

**DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2023**

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Keith Clark, At-Large, Board Chair
Erika Evans, At-Large
Theresa Petrey, ACB
David Henry, NFB
Tiffany Moore, AER

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Pamela Armstrong, VFP
Terry Sheeler, OIB
Larry Wayland, FAIRS
Eric Yarberry, WSB

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Tyrone Williams, ASBVI

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

James Caton, ASBVI
Kara Aaron, BVA

Attorney General’s Office Representative: None

Governor’s Office Representative: None

Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) Board Meeting Support Staff: Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes, Theresa Bertram, Amber Neal, DiAnnette Finks, Gustavo Manzanales, Amy Jackson, Sherlyn Harris, Deon Harris, LaTasha Mays, LaToya Baker, LaTasha Age, Tina Shores, Megan Lamb and Brandy Bryant.

Others Present: Mollie Hernandez, Disability Rights Arkansas; Sam Leonard, DSB Consumer

Meeting Agenda Approval-

Chairman Keith Clark asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Theresa Petrey made a motion to approve the agenda. Erika Evans seconded, and the motion carried.

Board Meeting Minutes Approval-

Chairman Keith Clark asked for approval of the June 9, 2023, minutes. David Henry made a motion to approve the minutes. Theresa Petrey seconded, and the motion carried.

Director’s Report – Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes

Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes began the Director’s report by thanking the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) staff, and the DSB Board for their support.

Dr. Williams-Stokes reminded members that the DSB Board Meetings are open to the public. Act 56 requires the agency to post the agenda and meeting information on the DSB website and

www.Arkansas.gov. Dr. Williams-Stokes encouraged board members to forward the meeting notice to their respective organizations.

Consumer Success Story: Sam Leonard- Mr. Leonard shared his testimony with the board and thanked the Division of Services for the Blind for the support received to begin his career.

VR and OIB Reallotment Received: DSB received \$1,288,894 for Vocational Rehabilitation and \$4,644 in Older Individuals Who Are Blind programs. The funds will be used as follows: \$1,038,894 for consumer services (\$895,559 for VR Services and \$193,335 for Pre-Employment Transition Services) \$200,000 will be used to implement staff training and program development. The OIB reallotment will be used to support consumer services. A summary was emailed to board members and OIB members.

Human Resources- DSB received approval to hire 10 positions. The positions have been advertised and interviews are in process. The Assistant Director and Rehab Program Manager for Business and Technology are included. The counselor vacancies continue to be a challenge to ensure that the agency remains on target with WIOA outcomes.

FFY Year End Closeout is in process. All 2022 federal grant awards will expire on September 30, 2023. The amount needed to meet Maintenance of Effort for the 2023 award and the match for OIB has been completed. DSB is on target to meet the match for ILRS. The budget Summary report is included in the board packet.

Corrective Action Plan for Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) -

Dr. Williams-Stokes provided the update on the Corrective Action Plan (CAP). The quarterly update was submitted to RSA on July 30, 2023. Feedback has not been received on the July 30th submission. A summary of updates include:

Finding 1 - Insufficient Policies-Draft policy revisions for fiscal and program are being finalized for the July 30th submission to RSA. Resolved.

Finding 2 - Insufficient Internal Controls- DSB is working to update internal controls in AWARE and within the AASIS financial accounting system process. The process to procure a new grants management system (WebGrants) is under development. This has been delayed due to incompatibility with vendors and systems. DSB will share this cost with ARS due to being in a shared services position.

Finding 3 - Provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services to Potentially Eligible Students with Disabilities – DSB is currently able to track Potentially Eligible students in AWARE which allows counselors to provide, or arrange for the provision of, pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities who are potentially eligible for VR services. During the RSA monitoring review period 2017-2019, we did not have that in place. **Resolved.**

Finding 4 - Obligations and Expenditures Not Properly Assigned to Correct Period of Performance -DSB is working with Alliance to address the budget module to ensure the period

of performance is captured in AWARE. We are working to identify a grants management system or some other system that allows DSB to address the period of performance on the administrative side capture non-Federal and Federal obligations and ensure expenditures are paid from the correct Federal award for the VR award. **Resolved.**

