

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2013

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Gerald Carr
Sandra Edwards
Irma Nelson
Angyln Young

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Kara Aaron
James Gatewood

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Teresa Doan
Gary Hall
Dickie Walker

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Larry Dickerson
Jim Hill
AER Vacant

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Erika Gee

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Tony Brown, Charlie Cain-Davis, Kandy Cayce, Chris Dean, Mary Douglas, Lilian Felicitas, Lisa Fore, Rhonda Garmon, Ebony Kelly, Robert Lamb, Christy Lamas, Jim McCune, Ginny McWilliams, Mona Mason, Katy Morris, Jim Pearson, Judith Renick, Kena Sabb, Tina Shelby, Lou Talley, Jessie Thomas, Tanya VanHouten, 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 Ms. Irma Nelson to approve the agenda. Ms. Angyln Young seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

APPROVAL OF 12/14/12 MINUTES. An amendment was made to reflect the discussion of memberships during the last board meeting. Motion was made by Ms. Irma Nelson to approve the minutes. Ms. Sandra Edwards seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT

NATIONAL ISSUES:

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) – HR803, which restructures the WIA, has been approved in committee. It eliminates 36 job training programs that are partner programs, but none of them are rehabilitation programs. The Democrats and staff walked out in opposition when the bill was passed out of committee. The bill downgrades the RSA Commissioner from a presidential appointment. If the bill becomes law, the head of each State Rehab agency would no longer be members of State Workforce Board, and the VR Counselors would no longer be members of the local Workforce boards. The utilization of VR dollars would be decided to an extent without voting representation of Rehab.

Sequestration – The continuing resolution goes through March 27. The impact of sequestration would mean a 5% reduction to Vocational Rehabilitation funds, but VR is entitled to a 3.5% COLA, which lessens the cut. The reason why the reduction won't hit DSB Voc Rehab consumers, including Supported Employment this year, is because DSB maintains a reserve from its earned VR re-allotment dollars to buffer the consumer impact of crises as they arise. It's the tiny categorical programs such as Independent Living Rehabilitation-ILRS and OIB-Older Blind) that will feel it. In 2012, DSB received a \$1.7 million performance bonus in re-allotment and a \$1.8 million award in 2011. DSB uses these funds conservatively to bridge the peaks and valleys of funding allotment.

Reduction in Force/Reduction in Hours Worked – DSB has not experienced an RHWP (Reduction in Hours Worked Plan) since about 2000 where state and federal agency staff had to take off one day of work a week without pay. No RHWP is expected for DSB, though it is for federal offices. It is looking very chaotic in D.C., but DSB as a whole should be in good position to absorb the reduction in the short term. Nobody knows what is going to happen in the long run.

STATE ISSUES:

New ARS Commissioner – We welcome Senator Randy Lavery as the new commissioner of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. Randy had worked with DHS for the Division of County Operations years ago for about eight years. He is absolutely familiar with DSB and has served as an official advocate for persons with disabilities after he left DHS. After being a senator for so many years, he also has a really strong knowledge in disability programs in the state. We are really glad to see him appointed as Commissioner at ARS.

PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES:

Field Chief Christy Lamas summarized the current partnership in Supported Employment services - Vocational **Assistance Under Long Term (VAULT)** - VAULT is a joint effort between DSB, WSB and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind. Staff of the organizations have been meeting and working on job placement, and the partner agencies have developed and signed an agreement and endorsed related fee schedules.

Assistive Technology Instructor Training – Christy also described the progress of the effort to provide equipment and instruction in assistive technology training to the corps of eleven DSB Rehab Teachers across the state, to qualify them for emerging certification standards being developed by the academic arm of AER. WSB is developing the curriculum and will provide instruction to DSB Rehab Teachers through a mix of on-line and face to face sessions.

Division of County Operations (DCO) – DSB remains in conversation with the Division of County Operations to routinely employ DSB consumers in DCO call centers and other county offices. DCO is currently renovating its data system to accommodate recent significant service program changes and to provide for access by DSB consumers employed by DCO as a result of this partnership. Employment results are expected within the 2014 federal fiscal year.

Arkansas Children’s Hospital – DSB staff are working with Arkansas Children’s Hospital to develop opportunities for employment of DSB consumers in a medical setting. Both parties are committed and an agreement is under development. Rehab Counselor Dawna Fultz of Texarkana took the lead in this initiative and has seen some success in the early stage.

