

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2009

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Berry  
Lori Hunter  
Nola McKinney  
Irma Nelson  
Dickie Walker

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Kara Aaron  
Carl Foreman  
Jim Hill

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Lions Representative (vacant)  
Anglyn Franquemont

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Ann Moore  
Sandy Rowland

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: None

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Katy Morris, Cassondra Williams, Francine Crain, Mary Douglas, Cortney Browning, Jim Pearson, Donna Walker, Tanya VanHouten, Dorothy Brooks, Ginny McWilliams, Lou Talley, Tina Shelby, Kandy Cayce, Mona Mason, Mary Cabaniss, Kena Sabb, Charlie Cain-Davis, Paula Smith, Carol Marshall, Patricia Smith

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

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

**APPROVAL OF 03/13/09 MINUTES.** Motion was made by Mrs. McKinney 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:**

- Quiet Cars. In congress, bills HR734 and S841, regarding pedestrian safety and quiet cars are gaining co-sponsors, indicating progress. The issues of accessible money, technology and prescriptions are also being debated.
- Needs Assessment. RSA has not yet completed its new Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment instrument. Therefore, under federal advisement, DSB used the existing instrument drafted earlier by the DSB Board, collected related consumer responses and used them in the construction of the 2010 state plan in order to meet the state plan deadline of June 30.

### **STATE ISSUES:**

- Arkansas Workforce Investment Board (AWIB). In compliance with federal rehabilitation regulations, the Workforce Investment Board has been restructured, under new state law, to include the Director of the Division of Services for the Blind as a full member of the Board. This releases DSB and the state of Arkansas from corrective action plan under previous citation by RSA.
- Institutions of Higher Education (IHE's). DSB recently received the signature of U of A Fayetteville on the interagency agreement required of state rehab agencies under federal law. This should encourage other members of the U of A system to also sign. At this stage, we anticipate having all agreements signed by the required deadline of September 30<sup>th</sup>.
- State Independent Living Council (SILC). Federal law requires all states receiving Vocational Rehabilitation funding to be advised by a fully functioning State Independent Living Council (SILC) comprised of 15 members. The Council must represent the independent living interests of the entire state from a rehabilitation perspective. Arkansas had been cited for non-compliance in 2007, and DSB and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) were charged to assist the Governor in any way beneficial to resolve the problem. The effort was successful. The SILC is now fully functional. DSB Board Member, Ms. Lori Hunter, is also a member of the SILC.
- State Lions Convention. Lions Clubs of Arkansas held their state convention in late May in Hot Springs and much of the discussion centered on increasing services at the local level. From the standpoint of DSB, it was very encouraging.

- Helen Keller Deaf Blind Proclamation. The Proclamation Ceremony honoring Helen Keller and recognizing the capabilities of persons who have both visual and hearing impairments will be held at the State Capitol, Friday, June 26, 2009 at 9:45 a.m. Please submit your name to Mrs. Dorothy Brooks, if you are interested in attending.
- Arkansas School for the Blind (ASB). ASB recently celebrated its High School graduation and the promotion of its 6<sup>th</sup> Grade class. The ceremonies were very encouraging from the standpoint of the future workforce. It is good to see students that are coming forward with strong interests in academics, as well as participation in a variety of extracurricular activities. Mrs. Terra Patrom reported also that a good Low Vision Conference was held June 9, 2009 at the Arkansas School for the Blind.

#### **DIVISION ISSUES:**

- DSB Board Appointments. June 30<sup>th</sup> is approaching and, technically, several positions on the board will be expiring. DSB is working with the Governor's office to support their staff efforts to get vacancies filled quickly. Lion Governor Jerry Pulliam, Council Chair for Arkansas Lions, is scheduled to attend this meeting shortly to discuss the Lions position on the board.
- Arkansas Council of the Blind (ACB). The annual state meeting of ACB was held May 1-2, 2009. Several DSB staff members, including myself, attended the state meeting, which had an excellent agenda, including a keynote address by National ACB President, Mr. Mitch Pomerantz.
- Committee of Licensed Blind Vendors. Vendors held their quarterly meeting May 9, 2009. Primary issues discussed included the declining number of locations and the highways production of income from Highway locations. It was noted that a new Department of Workforce Services facility just opened and DSB has one vendor trainee preparing for that location.