Finding 5 - Financial Management System and Internal Controls Fail to Ensure Supporting Documentation is Maintained - DSB has not exercised the requisite methods of administration, financial management, or internal controls necessary to ensure financial accountability and the proper expenditure of funds. DSB must employ methods of administration that ensure the proper and efficient administration of the VR program, including financial accountability. DSB must implement financial management and internal control procedures necessary to ensure the proper expenditure of program funds for allowable program costs. These procedures must include the retention of supporting documentation for the expenditures. **The process to procure a new grants management system is under development.**

Finding 6 - Internal Control Deficiencies – Rates of Payment, Financial Reporting, and Personnel Costs- DSB is working with the TAC to develop effective internal controls and rates of payment fee schedule to address this item. The procedures or PARS or tool used to report and track the Personnel costs is under development. – **Resolved**

Finding 7 - Lack of Internal Controls for the Development, Implementation, and Monitoring of Contracts- DSB does not maintain effective internal controls over the Federal awards necessary to provide reasonable assurances that it is managing the Federal award in compliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the award. Specifically, internal control deficiencies exist for developing contracts, monitoring contracts, reviewing, and approving invoices, and supporting documentation, which does not permit DSB to ensure all costs charged to the contracts are reasonable, necessary, allocable, and allowable under the VR program. DSB does not have mechanisms to monitor and reconcile contracts reimbursed with Federal funds, to ensure that expenditures reported are accurate, allocable, and allowable, or to track account, and report program and fiscal data for service provision accurately on the RSA-2 or RSA-911 reports. **The draft contract monitoring policy was submitted to RSA on July 30th. No updates are available.**

Finding 8 - Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Reporting- DSB has reconciled the MOE reporting to include the Vending Facility Program Set-aside funds. **Updated reports were submitted to RSA on July 30th.**

DSB Director will attend the NCSAB and CSAVR meetings on October 28-November 3, 2023. Dr. Stokes indicated that her role as President-Elect for NCSAB expires on December 31, 2023. Dr. Stokes will also attend the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association meeting on September 20-22, 2023.

DSB Gift and Bequest: The Board voted to purchase a recognition to the family of William “Bill” Heaston. The funds to purchase the plaque came from the DSB Gift and Bequest account.

The plaque will be presented to his wife in memory of the great work he contributed to the DSB Board.

DSB Technology Lab Update- Gustavo Manzanales:

Gustavo Manzanales stated that the Technology lab is busy, and things are going extremely well. The tech lab currently has two vacant positions. Counselors are referring high school graduates to the lab for recommendations and evaluations for technology equipment for the upcoming college summer and fall semesters. The Technology lab was able to provide work-based learning opportunities for two (2) Jump Start participants. The Jump Start workers have contributed to the update of devices and assistance to Tech lab consumers. The Technology Lab continues to offer online training to consumers. Mr. Manzanales said that ChatGPT and Monarch, a new braille display technology, were discussed at the CSUN conference. Information gained at the conferences promotes relationship-building with vendors and the information can be shared with co-workers and consumers.

Various conferences will take place in October and November. The partners' meeting will occur in late October, where the technology staff will do a demonstration on technology for the visually impaired. In November staff will attend a conference in Savannah Georgia to learn more about the federal programs and network with other state personnel to learn how to best apply policies and procedures. The tech department will be working closely with the counselors to make sure the beginning of 2024 runs smoothly to get students, and other clients equipped with their technology needs.

Staff Development Update- DiAnnette Finks

DSB currently has 4 staff members working towards their master's degree in the Rehabilitation Counseling program. Bridget Glover, Stephanie Moten, Latasha Age, and Jessie Foster.

Rakim Cheeks is preparing to take the CRCC Exam in October of this year.

Currently enrolled in the Business Administration Master's program at UALR, is LaToya Baker with an emphasis in Human Resources.

CONGRATULATIONS – to Dr. Megan Lamb for the Certificate of Completion on the VR Grants Management Certificate Program (VRTAC-QM) 8/11/2023).

CONGRATULATIONS – to Heather Grigsby on having completed the prescribed studies and having satisfied the requirements for designation as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. Heather is currently working to complete her internship hours and will be graduating on December 16, 2023.

