

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 11, 2006

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Berry
Lori Hunter
James Johnson
Lindi Johnson
Nola McKinney

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Harold Brewer
Jim Hill
Ramona Sangalli

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Searcy Ewell
AER Representative (replacement pending)

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Buddy Spivey
AER Ex-officio (replacement pending)

DHHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: None

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Jim Hudson, Katy Morris, Coral Virden, Jim Pearson, Donna Birdwell, Kara Aaron, Mary Cabaniss, Kandy Cayce, Ginny McWilliams

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. Motion was made by Mrs. Nola McKinney to approve the agenda. Mrs. Sharon Berry seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF 12/10/05 MINUTES. Motion was made by Mr. James Johnson to approve the minutes. Mrs. Berry seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT -

DSB completed Board Orientation today for all standing members who had not previously participated. Additional orientation sessions will be scheduled as new members are appointed by the Governor. The DSB Director has been in contact with the Governor's office concerning the appointments pending for the AER position and AER ex officio position on the board. At large Board Member, Mr. Searcy Ewell, is having health problems. We have not received any written documentation regarding his health or his board status, but we will try to keep the board apprised of the situation.

FEDERAL FUNDING - At the national level the Voc Rehab allocation increased 1.03% over federal 2005, while DSB's allocation increased 1.9%. DSB's allocation for the Independent Living State Grant program decreased 4.4%, while the overall program nationally went down 22.3%. The older blind program as a whole, decreased 2% nationally, but DSB's allotment went down by only 1.3%. Next Monday we will meet with DHHS Director, John Selig, DHHS Assistant Director, Janie Huddleston, and DHHS Chief Fiscal Officer, Jerry Berry to discuss our biennial budget plans. This will be discussed in more detail later in the agenda.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION - Now that the RSA Regional Offices have closed, our sources for technical assistance are stationed exclusively in Washington, D.C. Our federal contact is Ms. Melodie Johnson. Ms. Johnson and members of her staff are scheduled to come to Arkansas to conduct a Section 107 Review of DSB for a week in late May or early June. After the Section 107 Review is completed, RSA has 45 days to provide us a report of the review. We then have 45 days to formulate a plan to work on any areas that the report indicates need improvement. The last 107 Review Report, based on federal fiscal year 2004, was received just last month. A phone conference is scheduled in the near future with Ms. Johnson to discuss the results and any subsequent corrective action.

BLIND INTEREST GROUP MEETING – DSB Director attended a quarterly Blind Interest Group meeting to interact with other Administrators of various agencies and organizations interested in advancing services to persons who are blind. It was learned that the UALR program certifying Teachers for the Visually Impaired has lost its chief instructor, Dr. Margaret Robinson, and may become inactive after May 2006. Dr. Robinson is leaving the state and it is probable that there are not enough students requiring vision certification to warrant the university continuing the program at this time.

STATE PERSONNEL CLASSIFICATION STUDY - As you may have read, the state Office of Personnel Management is conducting a personnel study throughout state government in preparation for the 2007 legislative session. We are hoping it will result in upgrades for various DSB staff.

TRANSITION – Mrs. Kara Aaron gave a report on a statewide Transition Partnership meeting that was conducted by consultants with the Department of Education. DOE is trying to get things organized on a statewide level and set up a mission and vision statement. The meeting was very well structured and the group is going to have its first annual transition summit to share information between different state agencies on transition. At the next meeting the members will work on a uniform definition of transition because every agency has its own. This statewide planning conference evolved from a similar meeting held in Washington D.C. last summer.

WORKFORCE – DSB has been unable to get reliable data on how many blind and visually impaired people are actually receiving services in the Workforce Centers. It appears that a lot of blind people are simply not going to the centers. This makes it difficult for DSB to evaluate services provided to consumers by the Centers. A Disability Subcommittee of the Workforce Investment Board has been formed to examine the type and quality of services being provided to persons with disabilities, including persons who are blind. The first meeting will be held this Friday. The players are ARS Commissioner Mr. Robert Trevino, Workforce Director Mr. John Wyvill, Mr. Eddie Miller, from the Disability Rights Center, and DSB Director.

MEDICAID WAIVER – The DSB Medicaid Waiver initiative has been abandoned. As originally stated by DSB, it was finally agreed by all parties that our mission to teach people skills that would result in the elimination of the need for personal assistant services, did not fit in the Medicaid Model centered around the provision of personal assistant services.

HAVA – Mrs. Katy Morris read a letter from Secretary of State Charlie Daniels to the DSB Director thanking him for his active involvement on the State “Help America Vote Act” (HAVA) Committee and for his efforts on the issue of accessible voting. Secretary Daniels stated that there will be at least one accessible voting machine at every polling site in Arkansas in time for the Presidential Primary beginning May 23, 2006.

END OF DIRECTOR’S REPORT

DSB EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee members included Mrs. Nola McKinney, Chairperson, Board Members Mrs. Sharon Berry and Mr. James Johnson, and DSB Field Supervisor Ms. Donna Birdwell. As discussed during the December board meeting, Mrs. McKinney presented the proposed DSB Staff Profile Form to the Board as a tool for thorough completion of the DSB Employee of the Year nomination. Ms. Lori Hunter moved to approve the form. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. In the call for discussion, Mr. Johnson moved a substitute motion that the staff profile form be amended to delete the phrase “or church” from the question on volunteer activity since the nomination pertains to performance in a state job. Mr. Johnson observed that it might be questionable that involvement or non-involvement in church functions should be considered germane to the performance of a state job function. Ms. Hunter deferred to Mr. Johnson’s substitute motion. Mr. Johnson moved that the form be approved as amended. Mrs. Berry seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.*** The amended form is attached as a formal part of these minutes. The Committee recommended that DSB employees submit their staff profiles to Staff Development Coordinator Ms. Dorothy Brooks. Mrs. Brooks would then share the profile upon request with persons interested in nominating the individual.

