

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, JUNE 10, 2011

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Gerald Carr
Sandra Edwards
Gary Hall
Irma Nelson
Dickie Walker

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Dr. Larry Dickerson

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Sharon Berry
Anglyn Young

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Kara Aaron
Thomas Bradford
Jim Hill
Ann Moore

DHS Representative: Steve Jones

Attorney General's Office Representative: None

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Tony Brown, Mary Cabaniss, Kandy Cayce, Mary Douglas, Rhonda Garmon, Linda Haynes, Ginny McWilliams, Mona Mason, Katy Morris, Jim Pearson, Judith Renick, Tina Shelby, Lou Talley, Jessie Thomas, Coral Virden, Donna Walker, Cassandra Williams, Dwana Williams

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. Motion was made by Mr. Gary Hall to approve the agenda. Ms. Irma Nelson seconded the motion. *Motion Passed.*

APPROVAL OF 03/11/11 MINUTES. Motion was made by Mr. Hall to approve the minutes. Mr. Dickie Walker seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT

NATIONAL ISSUES:

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) – The WIA reauthorization bill is in the Senate. There is no companion bill in the House right now, but a mark-up is expected soon. Proposed cuts in Title V, specifically Projects With Industry, would affect LWSB, but there are no proposed cuts in Title I Vocational Rehabilitation for the next federal fiscal year.

Tech Bill – The Technology Education bill now requires that when the Department of Education utilizes emerging technology to make acquiring and reading books easier for sighted students, it must also consider accessibility for students who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Federal Web Site Accessibility – A recent university study found that 90 percent of the federal websites reviewed during the study were not accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired.

STATE ISSUES:

Arkansas Council of the Blind (ACB) – ACB held an excellent conference in Hot Springs in April. Dr. Kent Zocchi, the ophthalmologist who spoke at the ACB conference, was unaware of DSB services and offered to assist DSB in a dialogue with the ophthalmologist association that serves four states, including Arkansas.

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) – AER had their statewide meeting May 16-17. DSB Rehabilitation Teacher Jimmy Jones taught a segment on instructing people who are blind to fish. Mr. Jones was elected to the AER board.

Arkansas School for the Blind (ASB) – DSB assisted with the second annual Braille Challenge held at ASB. The challenge tests the Braille skills of students from school districts and private schools across the state as well as those at ASB. Rosetta Scott, a student in the Rogers area, scored high enough to qualify to compete at the National Braille Challenge. ASB held its senior graduation May 27 and several DSB staff, along with Sandy DeRobertis of RSA, attended the event to recognize the graduates. The national anthem was sung impressively by five year old ASB student Sarah Thacker, and First Lady Ginger Beebe gave the keynote address, encouraging students to follow their dreams, but to be prepared.

Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI) – DSB has a formal agreement with ESVI, but ESVI is restructuring, so DSB will need to update its agreement and do some cross-training.

Executive Order 10-17 – Governor Mike Beebe is moving forward with the Employment First Initiative, which dovetails with the Tech Access Act that just passed in the Arkansas General Assembly as well as the new \$1.5M Disability Employment Initiative grant received by Workforce Services. DSB is a collaborator and service partner in that grant. Through this partnership, DSB staff will continue to serve as consultants and back up Workforce Services staff abilities to serve DSB consumers at workforce centers, using the kiosks installed by DSB as a result of stimulus funds.

Library For The Blind – DSB Rehab Teachers have been working with the Library to make sure that the library’s digital players get delivered to consumers. The majority of library patrons are current or past consumers in the DSB older blind program. This makes delivery a challenge, because Rehab Teachers are currently funded only to serve individuals on the Vocational Rehabilitation caseload.

EmployAbility Project Partnership – DSB is working closely with the DHS Division of Aging and Adult Services - EmployAbility Project. Project staff members Scott Holladay and Betsy Barnes also staff the Governor’s initiative on Executive Order 10-17 mentioned earlier. The Project serves as a resource to DSB to train its staff on how DSB consumers can maintain important benefits and still work. Through the project, DSB has received and distributed an informational DVD statewide to assist consumers in acquiring and retaining employment. The examples in the video help dispel some of the fears that stand between some consumers and employment.

Proclamation – On Monday, June 27, DSB will participate in the Governor’s proclamation ceremony at the State Capitol recognizing Helen Keller Deaf-blind Awareness Week June 26 – July 2.