The following conferences will be held in the month of September:

- The National Rehabilitation Counseling Association (NRCA), September 20-23rd
- The 2023 Blast on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City, NJ September 27-29

The DSB Newsletter was launched on September 1st! This is an awesome tool that allows DSB to share relevant information and to see the positive outcomes happening at DSB. Mrs. Finks thanked everyone for the wonderful submissions, emails, and positive feedback. She explained that the newsletter will come out quarterly and encouraged continued support.

Field Services Administrator's Report – Dr. Megan Lamb's Report

DSB's Cost Reimbursement Specialist has been working diligently to bring in funds for the agency. At this time DSB has received over \$82,761.33 in additional funds which were applied to the OIB program. SSA has approved several additional claims in the process of being paid to the agency as well.

DSB's Pre-ETS team has completed expending the 15% reserve for Pre-ETS services for Federal Fiscal Year 2022 prior to the September 30 deadline to ensure compliance.

Field Services staff have begun submitting their Personal Activity Reports (PARS) in EASE to ensure that funds for payroll are correctly allocated to each grant. This has required staff to submit their PARS every two weeks instead of monthly, and they have been excellent at working to get these in on time and correct.

Field Services Meeting was held June 20-22 in Hot Springs, AR. During this meeting, staff from the VRTAC-QM came and provided training on Rapid Engagement, IPE writing, Informed Choice, and Leadership. Staff also received additional training on the updated Policy that was approved by the Board and is in the promulgation process.

DSB continues to work on the Supported Employment Pilot with the VRTAC-QE. One consumer has been successfully employed for a few weeks and continues to improve in her position. Two additional consumers are currently in the job placement process. The technical assistance has helped our staff understand the Supported Employment process. As part of this pilot, DSB is working with Virginia Commonwealth University and VRTAC-QE to plan a statewide rollout training and a vendor training and recruitment event for Supported Employment.

The DSB Director, Quality Assurance Staff, Field Services Administrator and Quality Assurance Coordinator for Field Services attended the Performance Evaluation and Quality Assurance conference in Vermont in August 2023. This conference offered the opportunity to discuss data collection and improvements with other agencies and RSA to help DSB continue to improve the ability to accurately tell the story of the great work that we do.

OIB Services and Outcomes Update

DSB is currently serving 506 individuals in the OIB program. For Federal Fiscal Year 2022, which covers October 2021 until September 2022, DSB received 476 referrals to the OIB program and closed 81 cases successfully. For Federal Fiscal Year 2023, which began October 1, 2022, DSB received 451 OIB referrals and closed 104 cases successfully. DSB continues to provide assessments, assistive technology devices and training on them, surgical and therapeutic treatment related to visual disabilities, orientation and mobility training, daily living skills, and transportation as needed to our consumers. Our largest service request continues to be for assistive technology devices and training on how to use them. Using the money provided from SSA Cost Reimbursement, we have been able to purchase a variety of assistive technology devices for our OIB consumers.

Quality Assurance Unit Update - Sheryln Harris:

The QA Unit (which consists of myself and Scott Seay, the QA Auditor) recently attended the 14th Annual PEQA Summit in Burlington, VT. The conference focused on Performance Evaluation and Quality Assurance. Scott and I networked with Quality Assurance teams from other states and discussed methods to improve current practices.

Scott has reviewed 90 case review sets for PY 2023. Case review sets can range from five cases up to 25 or more cases. I want to thank Scott for his hard work and dedication. He is an asset to the QA team.

Next month, the QA Unit travels to Savannah, GA, for CSAVR.

AIRS Update – Theresa Bertram:

Theresa Bertram updated the Board on the Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS) program. Ms. Bertram stated that AIRS staff attended the VISION 2023 Denver conference in July and talked about the innovative technology and stem cell research that is being conducted to hopefully heal macular degeneration in the next five years. Ms. Bertram mentioned her upcoming speech with the Conway Lions Club on Sept. 28.

