

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
FRIDAY, JUNE 8, 2012

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Gerald Carr  
Teresa Doan  
Sandra Edwards  
Irma Nelson  
Dickie Walker  
Angyln Young

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Kara Aaron  
James Gatewood  
Jim Hill

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Gary Hall

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Larry Dickerson  
AER Vacant

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Erika Gee

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Tony Brown, Mary Cabaniss, Kandy Cayce, Mary Douglas, Rhonda Garmon, Robert Lamb, Christy Lamas, Mona Mason, Ginny McWilliams, Katy Morris, Jim Pearson, Lou Talley, Coral Virden, Cassandra Williams, Dwana 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 03/09/11 MINUTES.** Motion was made by Mr. Walker to approve the minutes. Ms. Nelson seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

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

Chairman Carr recognized Mrs. Sharon Berry, previous Chairman and Board member, by presenting her with a plaque in honor of her service. Mrs. Berry expressed her appreciation to the Board for allowing her to be a part of the board and said she learned so much during the eight years that she spent on the board. She said DSB has had a great impact on the children at ASBVI and adults across the state through the services, support, and opportunities it provides.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT

It has been a tough quarter for consumers and staff members. Everyone has been working very hard. Three of our staff members have experienced family tragedies.

Tina Shelby, Supervisor in the Harrison office, lost her father; Sally Mahan, Rehabilitation Assistant in the Fort Smith office, lost her father; and Feona Barnett, Vocational Instructor in the Fort Smith office, lost her brother. A lot of people are stepping up taking on a heavy burden, even though they have their routine work to do just the same. There is no way to thank them for their leadership.

At the end of this quarter, we will be saying goodbye to our Chief Fiscal Officer, Mary Cabaniss, who has been with us since 2004, and has kept the fiscal affairs running smoothly. In Fayetteville, we will say goodbye to Certified Voc Rehab Counselor Patrick Calaway, who is leaving to pursue his music career. Taya Kearney, Client Data Center Manager, in the Little Rock office will be leaving to spend more time with her children this summer, and we wish her the very best.

#### NATIONAL ISSUES:

CSAVR/NCSAB – The recent Council of State Administrators in Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) conferences were particularly valuable this year. At CSAVR, the heads of the state rehab agencies met on Capitol Hill with various Senators and Congressmen, including Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa, who gave us 45 minutes of his time. With a long history of support to rehabilitation, Senator Harkin gave a lot of ‘backstory’ on some of the legislation that has occurred over time. The opportunity for dialog with Senator Harkin was priceless. At NCSAB, there was a discussion of the role of technology in enabling persons who are blind. Technology should open up a lot of areas that have been closed to persons with visual impairments in past decades.

Assistant Secretary of Labor Jane Oates addressed state rehab directors. One issue of concern for DSB and blind agencies in other states was that the Work Keys assessment that results in the career readiness certificates at the Workforce Centers is not accessible to individuals who use screen readers. As a sighted person, I can go in on-line and take the assessment, but my blind counterpart can't. I raised that issue with Assistant Secretary Oates, noting that many job advertisements list Career Readiness certification as a pre-requisite to application, so without it, individuals who are blind would be functionally barred from applying. The Assistant Secretary pledged to check to see if one of the six contractors that provide these assessments may be interested in developing the online access to the testing.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) – The House version of the Workforce Investment Act passed through committee and now goes to the House floor. The members of NCSAB and CSAVR have major concerns with that version. It downgrades the Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services by removing it from presidential appointment. Additional changes to the act include elimination of the Rehab agencies from the state Workforce Board. This could allow decisions regarding rehabilitation funds to be made without representation by rehab.

Other proposed changes to the WIA include folding categorical program funding into vocational rehabilitation. This makes it look as if VR's funding is increasing slightly, but it is only increasing because other sources of funding are being folded into it, so it is not really an increase in VR. CSAVR/NCSAB staff representatives are actively educating Congress about these issues.