Legislative Session – New legislation, which DSB helped draft, created a category under state purchasing procedures for “work centers for the blind”, opening opportunities for the Lighthouse for the Blind to contract with the state and allowing agencies to buy products and services from the Lighthouse under special provision.

Division Issues:

Federal Review – The RSA Federal Monitoring Review was completed in late May and initial federal response in the exit conference was very supportive and complimentary. In a discussion of federal Performance Standards and DSB performance, DSB Statistician Mrs. Courtney Browning pointed out that the division was subject to a different minimum wage during part of the five year time period reviewed because certain states’ minimum wage was lower than the federal wage. If considered by RSA, this will effectively raise the performance scores for Arkansas, Wyoming, Alabama, and two other states. DSB will not be able to go back and change the comprehensive 911 report, because it is historical

data and has been disseminated, but the special circumstance could be included as a federal review comment in the standards and indicators section of the final report.

The focus areas of the review were organizational structure, transition services, and fiscal integrity of the VR program. RSA was very impressed with the structure of the board and its ability to function within a departmental environment, yet retain its authority. Reviewers used the term “unique” to describe DSB’s organizational structure. From comments made by RSA staff, any findings published in the final report, are likely to include that DSB must spend any Social Security reimbursement funds before using its VR funds, and that DSB must allocate the cost of every position in the agency to the program funds of the consumers being directly served. RSA team members said they did not anticipate questions coming forward regarding transition or organizational structure. The draft report is expected within 45 days from the time that RSA exited.

Jump Start – There will be 21 participants in Jump Start, beginning June 12 and ending July 1. This year we are doing a pre-assessment and a post-assessment to measure the value gained. We will send a formal report to each participant’s school about where the student stands as far as his/her needs.

Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) – DSB staff will also be participating in YLF on July 14. The annual event is sponsored by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and the Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities and will be held at the University of Central Arkansas July 11-15. DSB had three consumers who participated in both Jump Start and Youth Leadership Forum last year.

Older Individuals Who Are Blind (OIB) – DSB is contracting with Lions World Services for the Blind for OIB services through September 30 under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Budget – At RSA suggestion, DSB expects to increase its contracting capacity with the community rehabilitation programs, if the CRPs can be trained to properly provide services to persons with visual impairments. The Region VI Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center will assist in the training.

Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS) – A discussion was held on the number of individuals who actually utilize AIRS and its cost effectiveness. Various ways to survey consumers were discussed, including adding the question to the VR survey. Dr. Larry Dickerson suggested contacting Dr. Bill Jacobsen at UALR, since his graduate students must do research studies and often need relevant topics. Dr. Dickerson said this would be fast and free. He offered to assist with the study. The DSB Director said the structure of the Reading Service is necessary in order to cover the small town newspapers. The station

employs one full-time staff member and one part-time. The Director said she will bring this evaluation issue forward to the Friends of AIRS (FAIRS) Advisory Board.

Faith Based Bridge for Consumer Employment Contracts – Of the four Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in Arkansas, only Sources for Community Independent Living Services, Inc., out of Fayetteville, and Mainstream, Inc, here in Little Rock bid for the Vocational Rehabilitation contracts this year. The other CIL's will continue to work with DSB, but will not provide paid voc rehab services through the contracts.

Kiosks – The kiosks partnership with the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) is expanding. DSB has received the signed agreement from DWS for the other seven locations planned, bringing the total number to 17 locations.

Business Plans – Recognizing that self-employment is sometimes the only employment available in areas that are largely rural, DSB is seeking to expand its Self-Employment Program. The process for development and review of business plans has been revised to include contracting with professionals to assist consumers and counselors in development of the business plan, and establishment of an internal review committee to include the counselor, and the administrators for Field Services and Business and Technology. Donna Walker will issue the final directive soon and the policy will then be promulgated.

Vending – Due to insufficient expected profit, DSB has issued another five-year waiver to federal GSA for the cafeteria VFP location in the basement of the Little Rock Federal Building. GSA had renovated the location, but applied operating requirements, such as hours, staff numbers, and other restrictions that made it unprofitable for both the previous VFP vendor and the most recent GSA contractor.