Ms. Bertram thanked DSB and the Board members for allowing the advertisement and publishing opportunity for the reading services. Ms. Bertram has received feedback from people interested in AIRS services, and because of that listenership numbers have increased according to ARPBS analytics at <http://airs.aetn.org>. AIRS averages approximately 1,400 listeners this month. AETN-4 Audio is accessible on television with local channels, and the platform has about 100 listeners weekly. AIRS Plus, which can be reached at (844)-888-0981, has approximately 2,500 listeners. Newline has approximately 300 listeners signed up with 100 loyal users. Information to join Newline is on nfb.org. AIRS Radio has 300 active followers on Facebook. AIRS is now on Alexa. The command is “Open AIRS Radio.” Ms. Bertram is working to get audio descriptions for theatre shows for consumers. AIRS also relies on DSB counselors to make consumers knowledgeable about AIRS services. Ms. Bertram thanked DSB and the Board for getting the word out about AIRS services.

Old Business Section:

DSB Board Appointments Update Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes:

Dr. Williams Stokes stated that voting Board members are appointed by the Governor. As of today, 2 members Keith Clarke and Erica Evans are term-limited as of June 30, 2023, Tyrone Williams is awaiting reappointment and William “Bill” Heaston's position is vacant due to being deceased. She stated that the Governor’s office has been notified of the vacancies. Board members should plan to serve until they are officially replaced.

DSB State Plan Goals – Dr. Megan Lamb Vote Required*

DSB developed the following goals for PY2025 and PY 2026 based on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, recommendations from the DSB Board, and guidance received from RSA and the Technical Assistance Centers during our work on the Corrective Action Plan. The goals have been approved by the DSB Board.

1. Goal 1: DSB will continue to improve outreach across the State of Arkansas including in underrepresented areas.
 - a. To accomplish this goal, DSB staff will have the following metrics:
 - i. VR Counselors will conduct at least two employer meetings per month to connect with businesses in their area and be aware of opportunities for their consumers.
 - ii. DSB's Outreach Coordinator will attend events across the state to inform consumers and their communities about the services DSB will offer.
 1. Attend at least 3 events each month.
 2. Attend events in every region of the state each quarter.
 - iii. DSB's Business Engagement Coordinator will participate in Job Fairs, Business Expos, and Chamber of Commerce Events to make connections with employers that lead to employment opportunities for consumers.
 1. Maintain membership with the State Chamber of Commerce
 2. Maintain memberships with local Chambers of Commerce
 3. Connect with at least 5 employers each month to discuss possible job openings and opportunities.
2. Goal 2: DSB will increase the number of Rehabilitated Closures for the agency working toward a target of 200 Rehabilitated Closures per program year.
 - a. To accomplish this goal, DSB will have the following metrics:
 - i. VR Counselors will work to place consumers in careers that meet their goals.
 1. Move consumers who are ready to look for work into Job Ready Status in AWARE to allow for support in Job Placement Activities.
 2. Provide Business Engagement Coordinator with a list of consumers and their skills who are Job Ready to allow for assistance in Job Placement.
 - ii. DSB will work with the Office of Skills Development to improve referrals to Apprenticeships, including working to build upon the Apprenticeship Pilot that began in PY2022.
 - iii. DSB's Business Engagement Coordinator will cultivate list of jobs and related skills available in each region, updated quarterly.
3. Goal 3: DSB will increase the availability of Pre-ETS services and opportunities for Students with a Disability.

- a. To accomplish this goal, DSB will have the following metrics:
 - i. DSB will continue to partner with Children and Youth with Sensory Impairments (CAYSI) to identify students who will benefit from Pre-ETS.
 - ii. DSB will offer the annual Jump Start Camp both virtually and in person for students to gain valuable Work-Based Learning Experiences.
 - iii. DSB will work with partners and resources to continue to identify additional service opportunities and programs for Students, such as the College Experience Camp to increase opportunities.
 - iv. DSB's Transition Manager will meet quarterly with the state ESVI and ABSVI to identify students, opportunities, and needs for Pre-ETS services.

