

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND (DSB)
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2021

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Keith Clark, At-Large, Board Chair
Erika Evans, At-Large
Tiffany Moore, AER
David Henry, NFB
Theresa Petrey, ACB
William “Bill” Heaston, Lions

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Sandy Rowland, VFP
Sharon Giovinazzo, WSB
Larry Wayland, FAIRS
James Caton, ASBVI
Sandra Edwards, OIB

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Stephanie Smith, ASBVI, Resigned

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Kara Aaron, BVA
Lisa Reynolds, AER

Attorney General’s Office Representative: None

Governor’s Office Representative: None

Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) Board Meeting Support Staff: Betsy Barnes, Theresa Bertram, Megan Lamb, LaToya Baker, Jim Pearson, and Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes.

Others Present: Mollie Hernandez, DRA; Dr. Sha ‘Anderson Arkansas Independent Living Services Executive Director.

Motion to Approve the Meeting Agenda

Ms. Evans motioned to accept the agenda as printed, and Mr. Heaston seconded. The motion carried.

Motion to Approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting on June 11, 2021

Chairman Clark asked for approval of the June 2021 minutes. Ms. Evans made the motion and Mr. Henry seconded. The motion carried.

Director’s Report – Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes

Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes began her Director’s report by thanking the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) staff, the DSB Board, and Chairman Keith Clark for their support. Since the last meeting, DSB has welcomed three new board members. The appointments include William “Bill” Heaston who replaced Basil Julian representing the Arkansas Lions, Tiffany Moore

replaced Bill Johnson representing Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) and David Henry replaced Terry Sheeler representing the National Federation of the Blind-Arkansas affiliate. Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes stated that an orientation for new members is under development to include an overview of the state and federal requirements for the DSB Board members. In addition, Stephanie Smith, representative for Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired resigned on September 8, 2021 due to a new position assignment. Dr. Williams-Stokes stated that she is working with the Governor's office to secure the replacement for this position.

Dr. Williams-Stokes reminded members that the DSB Board meetings are open to the public. According to Act 56, DSB is required to post the agenda and meeting information on the DSB website and www.arkansas.gov. She also stated that the supervisory responsibility of the DSB Board is to provide oversight for the agency operations to include budget preparation and approval, policy making and revisions, employment engagement and employee professional development under state and federal laws. DSB has provided training annually to ensure board members and staff are informed about the federal and state requirements noted in the Division of Services for the Blind State Plan.

Dr. Williams-Stokes informed board members that the DSB Reallotment Award was in the amount of \$1,663,460 and was received from RSA on September 1, 2021. The incentive reallotment award is in direct result of DSB meeting grant award requirements, implementing the VR award requirements, and meeting the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) or Vocational Rehabilitation match by September 30, 2021. Dr. Williams-Stokes acknowledged the efforts of all the DSB staff who worked together to make this possible. Most of the funds will be used to provide services to consumers, 15% will be used in the Pre-Employment Transition Services Program, equipment updates for the DSB Technology Lab, Possible VFP updates (if needed due to the program just received \$150,000 stimulus funds to complete upgrades), AWARE database updates, and Arkansas Information Reading Services equipment updates. The funds cannot be used to create new positions as they are meant to provide short term funding (1 year) for projects. Funds will have to be expended by September 30, 2022.

Dr. Williams-Stokes mentioned that DSB is required to match the federal grant awards to be eligible for carryover of an additional year for all federal grants awards. The Maintenance of Effort (MDE) for the 2021 Vocational Rehabilitation Program is due by September 30, 2021. DSB staff expended \$1,785,506 of state general revenue funds to meet this requirement. Additionally, the 15% required match for the Pre-Employment Transition program increased to \$989,000 due to the additional reallotment.

