DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2026

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT
Tiffany Moore, AER, Board Chair
Ernest Huff, At-Large, Vice Chair
Roy DePriest, At-Large, Secretary
Mollie Hernandez, DRA
Judy Ricci, ACB

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT
Eric Yarberry, WSB
Terry Sheeler, OIB

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT
Vacant, Lions Representative

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT
Nicole Walsh, ASBVI
Kourtni Felps, VFP
Larry Wayland, FAIRS
Kara Aaron, BVA
Vacant, ASBVI

Attorney General's Office Representative: Michael Lewis

Governor's Office Representative: None

Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) Board Meeting Support Staff: Nathan Winter, Dr. Megan Lamb, Theresa Bertram, Rayvern Lewis, Gustavo Manzanales, Amy Jackson, Dr. Sherlyn Harris, Contrena Smith, and Brandy Bryant.

Others Present: Matt Pitsch, Secretary of State Office, David McCoy, Chief of Legal Services

Greetings – Director Nathan Winter:

Mr. Nathan Winter began by greeting everyone and welcoming them to the DSB Board Meeting. Mr. Winter stated that the business handled in today's meeting is absolutely critical for how DSB functions as a whole. While the last meeting was a special called meeting, today's meeting is the official scheduled board meeting. The meeting is being held in-person, via Zoom, in addition to being streamed live on ARCAN.

Mr. Nathan Winter expressed, "So, now DSB going to kind of hopefully get back on that regular rhythm of quarterly meetings. But over the last several weeks, DSB staff have really been working hard. What was, as we know outlined in the meeting last time, today we have all of the action items that DSB is doing as well as continuing to work with clients on developing plans and getting back in touch with them. And the counselors have been working really hard to make sure that those things happen. Currently, DSB is really just trying to engage with all of its participants and just getting consumers ready to move forward with their plans. So, thank you all

for being here today. I am definitely looking forward to the meeting and the feedback that the agency receives."

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Nathan Winter asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the last special meeting scheduled for May 20, 2026. Mollie Hernandez made the motion to approve minutes. Roy DePriest seconded, and the motion carried.

Chairperson Comments – Chairman Tiffany Moore

Ms. Tiffany Moore stated, "I would just like to just take a minute and say good morning to everyone and thank you for being here. I know these are volunteer roles and I am just really appreciative of everyone's time and thankful for everyone's concern and efforts to be here and be present. As a novice Chairman, I would like to say that I am excited to work with everyone that is on the board, voting members and non-voting board members and if anyone ever wants to reach out to me and just talk about our ideals for the blind community what we want. Respectively, not necessarily talking about agenda specific items but if you want to just discuss your ideals or your goals as relates to DSB and the blind and/or visually impaired community of Arkansas. This is something that is very personal to me and that I have committed my professional career to the past 20 years. Therefore, that is something I welcome from people, and I want us to be able to lift each other up in these roles and to move the agency forward."

Ms. Tiffany Moore also added, "there are two upcoming events in October and so I am kind of planning a little bit ahead. If you are like me, you like things on your planner. So, I am going to put it out there. Mr. Nathan Winter had mentioned that October is an overall disability employment awareness month. In light of that, there will be an event at the Capitol Road on October 1, 2026, and we will continue to get you guys more information on that event because we definitely would like certainly as many board members to attend as we can, and as many constituent groups there from the blind community as possible so we have good representation. In turn, I will absolutely do my best to represent as well."

Ms. Tiffany Moore wrapped up by saying, "Additionally, another event to put on your planner is on October 15th usually. Which is the celebration for White Cane Day, and it is usually in collaboration with other agencies. Please correct me if I'm wrong, Dr. Lamb, but I believe it is a collective effort of DSB, WSB, sometimes Uranus. Yes, it is collaborative, but obviously a very important day. And if we can just tentatively mark our planners to anticipate something coming up, that would be lovely. And again, I am available for individuals that have any concerns or feedback, even if it is just for feedback from me. I definitely look forward to working with everyone."

Director's Report – Nathan Winter:

Director Nathan Winter began his report by stating, "I had a few things that I just wanted to talk to you guys about, specifically like updates with our Performance Improvement Plan, including the high-risk letter, and Specific Conditions. The agency just sent out an OIB Directive not too long ago since the last meeting. And I just want to kind of discuss that with you all a little bit. And really the big one that we want to just update you on today is the Order of Selection Update."

Performance Improvement Plan Update:

Director Winter stated, "So I will start with the Performance Improvement Plan. Now you remember as we discussed it last time, the reason that we got put on a performance improvement plan is because we as a state - so that includes ARS and DSB together. It is an overall state VR performance score, that if we drop below 90%; and that's 90% if you take the state performance measures which those five performance measures average them up individually and then divide that by five your average has to be greater than 90%. Right now, DSB is at 81.32%. So, that is what DSB got put on a performance improvement plan for. If we fall below that 90% in two consecutive program years, then we get sanctions that are placed on the governor's discretionary fund for WIOA, and we do not want to be the reason that sanctions get put on those funds."

