

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 10, 2006

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Berry
Bob Connell
Lori Hunter
Lindi Johnson
Nola McKinney

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Harold Brewer
Jim Hill

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

James Johnson
Searcy Ewell

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Ramona Sangalli
Buddy Spivey
AER Ex-officio (replacement pending)

DHHS Representative: Janie Huddleston

Attorney General's Office Representative: Tom Gay

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Jim Hudson, Katy Morris, Coral Virden, Carolyn Holbrook, Jim Pearson, Donna Birdwell, Mary Cabaniss, Kandy Cayce, Ginny McWilliams, Charlie Cain-Davis

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Lindi Johnson called the meeting to order.

Chairman Johnson welcomed new board member, Mr. Bob Connell, representing the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER).

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. Motion was made by Mrs. Nola McKinney to approve the agenda. Mr. Bob Connell seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF 03/11/06 MINUTES. One amendment was made to the minutes to correct the name of the Chief Instructor of the UALR program certifying Teachers for the Visually Impaired. The correct name should reflect Dr. Margaret Robinson. Motion was made by Mrs. Sharon Berry to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Bob Connell seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT - Congratulations to the new Chief of DSB Field Services, Ms. Donna Birdwell.

The meeting with the RSA Federal Representatives, Ms. Melodie Johnson and Ms. Jackie Stuckey was very successful. Major discussion points were the DSB service delivery program and its interaction and collaboration with other agencies around the state and country. Several interviews were conducted with consumer interviews being the most significant and impressive, according to RSA. DSB staff members at all levels were also interviewed. During the exit conference, the federal representatives made suggestions on what DSB needs to do in certain program areas, taking into consideration existing money constraints. DHHS Assistant Director Janie Huddleston has been an advocate for additional funding for DSB, particularly in the Older Blind Program, and we look forward to working with her during the upcoming legislative session.

The final day of the federal visit included a conference call regarding nationwide standards and indicators with Mr. Jerry Elliott, the statistical expert with Rehabilitation Services Administration in Washington. Besides statistical analysis, Mr. Elliott has experience in running a VR agency and working with the blind agencies. Mr. Elliott observed that DSB again passed all the standards and indicators during the last reporting year. He noted that the Standards and Indicators report does not project where an agency needs to be, but rather only indicates whether it is successful in meeting the minimum standards set for all rehab agencies.

DSB Director expressed his appreciation to Mr. Jim Hill, superintendent of the Arkansas School for the Blind and Mr. Eddie Miller, the Client Assistance Program Coordinator with the Disability Rights Center, for their participation in the interview process. The federal representatives were particularly intrigued with the supportive relationship between DSB and the Disability Rights Center. Appreciation was extended to Mrs. Janie Huddleston, Mrs. Lindi Johnson and the consumer groups as well as all the DSB staff involved in the Federal visit. DSB has some areas to be working on following the results of the review, and look forward to the RSA officials writing us about how they really perceived everything.

WORKFORCE– The DSB Director, along with policy writer Ms. Kandy Cayce, has been involved in Workforce Committee meetings on English Proficiency and Disability Access. DSB is looking at better ways to familiarize the Hispanic community with the availability of DSB services. The division is also awaiting the results of a survey of workforce centers and how they are assisting persons with disabilities throughout the state. The document will be used to develop a strategy, beginning in the next two weeks, on how we can assist the workforce centers to improve services to persons with disabilities.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

OLDER BLIND CONSUMER REPORT – Mrs. Ginny McWilliams reported that Brenda Cavanaugh with Mississippi State University had finished compiling the information for the consumer satisfaction survey of the Older Blind Program nationwide. Dr. Cavanaugh intends to submit the report in time for distribution at the next board meeting.

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE REPORT – Mrs. Nola McKinney reported that, without the proposed staff profile, only minimal changes would be made to the Employee of the Year nominating form. The awards will be presented in October and the nomination form deadline will be the first Friday in August.

ANNUAL BUDGET 2007– Ms. Mary Cabaniss reported that the annual budget process began in April of this year and the final document was submitted May 5. It is a base line budget with the exception of the cost of living increase for employees (COLA) which is up to 3% above the employee's annual salary. There was a \$100,000 decrease in maintenance and operations costs budgeted in 2007 due to a projected decrease in computer purchases this year. Most of the agency computers were replaced last year.

The biennial budget process has begun. DSB has requested nine positions for the older blind program which includes one supervisor and eight rehab teachers. The request includes additional case service funding to support the additional staff positions as well as travel and maintenance and operations for the additional staff as part of the request. The request is approximately \$550,000 per year of the biennium. DHHS executive staff is familiar with the DSB request and a meeting is scheduled next week for discussion. We will keep the board updated on the progress of the biennial budget, which covers state fiscal years 2008 and 2009, as it goes forward for consideration by the Governor and the Legislature.

BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY REPORT – Mr. Jim Pearson, administrator of Business and Technology, reported upon the activities of the Section.