The DSB Monitoring Report was received from the Rehabilitation Services and Administration (RSA) on August 18, 2021. The report included requirements of additional work in the following areas: Fiscal Policy Updates- during the review, the fiscal policies utilized while DSB was

located under DHS are not in compliance with RSA program and fiscal requirements. Dr. Williams-Stokes stated that staff are working to update the required fiscal areas to address the compliance issues. DSB's current structure does not include a full-time Chief Fiscal Officer or Human Resources Director as it did before the transfer to Department of Commerce-Division of Workforce Services. RSA indicated that the new organizational structure without an approved cost allocation plan or indirect rate puts the agency out of compliance with tracking personnel activities towards the federal grant awards. Since then, DSB has implemented the Personnel Activity Reports (PARS) to track agency staff time, and the work performed for DSB by the Arkansas Rehabilitation Service's staff. RSA recognized the work that DSB completed towards developing program policy, mainly because a year and half prior to the monitoring review DSB staff worked with RSA to review select program policies. RSA recommended that DSB continue with updates to develop policies in the areas of Supported Employment and Services. Dr. Williams-Stokes commended the tremendous amount of work that the Field Services staff completed in the area of Pre-employment Transition Services Program (Pre-ETS). Dr. Megan Lamb and Pre-ETS Supervisor LaTasha Mays, developed policy and procedures to ensure the DSB Pre-ETS program implementation align with federal regulations. RSA also commended DSB staff on the work and provided additional guidance in the areas of staff tracking and service delivery.

The DSB Statewide meeting is scheduled to be held virtually again this year. DSB is restricted to day travel without prior approval from the Commerce Secretary. Dr. Williams-Stokes stated that she will keep the board members updated regarding training opportunities.

Assistant Director's Report – Betsy Barnes

Assistant Director Barnes stated that the DSB SFY 2021 Budget Report and Expenditures for April 1, 2021, to June 30, 2021, are included in the board packet. DSB expended \$1,045,564.21 on Client Services and \$981,274.87 on Agency Operations for a total quarterly expenditure of \$2,026,839.08. DSB will submit additional technical assistance requests to address the findings that Dr. Williams-Stokes mentioned in her report regarding the RSA Monitoring Report. Technical Assistance related to program management, policies and procedures, and internal controls, will be submitted to the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM). Technical Assistance related to supported employment policy and procedures will be submitted to the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE). Technical Assistance related to Pre-Employment Transition Services and program management will be submitted to the National Technical Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT).

DSB has 54 employed staff or 72% of positions filled. Nineteen positions are in the process to be advertised, conducting interviews, or pending completion of background checks. Since our June Board meeting, staff that have joined the DSB family are Sherlyn Harris, Quality Assurance Manager, LaToya Baker, Administrative Analyst, and Deon Harris, Quality Assurance Coordinator. We are proud to announce several promotions, Contrena Bowie, Rehab Program Manager, Ronda Garmon, Rehab Program Manager, and Amy Jackson, Administrative Analyst.

The Professional Development training for 2021-22 includes Community Outreach: An Overview Course. All staff will identify a second training course with their supervisor that correlates with the job duties. Staff continue to take advantage of other trainings offered on-line.

DSB supervisors will conduct mid-point evaluations in October. We have reduced the number of required Performance Groups and Measures to five for non-supervisor staff and supervisors will be measured by four groups and measures.

DSB has four staff enrolled in Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC) programs, and one enrolled in Orientation and Mobility of the Blind (O&M) program at UALR. One staff recently graduated with MRC and will take the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor's (CRC) exam. Two staff are enrolled in a Rehabilitation Counseling internship and will graduate in December 2021 from UALR.

This quarter the staff attended the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) conferences virtually. Staff also attended Arkansas Council of the Blind (ACB) virtually in August. The fall CSAVR will be held virtually Oct 25th and 26th, and November 1st -5th. NCSAB will be virtually in December.

The Quality Assurance (QA) team met with the Technical Assistant Center (TAC) team to discuss a strategic plan to monitor Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) for Field and QA going forward. QA has also updated access to the Employer module in AWARE. Staff received training at the Field meeting in July. This allows the agency to improve the tracking of performance measures and state plan goals. Additionally, work is underway to improve tracking and internal controls in AWARE.