Arkansas Information Reading Services-AIRS (formerly Radio Reading Services for the Blind). National Federation of the Blind Newsline representatives have approached the division regarding how DSB might utilize Newsline services similar to what is available to consumer readers in several other states. DSB's proposal to NFB is for NFB to take over the provision of the larger news sources such as the Democrat-Gazette. This will allow DSB to concentrate on some of the more local papers, such as in Hot Springs, Batesville, and the other smaller towns in Arkansas. DSB and the AIRS foundation board (Friends of Arkansas Information Reading Services-FAIRS) hope that this service design will enable AIRS to serve more people and give them information that is more appropriate to their current needs, particularly related to employment.

- Board Orientation Training Modules. DSB anticipates building on the board orientation training that is available on-line connected with state rehabilitation councils. This source also offers guidance on strategic planning.
- Faith Based Initiatives. DSB's Faith-based Initiative focuses on providing services to unserved and underserved consumers across the state. In order to move this initiative forward we are contracting with centers for independent living to partner with churches and act as a conduit for job-related information available from DSB. Last year one center for independent living (CIL) participated with the division via contract. This year, two CIL's applied for a contract to provide faith based services. There are four CIL's in the state and we anticipate the other two will join our efforts in the future.
- Jump Start 2009. DSB saw an overwhelming response to the call for Jump Start applications this year. Twenty Two applications were accepted and participants were employed in such areas as Fletcher Library, Clear Channel Radio, Central Arkansas Transit, Central High Museum, Easter Seals, etc. Several staff provided job coach services to participants. I had the pleasure of coaching a very bright young man who was orienting himself to his Jump Start assignment at the Central High School Museum. Some of the future social and educational scheduled events include attending a Traveler's Game; attending a production of "Tommy" at the Reparatory Theatre; a River boat Cruise; Gator Park; a Metro Tour at Metropolitan National Bank; Wild River Country and touring the Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind. Participants work in actual paid jobs in the mornings, and gain independent living skills through afternoon classes that teach how to do laundry, plan for menus and cook, etc. Jump Start provides both independent living skills training and actual paid employment experience for individuals transitioning from high school to work or higher education. School for the Blind Superintendent Jim Hill, commended Jump Start Coordinator (and DSB Area Supervisor) Tanya VanHouten and the DSB Staff for the smooth operation of Jump Start on the ASB campus, in the midst of numerous other campus activities this year.
- Economic Stimulus Funds. DSB is moving forward with the Economic Stimulus Plan. The independent living supply depots will be available to eligible consumers beginning this month. The advantage of establishing a supply depot with each Rehab Teacher (RT) is that the rehab teachers will be able to provide the supplies

