

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2009

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Berry  
Lori Hunter  
Nola McKinney  
Irma Nelson  
Dick Walker  
Anglyn Franquemont

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Kara Aaron  
Jim Hill  
Ann Moore  
Ramona Sangalli

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Lions Representative (vacant)

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Sandy Rowland

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Erika Gee

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Katy Morris, Cassondra Williams, Coral Virden, Cortney Browning, Jim Pearson, Donna Walker, Tanya VanHouten, Dorothy Brooks, Kandy Cayce, Ginny McWilliams, Lou Talley, Tina Shelby, Robert Lamb, Mona Mason, Mary Cabaniss, Kena Sabb, Dwana Williams, Scott Murphy, Alycia Barras

**CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Mrs. Nola McKinney called the meeting to order.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA.** Motion was made by Ms. Irma Nelson to approve the agenda. Mrs. Sharon Berry seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

**APPROVAL OF 12/08/08 MINUTES.** Motion was made by Mrs. Berry to approve the minutes. Mrs. Anglyn Franquemont seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

**INTRODUCTIONS.** All persons in attendance introduced themselves. Mrs. McKinney introduced Ms. Cassondra Williams, the new DSB Assistant Director.

**DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT** –

**NATIONAL ISSUES:**

- Federal Budget. The federal budget finally passed recently, replacing the series of congressional continuing resolutions that authorized federal funding for DSB. DSB was in a better position than some other state rehab agencies because our budget policy provides for a carryover reserve for just such situations as budget stalemates.
- Federal Economic Stimulus. The federal Economic Stimulus plan will have significant impact for state rehab agencies, providing needed funding.
- Pedestrian Safety Act. DSB is still tracking HR 734, the federal legislation regarding Quiet Cars. It has picked up 81 co-sponsors, which is very promising.
- U.S.P.S. The relationship between Randolph-Sheppard and the U.S. Postal Service also appears to be improving and discussions are ongoing. The Arkansas Vending Facility Program has not experienced the strained relations with U.S.P.S. that have existed in some other states.

**STATE ISSUES:**

- State Economic Stimulus. A large portion of the Economic Stimulus Funding accruing to Arkansas will flow through funding mechanisms in DHS. Total Stimulus Funding confirmed for DSB is \$1.162 Million. The stimulus program plan (sent to the board by email recently) has been tentatively approved by DHS and the Governor's Office, and DSB staff are working hard to get all the initiatives rolling. DSB has a total of twenty seven months to accomplish the stimulus plan and meanwhile we already have a huge undertaking in ongoing VR activities to meet current program standards. Staff members statewide have been very impressive in their creativity. They are stepping forward with their own ideas and better ways to accomplish both the existing state plans and the stimulus plan.
- Workforce Center Kiosks. DSB staff will meet with Department of Workforce Services (DWS) staff Monday morning to discuss the Stimulus initiative that will place accessible computer kiosks in ten selected DWS locations statewide. This will enable persons who are blind to participate in job search activities in the identified workforce centers, similar to their sighted peers. This \$50,000 technology grant from DHS to DSB goes hand in hand with a grant that Workforce Services recently obtained to train its staff on the provision of workforce services to persons with significant disabilities.

