

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2009

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Berry  
Gerald Carr  
Sandra Edwards  
Gary Hall  
Irma Nelson  
Dickie Walker  
Anglyn Young

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Kara Aaron  
Thomas Bradford  
Larry Dickerson  
Jim Hill  
Ann Moore

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

None

DHS Representative: Steve Jones

Attorney General's Office Representative: Erica Gee

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Mary Cabaniss, Charlie Cain-Davis, Kandy Cayce, Francine Crain, Mary Douglas, Robert Lamb, Mona Mason, Ginny McWilliams, Katy Morris, Judith Renick, Tina Shelby, Lou Talley, Tanya VanHouten, Coral Virden, Donna Walker, Larry Wayland, Cassandra Williams, 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. Mr. Gary Hall seconded the motion. One amendment was made to the agenda moving the Consumer Satisfaction Survey Results for consumers of record in FFY 2008 to the March 12, 2010 Board Meeting. *Motion passed.*

**WELCOME TO NEW BOARD MEMBER.** The board chairman welcomed new board member Mr. Gerald Carr, representing Arkansas Lions.

**APPROVAL OF 09/11/09 MINUTES.** Motion was made by Ms. Anglyn Young to approve the minutes. Ms. Irma Nelson seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

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

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT –

***NATIONAL ISSUES:***

FEDERAL LEGISLATION - HR734 on pedestrian safety or “*Quiet Cars*” has gained sponsors in the house, showing 168 up from 136 since last we met. The same is true with the corresponding legislation in the Senate - S841, up now to 27 co-sponsors from 13 earlier. The *Tech Accessibility Act*, known as the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Communications Act is HR3101 and does not seem to be showing very much movement, but we are seeing negotiations ongoing with some of the providers of those types of services. The idea is to build in accessibility at the front end rather than retrofitting at the back end. There is a lot of action by NFB and others in negotiating with some of the service providers. Elsewhere, we are seeing some success in discussions with Kindle and Amazon, and other types of E-Books showing understanding in the need to design access within a product at the front end.

RSA COMMISSIONER NOMINEE - Lynnae Rutledge from Washington State VR has been nominated to be the Commissioner of RSA. The nomination is still under consideration of the Senate.

LOUIS BRAILLE COIN. This is the last day to order the Louis Braille Coin. You have until 4:00 Central Time to get your orders in. The delivery date is up until December 31.

***STATE ISSUES:***

ARKANSAS WORKFORCE CENTERS - DSB continues to work with the Workforce Centers in the computer Kiosks. We have agreed to train the workforce center staff and to provide follow up instructions that Workforce Services managers can refer to when DSB staff are not present in order that DWS can serve individuals with vision impairment when DSB staff are not present.

STATE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (SILC). The SILC is responsible to oversee the planning and delivery of Independent Living Services in the state, including those provided by the four Centers for Independent Living (CILs). Recently, RSA called for the SILC to revise the state plan for independent living so that it would reflect the plans of the council on current and future funding and programming for the catchment areas. There are four CILs currently, but RSA wants the state plan to reflect current and future designs for services across the state.

BLINDNESS AWARENESS DAY - Numerous agencies and organizations serving persons with vision problems in Arkansas met in the rotunda of the state capitol October 15<sup>th</sup> to hold an information/demonstration fair and celebrate national White Cane Safety Day. Even with significant prior public notice, we had a sparse turnout on the rainy day, but had good coverage from channels 4, 7 and 16. As it turned out even that coverage was eclipsed by the week's "hot story" – The annual Little Rock Race for the Cure" marathon. Next year, we will plan a Blindness Awareness event well after the Race for the Cure.

COMMUNICATIONS – DSB is seeing success internally with increased communication among sections. We are cross-training and sharing information between sections daily rather than just periodically.