#### STATE ISSUES:

Partnerships – DSB is always in the process of developing and improving partnerships. RSA recommendations from the monitoring review in May 2011, charged DSB with two particular tasks: 1) get our Supported Employment network up and growing; and 2) plan out our short and long range policies and procedures, so that present and future staff will know what it is they need to do and how to do it. Christy Lamas, Little Rock Field Supervisor and DSB Transition Coordinator, is taking the lead for DSB with the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership. This involves the Department of Education/Special Ed and other agencies having a stakeholder interest in the lives of youth with disabilities that are in the educational and rehabilitation system. Mrs. Lamas just returned from the National Transition Conference and is applying what she learned there to partner with the statewide network of services to visually impaired youth.

#### DIVISION ISSUES:

Transition – The “Jumpstart” summer work experience program is a big part of the DSB Transition Initiative each year. Thirteen students are currently enrolled for 2012. There is already employer-praise for some of the students at the work sites, and the youth are enjoying their jobs. Initially, we encountered delay in getting some of the Jumpstart temporary employees hired, but, thanks to DSB staff members who stepped in to fill the labor gaps, things smoothed out and the program is going well.

As referenced in the State Plan, DSB is going to have Parent Summits in each of the five service areas so we can bring together the parents and stakeholders that affect the Individual Plan for Employment and the Individual Education Plan of transition-age students. The training is designed to better ensure that: 1) parents understand the rights of their children under both education and rehabilitation law and can be good advocates; 2) students are armed with the information they need to be good self-advocates; 3) personnel from various stakeholder agencies become more familiar with the related laws and regulations, and 4) everyone is connected in an ongoing dialogue.

Supportive Employment – RSA has encouraged DSB to expand the expertise of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) to provide supportive employment services to DSB clients. To do that, DSB is working with the federally sponsored Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center out of Hot Springs. The focus is upon expanding the capacity of those CRPs in Arkansas (World Services for the Blind-WSB and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind-ALB) that specialize in services to individuals with vision problems.

DSB and TACE have been in conversation with both organizations about how, as a team, we can better grow a supportive employment services network for DSB consumers. The initial plan is to customize a curriculum to the tasks needed to be performed by DSB consumers for willing employers. WSB would train the consumer to perform the tasks of a specific job family, and train the consumer's 'natural support system' (usually a family or church member) to provide long-term services that will support the consumer's opportunity to perform the identified tasks. Such support services may include assistance with Activities of Daily Living, Transportation, Job-coaching, etc. The group is looking at a training situation where WSB would provide tandem training for both the consumer and his/her natural support network (usually a family or church member).

Deaf Blind Awareness Week Proclamation – Tina Shelby is working on the presentation of the Helen Keller Deaf Blind Awareness Week proclamation, and it will likely occur in late June. We will post the date so everyone will know when it is going to occur at the State Capitol.

Operation Jump Start – Jim Pearson, Tony Brown and Jimmy McCune presented a small business development training in Harrison for DSB direct service staff and a few very vocal consumers. Operation Jump Start is a national program to help entrepreneurs understand what is entailed in starting a successful business, including how to do a business plan and arrange financing. The training also covered related DSB policy on small business as a self-employment vocational outcome for DSB consumers.

Older Blind Contract – The legislative Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER) committee met recently and approved the 2013 contract between DSB and World Services for the Blind for WSB management of the statewide Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) Program.

DSB continues to partner with WSB for the OIB program because state and federal funding to DSB has long been insufficient to address the needs of the growing population of older blind individuals statewide. We are working closely with WSB and Mississippi State University (MSU) to ensure WSB service delivery and DSB oversight continues to meet the performance standards that MSU is federally charged to evaluate.

Rehab Teacher Technology – DSB Rehab Teachers continue to expand their duties in vocational rehabilitation with emphasis upon demonstrating assistive technology. This has been a real change for the teachers who will be receiving additional formal training in assistive technology instruction to support them in their new duties.