Field Services Administrator's Report

Dr. Megan Lamb presented the Field Administrator's report by stating that on July 13-15, 2021, DSB Field Services held their annual Field Services meeting by Zoom. All field staff participated in a workshop on Cultural Humility led by The Diversity Booth. This workshop sparked conversation and discussion on how we can understand coworkers and consumers better. Staff also attended trainings on placing consumers in Job Ready Status as required by the DSB State Plan, using Service-E status in AWARE, and Employer Engagement. The region administrative assistants attended a specific training on entering new employer contacts into AWARE. This training will reduce redundant entries in our system enhancing our ability to report on employer engagement.

Business Engagement

Our Business Engagement Coordinator also provided a session for staff regarding how to submit employer contacts as follow up, DSB's plans for job clubs, and work completed on the Small Business Committee.

DSB supervisors and administration staff attended the recent ACB virtual conference. All DSB counselors, supervisors, and administration staff will attend the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Partner's Meeting on September 21st -23rd. This conference provides an opportunity for staff to learn about WIOA Partners and ways to work more effectively together.

Several supervisors and Dr. Lamb participated in the Lead VR leadership training program. This program encouraged the participants to review leadership styles and natural responses to find productive paths to successful leadership. DSB has several staff participating in the Virginia Commonwealth University Supported Employment Course. Once completed staff will have a stronger understanding of Supported Employment and be certified Supported Employment Specialists. DSB counselors and supervisors also participated in a training from the Helen Keller National Center on supporting deafblind consumers in employment. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) counselors and staff were also invited to attend as part of our work to improve the dual caseload process for supporting deafblind consumers.

Dr. Lamb thanked those involved in "The Deaf Blind" pilot project for Pre-ETS consumers. DSB staff work with consumers to provide services and learn from the other participating agencies on how to improve service delivery in this area. As part of this process DSB's Transition Manager, Latasha Mays, developed an official process for handling dual cases with ARS staff. This dual caseload packet has been requested by the Helen Keller National Center as a model for other states. Dr. Lamb also thanked Latasha Mays and her team on all the hard work.

Independent Living Items have been ordered for all DSB offices and shipped to them. These items are available to be sent out to consumers who need items to live more independently. Consumers do not have to be eligible for other DSB programs to receive these items.

DSB's Business Engagement Coordinator (BEC) partnered with Chamber of Commerce organizations across the state to help connect DSB to employers. Staff are working to update the Small Business process and have created a committee to review small business plan requests. The BEC is also working to design virtual job clubs for consumers.

DSB's Pre-ETS staff continue to work with ACE Academy to provide opportunities to students. This month Pre-ETS consumers will have the opportunity to participate in an afterschool 2-week online training session. The first sessions will focus on Career Exploration and learning how to develop a Work Based Learning Plan. The second week consumers will attend breakout sessions related to employment facilitated by blind and low vision professionals.

Business and Technology Administrator's Report- Jim Pearson

Business and Technology Program Manager Jim Pearson provided a report for the Vending Facility Program (VFP). Mr. Pearson announced that all the highway locations are open for business, except for the two White River sites. Sales are down about 50% due to adverse effects of the pandemic. The federal sites are still closed except for the Little Rock Federal Building, and sales are down about 50% overall at manned locations due to the pandemic. Mr. Pearson stated that they have 5 vacant locations and need trainees for these locations. The locations are #037 1 Capitol Mall, #005 DHS, #68 PCCH, #074 Federal Building and #097 Revenue Department.

Federal Relief and Restoration Payments (FRRP) have been approved and checks were mailed to eligible managers. Three managers received the payments. Vending machines are in the process to be purchased for locations with the remaining FRRP funds. The FRRP Funds were distributed as follows: \$16K was received by the managers and \$140K will go toward the purchase of new equipment. The state bid process to secure the new equipment should be finalized by the end of September. Mr. Pearson noted that the DSB Technology Lab visits is open to serving consumers onsite.