DSB PERFORMANCE STANDARDS - Thanks to the tremendous hard work of field services and the DSB staff who directly support them, the division met the performance standards required of us by RSA for federal fiscal year 2009. This is at a time when many other state rehab agencies are not meeting their standards. Three Hundred Fifty DSB consumers achieved their selected employment outcomes this federal fiscal year, up from 347 last year. Federal standards require that state agencies meet or exceed the level of the prior year. In this economy, this is an amazing accomplishment.

RSA ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT - The latest Annual Review Report (based on FFY 2008) has been posted by RSA on its Management Information System. As we have done for several years, DSB compares well in FFY 2008 with other states. There are several positive upward trends. The one downward trend we see is in the average competitive wage, because DSB has a high percentage of homemakers and unpaid family workers compared to other employment outcomes. When zero earnings are factored in for such unpaid workers, it brings down the overall average earnings. DSB is looking at shifting homemakers to a different program, as done in some other states, to remove them from Voc Rehab and continue to serve this valuable outcome. This should enable DSB to continue to meet RSA performance standards in the coming years.

SUCCESSION PLANNING - DSB is moving forward with intensive training for staff at all levels to build skills and the capacity to weather the multiple changes we face. The WinRock Training last August, sponsored by the Technical Assistance and Career Education (TACE) Center, allowed staff to identify and prioritize needed training to be addressed in the near future. We will begin the training series in January or February.

POSITION EQUITY – The new pay plan that took effect June 28<sup>th</sup> included new titles and job functions for most DSB Staff. Previously specialized titles have been made generic and their duties compressed within broad job families that are sometimes wholly unrelated to rehabilitation. The end effect in many cases has resulted in the comparative downgrade

of DSB staff compared to the classification levels of their peers in other agencies who possess similar credentials. No incumbents have lost any money, but when DSB must recruit, it is in a weakened position to compete for qualified staff because other agencies have higher level positions for the same responsibilities.

ECONOMIC STIMULUS FUNDS – The various initiatives under the Recovery Act are moving along. As mentioned earlier, recruitment is a problem for the *Job Developers and Job Coaches*. We get staff hired. They work a few days and quit.

[ A discussion ensued regarding creative ways to recruit and retain qualified personnel with a commitment to rehab. Dr. Dickerson mentioned possibly hiring rehab students part-time in lower level positions, enabling them to pursue the completion of their academics to qualify for certification. He suggested DSB officials sponsor an informal meeting between hiring officials and rehab students as a recruitment tool. Mr. Carr suggested that two students could alternate school semesters with work and both would essentially be equally experienced and ready for employment upon graduation].

Stimulus funds are earmarked to upgrade and expand the current *BSIS* statistical tracking system to allow us to move to a web based program. The *Arkansas Information Reading Services* now features NFB NEWSLINE as a service under recovery funds. It's off to a slow start in assisting people to sign up and utilize the system, but is picking up speed. The *Qualified Blind Apprentice* initiative is showing some promise. I spoke with the Director of county operations, Ms. Joni Jones, and we talked about the fact that County Operations is operating a major call center and plans others. Ms. Jones was amenable to pursuing one or more of those related classifications as candidates for a Qualified Blind Apprentice approach for employment.

The stimulus *case audit* and training project is proceeding well. Auditors are covering one hundred percent of the case files to prepare us for when the feds return for annual review originally slated for 2010. Every time we identify something in the audits that shows staff misunderstanding, we alert staff and train for correction. When I was at the Council of State Agencies for Voc Rehab a couple of weeks ago, they announced the states to be reviewed this year, and Arkansas was not one of them, so we have a temporary reprieve, and should be in good shape by the time our turn arrives.

Under another stimulus initiative we purchased additional heavy equipment such as refrigerators for the *vending program*. The request for 9 additional state cars and one accessible van appears to be stalled again, but is still open. Purchase of Services funded under Stimulus is showing some movement, but we want to reach outside the norm and partner with larger agencies such as aging to produce a bigger impact for persons with multiple disabilities.