Awareness and Satisfaction Survey – DSB is working with the Lighthouse for the Blind's call center to conduct a listener satisfaction survey of Arkansas Information Reading Service. The survey is being done in a joint effort with the Library for the Blind.

Budget. Mary Cabaniss, Cassondra Williams and I have just finished the annual budget process, which flows right into the biennial budget process. Because the 2012 legislative session was restricted to financial matters, DSB was delayed from submitting the

personnel and special language requests that are crucial to DSB compliance with the rehabilitation state plan. The result has been that DSB hiring supervisors repeatedly receive lists of applicants that do not meet RSA standards. We are working through DHS Human Resources to negotiate with state OPM to secure a considerable number of changes in classification of authorized personnel this session. No new positions are requested.

Vending – DSB staff are looking forward to the Annual Vendors Seminar to be held August 3-5 at the Hampton Inn in North Little Rock.

Federal Monitoring Review Action Steps – After a federal monitoring review, state rehab agencies implement recommendations through an approved corrective action plan for any issues deemed significant. During the 2011 federal review, the only issue subject to corrective action was DSB's method of invoicing for purchased services. Auditors required that DSB ensure that original invoices meet the definition per Generally Accepted Accounting Procedures (GAAP). Subsequently, DSB found a way to hopefully lighten some of the burden for staff by using electronic invoicing.

Administrative Procedures Manual –Assistant Director Cassondra Williams is developing a searchable administrative procedures manual for staff, so there will be an on-line indexed source to guide new staff and veterans as well. This will be particularly important as veteran staff retire in the coming years and fewer are available to mentor new staff. The Extreme Manual Makeover Team (EMMT) will review these procedures so that Cassondra will have input from staff in all specialty areas. EMMT is also looking at how we assign territories to staff, based on where our consumers live, and how we tie it back to performance.

Staff Tuition Support – Along with the budget, during the session, DSB will resubmit the special language regarding payment of tuition for staff seeking degrees and certification, since the language was delayed from last session. This is a formal part of the state plan.

Training – The Training Advisory Council (TAC) is a staff resource, representing all services areas, that makes recommendations on what training is needed. Last year, many staff expressed concern that significantly more training was needed, and that did occur. This year, most of the staff indicate that they need relief from the hectic training schedule so they can attend to other duties.

Peer Reviews – While Ginny McWilliams has been serving as interim Field Administrator, the Area Supervisors have stepped up to take on the responsibility of formal case review to prevent a backlog. Case review also serves as a training tool and the case review reports indicate better understanding of vocational rehabilitation and required reporting by the supervisors and subsequently the caseload staff.

BSIS – DSB is moving toward replacing the Blind Services Information System (BSIS), which is the data system that we use to track services to consumers and their related costs. A Request for Proposal (RFP) from data system companies has been floated and we are expecting responses shortly.

#### END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

DISCUSSION/APPROVAL OF STATE PLAN 2013 – Ginny McWilliams, Acting Field Administrator.

The FFY 2013 draft goals were approved at the December 2011 Board meeting. There were no comments received during the Public Forum comment period.

The goals approved last December are :

- (1) Goal 1 – DSB will increase employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired;
- (2) Goal 2 – DSB will increase its services to transition students; and
- (3) Goal 3 - DSB will expand its outreach efforts to include the general public as well as the unserved, the underserved, minorities and stakeholders.

**A motion was made by Irma Nelson to approve the state plan. Mr. Dickie Walker seconded the motion. Motion Passed.**

FIELD SERVICES - DSB is on target to meet our 305 closures that are required by September 30 to meet federal standards for FFY 2012. Everybody who has ever worked a VR caseload or handled a closure knows that it is extremely complicated and some counselors, supervisors and their assistants have worked especially hard this year. We have a net gain of 135 active clients over last year, and that is only through June 1. We have 171 closures year to date. We are currently down to the required 20 percent level for homemaker closures. Everything pending for the state fiscal year ending June 30<sup>th</sup> will be paid by June 15, and I want to thank all the supervisors, who have worked with new counselors or who had counselor vacancies and still ensured that none of the services or paperwork slowed down.

