DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 13, 2003

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT
Jim Adams
John Barnett
Sharon Berry
Searcy Ewell
Lindi Johnson
Nola McKinney

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT
Jim Hill

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT
Maria Morais

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT
Pierre Curry
Donna Hunt
Ramona Sangalli
Buddy Spivey

DHS Representative: Artee Williams

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, Richard, Behra, Donna Hartzell, Kandy Cayce, Lyndel Lybarger, Kara Mahan

CALL TO ORDER

APPROVAL OF AGENDA Mr. Jim Adams made a motion to accept the agenda. Mrs. Nola McKinney seconded the motion. Motion passed.

WELCOME TO BOARD MEMBER, MRS. SHARON BERRY
The board chairman welcomed new board member Mrs. Sharon Berry, Arkansas School for the Blind Representative. Mrs. Berry replaces board member John Becton.

INTRODUCTIONS

APPROVAL OF 09/20/03 MINUTES Motion was made by Mrs. Sharon Berry and seconded by Mr. Jim Adams to approve the minutes of the September 20, 2003 Board Meeting. Motion passed.
RECOGNITION OF FORMER BOARD MEMBER MR. JOHN BECTON  Mr. Becton was presented a plaque for 8 years of service on the DSB Board.

DSB DIRECTOR’S REPORT

DSB Director extended an invitation to the Board members to attend DSB’s Annual Christmas Luncheon that will be held Monday, December 15, 2003 at 11:30 a.m.

Workforce Investment Act – Reauthorization of the Rehab Act in Washington. Major issues of concern to blind citizens of Arkansas are program accessibility and transportation to the ten workforce centers and various satellite centers. Some of the programs being offered in the centers currently are resume building, interviewing skills, tests, evaluations and job placement. So far DSB has not received many results from workforce centers. Centers are responsible for the work placement of both disabled and non-disabled individuals. Though federal regulations currently require the DSB Director to be a member of the state Workforce Investment Board (WIB), that membership has been eliminated this year.

Reauthorization – Reauthorization is in the committee to be passed, possibly in January 2004. Funding is an issue concerning DSB. Current phrasing allows that .75 percent of funds go to the workforce centers in Arkansas and around the country. It has been proposed to increase to 1.75 percent. Mandatory membership on the Workforce Board would go to the larger of the two rehab agencies in each state, meaning the general agency. An option is proposed to allow a governor to also name the director of the state rehab for the blind to the WIB.

Employment Outcomes – There is concern among state rehab agencies regarding the federal concept of integrated work settings. Presently state rehab agencies cannot receive performance credit for placing a blind person into a workshop position although the workshop may offer better pay than other employment settings.

Vision Rehab - HR1 provides for a study of rehabilitation teaching, orientation and mobility and other services as possibly eligible under Medicare in the future. The President signed the bill and the results will be looked at in 2005. There is a controversy over whether doctors or state agencies would to be in control of the vision rehab services.

Continuing Resolution – There is a 4 percent increase. It has not been signed but may be signed shortly after January.

The advisory group for LWSB and the group for UALR Counseling and Adult Rehab Education each met in early December and discussed prior year successes and directions for the coming year. These are both informative and enjoyable events each year for DSB participants.
Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). DSB is required to develop MOUs with Workforce Centers regarding what services will be provided by the Centers and how much DSB should be obligated to pay for such services. However, federal regulations do not provide clear guidance on what should or should not be contained in an MOU. DSB has submitted MOUs to each Center for signature, but several have refused to sign the documents. One workforce center signed the document for 2003, but failed to bill DSB on time and had to file a claim with the State Claims Commission in order to be paid after the fiscal year closed.

Standards of Performance – 325 Vocational Rehab consumers were placed in jobs in program year 2002 (referred to as status 26 closures). 335 Vocational Rehab consumers were placed in jobs in program year 2003, just ended. In the Older Blind Program, 295 consumers were successfully rehabilitated in 2003. More details on the Older Blind Program will follow later in the Board Meeting.

Funding the Older Blind Program. DSB is continuing to seek a possible Medicaid Waiver for new funding for the Older Blind program. In the wake of severe reductions in state funding, the vacant positions in El Dorado and Forrest City have been moved to Fayetteville and Pine Bluff and caseloads consolidated. Both positions are currently being advertised.