LICENSED BLIND VENDORS. The Vendors Committee met November 7, and had their first training on Robert's Rules. The program is still experiencing a decline in the number of locations and the number of consumers interested in pursuing vending as a career.

AREA CONSUMER OF THE YEAR. The Consumer of the Year recognition process has really taken off. We are partnering with civic groups, particularly Lions, all over the state to honor our area winners in their home towns, as we approach the selection, today, of the overall Consumer of the Year. Ms. Kandy Cayce has worked hard in putting articles in the small papers wherever our consumers live. We had an article in the Paragould Daily Press. I expect there will be an article in The Log Cabin Democrat in Conway either electronically or in the print paper. There are articles available for every location wherever our local winners are. It gives the proper recognition for our consumer and it educates the civic group. It also familiarizes both the civic groups and the press to the fact that our program operates in every square foot of Arkansas.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**NEW BOARD MEMBER TRAINING** – Chairman Berry informed the board that we have a lot of new board members and even some of the seasoned board members have not received board orientation training. The training will be an overview of DSB responsibilities, and we will begin the modules wherever it would be the most beneficial. Board Orientation training is scheduled prior to the board meeting Friday, March 12, 2010, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the same location of the board meeting. Lunch will be provided. Board members who have not received orientation training should plan to attend, but all the board is encouraged to participate.

**APPOINTMENT OF JIM HUDSON ADVOCACY AWARD COMMITTEE**– This award honors a person who has worked in the field of blindness or has assisted a blind or visually impaired person in a way that changes that person's life. Since many of the members of the original committee are no longer on the board, Chairman Berry appointed Ms. Irma Nelson as chair of the committee and Mrs. Kara Aaron and Mr. Gerald Carr to serve as committee members. DSB Area Supervisor Mr. Robert Lamb was named to staff the committee. The committee will accept nominations during each quarter and bring those nominations to the full board for consideration. Awards will not necessarily be made every year. Criteria for the nominations will be posted on the DSB web site.

**APPOINTMENT OF 2010 LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE** – With the approach of the first fiscal legislative session, Chairman Berry appointed Mr. Jim Hill, Dr. Larry Dickerson and Mr. Gerald Carr to the DSB Legislative Committee. Mrs. Morris will serve as DSB staffer for the committee.

**APPOINTMENT OF 2010 NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE** - RSA has released an approved draft of the instrument to be used for the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The CSNA is one of the specific responsibilities of the governing board of state rehab agencies, and the results guide the formation of goals within the state plan. In preparation for this process, Chairman Berry appointed Ms. Angyln Young, Mrs. Kara Aaron and herself to the Needs Assessment Committee for 2010 and asked Mrs. Ann Moore to serve as Chair. Mrs. Donna Walker will serve as DSB staffer for the committee.

**CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS FFY 2008** – In the interest of a timely beginning for the DSB Reception honoring the Consumer of the Year, Chairman Berry indicated that the survey report will be postponed to the March 12, 2010 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 Arkansas Council of the Blind (ACB) state convention will be held May 7-9, 2010 at the LaQuinta Inn at Otter Creek. The National Federal of the Blind (NFB) annual convention will be held the first week in July, 2010 in Dallas, Texas. The ACB National convention will be held in Phoenix, Arizona, July 10-17, 2010 and will not conflict with NFB.

**SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING.** The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, June, 11, 2010, 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 2009**  
Committee Chair Ms. Angyln Young, thanked members Mr. Gary Hall and Ms. Sandra Edwards for their work on the committee, and announced that the DSB consumer of the year for 2009 is **Mr. Rudy Kurz.**

The meeting was adjourned to the DSB Consumer of the Year reception.

Respectfully Submitted,

Irma Nelson  
Secretary

**To see reports, click on links below:**

**ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT**

- [AILC Report August 2009](#)
- [AILC Report September 2009](#)
- [AILC Report October 2009](#)