluate the various proposals submitted.

Contracts – We are in the process of renewing the Mississippi State evaluation contract, as well as the NEWSLINE contract.

Maintenance of Effort (MOE) – DSB has sufficient general revenue to close out this federal fiscal year and meet the required match, referred to as “Maintenance of Effort-M.O.E”. Thanks to the hard work of field services personnel in adhering to the compliance standards, DSB again qualified for incentive funds. I received notice the other day that RSA has transferred us an additional \$1.8M in incentive funds. This is the third consecutive year that DSB has been able to achieve this.

Survey Drawing – DSB and the Arkansas Library for the Blind conducted a listener satisfaction survey for AIRS and the Arkansas Library for the Blind using the Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind call center. To encourage people to respond, the Board of the Arkansas Information Reading Services came forward with three \$25 prizes and a \$100 grand prize. Of the 309 respondents, 283 people wanted their name and address in the drawing. Surveys were sent out to approximately 3400 people. The three winners of the \$25 door prizes were Sarah Bradley, Robin Wilson, and James Henson. The winner of the \$100 grand prize was Rhonda French.

End of Director's Report

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE REPORT – Irma Nelson reported that the winner of DSB 2012 Employee of the Year for Clerical Services was Mona Mason. The winner of the award for Direct Services was Omagene Farley, and the winner of the award for Administrative Services was Kandy Cayce. Ms. Nelson added that the DSB staff member selected as Overall Winner as DSB 2012 Employee of the Year was Omagene Farley.

DISTRIBUTION OF PRIVATE MATERIAL TO DSB CONSUMER HOME ADDRESSES. DSB has been requested by a consumer group recently to distribute information and membership material to the home addresses of DSB consumers to alert them to the existence of the consumer group and its upcoming events. A similar request had been made back in 2001 as well, and Attorney General Mark Pryor, through Assistant AG Tom Gay, had cautioned DSB via letter that distribution to private addresses was not permissible under state or federal law. DSB can post event information and anything of a general nature on our website announcements. We certainly want to make consumers aware of the events, but we are not allowed to send private material to our individual clients. Current Assistant Attorney General Erika Gee confirmed that nothing had changed in regard to this rule.

2012 ACB CONVENTION REPORT – Ms. Sandy Edwards reported that the ACB convention this year was held in Louisville, Kentucky and was a wonderful convention. She voiced appreciation for DSB financial support. Ms. Edwards noted that the week was packed with general sessions every day and all kinds of special interest meetings in the afternoons and evenings along with tours, receptions, hands-on exposure to new technologies, and involvement in legislative activities.

2012 NFB CONVENTION REPORT – Mr. Gary Hall reported the NFB convention was held in Dallas, Texas, June 30 – July 5. One of the discussions was people getting paid less than the minimum wage. There is one employer that is paying only 3 cents per hour. NFB is trying to get Washington to pass a law to pay everyone the minimum wage. Next year the convention will be held in Orlando, Florida.

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER (DRC) REPORT – No representative was present. No report was provided.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (AILC) REPORT – 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 state ACB convention is next April 20-21 at the Austin hotel in Hot Springs. The State NFB convention is October 5-7 at the Fayetteville Clarion.

A discussion was held on permissible means for consumer groups to use DSB capacity to notify individual consumers of issues and events. The question was what exact information can be shared with individual consumers by the counselors, so the consumer groups will know what can be sent out to individuals by DSB and what cannot. Consumer group representatives requested print and electronic copies of the 2001 ruling prohibiting DSB from distributing materials of private groups to individual consumers. This discussion will also be put on the agenda for the December 14, 2012 Board meeting.

The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, December 14, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, first floor, conference Room A to include the Consumer of the Year Celebration in conference room B.

ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION - (Annual Evaluation of DSB Director).

RECONVENING OF THE BOARD - The Board Chairman reported that the DSB Board had completed the annual evaluation of the DSB Director and the board thought the Director does a fine and outstanding job. Mrs. Morris will secure the signatures and submit the evaluation form to complete the process.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra Edwards
Secretary