Arkansas Information Reading Services Report- Theresa Bertram

Theresa Bertram updated the DSB Board concerning Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS). AIRS Radio is working to implement the Fall programming. A new parenting show will be added to the program. The popular Armchair Reader has been restored to the program list, and dramatizations of famous Hitchcock films. AIRS Radio will continue shows on diabetic health, vision loss, veterans benefits and other familiar topics. Numbers continue to remain steady. Listenership numbers remain steady according to ARPBS analytics at <http://airs.aetn.org>. AIRS averages approximately 2400 listeners a week. AETN for Audio is accessible on-televisions with local channels, and the platform has about 100 listeners a week. AIRS Plus, which can be reached at (844)-888-0981, has approximately 300 listeners. Newline has approximately 300 listeners signed up. AIRS Radio has 275 likes on Facebook.

AIRS staff, Ida Lewis, Shawn Smith, and Theresa Bertram continue to read out of local magazines like “501 Life Magazine”, “Searcy Living”, and “About the River Valley”. Ms. Bertram mentioned that the local newspaper readings are popular. AIRS started local newspaper reading to include the “Mena Star”, “DeQueen Bee”, “Petit Jean County Headlight”, “Pocahontas Star Herald”, and “Newton County Times”. There are approximately 19 other papers that can be heard on AIRS plus. AIRS Kids Radio is popular every weekend, with programs for the younger listeners on Saturday mornings and then teen programming in the evenings. Ms. Bertram stated that AIRS also have readings from Teen and Young Adult Books on Thursday evenings. AIRS is always looking for volunteers, no matter the age, so if you want to be a radio star, let Ms. Bertram know.

AIRS does not have control over Newline, however, DSB has added available local online papers to the service. Updates are underway to the “Cleveland County Herald”, “Nashville News Leader”, “Pine Bluff Commercial”, “Press Argus-Courier”, “Waldron News”, “DeQueen Bee”,

and “Carroll County News”. These newspapers are only available if you have a Newline account.

Ms. Bertram met with the Central Arkansas Blind Veterans support group in August. She commended Ms. Kara Aaron for giving her an opportunity to speak to the group. Ms. Bertram stated she enjoyed speaking with the Central Arkansas Blind Veterans support group. She also recognized the volunteers, staff, and Friends of AR Information Reading Services (FAIRS).

OLD BUSINESS

Report on RSA WIOA Dashboards/WIOA Update

Dr. Lamb opened with an explanation of the change from using the RSA-2 versus the RSA-17. The RSA-2 is the annual Vocational Rehabilitation report on service expenditures, which has been replaced with a quarterly report called the RSA-17. The RSA-17 is tracked on the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) from October 1st-September 30th. The report categorizes the expenditures into service categories based on services provided to the consumer, how many different individuals received each type of services, and identifies total expenditures to the Rehabilitation program.

Dr. Lamb presented the Independent Living Center expenses from October 1, 2020 to August 28, 2021; VR expenses for World Services for the Blind (WSB)- \$429,031.31; Alphapointe - \$58,957.70; Louisiana Center for the Blind- \$97,800.00; World Services for the Blind Pre-ETS- \$22,600.00; and World Services for the Blind OIB- \$5,225.00. The outcomes for these expenses were as follows: WSB VR has 18 participants with open cases with 1 Employed Status and 1 participant closed; Louisiana Center for the Blind has 3 participants with open cases; Alphapointe with 2 participants with open cases; WSB-OIB with 1 participant with a closed (met goal) case; WSB-Pre-ETS with 2 participants open cases and 1 as a potential with a case still open.

For the same period of October 1, 2020 to present, the expenses by service category were as follows; assessment was \$21,659.76; diagnosis and treatment \$694,237.89; training \$1,068,507.15; job services \$28,447.00; transportation \$9,237.32; maintenance \$27,679.21; rehabilitation technology \$277,239.51; supported employment \$0; reader services \$102.00; personal attendant services \$6,688.00; other services \$705,663.45; technical assistance \$0. Training category as follows: graduate college was \$19,460.79; four-year college \$369,761.87; junior college \$64,423.64; vocational \$173.810.95; on-the-job \$1,000.00; disability skills training \$230,467.99; and, miscellaneous (costs that were more specific to the consumer’s individual needs) \$204,581.91. Job services as follows: job search assistance \$10,497.00; job placement \$17,700; on-the-job supports time limited \$250.00; and on-the-job supports supported employment \$0.