The Vending Facility Program (VFP) Unit currently serves 23 staffed vending locations across the state, which produce average vendor earnings of about \$18,300 a year. Nineteen of the locations are state facilities and four are federal. Under a special state law, colleges have taken over several of the previous VFP locations in the past two years, because the institutions can enter into a contract with vending machine companies that pay the colleges big money over a five year period of time, rather than providing earnings to a licensed blind vendor.

Upgrade of VFP locations and equipment purchases are funded partially by an 11% fee paid by licensed blind vendors from their net earnings each month, with the remaining funding for equipment replacement coming from what the managers make and the proceeds of machine income on the highways. A 1986 federal act allows VFP to contract with the state highway department to establish approved vending facilities on major highways and interstates and receive subsequent proceeds, while the highway department is paid a percentage for clean up fees. The VFP program pays for maintenance and repair of the facilities and lets the bids on the highway locations every three years, in conjunction with the highway department. The highway locations net the vending program about \$155,000 a year in machine income. DSB provides administrative support to the licensed blind vendors as part of the federal Randolph Sheppard Program. Three staff members are committed to this purpose. All of the funds for the vending program are audited by DHHS Audit and Legislative Audit each year.

The Technology Unit receives referrals from counselors regarding any type of technology needs of consumers. The unit assesses consumer skills and needs and sends a recommendation back to the counselor, along with usually at least three suggested suppliers for the equipment. The counselor purchases the equipment, and technology staff assemble and test it before they arrange delivery to the consumer. The unit also provides training and consultation on technological equipment and devices. DSB is also required to have an overall **Information Technology Plan** as part of the overall state information technology plan. The DSB Information Technology Committee meets as necessary to discuss the future technology needs of the staff related to the plans of DHHS. DSB is currently operating on Windows XP operating systems with Microsoft Office 2003. All agency computers were upgraded about one and a half years ago. The agency equipment inventory is also managed under the Business and Technology Section in conjunction with DSB Administrative Services. It is also audited each year.

Braille Production. The Business and Technology Section produces Braille for DSB consumers and staff, as well as other state agencies and the public. There is no charge for rehab related Braille, but public entities, like restaurants, are charged a reasonable fee. The section is also responsible for DSB's volunteer program, coordinating DSB's volunteer efforts with similar programs throughout state government. The agency **website** is also managed under this section as a means of information and access. The address is www.arkansas.gov/dhhs/dsb/NEWDSB/index.htm

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT (DRC) - Mr. Eddie Miller reported upon his recent involvement with the DSB On-site Review and DRC efforts to expand its recognition in the Hispanic community. He indicated that, as he informed the federal representatives, DRC has an open door policy with the DSB Director and staff. Between now and October 1, he plans to visit the DSB field offices and meet some more of the DSB staff outside of Little Rock. Regarding outreach efforts, he added that the DRC was recently featured in the Hispanic newspaper HOLA' Arkansas, and suggested that DSB may wish to pursue a similar article on DSB being done in the paper to enhance DSB efforts to reach potential consumers who are Spanish-speaking. Mr. Miller noted that for DRC, there are currently a lot of youth issues being pursued right now and litigation is expected. Many discussions center around reasonable access by students to information provided at colleges and universities. Mr. Miller expressed his appreciation to Mr. Hudson and his staff for their relationship with DRC. He noted that DRC is funded independently through the federal government and works under federal laws.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC) – No representative was present. A report was submitted with the board packet.

BOARD VACANCY - Mrs. Katy Morris read a letter to the board from Mr. Chad Rocket, Director of Boards and Commissions within the Governor's Office. The letter confirmed that the board had complied with Act 219 of 1997(ACA 25-17-210 and 25-17-211 in notifying the Governor of the continued absence from 3 or more consecutive board meetings of member and DSB Vice-Chairman Mr. Searcy Ewell without petition for excused absence. The act requires that, after opportunity for appeal, the position be declared vacant by the Governor. Mr. Rocket's letter recommended that the board ratify the Governor's action by formal vote. Mr. Bob Connell made a motion to remove Mr. Ewell from the board. Mrs. Nola McKinney seconded the motion. **Motion Passed.** All present voiced regret for the necessary action. Numerous comments were made regarding the long years of selfless labor Mr. Ewell has contributed to improving the future for persons who are blind or visually impaired in Arkansas and across the nation.

CONSUMER INPUT –

NFB State Convention will be held the third or fourth Saturday in September in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

Mrs. Nola McKinney reported that the ACB State Convention in April was very successful. The executive director from Washington, D.C. was present and was very impressed with the conference.

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) National Convention will be held July 1-7, 2006 in Dallas, Texas. Ms. Lori Hunter expressed her appreciation to the board for sponsoring her to attend the convention to represent the board.

Our sincere condolences are extended to DSB Vending Facility Specialist Gloria Mance, whose husband, Clyde Mance, passed away a short time ago, and also to the family of former Vending Facility Manager Christine Taylor who also died recently.

Schedule of Next Meeting - The board voted unanimously to hold the next quarterly meeting Saturday September 9, 2006, at 10:00 a.m. at the Department of Health and Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, 700 Main Street, First floor Conference Rooms A & B.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Berry
Secretary