State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) – Policy Development Manager Kandy Cayce is guiding us through the latter stages of development for the state plan for independent living, together with staff of ARS and the State Independent Living Council.

State Lions Club Convention – Recent questions from Lions Clubs across the state made it appear that many clubs are unaware of the services offered by DSB that support their own club efforts in the local communities. In light of this, I contacted the Lions Council of Governors and have been granted the opportunity to address the state Lions in convention in early May. Members of the Friends of Arkansas Information Reading Services (FAIRS) Board will also be there with informational items and man the DSB Information Booth. Hopefully, it will give us a chance to increase awareness among the clubs.

DIVISION ISSUES:

Tech bill – DSB experienced a great setback the other day when Senate Bill 440 was filed. It strips the state’s existing prohibition against purchase of inaccessible technology. SB440 was approved by the senate committee, went right to the senate floor, was approved there, moved on and is now sitting on the Governor’s desk for signature.

Appropriation Bill – Other legislation includes DSB appropriation bill SB211. It is being held in the Joint Budget Committee along with hundreds of other bills, because there is so much going on during the session and things have been so contentious.

Closures – I want to congratulate field services, as counselors are well on track to meet performance standards pledged in the state plan. Last March, we had assisted consumers in achieving 73 successful rehabilitation closures, and this year at the same time we are at 117.

AWARE – Staff from all sections of the agency are working very hard on the replacement for our well-respected Blind Services Information System (BSIS). The replacement is called “AWARE”.

Leadership Training – Our WINGS leadership training initiative is on track. Rehab Teacher Tanya VanHouten reported that she and teammates Amy Jackson and Jo Ann McAdoo have sent out all the surveys to the counselors, technology staff and clients of the last year. The team will return to Oklahoma next week for another segment of the leadership training.

Recruitment – DSB is seeing significant improvement in the timely flow of recruitment. This has taken a huge amount of work on everybody’s part, but is really showing progress. DSB as a whole normally does not have a very high turnover rate compared to the Department, but the clusters of geographically located turnovers makes it extremely hard on Jonesboro and West Memphis who have been without a RT and VRC. In the West Memphis office we lost Kenneth McCoy, who retired back in October.

Staff Changes – We want to welcome Rehab Teacher Monica (mone-nee-kuh) Taylor out of the West Memphis office. We have hired Monica and Runar (rune-ar) Jensen, who is the certified Rehab Counselor for the West Memphis office. Dominique Maltbia is our new Rehab Assistant in the Little Rock office.

Farewell to Larry Wayland - Most of you may know that we have been anticipating losing State Rehab Technologist Larry Wayland to retirement as of June 30, but now Larry is planning his exit April 30 and so far will not hear of us giving a retirement celebration for him. If you get a chance, please stop by and say goodbye to Larry.

Jump Start 2013 – As the DSB Coordinator for Jump Start, Tanya VanHouten reported that we are at the application stage and have 20 slots allotted. The dates for Jumpstart are June 9 to June 28. The deadline for submission of the applications is March 29. World

Services for the Blind's College Prep Program will overlap the last week of Jump Start, but WSB will be flexible with the schedules of students wanting to do both. The T-shirt motto this year will be "Jump Starting a Bright Future" and the shirts will be green and yellow. This year's community service will be bottled water distribution. The bottles will have inspirational quotes on them and the distribution will be made to our local homeless shelter.

Small Business – So far this year, DSB has two consumers who have submitted successful small business plans. One is in the Jonesboro area, and the other is a former Lighthouse employee in central Arkansas. DSB has placed particular emphasis on small business this year because of the difficulty of finding employers in rural Arkansas.

VA Location – Business and Technology Administrator Jim Pearson reported that the Department of Veterans Affairs in Fayetteville approved a new vending facility location in the lobby of the new VA outpatient center. The location will sell pre-packaged goods and is planned to open in July, 2013.

Support Groups – The Rehab Teachers continue to assist the blindness support groups around the state. They provide assistance from a VR standpoint, because the direct service programs of DSB are currently all VR. Support groups are encouraged to take advantage of the availability of the Rehab Teachers for this purpose.

