

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 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, Charlie Cain-Davis, Christina Dean, Mary Douglas, Lilian Felicitas, Lisa Fore, Rhonda Garmon, Jimmy Jones, Christy Lamas, Robert Lamb, Carol Marshall, Mona Mason, Ginny McWilliams, Katy Morris, Jim Pearson, Kena Sabb, Lou Talley, Jessie Thomas, Coral Virden, Cassandra Williams,

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

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

APPROVAL OF 09/14/12 MINUTES. *Motion was made by Ms. Nelson to approve the minutes. Mr. Gary Hall seconded the motion. **Motion passed.***

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT- Katy Morris.

Mrs. Morris noted that it has been a busy time since last Board Meeting. DSB welcomes its new Chief Fiscal Officer, Lilian Felicitas, who joins us from DHS Office of Finance & Administration. Lilian has worked directly with DSB financial reporting in the past. Welcome also to Christina Dean, who has joined Jim Pearson's staff in Business and Technology as the Client Small Business Development Specialist. This is a new area of emphasis for DSB, and we are hoping that this focus is going to open up a lot of opportunity for our clients as entrepreneurs. We are really glad to have them both on

our team. Congratulations are in order for VR Counselor Kenneth McCoy of the DSB Jonesboro Office upon his retirement October 31st. Best wishes also to VR counselor Rickey Etheridge who recently transferred to the VA.

NATIONAL ISSUES:

Sequestration – No congressional action has been taken on the pending “fiscal cliff”, so the impact on rehabilitation programs remains unknown.

CSAVR/ NCSAB – The Council of State Administrators in Vocational Rehabilitation and The National Council of State Agencies for the Blind meet in overlapping conferences twice a year. This enables them to address the issues of general rehabilitation as well as those specific to blindness and to jointly take advantage of the presence of RSA officials.

In November, Christy Lamas attended CSAVR and I attended NCSAB to gather the perspective of each group. Both groups had agendas heavily focused on return on investment in various applications, an issue under close congressional scrutiny. A highlight of the NCSAB conference was a featured panel of consumers and employers, including the Marriott Hotel chain and other groups. Some consumers were also successful private entrepreneurs.

For me, the proudest moment came when I reported the design and progress of Governor Beebe’s Employment First Initiative related to his Executive Order 10-17 issued in 2010. At that time, the Governor had named a statewide Task Force to identify and eliminate barriers to state employment for persons with disabilities. The first such action was taken immediately by the state Office of Personnel Management to thoroughly review every single job specification in state government, and delete qualifications unrelated to the job that previously had made persons with disabilities ineligible to even submit an application.

Vending – DSB Policy Manager Kandy Cayce and DHS legal Counsel, Clay Crews, attended the first national Randolph-Sheppard Legal conference recently in Philadelphia. Discussions centered on placement of vending locations on federal property and related legal concerns and negotiations. Though Arkansas does not have the same naval bases and other high volume federal settings as other states, the information was largely transferable to in-state scenarios.

STATE ISSUES:

Fiscal Plan – Many of you are familiar with the issues surrounding Medicaid spending, the fact that Arkansas is on track to experience a huge deficit in 2014. If there is a program decision to be made in the state of Arkansas, it will fall to the legislature in the upcoming session. We do expect it will have some ripple effect with DSB, because rehab is always designated as the dollar of last resort for eligible clients. Other entities pay first and then DSB is left with the rest.

Upcoming Session – We feel like DSB has done fairly well with the current legislative requests. Though they were modest, DSB is still very fortunate compared to what is being faced by other state agencies for the blind. One of the initiatives sought was for DSB to be authorized all caseload positions at the higher certified level, so that applicants who weren't already certified would have incentive to join DSB and work their way up to the certified level. The governor has supported this request. Next we seek approval from the legislature. Another request seeks authorization to pay tuition for counselors seeking degrees toward certification. So far this is progressing well. We did not succeed in gaining OPM approval to retitle the DSB Director as DSB Commissioner as originally titled in Act 381 of 1983. This was recommended by both the Attorney General and the RSA Review Team to make a distinction between references to the DHS Director and the DSB Director to avoid confusion.

WSB – DSB is working on an initiative in conjunction with World Services for the Blind and the Division of County Operations (DCO). We are trying to develop a curriculum similar to what WSB does with IRS to produce turnkey staff for DCO in certain program areas from individuals who are our consumers. We are moving forward and expect to get a team together on that next week. Another thing that we are looking at with World Services is the Assistive Technology Instructor training for DSB Rehab Teachers. The ATI training may enable us to secure credentials that would help us with our comprehensive system of personnel development to comply with the state plan and federal regulations.

