

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 8, 2007

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Lori Hunter  
James Johnson  
Lindi Johnson  
Nola McKinney  
Irma Nelson

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Sandy Rowland

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Sharon Berry  
AER Representative (Vacant)

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Kara Aaron  
Jim Hill  
Ramona Sangalli  
AER Ex-Officio (Vacant)

DHS Representative: Steven Jones

Attorney General's Office Representative: Erica Gee

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Jim Hudson, Katy Morris, Carolyn Holbrook, Cortney Heslep, Francine Crain, Charlie Cain-Davis, Jim Pearson, Donna Walker, Mary Cabaniss, Kandy Cayce, Chris McKenzie, Tanya VanHouten, Dorothy Brooks

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

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

**INTRODUCTIONS.** All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

The Board Chairman welcomed new board member, Mr. Sandy Rowland, representing the Arkansas Association of Blind Business Enterprise Managers.

**APPROVAL OF 06/15/07 MINUTES.** Motion was made by Ms. Irma Nelson to approve the minutes. The board voted unanimously to approve the minutes. *Motion passed.*

**DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT** – DSB Director Jim Hudson noted that he has been contacted by Governor Beebe's staff who indicate that DSB Board vacancies will be filled shortly.

HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT (HAVA) – DSB continues its involvement in the HAVA initiative and is concerned with access issues affecting Arkansas voters who are blind or severely visually impaired. Such issues include poor audio quality for machine voting, lack of training for workers at voting locations, particularly regarding confidentiality, etc. Voting officials need to solicit input from people who are blind and seriously consider their opinions about what is happening. Consumers are encouraged to call the Disability Rights Center regarding positive and negative voting experiences, because the Center is conducting a study on the issue presently and it is our opportunity as citizens to affect a positive change.

COUNCIL OF STATE ADMINISTRATORS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (CSAVR) - The CSAVR is looking at the future of rehabilitation in the nation. Reauthorization is still pending, and professionals in the field and consumers alike are examining what rehabilitation should look like in the next few years.

INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (IHEs) - Federal law requires DSB to enter into cooperative agreements, under a dictated format, with the thirty-three (33) public institutions of higher education in the state. So far, only twenty-three have signed with the remaining ten (10) taking issue with some of the dictated provisions. DHS Deputy Director Steven Jones has volunteered to assist DSB in securing the remaining signatures and working with the Governor's Office to encourage the IHEs to sign the agreements, which are mandatory to rehab agencies, but not to colleges and universities.

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD – Federal regulations require that the head of the separate state agency for the blind in Arkansas be a formal member of the Workforce Investment Board. Since state law does not mirror federal law, Arkansas has technically met this requirement by having me occupy one of the appointment vacancies as a person with a disability. However, when reappointments were announced recently, I was not included on the board either in my official capacity as Director or my personal capacity as a person with a disability. This puts Arkansas out of compliance with federal regulation. Workforce Board Director, Colette Honorable was very distressed with the error and is working to get it corrected.

STATE PAY PLAN – The state Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has restarted its study of all job functions and pay levels in Arkansas state government. The legislature had tabled the measure last session. OPM expects to finish the Pay Plan Study this coming session and make its recommendations to the Legislature for all state classifications. It remains to be seen what positive outcome this may have for DSB staff.

PERSONNEL EVALUATIONS – During last legislative session, the General Assembly changed the personnel evaluation process for state employees to be far more performance based than previously. All DSB staff are now eligible for performance bonuses in the event there is clear documentation of “satisfactory”, “above average” and “exceeds standard” performance levels. Such scores will correspond to bonuses of 1.5%, 3% and 4.5% to be factored into their pay after October 1.

RSA 107 REVIEW – DSB is working with RSA to finalize the RSA Section 107 Review that occurred here in June 2007. We are very appreciative of the excellent participation from stakeholders including the DSB Board. RSA officials seemed to be very impressed, and found the board meeting quite interesting. While RSA was here they wanted to look at certain DSB program areas. What we are doing now is examining the first draft of the resulting RSA report to let the drafters know if they have inadvertently made any substantial drafting errors. A final report is expected shortly thereafter, and the division will take whatever corrective action RSA requires. We do expect RSA to require us to expand our capabilities in Supportive Employment to consumers through networking with other agencies, etc. Supportive employment provides an array of intensive services usually to blind consumers who have other disabling conditions that make it particularly difficult for them to become or remain employed.

STATE PLAN – Field Policy Developer Ms. Kandy Cayce has been working closely with Administrator Mrs. Donna Walker and the two Area Field Supervisors, Ms. Chris McKenzie and Mrs. Tanya VanHouten to complete the 2008 VR state plan due to RSA shortly. The plan is based on the results of the comprehensive needs assessment designed by the board and conducted at forums all over the state during the spring.