Questions arose regarding the legality of requiring staff to submit personal information, and the Director agreed to forward the question to the Attorney General's Office for guidance. It was subsequently agreed that Mrs. McKinney, Mrs. Berry and Mr. Johnson would continue to serve as the DSB 2006 Employee of the Year Committee.

VOC REHAB CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY REPORT

Mrs. Ginny McWilliams, Case Reviewer for DSB, gave a summary of the Vocational Rehabilitation Client Satisfaction Survey Process. A total of 1,357 surveys were mailed to VR consumers the first week in December. The survey contained ten questions where consumers were asked to choose between strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. **The overall satisfaction rate was 91.17 %.** *A detailed report by individual survey question is attached as a formal part of these minutes.* For the Older Blind Program, 785 consumer surveys were mailed. The surveys are to be returned by consumers to Dr. Brenda Cavanaugh with Mississippi State University's Center on Blindness and Low Vision for analysis and inclusion in a national survey study. Mrs. McWilliams will report on the results of the Mississippi State survey of DSB consumer satisfaction at the next board meeting.

APPROVAL OF BOARD TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENTS – In accordance with state law, boards must vote yearly to authorize reimbursement to their members for board meeting travel expenses and any other official travel. Mr. Johnson made the motion that DSB board members be reimbursed per state regulations for their costs incurred in attending the board meetings and national conferences. Mrs. McKinney seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

BIENNIAL BUDGET – In the biennial budget, we plan to ask for a half million dollars in increased general revenue to fund additional Rehab Teachers and related costs in the Older Blind Program to meet the needs of the rapidly growing population. Additional appropriation will also be requested for training. The DSB Annual budget process will begin in April, and upon submission will be followed shortly by the Biennial Budget.

JUMP START – Ms. Kandy Cayce gave a report on the history of the Jump Start Program. She related that Jump Start began as a small DSB sponsored student activity called "VISION". It evolved into a multi-agency statewide program for high school students who are visually impaired or blind, involving from time to time DSB, Arkansas School for the Blind, Arkansas School for the Deaf, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and the Special Education Unit of the Department of Education. The purpose of the program is to expose students to the world of work and help them transition from high school to employment or college. The students are placed in part time jobs in the morning and participate in skills enrichment activities in the afternoon during the week.

They are taught orientation and mobility and other independent living skills, and are provided recreational and other opportunities on a daily schedule. The students go home on the weekends. Approximately 30 students apply each year, but only about 22 students can be accepted each summer to maintain sufficient staffing ratios. The program builds student confidence, makes them feel more a part of the community, provides computer technology experience and job seeking skills, and teaches them how to seek work and mentors on line. Most recently, the program has been a collaborative effort of the Arkansas School for the Blind and DSB. The School provides room and board, night supervision and additional recreational activities.

Wal Mart and Entergy have sponsored students occasionally. This year Jump Start runs from June 11 through June 30, 2006. The deadline for applications is Friday, March 17, 2006. Applications are available on the DHHS/DSB website www.arkansas.gov/DHHS/DSB/NEWDSB/index.html.

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT (DRC) - 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.

ELECTIONS OF ALL OFFICERS – Chairman Johnson called for nominations and reminded the board that the office of Chairman carried a two year term, while those of Vice-Chairman and Secretary each carried a one-year term. Mrs. McKinney nominated Mrs. Johnson to another term as Chairman. Mrs. Berry seconded the nomination. **Mrs. Johnson was elected unanimously.** Mrs. Johnson nominated Mrs. McKinney as Vice-Chairman. Mrs. Berry seconded the nomination. **Mrs. McKinney was elected unanimously.** Mrs. McKinney nominated Mrs. Berry as Secretary. Mr. Johnson seconded the nomination. **Mrs. Berry was elected unanimously.**

CONSUMER INPUT – State ACB Convention. The Arkansas Council of the Blind will host its annual state convention at the Comfort Inn in downtown Little Rock, April 28-30, 2006. The keynote speaker will be Ms. Melanie Brunson, national ACB Executive Director. Additional speakers scheduled include, among others, Mr. Larry Wayland, Mr. Jim Hudson, Mr. Jim Hill and Mrs. Sharon Berry. Entertainment will be provided by Mr. Dwayne Hodges.

NATIONAL CONSUMER MEETINGS. The American Council of the Blind national convention is scheduled to be held at the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville-Riverfront Hotel in Jacksonville, Florida July 8 – 15, 2006. The National Federation of the Blind national convention will be held July 1-7, 2006 at the Hilton Anatole Hotel in Dallas, Texas.

Following discussion, Mr. Johnson moved that Mrs. McKinney be authorized to represent DSB at the American Council of the Blind convention and Ms. Hunter be authorized to represent DSB at the National Federation of the Blind Convention, each to be reimbursed for actual and reasonable expenses in accordance with state procedures, not to exceed \$1,200 each. Mrs. Berry seconded the motion. ***Motion Passed.***

Schedule of Next Meeting - June 10, 2006 at the Department of Health and Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, 700 Main Street, First floor Conference Rooms A & B at 10:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Berry
Secretary

Attachments (2) VR Consumer Survey Report
Amended Staff Profile Form