

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

December 14, 2002

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Jim Adema
John Barnett
John Becton
Searcy Ewell
Lindi Johnson
Nola McKinney
Maria Morais

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Pierre Curry
Jim Curry

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

NONE

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Donna Hunt
Ramona Sangalli
Kara Mahan
Buddy Spivey

DHS Representative: Artee Williams

Attorney General's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Jim Hudson, Katy Morris, Coral Virden, Carolyn Holbrook, Richard Behra, Linda Paxton, Jim Pearson, Lyndel Lybarger, Gloria Mance, Chris McKenzie, Donna Hartzell

CALL TO ORDER

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. Mr. John Barnett made a motion to accept the agenda. Mr. Searcy Ewell seconded the motion. Motion passed.

INTRODUCTIONS.

APPROVAL OF THE 09/14/02 MINUTES. Motion was made by Mr. Searcy Ewell and seconded by Mr. Jim Adams to approve the minutes of the September 14, 2002 Board Meeting. Motion passed.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT– Across the nation, state rehabilitation agencies are functioning under a continuing resolution, which means Congress is funding the state agencies at status quo until the final appropriation bill is passed.

Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act–There has been some talk about moving the Rehabilitation Services Administration from the federal Education Department into the Department of Labor. Organizational status is not the important thing. What matters is that state rehab agencies must be given the responsibility and authority to work with severely disabled consumers and provide effective services.

The National Federation of the Blind State Convention was held in Fort Smith, in late October. This year's meeting presented the opportunity for a good interchange between consumers and agency personnel on consumer issues. The Federation passed a resolution commending the newly formed NFB Arkansas Association of Blind Students on the success of its transition event that was held at the Arkansas School for the Blind. The event was very effective in introducing students to what they can expect in higher education and the world of work.

The American Foundation for the Blind recently provided funding to DSB and Lions World Services for the Blind for an initiative to enhance literacy among adults who are blind. DSB staff also attended substance abuse training at Lions World Services for the Blind in order to better address the elevated rate of substance abuse within the population of disabled persons.

Work Force Investment Board–This is a group of over 40 individuals, consisting primarily of private business people. Recently the strategic planning committee has been studying employment-focused services in the state, and how they relate to each other. It recommends how services should be organized to ensure that individuals have appropriate opportunities for jobs in the state.

DSB Vocational Rehabilitation staff should be particularly commended for their achievement during the federal fiscal year, which just ended September 30. A record 325 consumers were placed into gainful employment during the year, even though staff had less funding for purchase of services than in recent years.

Client Satisfaction Survey–The surveys have been mailed. The agency is in the process of hiring a case reviewer and a report will be submitted at the March 2003 Board meeting.

Ticket-To-Work-The tickets went out in November and so far only one individual has given the agency a ticket. All clients receiving social security benefits, SSI and SSDI, are given a ticket to receive paid-for services that can be taken to any employment network to receive services in order to become employed. The employment network is then reimbursed for services. A list of entities comprising the Employment Network for the state of Arkansas is available on the Ticket To Work Website. Go to

Arkansas Radio Reading Services–Radio Reading Services is continuing to work on constitutional revision and downsizing the ARRSBN Board.

Nola McKinney represented the DSB Board and presented awards to DSB staff during the statewide meeting held in Hot Springs, September 16–18, 2002. The employees receiving awards were Jimmy Jones in direct services, Dwana Tatum in clerical services and Randy Johnson in administrative services. Jimmy Jones was the 2002 DSB Employee of the Year.

Budget–DSB has requested \$325,000 each year in general revenue for the Older Blind program for the next two years. The request has been supported by DHS Director, Kurt Knickrehm, and was recommended to the legislature for funding by Governor Mike Huckabee. This is the first time since its inception that the Arkansas older blind program has received a recommendation from a Governor for significant General Revenue support. If this revenue is not received, the staff and number of consumers served by the Older Blind Program will have to be significantly reduced. Without an increase in total General Revenue, DSB must divert excess General Revenue (above match requirements) from the Older Blind Program to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) or forfeit federal VR funds.

State Police is currently investigating some activity and expenditures from prior fiscal years in the Pine Bluff office that were questioned by Legislative Audit.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Vending Facility Program (VFP) Report-(Presented by Jim Pearson, Business & Technology Administrator). The Vending Facility Program licenses and monitors snack bar type operations throughout the state under the federal Randolph-Sheppard Program. Blind persons interested in becoming licensed blind vendors are referred to VFP by Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. Following a battery of skills tests, qualified candidates receive six weeks on the job training (OJT) with a seasoned manager. During OJT, the seasoned manager will demonstrate to the vending trainee how to purchase, price and sell products, deal with customers, etc. Training manuals, quizzes and exercises that are specifically job related are also utilized for training. After a trainee is licensed as a vendor, he/she will complete a four month probationary period in a location, performing daily vending operations independently. The VFP program has 29 locations throughout the state, with 21 in state agencies and the remaining eight split

evenly between federal and private locations. The managers, who are considered self-employed for tax purposes, earn an average \$17,554.00 annually in income and another \$1,683 in leave and retirement each year. Eleven percent of each manager's net profit is returned to the VFP Program to purchase equipment and provide training. This totals approximately \$65,000 to \$70,000 a year. Under the Randolph-Sheppard Program, managers select a governing body for their Vendors Association. This body also serves as an Advisory Committee for the Vending Facility Program, meeting quarterly. A Vendor Training Seminar is held annually to update managers on health codes, technology equipment, food, product vendors, food service, etc. Anyone needing additional information of VFP can contact Jim Pearson at (501) 682-0350.

ASB SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM –(Presented by Board Member Jim Adams) The three week program began with 33 students and ended with 29 students, and was very successful. The program is a blend of social and academic enrichment for school age students second grade through age 18. Field trips to Wild River Country and a barge ride, picnic and swimming at Lake Ouachita are popular among the students. A Little Rock Master Gardening program is also popular. The program, in conjunction with the Jump Start program, ended with a talent show which was very positive.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC) –The report is to be mailed to the Board Members.

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT – No report was submitted.

CONSUMER INPUT– ACB is selling dancing Hamsters and Beanie Babies. The ACB state convention will be held March 21-22, 2003, in Springdale, Arkansas.

The Division of Services for the Blind, Lioness Club and Garland County Library are sponsoring the Third Annual Vision Fair Thursday, January 16, 2003, 10:00 a.m to 4:00 p.m. Services provided are glaucoma and acuity checking, diabetic checking, blood pressure checks and additional information.

The National Federation of the Blind is hosting its annual legislative event the first week in February in Washington, D.C. Members will meet with Senators and Congressmen regarding legislation. Also, a half day seminar will be held on rehabilitation issues.

Chairman Lindi Johnson suggested that future Board meetings might be scheduled around the NFB and ACB State Conventions.

QUARTERLY SUCCESS REPORT- (Presented by Dena Lambert, a blind student at

the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville). The Arkansas Association of Blind Students, in cooperation with the Division of Services for the Blind, Arkansas School for the Blind and State Department of Education, conducted a weekend transition for eleven college students at the Arkansas School for the Blind. The meeting was positive and very successful.

The Board Meeting was adjourned.

The next DSB Board meeting is scheduled at 10:00 a.m., March 8, 2003 in the Donaghey Plaza South building, First Floor, Conference Room A.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nola McKinney

Secretary