Supported Employment – We are moving forward with the supportive employment initiative with WSB and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind. Two of the things that the feds looked at when they came in 2011 were DSB increasing the capacity to serve supported employment consumers, and better definitions and training for DSB staff on the data required on invoices.

Workforce – We are continuing our presence on the local Workforce Boards. The law requires that the person who has the first-hand knowledge of caseloads in a geographic area is the one who is supposed to be on the local Workforce Board. This is usually the VR Counselor, unless vacant, then it falls to the Supervisor.

Consumer Groups – One of the things that I think is a state issue that benefits everybody is DSB's involvement with the consumer groups. I thought it was an outstanding NFB meeting in Fayetteville October 5-7. We had a good showing from the staff.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services – We continue to partner with Arkansas Rehab Services. DSB participates in the Business Expos that ARS is having across the state. The most recent of these was in Fort Smith September 25, and was well attended.

White Cane Safety Day – We had a very successful White Cane Safety Day. Thank you to all the folks who participated and to Kandy Cayce and her team of several other folks for managing the process.

Policy Manuals – The Extreme Manual Makeover Team (EMMT), comprised of Ginny McWilliams, Lou Talley, Feona Barnett and so many folks, has been involved in getting the program manuals up and rolling and online and searchable. Next we will work on a DSB administrative procedures manual to tie in with the DHS policy manuals. We won't duplicate DHS policy/procedures, but merely guide staff on how DSB implements the DHS policy/procedure. The DSB Administrative Procedures Manual will be online and searchable. It will give us stronger written day-to-day guidance, which is especially important during vacations and turnover.

BSIS Replacement – I have made reference to the RSA Corrective Action Plan (CAP) that we had to address. In a related effort, we have worked very closely as a team with DHS purchasing to finalize the contract to replace the Blind Services Information System (BSIS) within DSB. Cassondra and other DSB staff looked at different providers and settled upon Alliance AWARE. From what I see across the nation, there are many rehab agencies that utilize AWARE. The DSB team includes staff from every specialty area, (including Feona Barnett, Liz Whitaker Christy Lamas, and Jimmy McCune with Cassondra as the project leader), so hopefully we won't overlook something or at least someone will notice it if we do. The idea is that we will be developing the new system now, run a parallel system until October 1, and go live October 1 if all goes well.

WINGS – We have a leadership development team receiving training through the federally sponsored Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) center. The training program is called Wicked Innovation: Next Generation Solutions (WINGS). This is a partnership with TACE and the rehab programs of Oklahoma and Texas. Jo Ann McAdoo, Amy Jackson and Tanya VanHouten are benefitting from a great deal of training over about an 18-month period. This team has taken as its project the tech program within Business and Technology. They plan to survey the staff and the consumers about their experiences with the DSB tech lab, what suggestions can be made, and how we can improve the services. They made a great presentation at statewide. We hope to get the results of the survey and be able to implement some of the suggestions and improvements in this upcoming state plan.

2013 Success –Each year we have goals and federal standards and indicators to meet as part of the state plan. For 2013, we had committed to work with consumers to achieve 305 closures by September 30. On March 1, we had closed about 72. Ginny McWilliams stepped in at that time as the interim field administrator, working with supervisors and in some cases mentoring one-on-one with the counselors, especially the new ones. As you all know, instead of gaining the 305 that we were required to achieve, DSB closed 313. Today is actually Ginny's last day in that role. On Monday Little Rock Field Supervisor Christy Lamas takes over as DSB Statewide Field Administrator. Congratulations to Christy and our sincere thanks to Ginny. I cannot thank you enough for your leadership.

APPOINTMENT AND DUTIES OF 2013 AWARD COMMITTEES – Chairman Carr observed that the program for 2012 appeared to work fairly well, and he had not heard any adverse comments about organization or participation. He noted that DSB will be recognizing some of those people later on today. He distributed a listing of the Award committees with his intended appointments to each. These were:

Employee of the Year (EOY) Committee: Teresa Doan, Chairperson; Sandra Edwards; and Jim Hill.

Consumer of the Year (COY) Committee: Irma Nelson, Chairperson; Kara Aaron; and Angyln Young.

Mr. Carr stated that the schedule for the award committee actions appeared to provide plenty of time. As far as he knew everything went smoothly, and if we do the same thing this year, continuing the cash awards, everything should go well.

