

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2011

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

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Ann Moore

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Erika Gee

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Tony Brown, Mary Cabaniss, Charlie Cain-Davis, Kandy Cayce, Francine Crain, Mary Douglas, Rhonda Garmon, Robert Lamb, Ginny McWilliams, Mona Mason, James McCune, Katy Morris, Jim Pearson, Judith Renick, Kena Sabb, Tina Shelby, Coral Virden, Cassondra Williams, Donna Walker, Larry Wayland, Dwana Williams

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

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

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

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The DSB Director introduced three new DSB staff members who were in attendance: Christy Lamas, Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor; Tony Brown, Staff Development Coordinator; and Jimmy McCune, Administrative Specialist with the Vending Facility Program.

NATIONAL ISSUES:

Budget – Congress approved a continuing resolution for the immediate future and reports indicate there may be movement to extend it another three weeks to avoid a shutdown of federal government. In the event of a government shutdown, DHS does have a related policy on reduced work hours when funding is interrupted, but it has been 15 or 20 years since it has been implemented.

National Library Service – A proposal has been made to Congress to reduce funding for Libraries for the Blind, which would mean about \$125,000 a year to Arkansas, which would be a significant cut to Library for the Blind budget.

Government Accountability Office (GAO) report – The GAO published a report indicating that there are some 250 federally funded vocational training programs, and the office is concerned that many such programs may duplicate services. Often Vocational Rehabilitation is lumped in with these generic training programs, rather than being viewed as a unique service to a special population.

Federal Review – The RSA review May 23 through May 27 will emphasize Transition, Organizational Structure and Finance. Hopefully several of the Board Members will be available that week to give input. DSB is in good shape on the issue of organizational structure, thanks to the clarification provided through the Attorney General's Opinion from a couple of years ago. Even though it does not carry the title, DSB clearly functions as a Commission and is recognized as such by RSA.

STATE ISSUES:

State Audit – Legislative Audit has completed its review of DSB Vocational Rehabilitation funding. The preliminary audit report noted that DSB should not use the medical invoice as the bill for payment. The Division will likely be required to submit a corrective action plan, showing how this will be corrected. Plans are to issue the proper procedure to staff and train on the subject March 16-18 during the quarterly meeting.

Executive Order 10-17 – The Employment First Task Force, established by Governor Beebe, is making steady progress. The overall purpose is to explore ways to increase the number of persons with disabilities employed in quality jobs in Arkansas.

Task Force recommendations are due to the Governor by October 31. For the state government Work Group within the Task Force, consumer groups are lending a hand in reviewing minimum qualifications to identify any state job descriptions that contain minimum qualifications that would automatically disqualify a person with a disability from being an applicant. Another task of the work group is to survey mid-level managers in state government to identify skill sets they consider necessary to be job-ready. Also the workgroup has recommended that state government use ARS and DSB to determine whether an applicant meets eligibility criteria as a qualified person with a disability. We would not be declaring whether they are eligible for an ADA accommodation, but just whether they are a qualified individual with a disability.

AASIS – Larry Wayland, Manager of the DSB Tech Lab, and Field Services Administrator Donna Walker have received Navigation Training in the Arkansas Administrative Statewide Information System (AASIS), and are utilizing live data. Besides their personal duties as managers, this is an important milestone for other persons who use voice synthesis to access information in AASIS. If AASIS is functionally accessible, it will open up state employment opportunities at several levels for persons who are blind.

DIVISION ISSUES:

Cost Allocation/Older Blind Program – The cost of services provided to Older Blind consumers from July 2010 to January 2011 exceeded those originally planned. Add to this the delay in federal funding due to the Continuing Resolution, and the reduced available funding required DSB to suspend services temporarily so that excess expenses would not charge against general revenue. Under the Order of Funding Priority developed by the DSB Board in 2006, available general revenue (above required match) is to be invested in the VR program to earn reallotment funds. While federal stimulus funds do remain for the Older Blind Program, the division is not allowed to pay for staff services with the funds due to their short term nature. Therefore DSB will seek to contract for OIB services with Lions World Services for the Blind through September 30, 2011.

Legislative Tracking – DSB will appear before the Joint Budget committee Monday regarding SB185, the appropriation bill, and HB2063 on Tech Access. HB 2063 names the Department of Information Services as the state entity responsible for regulating what computer equipment and access are acceptable. Senator Randy Laverty also submitted SB395 appropriating \$500,000 for DSB for eyeglasses and related services from general improvement funds.