Awareness of Consumer Group Activities – As discussed in earlier board meetings, counselors will be notifying consumers of group activities in the spring and in the fall and encouraging them to take part. Christy has that poised for going out next week. It will be information on both ACB and NFB, including when and where their state meetings will be held.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

SCHEDULING OF EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR (EOY) PROCESS AND
SCHEDULING OF CONSUMER OF THE YEAR (COY) PROCESS –

Staff Development Coordinator Tony Brown reported on the proposed schedule for the Employee of the Year (EOY) process, noting that Monday, July 8, he will post a call for nominations from the general public and DSB Staff. The deadline for Tony to receive the nominations will be Friday, August 2. Tony will then assemble the nomination packets and forward them to the board EOY subcommittee by August 14. The subcommittee will meet between then and the September 13 board meeting and select the categorical winners and an overall winner for recommendation to the full board at its September 13th meeting. Following board vote, the 2013 Employee of the Year will be announced. The DSB overall Employee of the Year will be honored at the AHSEA state conference October 9-10. It is proposed that DSB recognize the EOY winners in each category and the overall winner during DSB Statewide Meeting to be held in conjunction with the December board meeting at the same time we recognize the Consumer of the Year. Chairman Carr

noted that this suggestion will be taken under consideration until the next Board meeting in June, which will still be six months before the statewide meeting.

RECAP OF VR GOALS FOR PUBLIC FORUM AT 3:00 P.M. – Christy Lamas reported that the following goals were approved at the December 2012 board meeting:

(1) DSB will increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired; (2) DSB will increase its services to transition students, and (3) DSB will expand its outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as unserved and underserved individuals, minorities, and stakeholders. The public forum being held today for the purpose of seeking consumer input on these goals.

BOARD APPROVAL OF REIMBURSEMENT OF MEMBERS – State law requires that each state board authorize any reimbursement rates for board members during the first meeting each calendar year. It was proposed that board reimbursement be limited to state rates, and that this apply as well to sponsored attendance at the national consumer meetings. Sponsored delegates to the national meetings of NFB or ACB must be a member of the DSB board. Sandra Edwards made a motion to approve. Irma Nelson seconded the motion. Motion Passed.

DISCUSSION OF DSB 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION – Act 481 of 1983 took effect July 1, 1983. It was proposed that DSB pursue celebration of its 30th anniversary. Angyln Young made a motion to approve. Irma Nelson seconded the motion.

CALL FOR 3 NOMINATIONS EACH TO GOVERNOR BY ACB, NFB AND LIONS FOR BOARD MEMBERS WITH TERMS ENDING 6/30/2013 – On June 30, four of the seven board members' appointed terms run out. Two are eligible for reappointment and two are not. A member can serve two consecutive four-year terms, but then would have to be off the board for four years before being able to return to the board. A letter has been sent to the council chairman of the Arkansas Lions, and will be sent to the other organizations to submit at least three names to the Governor's office for these positions. Chairman Carr stated that he is eligible for reappointment, but has elected not to seek it, since he has completed twelve years on the board. He is confident the Lions will nominate a good person to take his place.

CONSUMER SATISFACTION REPORT 2012 – DSB Statistician Jimmy McCune reported that all closed FFY 2012 VR consumers were polled regarding their satisfaction with DSB services. The survey consisted of ten questions, and consumers were asked to indicate their satisfaction by choosing between strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. A total of 501 surveys were mailed out in 2012 compared to 530 that were mailed the previous year. This is a 5 1/2 % decrease. The number of surveys returned undeliverable was 49 or 9.78% compared to 28% the previous year. To date, 94 surveys have been returned with responses. The 94 surveys returned represented a 20.80% return rate compared to a 28.21% return rate the previous year. Responses were down 7.41%. Of the 94 surveys returned, the combination of strongly agree and agree represented an overall 91.32% satisfaction rate with the services that DSB offers, compared to a 92.27% overall satisfaction rate the previous year.

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

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) - ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR (1-YR TERM) - ELECTION OF SECRETARY (1-YR TERM) The Board Chairman recommended that the current Board members continue to serve until the Governor appoints a replacement for the pending vacancies. Irma Nelson made a motion to table the elections until the next Board meeting, June 14, 2013. Angyln Young seconded the motion. Motion Passed.

CONSUMER INPUT – The ACB state convention will be held in Hot Springs April 19-20, 2013 at the Austin Hotel. This year there will be an antiques appraisal and an auction to benefit Arkansas School for the Blind. Also there will be transportation available for a nominal fee departing from World Services for the Blind in Little Rock at 2 p.m., Friday April 19.

The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, June 14, 2013 at 1:00 p.m. at DHS Donaghey Plaza South, conference rooms A and B. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra Edwards
Secretary