Business Partners - ReVRB (Regional Vocational Rehabilitation Business) Team continues with 12 major business partners identified in the region. The team has also developed a series of training modules entitled “12 Modules for the Foundation of Rehab” as an orientation to new staff, employers and the public. We are going to put it on the web so everyone can access it. End of Acting Field Administrator Report.

SCHEDULE FOR 2012 EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR (EOY) PROCESS – The call for nominations for EOY will be sent out by DSB Staff Development Coordinator Tony Brown July 9. All nominations are to be returned to Tony by close of business August 1. DSB will forward the complete nominations for eligible staff to the committee by August 10, and the committee will choose the winners prior to the Labor Day weekend. The

chairman of the committee will recommend the category winners and the overall winner to the full board at the September board meeting for approval. The DSB overall winner will be recognized during the Arkansas Human Services Employee Association (AHSEA) annual banquet and subsequently at the DSB Employee Recognition Luncheon October 29<sup>th</sup> during the DSB Annual Statewide Meeting. The statewide meeting will be held in Fayetteville October 29-31, 2012.

SCHEDULE FOR 2012 CONSUMER OF THE YEAR (COY) PROCESS – For this year, the guidelines established by the DSB Board provide that by October 15, the Area Supervisors will confirm to the Field Services Administrator that at least one consumer has been nominated for each VR counselor caseload. The Field Services Administrator will then consolidate the nominations into one selection packet listing the nominees on the overall rating form and ensuring that all of the nominations are accounted for.

November 1 – The Field Services Administrator will forward the packet electronically to the DSB Board COY Selection committee.

November 1 - December 1, 2012 – The DSB Board COY Selection Committee will review and score the nominations and select one overall DSB Consumer of the Year, based on the total points awarded.

December 1 – The Chair of the DSB Board COY Selection Committee will notify the DSB Director of the COY winner within thirty days following the receipt of the nomination packet, so that the Director can ensure that related arrangements can be made, such as transportation for the winner, preparation of a news release, and engraving of the COY presentation award.

December 14 – The board chairman or designee (usually the COY committee chairman) will announce the overall COY winner during the December board meeting.

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 – Mr. Dickie Walker made a motion that the board consider sending two DSB staff members to each national consumer convention. Irma Nelson seconded the motion. Motion passed. The national ACB convention will be held in Louisville, Kentucky. The state ACB convention is next April 20-21 at the Austin hotel in Hot Springs. The NFB National Convention is June 30-July 5 in Dallas, Texas. The NFB state convention will be held in October in Fayetteville.

PROCESS FOR EVALUATION OF DSB DIRECTOR 9/14/12 – The Board Chairman stated that the board needs to discuss how the evaluation of the Director is to be done this

year. The state Office of Personnel Management provides a standard form for evaluation of Director Level personnel. There are nine performance areas that are dictated in the evaluation:

- 1) job knowledge;
- 2) accountability;
- 3) leadership;
- 4) decision-making skills;
- 5) teamwork;
- 6) adaptability;
- 7) quality of work;
- 8) code of conduct; and
- 9) special projects, goals or assignments accomplished.

This is a standard form developed by the State Office of Personnel Management for use in evaluating director-level personnel statewide. Chairman Carr proposed that sometime in the near future he would send each committee member a copy of the 9 evaluation standards and that each board member would be able to document his/her evaluation/comments and send them back to Mr. Carr. Mr. Carr would then consolidate all of the comments received into one document for discussion. At the September 14 board meeting an executive session would be held giving the full board the opportunity to discuss each evaluation standard and come up with a consensus of a rating for that particular performance area. The board would then authorize Mr. Carr to score and sign the 2012 document reflective of board discussions, and discuss it with Mrs. Morris, and to sign the same OPM form for 2013, beginning the new evaluation period.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING - The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, September 14, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, First Floor, Conference Room A

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra Edwards  
Secretary