Work Center for the Blind - We have been working on a bill (SB890) with the Lighthouse. In order for the Lighthouse to be eligible as a vendor of work center goods and services in the state purchasing system, it was necessary to rewrite an existing bill to create a new category of Work Center for the Blind. This language ensures the Lighthouse is not

identified as Sheltered Workshop, since their employees all make above minimum wage. This standing is important to the Lighthouse when it goes before Congress.

Prohibition of Drivers Licenses for DSB Consumers - HB 1422 passed and is now Act 194. The new law adds reporting responsibilities to the previous prohibition against DFA issuing Driver's Licenses to persons receiving DSB services.

DSB Board Vacancies - DSB will send the customary notification letter to alert the Governor of upcoming vacancies on the DSB Board.

2012 Budget – The budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1 is being drafted as previously approved by the board, recommended by the Governor and passed by the legislature. It contains no new positions, but contains appropriation available for contracting in the event DSB receives additional funds during federal reallocation.

Jonesboro DSB Relocation – The Jonesboro office is preparing to move with the rest of DHS to a renovated facility relatively close to the current location. DHS is committed to ensuring that DSB staff are provided space on a par with their DHS peers.

Disaster Preparedness – DSB is blending its disaster preparedness program with that of the Division of Volunteerism (DOV) to continue its local focus.

Workforce Agencies – The Memorandum of Agreement still rests with the Department of Workforce Services, but officials indicate it should be signed and returned to DSB shortly.

Jump Start – Jump Start is scheduled for Sunday, June 12 through Friday, July 1. DSB is working with the School for the Blind and other Transition Partners to finalize the curriculum identifying employment settings and arrange recreational activities.

Outreach to Minority Populations – DSB is continuing its outreach to minority individuals with vision impairment through the Faith Based Bridge to Employment contracts with the Centers for Independent Living (CILs). Last year three CILs participated in the initiative, and this year we are hoping that all four participate.

Consumer Satisfaction Survey – Shortly DSB will begin mailing consumer satisfaction surveys during the quarter following case closure, so that the information is fresher in the mind of the consumer and it is more likely DSB will have current addresses.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

APPOINTMENT OF EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE 2011

Ms. Irma Nelson will serve as Chairman of the committee. Mr. Dickie Walker and Ms. Sandra Edwards will serve as committee members.

APPOINTMENT OF CONSUMER OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE 2011

Ms. Angyln Young will serve as Chairman of the committee. Mrs. Kara Aaron and Ms. Sandra Edwards will serve as committee members.

ALTERNATE REPRESENTATION AT NATIONAL CONSUMER MEETINGS.

Mr. Dickie Walker made a motion that, in the event one or both of the consumer representatives on the DSB Board are unable to represent the board at their respective national meetings, the consumer representative(s) may name another of the remaining voting board members to attend the national consumer meeting as their proxy. The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion. **Motion Passed.**

AUTHORIZATION OF STATE PER DIEM RATE FOR TRAVEL TO NATIONAL CONSUMER MEETINGS. Mr. Dickie Walker made a motion that Board members be subject to state travel procedures and state per diem for reimbursement of official business costs related to travel to the national consumer meetings each year. Ms. Angyln Young seconded the motion. **Motion Passed.**

RESIGNATION OF AER EX OFFICIO REPRESENTATIVE ANN MOORE.

Chairman Berry informed the Board that Ms. Ann Moore voiced her intention to resign from the board at the end of the last board meeting. Ms. Berry asked AER Representative, Ms. Angyln Young, to inform AER, and request AER to name a replacement Ex-Officio representative to serve on the DSB Board.

BOARD DIRECTION OF DSB GOALS FOR 2012 STATE PLAN

Mrs. Donna Walker reported on the progress toward the goals set in the prior year and recommended strategies for the FY 2012 state plan.

Goal #1: DSB will increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: DSB will evaluate the effectiveness of the job developers and job coaches hired with stimulus money and, if productive in terms of consumer employment, will absorb the positions into the formula VR funding, adjusting purchased services to absorb these costs.

Performance Measure: A job development unit will be established.

Mrs. Walker reported that a job development unit was established with stimulus money to hire five job developers and five job coaches.