- immediately without the need to wait for an order to arrive. We are proceeding with the accessible Kiosks (computer locations that are reserved for blind and visually impaired persons) in ten workforce centers across the state. This is a joint effort with the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) through funds provided from the DHS Director's Office stimulus fund reserve. The tentative plan is to develop the ten sites currently identified by DWS, then follow up with other DWS locations with funds remaining from the original \$50,000 authorized, using what we learn to provide the best benefit to our consumers.
- Recruitment Efforts. During the last federal review in 2007, RSA identified the need for DSB to strengthen the quality and quantity of its organizational structure to better serve consumers in anticipation of a dramatic increase in turnover due to retirement of veteran staff. The five area supervisors deserve much recognition for their hard work in managing their day-to-day supervisory activities, maintaining vacant caseloads themselves, and still moving the recruitment process so that consumers will ultimately have Counselors and RTs they can work with long-term. Field Administrator Donna Walker, and numerous other field staff members are working hard to keep services moving in a difficult situation.
  - Territory Standards. As a part of the structural improvement in field services, staff is looking at the demographics of our consumers, and setting minimum caseload standards for staff based on population density and the incidence of blindness. This will enable DSB to recognize exemplary performance and target areas where more active outreach is needed.
  - State Pay Plan. DSB managers are currently involved in implementation of the results of the state pay plan study. The legislature and the State Office of Personnel Management (OPM) have been conducting this study for about five years. No job specifications have been released by State Personnel, and so very few DSB staff members know what their titles are going to be July 1. Hopefully by June 28 we can tell our staff something definite. That date is set by OPM for the conversion to new titles, pay scale, etc.
  - Vendor Recruitment. DSB is looking at how we can improve vending locations and increase interest in the Vending Facility Program (VFP) as a vocational outcome. DSB staff members are currently operating a Job Club connected with our tech lab, and we are fielding quite a few inquiries on VFP. The job club is open to the public and is facilitated by a Vocational Rehab Counselor.

- Strategic Energy Plan. The state is evaluating its energy use, and DSB will be pursuing a variety of ways we can conserve.

#### END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**APPROVAL OF STATE PLAN** - Mrs. Donna Walker reported that the draft state plan for vocational rehabilitation has been posted on line for comments. We received a total of 190 responses to the Needs Assessment survey and have factored those responses into the state plan. Some of the stated major problems include employment services, prescription management, orientation and mobility, assistance for reading mail and transportation assistance. We received a better population cross section response this time by distributing the State Plan Needs Assessment Survey so broadly and using a variety of media. Mrs. Nola McKinney made a motion to approve the 2010 State Plan. Ms. Lori Hunter seconded the motion. The board voted unanimously to approve the state plan. **Motion Passed.**

**CONSUMER OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE REPORT** – Ms. Lori Hunter stated that she wished to be replaced as the Chair of the Consumer of the Year committee. Mrs. McKinney made a motion that appointment of a new chair for the committee be tabled until the next board meeting. Mr. Dickie Walker seconded the motion. The board voted unanimously to approve. **Motion Passed.**

**APPOINTMENT OF EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE 2009** - Mrs. Berry appointed Mr. Walker as chair of the committee. Ms. Nelson and Ms. Hunter were named committee members. The award will be presented at the DSB statewide meeting October 19, 2009. Persons who wish to make nominations were reminded that incomplete nominations will not be transferred to the committee, and therefore not considered. Nominations must be completed in full to qualify.

**STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (SRC) TRAINING MODULES** – Mrs. Berry and Superintendent Jim Hill attended the SRC Training conference in St. Louis last summer that featured orientation and training modules for SRCs and the boards of state rehabilitation agencies. Orientation for SRC and state Board Members is mandated in the rehab act and the training modules are an easy, enjoyable and accessible way to meet that requirement. The program takes you through the rehab act and the processes of identifying board member responsibility to uphold the law. Members can either read or listen to the modules at [www.eRehab.org](http://www.eRehab.org). Each module provides a 10 item quiz at the end that can be taken numerous times, with a certificate issued for successful completion of each module. Mrs. Berry encouraged all DSB Board Members to take some part of the training prior to the next board meeting and hold a discussion on their value at the meeting.

**LIONS REPRESENTATIVE.** Mrs. Berry welcomed Council Chair Governor Jerry Pulliam who is attending the DSB board meeting on behalf of Arkansas Lions. Lion Governor Pulliam stated that he had three names to forward to Governor Beebe to consider for the vacant Lion's representative on the DSB board.

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

**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** – Arkansas Council of the Blind (ACB) has completed the nomination process for the ACB vacancy on the DSB board. The ACB national convention will be held in Orlando, Florida, July 3-11, 2009. The NFB convention will be held in Detroit, Michigan, July 3-8, 2009. The NFB state convention will be held September 25-26, 2009 at the Little Rock Hilton.

**NEXT MEETING.** The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, September 11, 2009, 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