Mrs. Morris added that the other listed committees are standing DSB Committees that are identified in the division by-laws. We really have not used them much in recent years, but in the event you get into a situation in the session where an issue arises that the board feels needs action, it will have a current committee. For example, the budget committee that came into being about eight to nine years ago when DHS Director Kurt Knickrehm required the board and former Chair Nola McKinney to look at the order of funding priority for the division. Basically, he was saying if it comes down to them cutting big money what is the priority of DSB. That is when the board budget committee met and looked at facing the fact that we have to meet our maintenance of effort, whatever that maintenance of effort was. The board committee said the first priority would be to meet the MOE and then the other programs that exist would be funded at a minimum level first, and if there was any money left over it would be discretionary. In our situation, especially as every year passes, there is less and less money left over. That is the first and only time that I have known that budget committee to meet.

The standing committees appointed by Mr. Carr include:

Legislative Issues Committee: Dr. Larry Dickerson, Chairperson; Gerald Carr; and Jim Hill.

Budget Committee: Gary Hall, Chairperson; James Gatewood; and Dickie Walker.

Constitution and Bylaws Committee: Irma Nelson, Chairperson; James Gatewood; and Kara Aaron.

Mrs. Morris assigned Staff Development Coordinator Tony Brown to staff the Employee of the Year Committee, and Policy Developer Kandy Cayce to staff the Consumer of the Year Committee. Kandy is doing all of the public relations work, writing all of the articles and setting up the other events with the area supervisors.

DRAWING FOR ADDITIONAL SURVEY WINNER – Mrs. Morris noted that the Friends of Arkansas Information Reading Services (FAIRS) Board had reminded DSB that the AIRS survey participant drawing should have included four \$25 awards, rather than only three. Kandy Cayce conducted the drawing for the fourth winner of \$25. The winner is Cathy Rester.

DISTRIBUTION OF CONSUMER GROUP MATERIALS BY DSB TO INDIVIDUAL CONSUMERS – DSB Director reported that, as Erika Gee had stated last time, nothing has changed in the opinion given by the Attorney General about the distribution of consumer group materials by DSB to individuals. Mrs. Morris suggested that since DSB cannot distribute NFB and ACB forms for membership, etc., DSB might send a reminder to consumers twice a year of how important it is for them to participate in consumer groups and time the reminder to coincide with the annual consumer group meetings. DSB would send out information on both ACB and NFB, who the contact persons are, and when the consumer group meeting is going to be. It would be sent at such a time that it will enable consumers to take advantage of some of the stipends that the consumer groups offer for attendance at the events. That way DSB is not advertising or soliciting for anybody, but rather providing information. The Board chairman suggested that we try this for a year, unless someone comes up with a better solution.

ACTION ITEMS FOLLOWING FEDERAL REVIEW AND STATE AUDIT – We have already covered this. Basically, the items were Supported Employment and invoicing. I know Cassondra is working on the policy and practice for invoicing. We developed a way to do this all by electronic means, and the auditors said they'd never thought about it that way. They approved the new method, and the other day we got a message from DFA where they had actually changed their policy to match our suggested procedure.

2014 STATE PLAN PROCESS – Ginny McWilliams gave an introduction to the 2014 State Plan process and reviewed last year's goals. The Board voted to keep the same goals in 2014 and update the strategies relating to the goals.

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

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (AIRC) REPORT – Sha Stephens, the new Executive Director since August, introduced herself to the Board and submitted a written report. She announced that the AIRC's website is being re-designed and will be very user friendly. Her contact number is 501-372-0607, and the website is www.ar-silc.org.

CONSUMER INPUT – ACB invited those present to their Christmas party. The ACB state convention is April 20-21 at the Austin Hotel in Hot Springs.

2012 CONSUMER SUCCESS STORIES – The DSB Area Supervisors shared with the Board the success stories of the 13 area Consumers of the Year, who were nominated for the state level award. The nominees were Ashley Fielding of Texarkana, Julie Brooks of Little Rock, Erika Evans of Sherwood, Diana Scroggins of Cleveland, David Naumann of Bentonville, Kellen Bassham of Mountain Home, Ethel Fowler of Blytheville, Billy Harrison of Newport, Willie Battle of Stamps, Jermaine Williams of Grady, Jessica Birmingham of Osceola, Buford Stinnett of Hot Springs, and Rebekah Shaver of Fort Smith.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF DSB CONSUMER AND EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR – Committee member Dr. Larry Dickerson announced that the DSB Consumer of the Year for 2012 is Ashley Fielding of Texarkana and his employer, Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind, is the DSB Employer of the Year.

SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING – The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, March 8, 2013, at 1:00 p.m. at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, First Floor, Conference Rooms A and B.

The meeting was adjourned to the DSB Reception honoring Mr. Fielding and all the 2012 Area Consumers of the Year.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra Edwards
Secretary