Dr. Lamb explained that the RSA-2 not only outlines expenditures but identifies the specific number of actual participants who receive each service. The information presented today also represents “paid for” services between October 1, 2020 to present in these categories. The breakdown is as follows: assessment 52; diagnosis and treatment 283; graduate college 4; four

year college 62; junior college 14; vocational training 20; on-the-job training 1; disability skills training 19; miscellaneous training 19; job search assistance 6; job placement assistance 7; on-the-job supports time limited 1; on-the-job supports supported employment 0; transportation 25; maintenance 14; rehabilitation technology 105; reader services 1; personal attendant services 1; other services 81 and technical assistance 0.

Dr. Lamb presented an update on the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA). She stated that the program year 2020 contains 3 quarters of data. A program year runs from July 1st to June 30th of the following year. The Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) includes: 57 with 5 secondary diploma, 1 educational functioning level 55 secondary report cards or post-secondary transcripts, 1 training milestone, and 2 skill progression. The Q3 rate is 15.1% per RSA. For the previous year, there were 66 Measurable Skill Gains, 35 secondary diplomas, 34 secondary report cards or post-secondary transcripts, and 3 clients had both types of Measurable Skill Gain. For the same time in 2019, there were 5 credential attainments: 1 vocational/technical certificate, 1 associate degree, and 3 bachelor's degrees.

- ▶ Program Year 2020 – 3 Quarters
 - ▶ 23 Credentials
 - ▶ 2 Associate's Degree
 - ▶ 5 Bachelor's Degrees
 - ▶ 13 Secondary Diplomas
 - ▶ 2 Vocational/Technical Certificates
 - ▶ 1 other Recognized Diploma, Degree or Certificate

Employment Rate PY2019

- ▶ 2nd Quarter After Exit – 97 Participants
- ▶ 4th Quarter After Exit – 125 Participants

Employment Rate PY2020

- ▶ 2nd Quarter After Exit – 78 Participants
 - ▶ Employment Rate (78/340) is 22.9%
- ▶ 4th Quarter After Exit – 14 Participants
 - ▶ Employment Rate (14/356) is 3.9%
- ▶ Retention PY2020 (36/78) is 46.2%

Median Wages PY 2019

- ▶ At Exit - \$11.00 40/week
- ▶ 2nd Quarter After Exit - \$5,892.21/quarter or \$12.27 per hour

Median Wages PY 2020

- ▶ At Exit - \$13.27 p/hour
- ▶ 2nd Quarter After Exit - \$7,116.69/quarter (\$14.83 p/hour)

Program Outcomes

- ▶ VR Program Year 2020 Closures (July 1, 2020 – June 10, 2021)
 - 139 Closed-Rehabilitated
- ▶ OIB Federal Fiscal Year 2021 (October 2020-September 2021)
 - 25 Closed-Goals Met

2021 Employee of the Year Update -Keith Clark *Vote Required

The DSB Employee of the Year committee consisted of Keith Clark, Kara Aaron, and Stephanie Smith. The committee congratulates the DSB employees nominated for the award, and the committee commends the supervisors who took the time to nominate employees through the state evaluation system. The committee received two recommendations for employees who were nominated for the highest employee performance rating of “Role Model” and Highly Effective”.

The Committee recommends two employees be awarded cash prizes of \$100, and that the overall winner be awarded an additional \$100 prize along with a plaque. The two nominations were Debra Newton, Fiscal Support Specialist, Vending Facility Program and Karen Henderson, Administrative Specialist II, Harrison office are recognized as outstanding representatives of DSB. The overall DSB Employee of the Year for 2021 was a tie vote. The EOY nomination is awarded to both employees for their dedicated service to the agency.