Director Winter added, "So, we had an update with RSA between our last meeting and this one just to kind of discuss where we currently are. And the last update that we had, which includes the update that I gave you, our Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) rate for Q2 was 18.4%. And our negotiated level is 59%. So, that is a pretty big gap there. Our employment rate Q2, two quarters after an individual exits the program was 1%. And our negotiated rate was 65%. Our median earnings were really good. That is the one thing that we performed really, really well at. It is over $8,000 and our negotiated level for that is $6,870. Our employment rate in the fourth quarter after exit. This is four quarters after the individual has been closed, was 9.9% and our negotiated level is 65%. And then our credential attainment rate was 10%, with a negotiated level of 37and a half. So, there is quite a big gap there from Q2, with where we need to be at the end of Q4, which is coming up really soon. At the end of the month is the end of our quarter 4.

Director Winter said, "So, we just had a call with RSA, like I said, and they gave us an update because our staff have been digging in and really cleaning up our case management systems. Counselors are really going in and trying to find those credentials, trying to find those measurable skill gains. Staff have been going in and trying to really identify the individuals that would have been eligible for wages and trying to make sure that we are pulling those numbers, and it has made a huge impact. What I just reported to you was about the Q2 numbers, so our Q3 numbers for measurable skill gains (MSG) to remember is that DSB negotiated level is 59%. Our current Q3 level is 57%, which means we are really close. So, we went from 18.4% to 57%. So, this is a huge jump. Our Q2 employment rate went from 1% in Q2 to 37% in Q3. Now, we are not where we want to be because our negotiated level is 65%. But we are showing steady improvement here, still. And I think whenever we roll Q4, we are going to get even better than that."

Director Winter continued by stating that, “DSB median earnings continue to be high over $8,000, with negotiated at $6,870. Our fourth quarter after exit number was 9.9 in Q2 and is now 43% in Q4. So, we have made huge gains in that as well with negotiated at 65%. And then our uh credential attainment rate was 10% and now it's 30%, with a negotiated 37and a half, and I really anticipate us going above 100% in credential attainment rate. I think we have already found since this was reported to us by RSA since this discussion happened; several more credentials that will get us up and above 60% which would obviously take us above 100. Hopefully, the Q2 and Q4 employment rate, will get the agency as close to that negotiated level as possible, but we are really going to try to bank on maybe MSGs, median earnings, credential attainment rate, going as far beyond 100% as we can because our finding was that we drop below 90. Well, even if Q2 and Q4 rates stay below our negotiated level, let's say they are at 70%. So, if they are dragging that percentage down, then if we go over 100% on some of these other measures, we may not drop below 90%. Because if DSB is at 110% or 115% on some of these others, it rises the rest of those percentages. Well, the median percentage went up, so hopefully that will happen and DSB will not get a continued finding after we end Q4 here. So that is kind of where we are with our Performance Improvement Plan. A lot of good work has already been done, and it will continue to be done here towards the end of the month.”

Dr. Ernest Huff stated he had a question and asked, “Is the reason these numbers are better is just because we have access to the data now? I remember at the last meeting you said that we did not have access to all the data. Are some of these improvements in the number of data corrections or can you explain a little bit about that?

Director Winter responded, Sure, and you are exactly right. DSB had a lapse in our access to the wage data for whatever reason. Part of it was we were kind of locked out of that system that we could not pull it ourselves and we have gotten access to that now. So, we are able to pull that data, and we are able to go back into previous quarters and start pulling that data as well. So, yes, that is a large part of it. The other part is just making sure that that we are identifying training goals appropriately so that we are not leaving training goals just hanging out there whenever they should have been closed. So, it is also like improving our numerators and our denominators, right? So, with those denominators, the cases that were just kind of hanging out with training goals whenever it should have been closed, they increase your denominator, but it is not going to help your MSG numerator at all because they do not have any ability to actually hit an MSG, right? So, we have these training goals just kind of floating out there that should have been closed previously and just making sure that we focus on that, and close those things, and then also that we really truly identify all the MSGs that we should be taking advantage of and getting those into the system as well. So yes, there is a large part of it which is previously the lack of access to data but also improving our business practices and such, to really make sure we are accurately reflecting the numbers that we have.”

Dr. Ernest Huff also stated, “Hey, I have a follow-up too. Are we contacting like the blind and visually impaired people out there? Is somebody calling these people to do follow-ups, and to see how they are doing? Is someone checking to see what they are working on? Do we have somebody actively doing that? Because as you know, I have a blind daughter, and I really have not had anybody really to do so; other than sending me some letters saying to send more

information. No one has called to see where she is going, or what she is doing? Do we have people actively working to do that or are we just crunching these numbers? That's just a question I have."