HAVA – Help America Vote Act - Consumers are encouraged to contact the Secretary of State office and local voting precincts regarding a waiver.

BREAK

STATUS OF DSB OLDER BLIND PROGRAM A statistical report was given by Mrs. Donna Hartzell, Field Supervisor and DSB Older Blind Program Project Manager. Per capita, Arkansas is 2 or 3 percent above the national average of older people or between 14 and 15 percent. The number of successful closures in the LIFE program have decreased. 405 “09” Closures were closed last year and 295 were closed this year. Six Rehabilitation Teachers cover the entire state. This program has received over a fifty percent cut in state services. ILRS (Independent Living Rehabilitation Services) funds ($38,000) have been used to work older blind cases. At least 40 or 50 cases were worked this way last year. 820 consumers were served last year. The number of racial ethnic groups that we are serving has declined dramatically in the past couple of years, partly because of a need for more outreach in certain areas. A lot of time has been spent obtaining numbers and ideas about who may qualify through a waiver. The waiver is a home and community based waiver through Medicaid. There is the financial eligibility and the level of care eligibility.
ELECTION OF OFFICERS  Election of Chairman – It was motioned by Mr. Searcy Ewell and seconded by Mr. Jim Adams that Mrs. Lindi Chairman serve another term as board chairman. Motion passed. Election of Vice Chairman – It was motioned by Mr. John Barnett and seconded by Mr. Jim Adams that Mr. Searcy Ewell serve another term as Vice-Chairman. Motion passed. Election of Secretary – It was motioned by Mr. John Barnett and seconded by Mr. Jim Adams that Mrs. Nola McKinney serve another term as Secretary. Motion passed.

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT  No representative was present. No report was submitted.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC)  No representative was present. Report submitted with board packet.

CONSUMER INPUT. A discussion was held regarding the absence of Ex-Officio board members at the Quarterly Board meetings. Ex-Officio board members are recommended by organizations for appointment by the Governor. It was suggested that contact be made with the particular organizations and a letter be submitted to the Governor. Arkansas law provides that standing Board Members absent three consecutive meetings without a legitimate excuse can no longer serve on the board. There has to be a recommendation by the board submitted to the Governor to replace a board member. It was suggested that the board chairman submit a letter to the organizations of ex-officio board members to enforce the bylaws and remind them of their duties. On the DSB Board, the ex-officio board members represent the vendors, blinded veterans, Lions World Services for the Blind and Arkansas School for the Blind.

The Battery Madison Street Alumni Association will hold a bowling tournament in March 2004.

The Lioness and Lions of Hot Springs, two support groups, and the Division of Services for the Blind will host the Fourth Annual Vision Fair, January 22, 2004, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Garland County Library. The Lions of Hot Springs Village will test preschoolers with a camera which gives the prognosis of eight different eye diseases for children; testing for Diabetes, Glaucoma and testing acuity with a new machine. Brochures will be available and three doctors will speak.

The Pulaski Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind is selling candles. Prices are $6.00, $7.00 and $8.00.

Ms. Kara Mahan was introduced as a new Field Supervisor at the Division of Services for the Blind. Mrs. Mahan supervises staff in Little Rock, Batesville, El Dorado, Texarkana and Pine Bluff.

The ACB State Convention will be held April 30, 2004 through May 1, 2004 at the LaQuinta Inn in Little Rock.
QUARTERLY SUCCESS STORY – A consumer who previously catered for private parties, etc., had lost almost all her vision and almost stopped cooking. A DSB rehabilitation teacher worked with the individual to help her regain confidence in her abilities. She combined what she knew with some adaptive and alternative techniques she learned and was able to cater her husband’s 85th birthday party. Over 100 individuals attended the party.

It was motioned by Mr. John Barnett and seconded by Mr. Searcy Ewell that the next board meeting be held at the regular scheduled time and date; March 13, 2004 at 10:00 a.m. It was suggested that the State Arkansas Council of the Blind Board Meeting be held immediately following the DSB Board meeting at the same location.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nola McKinney
Secretary