JUMP START - Kandy Cayce reported that Jump Start 2007 was very well received by consumers and employers alike. We started the three-week event with 17 students, but had one boy drop out because he preferred to attend church camp. One girl applied who was too young and one student dropped out during the last week. Fifteen students did finish and gave the program high marks. Jump Start is a transition initiative that provides skills training, on-the-job experience and a paycheck to high school age students who are at a stage where they should be thinking about what they want to do after high school... go to college, work, etc. It enables them to realize, through hands-on experience, that they have abilities and choices. Field staff and others who provided support services are to be commended for their intense efforts over a very short period of time to make the experience so valuable to the students involved. The students also are to be congratulated for working so hard and applying themselves to what really was a “Jump Start” to their futures.

OLDER BLIND CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY - The survey has been completed and returned by participating consumers. A summary report will be compiled and presented at the December board meeting.

DHS DISASTER PLAN - Like the rest of state government, DSB is developing an overall disaster plan for continuance of services to consumers in the event of a disaster. Chief Fiscal Officer Ms. Mary Cabaniss is DSB's project leader in this effort. Obviously, if you think about a major disaster happening in Arkansas and/or the nation you automatically think about all the issues that confront blind people...no phone service, no communication system, no food places, water contamination, etc. It can happen, and the best thing to do is to get systems in place all over the state to deal with predictable problems. The Governor is leading this effort. One thing we are going to have to do is be flexible. DSB will have to work with the department and other agencies throughout the state to be as prepared as we can be in terms of anticipating and serving the needs of persons who are blind or severely visually impaired.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**CLIENT OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE REPORT – (See attached Report)**

**The Client of the Year Committee consisted of Mr. James Johnson and Ms. Lori Hunter.** Chairperson, Mr. James Johnson, expressed his appreciation to Mrs. Katy Morris and her staff for getting the report together. The initiative originated from a suggestion made by RSA officials during their recent visit. Mrs. Morris read the report, and it is attached as an official part of these minutes. Briefly, the award would be presented to the winning vocational rehabilitation consumer at the December board meeting beginning in 2008. A reception honoring all nominees, employers and counselors would follow. The winner would be selected by the board committee from nominations made by VR counselors from each of their caseloads across the state. Mrs. Lindi Johnson made a motion to accept the VR Consumer of the Year Plan. Ms. Irma Nelson seconded the motion. **Motion Passed.** The board chairman appointed Mr. James Johnson and Ms. Irma Nelson to the VR Consumer of the Year committee. Mr. Hudson assigned Katy Morris to staff the committee.

**EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE REPORT** - The committee consisted of Ms. Lori Hunter, Chairperson; Mrs. Sharon Berry and Ms. Irma Nelson. Ms. Hunter announced the DSB staff winners for 2007 by service category. For Direct Services: Lou Talley, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in the El Dorado Office; In Clerical Services: Kena Sabb, Rehabilitation Assistant II of the Little Rock Office; and for Administrative Support Services, the winner was: Randy Johnson, Manager of the Reading Services for the Blind housed at AETN in Conway. Randy Johnson was also named the overall DSB Employee of the Year for 2007.

**AER REPRESENTATIVES** – As a long-time member of AER, Chairman Nola McKinney cited the need for participation by AER in DSB Board activities. Mr. Hudson reported that Governor Beebe was in the process of naming the AER Board Representative, and AER is working to name its Ex Officio member to the board.

**DIRECTOR'S PERFORMANCE PLAN 2008** – A legal question has arisen regarding the authority of the DSB Board to evaluate the DSB Director. DSB maintains that Act 481 of 1983 and subsequent legislation vests the responsibility of hiring, firing and evaluating the DSB Director with the Division Board. Repeated correspondence from the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration has officially recognized DSB as a commission with such authority for decades. Conversely, DHS Chief Counsel advises the department that it is the responsibility of Department Director John Selig, through DHS Deputy Director, Steve Jones, to evaluate the DSB Director. The Attorney General's Office cursory review indicated that the argument could be made either way, and the matter needs to be clarified. This becomes a key issue because one of the annual assurances that DSB must provide to RSA, in order to obtain approval of the state plan, is that DSB is a commission, as evidenced by the board's governing structure. If the DSB Board does not have full governing authority, federal law requires that a separate state rehabilitation council be appointed for the division with specific membership and duties.

**ACB 2007 CONVENTION REPORT** – A report was submitted with the board packet.

**NFB 2007 CONVENTION REPORT** – A report was submitted with the board packet.

**DISABILITY RIGHTS REPORT (DRC)** – Mr. Eddie Miller reported that the Disability Rights Center continues its advocacy on behalf of persons with disabilities. The DRC is not getting a lot of calls from DSB or people who are blind, but there are still a lot of voting, housing and other issues out there facing consumers. DRC goes out and looks at situations, but it really can't take any action unless an individual complains. On the national level, the big push is transition. DSB staff need to make sure they are involved in the area of transition because Arkansas has a new youth development collaborative which came out of the state workforce board and it promises better opportunities for youth with disabilities. We have to make sure everyone knows about it and participates.