Director Winter answered, "Yes, that's a good question. Right now, counselors are actively supposed to be going out and engaging with their caseloads and getting those kinds of updates because we should have a lot of IPs coming up for renewal here in the near future. Therefore, counselors really should be already going out and reaching out to the to the caseloads. That should be happening right now, well it is happening right now."

Mr. Roy DePriest asked, "The quarters you referenced, are those quarters that coincide with your fiscal year and not the calendar year. Or are they calendar year quarters?"

Director Winter responded, "That is a great question, and it is a very complicated question to answer, but I will do my best. So, the quarters are in program year and so they do coincide with the state fiscal year, but they are not exactly measured that way right. So, they come up with cohorts okay, so whenever a quarter hits right based on that program year, we take a snapshot of all the individuals that meet the criteria. Let's say we are looking at Q2. So, in quarter 2 after exit employment rate. So, every quarter it would be two quarters prior to that of individuals that closed we get wage data, and self-reporting data on hey is this person employed and we verify that with are they receiving some kind of income, right? But the actual Q2 number is calculated by the average of the four quarters. So, the past year's data up to that point, you have these cohorts, right? That exit and they consist of those quarterly data, right? That is based on program year. And they kind of follow along. So, you will see Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, those go into this Q2 after exit number. Well, in the next quarter Q1 will fall off and we'll pick up Q5, right? And as you go along, some of those cohorts fall off, as you pick up other ones. And that is why sometimes with this data that we were not able to pull, you will see like one cohort, where our numbers are really, really bad for that one cohort. While you are kind of waiting on maybe that cohort to fall off without reportable, but then Q4 may pick it up, right?"

Director Winter additionally stated, "I know it is difficult. However, maybe in the next board meeting if you guys want, I can actually throw some stuff out to you all in advance that kind of explains in detail how those performance measures are calculated per quarter. And then we can throw it up on the board and we can answer questions because that is a really good question, it is really nuanced. Honestly it is something that not a lot of people really fully understand other than our data analyst folks. They have it down to a science, but it is important because what our counselors are doing every single day affects what cohort the people that are exiting today are going to go into. And we need to make sure that those cohorts are as strong as they can be because they are going to follow us along for the next year and a half, two years after they exit our program."

Dr. Ernest Huff said, "Okay. I have another question. How are you checking to make sure the counselors are doing this? Evidently things have fallen through in the past, that is why we are here where we are today. How are we making sure that the counselors are doing this? Is there like somebody checking in on them? Do they have a supervisor? Are you checking on them? How do we know what their caseload is? I mean, can you just explain a little bit of that?"

Director Winter responded, Whenever Ms. Rayvern Lewis comes up, she's our Field Administrator. She can go into more detail on how we are holding the counselors accountable to that. But there is in our case management system at base level, right? They have to have so many contacts and that is tracked in our case management system. If they do not meet those then it will flag in the system, right? So, at a minimal level those kinds of things will check and catch failures to contact the individual participants. But right now, since we want more intentional contact and trying to reach out more regularly. That is something that has been issued, by myself and definitely rely on Ms. Lewis and the individual regional office managers to make sure that their counselors are doing those things. And we get reports on that. Any other questions that was on Performance?"

Eric Yarberry asked, "Hey, can I hop in here with a question real quick? I am glad you guys are meeting today. And I hopped on about five minutes late, so sorry if I missed the roll call. One of my questions is, I am glad to see that jump in and stats and measurables, that's good. But as a vendor though, I would be curious to see a breakdown of those stats and where those are coming from. If you all could get that, that would be awesome."

Director Winter answered, "Yes, we will make sure that we do that at the next meeting and I will send that to you all out in advance of just how those stats are calculated and where we are getting that information from."

Eric Yarberry responded, "Awesome. Thank you."

Specific Conditions:

Director Winter stated, "So, Specific Conditions, we had our first submission for our Corrective Action Plan (CAP), and that is based on that high-risk letter, right? We submitted that on Tuesday. And so, basically, we gave them updates on our cost containment measures. As far as where we are with Order of Selection which actually got approved by RSA to implement on June 01, 2026, and we activated within the case management system on Wednesday, so on June 10, 2026. So right now, we are currently on the Order of Selection, and I will talk a little bit more about that here in just a second. But that was part of our Corrective Action Plan. We also submitted to them a financial needs test. So that would be a calculation that is enacted on current caseloads, incoming caseloads, and on financial participation for individuals that meet certain thresholds. And that would be above and beyond the federal poverty level percentage. We really looked at a Technical Assistance Center, also how other states that have financial needs test to kind of draft that policy. So, it is sitting now with RSA. They have asked some questions about it, and we are kind of doing this back and forth, but certainly once we get a good solid draft approved by them, we are going to let the board see that before we go to implementation."