Chairman Clark called for a motion to approve the recommendation from the nomination committee for 2021 overall the EOY. William Heaston motioned. Theresa Petrey seconded. The motion carried.

2021 Consumer of the Year Process-Dr. Megan Lamb-*Vote Required

Dr. Lamb began her report stating that each DSB VR caseload will choose an outstanding consumer whose case was closed successfully within the last two federal fiscal years, with supervisors providing a recommendation for vacant caseloads. The counselor will submit the nomination and consent form to the Field Administrator, assigned Area Manager, and the regional Administrative Assistant. Once received and reviewed, DSB will order trophies for the consumer and their employer to be presented to them. All nominations are due by September 30, 2021.

Chairman Clark asked for a motion to approve the Consumer of the Year process. Bill Heaston motioned to accept the COY guidelines. Erika Evans seconded. The motion carried.

DSB Board Meeting Elections -Chairman Keith Clark

Elections: Vice Chairman/Secretary-*Vote Required

Chairman Clark opened the floor for nominations of Vice Chairman and Secretary vacant board positions. Chairman Clark nominated Erika Evans as the Vice Chairman and called for nominations from the floor. There were no additional nominations. Theresa Petrey made the motion. William Heaston seconded. The motion carried.

Erika Evans nominated Theresa Petrey for the Secretary position and called for nominations from the floor. There were no additional nominations. David Henry made the motion. William Heaston seconded. The motion carried.

DSB Board Committee Assignments

Dr. Williams-Stokes read from the DSB Board Bylaws information about the responsibilities of the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary positions. A copy of the bylaws was distributed to members at the June meeting. Chairman Clark asked for volunteers to serve on the Personnel committee. Erika Evans, Theresa Petrey, and William Heaston volunteered to serve on the Personnel committee. Dr. Williams-Stokes stated that Chairman Clark can appoint more members to this committee at later date if needed. The Budget Committee volunteers include William Heaston, Tiffany Moore, and Keith Clark. The Constitution and By-Laws committee volunteers include David Henry, James Caton, and Chairman Keith Clark.

Chairman Clarke called for nomination for Employee of the Year (EOY), Consumer of the Year (COY), and OIB Committee. Chairman Clark volunteered to serve on the Employee of the Year (EOY), Theresa Petrey, and William Heaston volunteered as well. The OIB Committee volunteers are William Heaston, David Henry, Dr. Sha' Anderson, and Terry Sheeler. There were no volunteers for the Consumer of the Year committee. Chairman Clark indicated that this committee will be decided next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

DSB Board Meeting Locations/Zoom- Chairman Clark

Chairman Clark announced the next board meeting in December to be held via Zoom. Dr. Williams-Stokes read from Act 56, which allows DSB Board and the staff to meet virtually. Act 56 authorizes virtual meetings if the public is informed prior to the event and is constituted as a formal meeting.

DSB Board Travel-NSRC-Chairman Clark

Chairman Clark announced that the Fall NSRC meeting will be held via Zoom if the meeting is announced at the national level.

DSB Technology-Lab Update-Gustavo Manzanales

Mr. Manzanales provided an update regarding the DSB Technology Lab activities. He indicated that Tech staff have been busy working with consumers to update or learn skills to meet

employment goals. The Tech Lab is open for in-person visits on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Due to COVID-19, some consumers elect to meet virtually. Tech staff are also available for hybrid visits, and training is conducted in the Tech lab and consumer homes. Mr. Manzanales discussed plans to expand training options to improve consumer opportunities for employment. New technology was presented to DSB Board members and staff on Zoom. Mr. Manzanales demonstrated the OrCam, technology device that is available to blind or visually impaired consumers who use the DSB Technology Lab. Mr. Manzanales mentioned that the OrCam also has an application on the cell phone that allows you to make calls for visual assistance. The device also has features to read print material, and to locate objects. The device requires internet service to work properly.

