

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 20, 2003

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Jim Adams
John Becton
Lindi Johnson
Nola McKinney
Maria Morais

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Donna Hunt
Buddy Spivey

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

John Barnett
Searcy Ewell

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Pierre Curry
Jim Hill
Ramona Sangalli

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Jim Hudson, Katy Morris, Coral Virden, Carolyn Holbrook, Jim Pearson, Lyndel Lybarger, Donna Hartzell, Chris McKenzie, Anna Allen, Patsy Langham, Connie Chambers, Kandy Cayce

CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Lindi Johnson called the meeting to order and thanked the National Federation of the Blind of Arkansas (NFBA) for setting aside time to accommodate the quarterly meeting of the DSB Board in conjunction with the NFBA annual consumer meeting being held in Fayetteville.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. Mr. Jim Adams made a motion to accept the agenda. Mrs. Nola McKinney seconded the motion. Motion passed.

INTRODUCTIONS.

APPROVAL OF 06/14/03 MINUTES. Motion was made by Mr. Jim Adams and seconded by Mr. John Becton to approve the minutes of the June 14, 2003 Board Meeting. Motion passed.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Reauthorization is being considered in Congress. The Work Investment Act and IDEA are pending. The agency is under a continuing resolution and will be operating under the same level as last year beginning October 1 until the budget is approved. A Cost of Living Increase is anticipated in terms of all funding.

HAVA- (Help America Vote Act) The committee has been meeting and the plan is available. Blind Consumers had their first opportunity to vote by secret ballot.

JUMPSTART – Jumpstart was a success again this summer. The event is a transition program, sponsored by DSB and the Arkansas School for the Blind (ASB) held each summer on the ASB campus. Its purpose is to provide skills training and job experience to blind or visually impaired youth completing high school and preparing for college, a job, or Technical training. Seventeen students were involved in the program this year.

Arkansas Radio Reading Service Network (ARRSN) has been off the air for extended periods lately due to Arkansas Educational Television Network (AETN) broadcasting large blocks of children's descriptive video, which inadvertently replaced the ARRSBN broadcast. AETN is very interested in hearing from consumers regarding their preference for the broadcast of descriptive video or the regular ARRSBN broadcast.

Statewide Vendors Meeting – The Annual Vendors' meeting was held in Little Rock in August and was very successful, with vendors actively discussing issues and exchanging ideas on location management and business operations.

RSA Federal Review – The RSA representative from Dallas spent the week at DSB reviewing processes, policies and many case files. DSB suggested that consumers be represented in the reviews of state rehab agencies and the RSA regional rep agreed to forward the suggestion to Washington. A report of the findings will be received in approximately forty to sixty days.

Error Correction – The field statistical report in the September 2002 board packet contained math errors. They were discovered and corrected before submission to the federal reporting agency last fall. However, for your files, corrected copies of the report are in your packet.

Successful Rehabilitation – Status 26 Closures. The total number of 26 closures for federal fiscal year 2002 was 325. We are expecting to meet or exceed that level for 2003.

Older Blind Program – The program is in real crisis. The Governor had recommended \$325,000 in additional general revenue during the last legislative session. This amount was appropriated by the legislature, but when the funding act, Revenue Stabilization, was finalized, the act contained none of the additional \$325,000 approved for Older Blind. In view of this, DSB is aggressively seeking other funding possibilities for Older Blind, as well as implementing cost reductions.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

INDEPENDENT CONSUMER SURVEY – During the past state fiscal year, DSB contracted with Opinion Research Associates (ORA) of Little Rock, a nationally recognized polling organization, to conduct the federally mandated Comprehensive Needs Assessment of DSB consumers. ORA has provided similar research to DSB in past years, and is very familiar with DSB services. ORA president Dr. Earnest Oakleaf presented an overview of the results of the survey to the DSB Board. The majority of DSB services rated well or very well, with Older Blind consumers in general demonstrating a higher level of overall satisfaction than consumers of Vocational Rehabilitation services. Details of the responses by program are posted at <http://arkansas.gov/dhs/dsb/DSB03survey.doc> Board Chairman Lindi Johnson thanked Dr. Oakleaf for traveling to Fayetteville and presenting the survey results and suggested ORA submit a proposal with cost estimates to the DSB Director for conducting another consumer survey next fiscal year.

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT – No report was received and no representative was present.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC) – The report from AILC Director, Peggy Vickers, was submitted with the Board packets. The AILC continues its activities together with, and on behalf of, persons with disabilities, raising funds through fashion shows, golf tournaments, pageants etc., applying for grants, presenting informational programs, participating in job seminars, etc. Mrs. Vickers expressed appreciation to DSB for its support and interest in AILC activities.

SPECIAL REPORT ON THE INDIANA VENDING PROGRAM - Mr. Ron Brown, a successful vendor in the state of Indiana, and a national representative of the National Federation of the Blind, spoke to the DSB Board regarding vending operations in that state. Most of the locations in Indiana are vending machine operations, but the program is looking to diversify further, possibly into state parks, prison commissaries and interstate locations. Indiana vendors average \$31,000 in annual income compared to the \$34,700 national average income for licensed blind vendors. There are 120 vending locations currently and 77 vendors. Mr. Brown noted that Indiana has a very active committee of blind vendors, adding, “The number one rule of any vending program is active participation and communication”. As the NFB rep, Mr. Brown noted that NFB has a Blind Merchants division that sponsors a Blind Leaders and Superior Training (BLAST) Conference each year with the next one scheduled for Florida in April of 2004. He encouraged interested parties to attend.

CONSUMER INPUT – Mrs. Maria Morais represented the DSB Board at the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. Mrs. Nola McKinney represented the DSB Board at the American Council of the Blind (ACB) Convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Mrs. McKinney noted that one of the main topics discussed at the Council convention was the need for transportation. She also

congratulated Michael Triplett of Arkansas on winning 3 ACB scholarships. Other topics of particular interest at ACB were digital books, glow in the dark canes, and small electronic magnifiers.

DSB QUARTERLY SUCCESS REPORT – In the interest of time, Chairman Lindi Johnson tabled the quarterly success report until the next quarterly board meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.

The next DSB Board meeting is scheduled at 10:00 a.m., December 13, 2003 in Little Rock at the Donaghey Plaza South building, First Floor, Conference Room A.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nola McKinney
Secretary