Supported Employment Goals

1. Goal 1: Increase the number of successful rehabilitated closures of consumers receiving Supported Employment Services, including those for Youth with a Disability.
 - a. To accomplish this goal, DSB will have the following metrics:
 - i. VR Counselors will receive training on DSB's Supported Employment Policy and procedures and identifying consumers who need SE services.
 - ii. DSB will develop vendor training and outreach to increase the number of available SE vendors working with the VRTAC-QE.

DSB will send staff to the annual APSE conferences to learn more about Supported Employment

Chairman Clark asked for a motion to approve the DSB State Plan Goals that was updated by Dr. Lamb. Erika Evans made the motion. David Henry seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Rate Setting Policy – Dr. Megan Lamb Vote Required*

Dr. Lamb provided an overview of the rate-setting policy that was emailed to board members prior to the meeting. She stated that after the board member's approval, the promulgation process is the next step in the process.

Chairman Clark asked for a motion to approve the Rate Setting Policy that was presented by Dr. Lamb. Erika Evans made the motion. David Henry seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Customer Satisfaction Survey Update – Sherlyn Harris:

Ms. Harris reported that the results of the 2023 Client Satisfaction Survey were emailed to board members. The 2023 Client Satisfaction Survey was mailed in various media via FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND to every DSB OIB and VR consumer closed and open during the 3rd and 4th quarters of Program Year 2023. Postage-free return-addressed envelopes were provided. The questions with their responses follow the overall summary. The survey consisted of ten questions and consumers were asked to indicate their satisfaction by choosing between strongly agree,

agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Ms. Harris provided a summary of the results during the meeting. The data reported represents the last two quarters of PY 2023, January 2023 to June 2023.

WIOA Update – Megan Lamb:

Dr. Megan Lamb stated that the RSA II is compiled by using the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) from October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023. The report categorizes expenditures by service category. For the same period of October 1, 2022, to May 30, 2023, the expenses by service category were as follows: assessment was \$12,693.04; diagnosis and treatment \$689,108.60; training \$1,508,183.42; job services \$16,823.11; transportation \$92,529.14; maintenance \$122,446.29; rehabilitation technology \$428,803.62; supported employment \$6,158.00; reader services \$0; personal attendant services \$1,980.00; other services \$797,286.07; technical assistance \$580.00; customized employment \$5,000.00. Training category as follows: graduate college was \$32,091.05; four-year college \$358,470.47; junior college \$30,837.97; vocational \$118,051.10; on-the-job \$5,424.00; disability skills training \$274,213.59; and, miscellaneous (costs that were more specific to the consumer's individual needs) \$562,636.24; job readiness \$126,459.00. Job services are as follows: job search assistance \$5,400.00; job placement \$7,423.11; on-the-job support time-limited \$4,000.00.

Dr. Megan Lamb explained that the RSA II not only outlines expenditures but identifies the number of actual participants who received each service. The services provided from October 1, 2022, to the present are listed in the following categories: assessment 40; diagnosis and treatment 282; graduate college 7; four-year college 59; junior college 10; vocational training 12; on-the-job training 4; disability skills training 34; miscellaneous training 35; job search assistance 5; job placement assistance 10; on-the-job supports time-limited 1; transportation 52; maintenance 22; rehabilitation technology 114; reader services 0; personal attendant services 1; other services 71; customized employment 3; job readiness training 12; and technical assistance 1.

An update on the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) was presented. Amy Jackson stated that the program year 2022 contains two-quarters of the data. The program year runs from July 1, 2022- June 30, 2023. For the year 2022, there were 23 Measurable Skill Gains, 37 secondary report cards or post-secondary transcripts, and 1 skill progression, a rate of 34/157 is 21.7%. The target rate is 55.6%. The Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) Program Year 2021 there were 50 Measurable Skill Gains, 42 secondary report cards or post-secondary transcripts, and 5 skill progressions, 2 training milestones, 1 education functional level increase. The rate of 24/145 is 27.9%. The target rate is 25.0%. A program year (PY) is divided from July 1 – June 30. The period used for reported performance measures is July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023.