DSB Board Annual Training-Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes

Dr. Williams-Stokes stated that the DSB Board members have received bi-annual training regarding ethical roles and responsibilities of serving as a board member. She stated that she is working to identify a speaker for the training to be consistent with the DSB Statewide meeting on December 8th and 9th. A refresher is recommended at least bi-annually as a reminder to board members.

OIB Board Report-Dr. Megan Lamb

Dr. Lamb stated that DSB continues to participate in the monthly managers meetings for OIB with Mississippi State University. DSB recently drafted a new OIB application form that is being tested for accessibility before dissemination to staff. In addition, DSB is working to draft letter templates for the OIB to allow for consistent communication with consumers from staff.

OIB Services and Outcomes Update

DSB is currently serving 252 individuals in the OIB program. For Federal Fiscal Year 2021, which runs from October 2020 until September 2021, DSB received 379 referrals to the OIB program. DSB has closed 25 cases successfully. During this time DSB has provided many assistive technology devices and training on how to use the devices, surgical and therapeutic treatment related to visual disabilities, orientation and mobility training, and transportation as needed to consumers. The largest service request is for more assistive living devices and training on how to use them. DSB staff can visit consumers in their home, making it easier to assess the needs and evaluate progress for our OIB consumers.

Friends of Arkansas Information Reading Services Update (FAIRS) -Mr. Larry Wayland

Mr. Wayland provided an update that FAIRS is still meeting virtually. He reported that FAIRS purchased newspaper subscriptions to support the DSB Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS) broadcast.

Report on Quarterly Disability Rights Arkansas (DRA) Activities-Mr. Tom Masseau or designee

Mollie Hernandez provided the Disability Rights Arkansas (DRA) Quarterly Report. DRA currently has one case that involves a DSB Consumer through the Client Assistance Program (CAP). She noted that the case is moving towards a successful closure for the consumer. In addition to that, Ms. Hernandez mentioned that DRA is working to ensure some of DRA publications are available in Braille and other accessible formats. In October, DRA will present a 90-minute informational webinar on Disability Employment. Information about the webinar will be available later.

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

Dr. Sha' Anderson introduced herself and how AR-SILC was established under the Rehab Act 1963. She congratulated DSB on the reallocation award. On September 23rd, AR-SILC will have a smaller version of the cross-disability summit. Dr. Anderson stated that she will sit on Register Educate Vote (REV) to educate those on voting rights Sept 13-20, 2021. Speakers include Rema McCoy-McDeid, Commissioner on Administration of Disabilities will join virtually, and the Self Advocates being Empowered (SAGE) representatives. The link will be sent to DSB Board members and staff. 60+ will be in attendance. Dr. Anderson attended the opioid crisis conference and received information on substance abuse and the use of Narcan. A few months ago, Dr. Anderson stated that she received information from the Center of Inclusive Design regarding Braille materials on the similarities and differences between the flu and COVID-19.

CONSUMER INPUT

Arkansas Council of the Blind-Theresa Petrey

Theresa Petrey stated Arkansas Council of the Blind (ACB) state convention was held via Zoom on August 13-14, 2021. The guest speaker was Superintendent James Caton of the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. DSB provided an update on the Vending Facility Program. The convention topics of discussion were update from IFB Solutions, obesity and starting wage increase. Speaker, Barry Shear, spoke on gadgets and assistive devices. Products for guide dogs were offered for trips with service dogs. She mentioned that the National American Council of the Blind (ACB) meeting was held on July 16-23, 2021.

National Federation of the Blind (NFB)

Board member David Henry provided the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Arkansas report. During July 6th-10th the national convention was held virtually. Topics were inclusivity, diversity, civil rights, education, transportation, and laws concerning service animals.

The NFB state convention will be Oct 29-30, 2021. Registration information can be found at <http://www.nfb.ar.org>. NFB has planned silent auctions and various other information about the blindness community.

SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING:

Friday, December 10, 2021- 1:00 p.m.

3:00 P.M. ADJORN

Chairman Clarke asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. William Heaston motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.