Vendors Quarterly Meeting – The vendors had a good quarterly meeting on May 6 and are preparing the agenda for the annual sales seminar August 4-6.

AIRS – The Arthur Sanders Studio was dedicated April 6th. Arthur Sanders was a volunteer for the reading service for about 20 years, and to honor him, his family donated significant funds to the FAIRS board for the purchase of updated equipment. FAIRS also wanted to honor Mr. Sanders by naming the newly renovated studio after him. A reception was planned by Coral Virden and held at AETN, which houses the reading service. Several DSB staff and FAIRS board members were in attendance along with members of Mr. Sanders' family, some of whom came all the way from Great Britain to participate in the dedication ceremony.

Disaster Preparedness – The five Administrative Assistants who support the Area Supervisors have been taking the lead in organizing disaster preparedness activities for DSB consumers in their local areas. Most recently, the DHS Division of Volunteerism

has been designated as a lead agency for local planning efforts for Disaster Preparedness. DSB will continue its activities, but in partnership with DOV teams in the communities.

Training – DSB is establishing a Training Advisory Council to give staff at all levels a voice in planning, budgeting, and logistics for quarterly field meetings and other trainings.

Jonesboro Office – This office will be re-located up the street from its current location. DSB anticipates July 25 for the move.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

REPORT OF RECENT PROGRESS ON 2012 STATE PLAN

Discussion/approval of FFY 2012 State Plan – Mrs. Donna Walker reported that DSB will meet the overall goals set in the FFY 2011 state plan. However, the Parent Summit, planned as part of Transition activities, will need to be carried over and made a part of the strategy for the FFY 2012 state plan. The informative summit is needed to assist parents in becoming more knowledgeable and better prepared to advocate for their children at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings. No comments were received during the plan's public comment period. The program goals remain the same as for FFY 2011, but it is the strategies that change. The goals were tentatively approved by the Board in March, and final approval is needed for submission to RSA. Mr. Dickie Walker made a motion to approve the 2012 state plan. Ms. Irma Nelson seconded the motion. **Motion Passed.**

PROCESS FOR 2011 EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR SELECTION

Ms. Irma Nelson will serve as chair of the Employee of the Year committee and Ms. Sandra Edwards and Mr. Dickie Walker will serve as committee members. Mr. Carr reminded everyone that all areas of the nomination form must be completed to be eligible for consideration. The call for nominations will end August 15 by 4:30 p.m. and the nomination packets will be forwarded to the committee within 10 days. The committee members will review nominations independently and individually score each nomination; then the committee will meet to 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. The award will be presented at the DSB Statewide meeting in October or November.

PROCESS FOR 2011 CONSUMER OF THE YEAR SELECTION

Ms. Angyln Young will chair the Consumer of the Year committee and Mrs. Kara Aaron and Ms. Sandra Edwards will serve as committee members. By November 1 of each year the DSB Director is to collect, organize and electronically transmit the nominations of all

area COY winners for the preceding federal fiscal year to the COY committee. The committee will review the nominations using the same five criteria that the Board has already established. The committee will rate each nomination on a scale of one to five points for each of the criteria. The committee will then select one DSB State Consumer of the Year based on total points awarded and notify the DSB Director of the name of the selectee by December 1 each year. The announcement is made at the December board meeting, which is followed by a reception.

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER (DRC) REPORT – Mrs. Elizabeth Eskew reported that the DRC is an independent, federally funded organization, mandated to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities throughout the state of Arkansas are protected. Currently, several employees of DRC are in training at the National Disability Rights Network in Maryland. They will bring back new information to better serve consumers. The DRC has been working closely with the Department of Justice and other entities to ensure that people with disabilities are receiving the services that they need at the Arkansas State Hospital. She invited the board and others present to visit the DRC website, www.arkdisabilityrights.org, for more information.

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 Arkansas Council of the Blind (ACB) had a successful state convention at the Austin Hotel in Hot Springs. ACB voted to have it at the same place next year on the third weekend in April. The ACB national convention will be in Reno, Nevada, July 8-16. The state National Federation of the Blind (NFB) convention is in Fayetteville October 14-15. The NFB national convention will be July 2-9 in Orlando, Florida.

SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING. The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, September 9, 2011 at 1:00 p.m., at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, First Floor, Conference Rooms A and B.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra Edwards
Secretary