Performance Measures PY2022 (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023)

- ▶ Measurable Skill Gains
 - ▶ Target Rate of 55.6%
- ▶ Credential Attainment
 - ▶ Cohort of exits from Jan – Dec 2022
 - ▶ Target Rate of 28.9%
- ▶ Employment Rate 2nd Quarter
 - ▶ Cohort of exits from PY2021
 - ▶ Target Rate of 60.5%

- ▶ Employment Rate 4th Quarter
 - ▶ Cohort of exits from Jan – Dec 2022
 - ▶ Target Rate 57.3%
- ▶ Retention with the Same Employer
 - ▶ Cohort of exits from PY2021
- ▶ Median Wages 2nd Quarter After Exit
 - ▶ Cohort of exits from PY2021
 - ▶ Target Rate \$5,697.00

2022 Credentials Earned

- ▶ Credentials Earned During PY
- ▶ 2 Master’s Degree
- ▶ 1 Vocational/Technical Certificate
- ▶ Reported Credential Rate is 1/10 10%

2021 Credentials Comparison – 2 Quarters

- ▶ 6 Credentials
- ▶ 1 Vocational/Technical Certificate
- ▶ 1 Bachelor’s Degree
- ▶ 2 Master’s Degrees
- ▶ 2 “other” Certifications/Degrees
- ▶ No participants who exited Jan-Dec 2020 report a credential after the enrollment date in training with DSB.
- ▶ Reported Credential Rate is 0/7 0%

Employment Rate PY2022

- ▶ 2nd Quarter After Exit – 94 Participants
- ▶ Employment Rate (94/211) is 44.5%
- ▶ Target Rate is 60.5%
- ▶ 4th Quarter After Exit – 65 Participants
- ▶ Employment Rate (87/251) is 34.6%
- ▶ Target Rate is 57.3%

- ▶ Retention PY2022 (71/128) is 55.5%

National Credential Comparison Employment Rate PY 2021

- ▶ 2nd Quarter After Exit – 114 Participants
- ▶ Employment Rate (114/197) is 57.87%
- ▶ 4th Quarter After Exit – 65 Participants
- ▶ Employment Rate (65/225) is 28.89%
- ▶ Retention PY2021(56/94) is 59.57%
- ▶

2022 Employment Rate/Median Wages PY 2022

- ▶ At Exit - \$16.00 per hour
- ▶ 2nd Quarter After Exit - \$7,948.79.00
- ▶ Target Rate is \$5,697.00

2021 Employment Rate Comparison/Median Wages PY2021

- ▶ At Exit - \$14.00 per hour
- ▶ 2nd Quarter After Exit - \$7,262.69/quarter

Program Outcomes

- ▶ VR Program Year 2021 Closures (July 1, 2021 – June 2022)
 - 145 Closed - Rehabilitated
- ▶ VR Program Year 2022 Closures (July 1, 2022 – June 2023)
 - 149 Closed – Rehabilitated
- ▶ OIB Federal Fiscal Year 2022 (October 2021 - September 2022)
 - 81 Closed - Goals Met
- ▶ OIB Federal Fiscal Year 2022 Closures (October 2022 – September 2023)
 - 104 Closed - Goals Met

Employee of the Year Update – Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes:

The Employee of the Year committee consists of Keith Clark, Theresa Petrey, and David Henry. DSB will begin compiling nominations for this category and email the packet to the committee to review and vote upon. Employee nominations and guidelines will be emailed on October 20th for the EOY committee to determine the 2023 DSB Employee of the Year.

Consumer of the Year Update – Dr. Megan Lamb:

DSB counselors are identifying individual Consumers of the Year for each caseload. All Consumer of the Year nominations are due to the Field Services Administrator by September 30, 2023. As the nominations are submitted individual caseload awards are being ordered and presented to the consumers. The full list with supporting documentation will be provided to the Board after September 30.

New Business Section:

DSB Board Travel SFY2024 – NSRC – Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes:

Chairman Clark asked for a motion to approve the DSB Board travel for SFY 2024. Erika Evans made the motion to approve DSB Board travel for SFY 2024. David Henry seconded the motion. The motion carried.

DSB Annual Training – Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes:

Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes stated that the DSB Annual Training will be held on December 7, 2023, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in addition to a reception the same evening from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. Dr. Stokes also mentioned that if any Board members had interests in specific pieces of training or had any ideas to bring forward, DSB is taking suggestions for training that members feel may be beneficial and relevant to the DSB board and staff.