Strategy: Based upon consumer response and effectiveness, DSB will continue to hold Job Clubs to assist participants in acquiring job seeking skills and improving their probability of securing employment. *Performance Measure:* Weekly Job Clubs will be held at the DSB Tech Lab.

Mrs. Walker noted that Rehab Teachers have recently been reassigned to provide much more in VR services, including job search activities, the teaching of Braille as an employment tool and more involvement in job clubs. To increase peer support/ peer mentoring, DSB has used the Consumer of the Year program, Job Clubs, and support groups to have consumers encourage each other and share information.

Strategy: DSB will continue to expand employment services to minorities in the underserved Delta area through the new West Memphis office.

Performance Measure: DSB will see a rising number of cases from this new area.

Mrs. Walker reported that DSB has had an emphasis on increasing our role in the Delta and that is why we opened the West Memphis office and moved in that direction. We will continue to monitor that and see if it improves our outreach to underserved and unserved populations and minorities.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer individuals for benefits counseling.

Performance Measure: Area Supervisors will monitor caseloads to ensure that VR Counselors will refer at least 10 consumers per caseload for benefits counseling.

Mrs. Walker stated that VR counselors have been encouraged to refer consumers to qualified Benefits Counselors, so they don't have any last minute disincentives to work and can keep their health insurance and other benefits, along with being employed, and not get into a losing situation.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer eligible Older Blind individuals to VR.

Performance Measure: DSB will refer 100% of eligible Older Blind individuals to VR.

Mrs. Walker reported that DSB continues to refer all older persons who are seeking employment to the VR program. Historically, DSB has had a high number of people age 55 and older who are VR clients, because a lot of those people have to continue to work for economic reasons.

Strategy: DSB will continue to recognize successful consumers and their employers and will encourage peer mentoring.

Performance Measures:

Each counselor who has been in his/her position for at least a year will nominate one individual from his/her caseload as a candidate for Consumer of the Year and encourage the individual to serve as a peer mentor to other people who are blind or severely visually impaired.

DSB will award Consumer of the Year candidates and their employers with certificates/plaques and related publicity.

Mrs. Walker reported, as mentioned earlier, DSB has increased peer support/ peer mentoring, and used the DSB Consumer of the Year program, Job Clubs, and support groups to enable consumers to encourage each other and share information.

Strategy: DSB will continue to expand its assistive technology services and improve access to these services and equipment.

Performance Measures:

DSB will continue to offer assistive technology training to new Rehabilitation Teachers as vacant positions are filled, so that staff can provide basic technology support to consumers in their respective geographic areas statewide.

DSB will continue to provide training to new Workforce Services staff as vacancies occur in order to increase their knowledge of accessible technology and the needs of consumers.

DSB staff will continue to meet consumers at DSB-sponsored accessible kiosks at 10 Workforce Services centers in order to assist them in their job searches.

Mrs. Walker reported that DSB has continued to provide training using the kiosks at the workforce centers and the Tech Lab to continue to train new rehab teaching staff

Goal #2: DSB will increase its services to transition students.

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed.

Performance Measure: The Transition Coordinator will review the database to insure it is being maintained by Rehabilitation Assistants, who input local information.

Mrs. Walker commented that Transition has been a priority for quite some time. DSB works with other transition partners, such as School for the Blind, ESVI and AITP, attend conferences and network. Jump Start is a good example of a successful transition activity.

Strategy: VR Counselors will continue to track transition students on their caseloads to insure that the IPE is developed or updated before a student graduates from high school.

Performance Measure: Area Supervisors will monitor this during case reviews to insure that no transition student will graduate without a current IPE.

Mrs. Walker noted that VR Counselors are required by a special field directive to meet with students to develop their IPE's before the students leave high school.

Strategy: DSB will continue to provide assessments to transition students specifically focused on activities of daily living, including but not limited to, mobility, knowledge of available

transportation resources, self-advocacy, acquisition of a variety of reading options, awareness of job opportunities, and rights and responsibilities as an informed consumer.

Performance Measure: All transition students will be referred to Rehabilitation Teachers for assessment of daily living skills and needed instruction.

Mrs. Walker mentioned that the recently reassigned Rehab Teachers are providing much more in VR services, including job search activities and the teaching of Braille. The Rehab Teachers are highly involved in Jump Start.