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

**CONSUMER INPUT** – Mr. Leroy Johnson was recognized with an award this year for all the work he has done as an ACB member and volunteer at the convention year after year. Mr. Dwayne Hodges was also recognized as an active new member. The next ACB national convention will be held in Louisville, Kentucky, July 5 – 12, 2008.

The State ACB Convention will be held at the Otter Creek LaQuinta the last weekend in April. Ms. Carla Rushmore from Kentucky will be the keynote speaker. Rooms are \$64 per night.

The NFB National convention will be held in Dallas in July of next year. The state convention will be coming up at the Arlington Hotel in Hot Springs, September 21-22, 2007, with NFB President, Dr. Marc Maurer, as the keynote and luncheon speaker. Registration begins Friday at 5:00 p.m and the convention will conclude Saturday afternoon. Vendors will be coming from Freedom Scientific and Human Ware.

**SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING** - The next board meeting will be held Saturday, December 8, 2007, at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, First Floor, Conference Room A at 10:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Irma Nelson  
Secretary

Attachment (1)  
Report of the Client of the Year Committee

## **DSB Consumer of the Year Committee Report – September 8, 2007**

The DSB Board Consumer of the Year Committee, composed of Ms. Lori Hunter and Mr. James Johnson, propose the following process for annually recognizing the DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer of the Year.

### Goal:

The committee proposes to recognize the DSB VR Consumer of the Year beginning with the December 2008 DSB Board Meeting. An award, suitable for display in the workplace, would be presented to the statewide winner, with commendations made to the consumer's employer and VR counselor. Local and state media, as well as local legislators, would be alerted to the honor, and photos and a news release would be provided to the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette and any appropriate local paper. The event would also be posted on the DSB web site. The announcement of the winner would be followed by a reception honoring all nominees, their employers and their VR counselors.

### Benefits:

This process would provide the opportunity for recognition of all nominees, employers and counselors. Additionally, it would draw media and legislative attention to the mission of DSB and the difference VR services can make in improving the personal and economic independence of the persons DSB serves.

### Methodology:

1. Nominations for DSB Consumer of the Year will be submitted electronically on a form provided to VR Counselors statewide beginning October 1, 2007. Each consumer whose case is closed in competitive employment during the 2008 federal fiscal year will be eligible for nomination for that year. Nominations will be accepted up until ten working days following the end of each federal fiscal year. For 2008, this will be by October 15, 2008.

### Nomination Criteria:

With a signed consumer information release, VR Counselors will nominate consumers successfully rehabilitated in competitive employment during the federal fiscal year based upon the following criteria:

- A. Severity of Visual Impairment/Blindness and Secondary Disabilities.
- B. Commitment of consumer as rehabilitation partner with DSB Counselor.
- C. Success in Training or Education.
- D. Success in Appropriate Employment.

- E. Self-Advocacy and Awareness of Local, State and Federal Resources for continued success.
2. VR Counselors will submit the nomination(s) to his or her Area Supervisor any time during the nomination period. To minimize the labor involved, Counselors may seek assistance from the DSB policy writer and the Staff Development Coordinator in phrasing consumer nominations.
  3. Each Counselor will notify local legislators and media of the nomination of the consumer as VR Consumer of the Year, attaching the nomination form as an outline for a potential news article.
  4. Upon receipt, the Area Supervisor will confirm each nomination by reviewing the form for completeness and returning an electronic acknowledgement to the VR Counselor.
  5. Within fifteen working days following the end of each federal fiscal year, Area Supervisors will confirm to the Field Administrator that at least one consumer has been nominated for each VR caseload assigned them, and forward all nominations to the Field Administrator for consolidation into a selection packet.
  6. The Field Administrator shall list the nominees on the overall rating form, ensure that each nomination is accounted for, and immediately forward the decision packet electronically to the Board Selection Committee. At present, this ensures a minimum of twelve nominations will be forwarded by October 22, 2008 for consideration by the board selection committee.
  7. The board selection committee will review the nominations and score each consumer from 1 to 5 points in each criteria area. The committee will then select an overall DSB VR Consumer of the Year and notify the DSB Director within thirty working days following the end of each federal fiscal year. For 2008, this will be by November 13, 2008.

The Award Process:

Upon receipt of notification, the DSB Director will arrange for the customized production of the recognition award, selected by the committee, to honor the overall winner. The remaining nominees will receive commendation certificates. The Board Chairman or his/her designee will recognize each nominee, the employer and the VR Counselor at the December Board meeting, and announce the overall winner. A reception honoring all nominees will follow the Board Meeting.