Report on Quarterly Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) Advisory Committee Activities-Terry Sheeler or designee.

OIB Report- Terry Sheeler:

Terry Sheeler provided a recap of the morning OIB meeting also a written report was emailed to Board Members prior to the meeting.

FAIRS Update – Larry Wayland:

No report was given.

Disability Rights Arkansas (DRA) – Mollie Hernandez:

Mollie Hernandez stated that Disability Rights Arkansas is not serving any DSB consumers under the Client Assistance Program this quarter.

Report on Quarterly AR State Independent Living Council (AR-SILC) Activities-. Dr. Sha’ Anderson or the designee

Dr. Fran Sha’ Anderson was not present. A written report was provided to Board Members prior to the meeting.

Consumer Input:

National Federation of Blind (NFB) – David Henry:

David Henry stated The National Federation of the Blind of Arkansas has been very active since our last Board meeting in June.

On July 13, 2023, NFB members from Arkansas attended the National Convention for the National Federation of the Blind in Houston, Texas. This Convention had an attendance of around 2,500 members. These members attended many of the blind workshops for employment, accessible devices, and career-building sessions. Our National Convention is where we discuss and pass resolutions that we feel will enhance the blind community and help others understand what our needs are to live an independent life. Several speakers from major technology organizations as well as other Federal Agencies tell how they are trying to improve the lives of the blind community. Daniel O'Rourke, a former hockey referee, stated that he would be traveling by bicycle on Route 66 from California to Illinois to help promote Braille literacy.

The Organization has been gearing up to participate in several events in Arkansas such as Bikes, Blues, and BBQ in Northwest Arkansas, Hillcrest Festival in Little Rock as well as events at World Services for the Blind celebrating White Cane Day and Blind Equality Achievement Month (BEAM) in October. Many of the local chapters are fundraising around the State for the programs and services provided by the Federation.

American Council of the Blind (ACB) - Theresa Petrey:

Mrs. Petrey shared that the Arkansas Council of the Blind has not held a Board meeting since our state convention in April although one will be held at some point this fall. A date has not been determined at the time of the September Board meeting. At the DSB Board meeting, Mrs. Petrey shared that the ACB state convention will be held in Fayetteville in the spring. The dates and location have yet to be determined, as these matters will be addressed at our ACB Board meeting.

Mrs. Petrey shared that while she attended the national ACB convention virtually, the state president, Rita Reese-Whiting went in person. As stated in the June meeting, there were two components to the national ACB convention, a virtual and an in-person component. Any members who wished to take part in voting had to be registered for the convention, whether they attended in person or virtually. Also, all members had to have their dues paid for the year 2023. Last-minute registration was allowed but only at the opening of the in-person portion which did not begin until June 30.

Mrs. Petrey shared there were the general sessions which began on the evening of July 1 and then morning sessions which were from July 3 through July 6. Along with the general sessions, there were breakout sessions held in the afternoons, some of which were available via Zoom. Jason Yasner from the National Library Service for the Blind spoke on new activities at the NLS.

The banquet was held on July 6. The keynote speaker for the banquet was Louie Sharp, a motivational speaker who talked about overcoming challenges. Mr. Sharp shared how he as a child, had to overcome personal challenges with family and how he aspired to learn all he could to succeed in life. Reports shared were that he received a standing ovation at the conclusion of

his speech. Those who were able to attend in person were able to enjoy tours to such places and events as a beach party which was held at a nearby lake, a tour to Horizons for the Blind, a Chicago Whitesox baseball game on July 4, a described play of "Tommy", two opportunities to go to a museum where antique music boxes and carousels were available for persons to touch, and a dinner cruise on Lake Michigan. Those in attendance were also able to check out new technology in the exhibit hall.

Schedule of Next Meeting:

Chairman Clark stated the next DSB Statewide Quarterly Board is scheduled for Friday, December 8, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. The meeting location will be announced later.

Motion to Adjourn:

Chairman Clark asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Erika Evans made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Theresa Petrey seconded. The motion carried.

ADJOURNED at 2:53 P.M.