**DIVISION ISSUES:**

- DSB Board Appointments. DSB is proceeding with the traditional letter of notice to the Governor on what vacancy exists on the DSB board and what appointments expire June 30.
- Higher Ed Agreements. Progress is being made on the federally required interagency agreements with the 33 Arkansas public Institutions of Higher Education. U of A Fayetteville is expected to sign soon. The importance of these agreements has been lessened somewhat by the strength of recent federal legislation outlining in law some of the commitments made in the agreements.
- Arkansas Independent Living Council. Arkansas is also closer to having a fully appointed state independent living council, as is required by federal law.
- DSB Appropriation Act 178. DSB's bill raced through the legislature and was signed into law very quickly. The main concern with the resulting act is that there are a few DSB managers who have been reclassified to the same pay level as the staff they supervise, and this presents personnel problems as well as jeopardizing DSB assurances under the state plan on the adequacy of organizational structure.
- Relocation of the DSB Tech Lab & Creation of Job Club. To accommodate expansion of the Newborn to 3 Program at the Arkansas School for the Blind (ASB), DSB recently relocated the DSB Tech Lab Staff to the DHS complex. The School has been a most gracious host for the years DSB has operated the Lab on campus, but the move was advantageous to DSB as well as ASB. The Tech Lab staff is working closely with DSB Counselors and just initiated a job club every Wednesday from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. to discuss various ways of finding jobs, including how to write resumes, cover letters, mock interviews, cold calls, job search, etc. Central Arkansas VR Counselors alternate leading the Job Club activities.
- Job Development/Coaching. Other job development and coaching programs are being expanded under each of the five DSB area supervisors, as an outgrowth of the Economic Stimulus Plan. This will include one job developer and one job coach (for a total of 10 positions) statewide. Past experience in DSB has shown great benefit to consumers when job developers were utilized to supplement the efforts of DSB Counselors.

- Jump Start 2009. DSB has kicked off its planning for Jump Start, which will run June 7th through the 26<sup>th</sup>. The applications are on the web and it closes March 26. Information has also been distributed in some of the public schools.
- Comprehensive Needs Assessment. It is time again for the board to conduct the Comprehensive Needs Assessment. During the 2007 federal review, RSA indicated that it was developing an instrument for the DSB Board to utilize in its Comprehensive Needs Assessment. Latest indications are that the instrument will be available June 1. We will keep the board informed on its duties related to the assessment.
- Becky Livingston. I received a call from Mrs. Imogene Johnson that Ms. Becky Livingston, an advocate and long-time friend of DSB, passed last Thursday and a memorial will be held Sunday at 2:00 p.m. in the LWSB auditorium. Memorial contributions can be made in her name to LWSB.

#### END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**DISCUSSION OF THE EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR PROCESS 2009** – Incomplete applications have been a considerable problem in the past. Mrs. Berry made a motion that a stronger statement be put on the application indicating that incomplete applications will not be accepted. Ms. Lori Hunter seconded the motion. *Motion Passed.*

**DISCUSSION OF CONSUMER OF THE YEAR PROCESS 2009** – Mrs. Berry made a motion that local recognition for individual Consumers of the Year be made through an appropriate Lions Club, and that the overall winner be recognized following the December DSB board meeting. The board voted unanimously to approve. *Motion Passed.*

**CONFERENCE TRAVEL PROCEDURES FOR BOARD MEMBERS** - Mrs. Berry made a motion that DSB use the state per diem rate and the state travel procedures for reimbursement of any and all official trips by board members. Ms. Angyln Franquemont seconded the motion. *Motion Passed.*

**DIRECTION OF DSB GOALS FOR 2010 STATE PLAN** – Mrs. Donna Walker reported that DSB is in the process of developing the 2010 VR State Plan. The Board sets the goals for the state plan, and the division develops strategies to meet those goals. Input has been solicited from DSB management at all levels regarding the 2010 goals and they are presented today for the Board's consideration, input and direction.

Proposed DSB VR Goals 2010: Chief of Field Services, Mrs. Donna Walker reported on the state plan process for federal fiscal year 2010 (October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010: DSB Managers recommend that the division continue the three primary goals from 2009, as they are still valid. These include increasing employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired; increasing services to transition students, and increasing the participation of minorities and other stakeholders.

Strategies associated with these goals include the following, several of which may apply to one or more goals:

- Opening an office in the Delta to reach more of DSB's underserved population. This has been initiated with creation of the West Memphis office, but the office and its community partners are still under development;
- Increase the ratio of supervisors to caseload staff. This has also occurred, but the new supervisors are still in the beginning stages of training and area organization;
- Continue to pursue Faith Based Initiatives as an extension of DSB Voc Rehab. This has begun, but needs extension statewide;
- Improve the usage of Arkansas Work Incentives Network (AWIN), a benefits counseling project offered throughout the nation in various Centers for Independent Living. The purpose of AWIN is to educate persons receiving SSI or SSDI on how to leverage their benefits to their best advantage as they move toward employed status;
- Continue to refer older blind consumers who want to go to work to the DSB Voc Rehab counselor for employment assistance;
- Continue to develop the Board's Consumer of the Year Program with increased emphasis on local recognition;
- Establish kiosks in the workforce centers for access by persons who are blind so they can do independent job searches;
- Create job developers and job coach positions to hit the streets and look for other job opportunities and contact employers and work sites to see what essential job functions are required;
- Develop Capacity of Rehab Teachers to Advise Consumers in Basis Technology Access;
- Develop job clubs at each local DSB Office in the coming year;
- Increase collaboration activities with specialists from Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI), so that DSB staff members are better aware of transition consumers and potential consumers in each community;
- Continue development of the DSB/ESVI transition database and use it as a means of communicating information of interest and benefit to blind and severely visually impaired youth;

- Continue the Jump Start Program as a means of exposing transition-aged youth to the skills of self-sufficiency and the world of work;
- Continue outreach to minority groups via radio infomercials, publications and participation in faith-based and community fair activities, and development of formal contracts with Centers for Independent Living to assist DSB as a conduit of DSB job-related information. Following board input and approval of the draft goals, DSB will post a preliminary plan on the internet so people can provide comment via the internet. They can also participate in person in the related public forum on May 1<sup>st</sup> at 2:30 p.m., or read the draft plan via the Reading Service and provide comments through that opportunity. We need the board to let us know if we are heading in the right direction on goals and to help us get the word out about the state plan draft, the comment period and the needed input at the public forum.

**END OF STATE PLAN 2010 REPORT.**

Mrs. Berry made a motion to accept the three goal areas of the State Plan, and approve the draft goals for public comment. Ms. Nelson seconded the motion. **Motion Passed.**

**DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT (DRC)** – Mr. Eddie Miller reported that the Disability Rights Center is in the process of completing its State Plan. He asked that DSB send in any comments on burning issues because “the people who talk get the action”. Mr. Miller indicated that DRC is different from other agencies in that it is subject to federal (rather than state) guidelines and is able to do a lot of things that state agencies cannot do. DRC have attorneys on staff to do what needs to get done.

**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 CHAIRMAN (two-year term)** – Chairman McKinney called for nominations for chairman and reminded the board that the office of the chairman is a two-year term and can serve no more than two consecutive terms (four years) and she can no longer serve. Mrs. McKinney nominated Mrs. Berry as Chairman. Ms. Franquemont seconded the motion. **Mrs. Berry was elected unanimously.**

**ELECTION OF BOARD VICE- CHAIRMAN (one –year term)** – Mrs. McKinney nominated Ms. Franquemont as Vice-Chairman. Ms. Nelson seconded the motion. **Mrs. Franquemont was elected unanimously.**

**ELECTION OF BOARD SECRETARY (one –year term)** - Mrs. McKinney nominated Ms. Nelson as Secretary. Ms. Hunter seconded the motion. **Ms. Nelson was elected unanimously.**

**CONSUMER INPUT** – The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) conducted a legislative workshop and Washington Seminar in D.C. in February. Members of NFB of Arkansas met separately with the entire Arkansas congressional delegation to discuss issues crucial to blind and visually impaired persons. These include “quiet cars”, the earnings penalty for blind SSDI recipients and Technology Access for Persons Who are Blind, etc. Persons interested in the progress of current bills on these and other subjects should contact Mr. Jim McCarthy or Mr. Jesse Hartle at the national headquarters of the NFB. Ms. Lori Hunter can give you their contact information.

The Arkansas Council of the Blind state convention will be held May 1-2, 2009 at the LaQuinta Inn, Otter Creek. National ACB President Mr. Mitch Pomerantz will be the keynote speaker. There will be an update on state and national legislation, a Physical Therapist speaking on how to reduce balance problems that affect many blind people, and a presentation on the prevention of scams targeting people with disabilities. The traditional Saturday night festivities will again include talented singer and keyboard player Wayne Hodges. The ACB national convention will be held in Orlando, Florida, July 3-11.

**NEXT MEETING.** The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, June 12, 2009, at 1:00 p.m. at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, First Floor, Conference Rooms A & B.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Irma Nelson  
Secretary