Strategy: DSB will hold an Information Summit to assist parents in becoming more knowledgeable and better prepared to advocate for their children at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

Performance Measure: In FY 2011, DSB will invite ESVI and transition parents to an Information Summit with VR Counselors and Rehabilitation Teachers, to provide information about students' rights and accommodations.

As noted earlier, Mrs. Walker reported that DSB is working with ESVI, School for the Blind and AITP to share information on DSB role in assisting students to know their rights and accommodations and be peer mentors.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with ESVI.

Performance Measure: In addition to the current mail-outs, in FY 2011 an e-mail component will be added as a supplemental method of outreach. In addition to the local networking efforts, the Transition Coordinator will dialogue with ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB.

Mrs. Walker added that DSB is examining how it may increase collaboration with ESVI. DSB needs to increase its outreach to Transition youth, because we are consistently hearing that there are more transition kids out there than what we are serving. DSB needs to reach out to those students and we have to collaborate with Transition Partners to do that.

Goal #3: DSB will expand its outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as the unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders.

Strategy: DSB will use exhibit booths at highly populated events to educate the public about DSB services and their availability.

Performance Measure: A pilot project will be initiated to participate in two mid-sized festivals, alternating locations around the state, in spring and fall.

Mrs. Walker noted that DSB is working to increase numbers in the Delta and started trying to attend more outreach activities and local fairs in the state. DSB had a booth at the Toad Suck festival for the first time last year.

Strategy: DSB will increase its contacts with faith-based organizations.

Performance Measure: DSB will make at least one faith-based outreach effort in each of its geographic areas in FY 2011.

Mrs. Walker commented that DSB staff are working with the Centers for Independent Living to ensure the CILs are succeeding in their agreements with Faith Based Organizations.

Strategy: DSB will increase its services to minorities.

Performance Measures: DSB will make at least one minority outreach effort to Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnic groups in each of its geographic areas in FY 2011.

Mrs. Walker reiterated that DSB has had an emphasis on increasing its name recognition in the Delta through the presence of the West Memphis office. DSB will continue to monitor those services to measure the effectiveness of its outreach to underserved and unserved populations.

Strategy: Area Supervisors and administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well.

Performance Measure: DSB will continue to send at least five supervisors/administrators to these conferences and will make presentations as requested.

Mrs. Walker noted that DSB staff are encouraged to attend the national consumer conferences, and that board members do attend the national conferences. DSB has a good attendance of staff at ACB and NFB state conferences including supervisory staff.

Chairman Berry thanked Mrs. Walker for her report and stated that she would like the School for the Blind mentioned as one of the Transition entities for DSB. The School for the Blind has 16 graduates this year and they are transitioning.

Mrs. Walker requested that scholarship information be sent to her and she will forward it to the Rehab Assistants who will forward to the school contacts.

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT – Mr. Vincent McKinney said that DRC has been monitoring legislation on the federal and state level to see what each legislative body does that impacts persons with disabilities.

He indicated that the DRC wants to ensure as many persons with disabilities are served as possible and asked that referrals be sent to them. He noted that one of his personal goals is to ensure that people with disabilities are not discriminated against.

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.

ELECTION OF BOARD CHAIR (2-YR TERM)

Chairman Berry made a motion to elect Mr. Gerald Carr as the new DSB Board Chairman. Ms. Angyln Young seconded the motion. **Motion Passed.**

ELECTION OF BOARD VICE-CHAIR (1 YR-TERM)

Mr. Dickie Walker made a motion to re-elect Ms. Angyln Young as the Vice-Chairman. Mrs. Berry seconded the motion. **Motion Passed.**

ELECTION OF BOARD SECRETARY (1 YR-TERM)

Mrs. Berry made a motion to elect Ms. Sandra Edwards as Secretary. Mr. Dickie Walker seconded the motion. **Motion Passed.**

CONSUMER INPUT – The American Council of the Blind (ACB) State Convention will be held April 29-30, 2011 in Hot Springs at the Austin Hotel. The state NFB convention will be held in Northwest Arkansas October 14-15, 2011. The DSB Public Forum for the state plan will be held April 29, 2011 at 10:30 a.m. at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building. Mrs. Kara Aaron informed the board that the BVA national convention will be held in Las Vegas, Nevada in August 2011.

SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING. The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, June 10, 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