Director Winter added, "The other the other part of our CAP was the fiscal forecasting, and we have Ms. Teresa Helliwell, that is going to speak on the finances a little bit later. But really what we are trying to do is make sure that we are really intentional with the funding that we have right now. That we are metering out those case service dollars. That we are not just submitting or putting big chunks of money in AWARE, and that we are breaking it out by region. This is so we just always have eyes on it, and we are making sure that we are really intentional not only with

the roll out of funds, but with how those funds are being utilized. Any questions on specific conditions and like kind of where we are with the high-risk letter?"

Dr. Ernest Huff asked, "On the on the fund allocation you said you are kind of spreading it out based on different areas. What are those geographic areas you are dividing it up in?

Director Winter replied, "Yes, so it is Northeast, Northwest, Central, and South. And they do not get the same amount of money. It is not just divided by four and then given out like that, however; it is based on caseload size and activity in that region as well. Unfortunately, it is not a hard and fast number, right? So, if we see one region needs more money, based on whatever circumstance, then we can make adjustments accordingly."

OIB Directive:

Director Winter began this segment by saying, "The next thing I want to share with the board is our OIB Directive. So, this was also sent out to all the staff on June 01, 2026, and it is really a policy directive that for right now is going to suspend OIB counselors and staff from utilizing surgical and therapeutic service designations within the OIB program. So, after June 01, 2026, we are suspending surgical and therapeutic services for OIB individuals and that is only individuals who are 55 years of age and older that are seeking out independent living type services. So, this does not affect vocational rehabilitation clients. It is not part of the Order of Selection in any way, shape or form. This is a totally separate piece of funding that DSB staff do help kind of obligate. But what we have seen is that therapeutic and surgical services have really taken a vast proportion of those costs within grant funding, which is not a huge chunk of money. Miss Helliwell will talk about that as well a little later, and disproportionately kind of taken up those resources, right?"

Director Winter added, "So, in an effort to really serve as many of those individuals as possible, we are choosing to suspend those services at least for a time. Now that may not be forever, right? But at least for now, we think that is the best way to move forward. Now, historically, DSB has given some of our general revenue to kind of supplement the grant funding that we got on the OIB program, which is totally allowable. You can do that. So, there is a match that you have to maintain of state money that you must put in to get the federal OIB money. And we had really been going above and beyond above that to just supplement the OIB program. And with the situation that we are in on the VR side, we will get more bang for our buck if we match VR funds, rather than if we over match OIB funds, right? And I would much rather utilize the general revenue that we have to try to pull down as much federal money as possible."

Director Winter stated, "So the services that we are going to continue to provide is like medical procedures for assessment. We are still going to provide low vision services and devices. We are still going to provide orientation and mobility training to those individuals, independent living type skills and services, assisted technology or adaptive equipment, and any support services that individuals may need. It is just purely the therapeutic and surgical service that that can be suspended. Any questions on that?"

Chairman Tiffany Moore, how do you define therapeutic?"

Director Winter said, “Well, that's a good question. Anybody want to answer what is included in a therapeutic service?”

Dr. Megan Lamb responded, “For OIB, it is those services directly related to their vision loss. So, cataract surgery, injections in their eyes, prescription glasses or contacts. But unlike VR, you cannot cover non-eye related medical anyway under it. It is those specific medical provision services, but we still have to do our assessment by exams for eligibility.”

Director Winter added, “And that is a vast majority of what people in the OIB program come for us come to us for is those services that we are going to continue to provide. There is not as many people that come to us for therapeutic and med and surgical type services, but when they do, it sucks up a huge amount of those dollars that then limits the number of individuals we can serve with those other services that we get a lot more requests for.”

Dr. Ernest Huff asked, “Is there any way we can get a copy of last year's budget, what the expenditures were and this year's budget and sort of how you are allocating things? I am not even sure what all we pay for. I mean, I found some things on the web, but I would like a more detailed budget uh to see that if that's possible.

Director Winter responded, “100%. Yes. I see Teresa Helliwell taking notes. All right. Any questions on the OIB directive? And again, OIB older individuals.”

Mrs. Terry Sheeler asked, “Yes, I have a question, please. My question is in regards to the OIB Advisory Board and where that stands at this point.”

Director Winter stated, “Yeah, I think we are actually going to discuss that a little bit later.”

Mrs. Terry Sheeler said, “Oh, okay. I just was not sure where it was coming in and where I should pop my question in.”

Director Winter said, “Yeah. We actually have an item on the agenda to discuss that.”

Mrs. Terry Sheeler responded, “Okay, that sounds fine. Thank you.”

<u>Order of Selection Update:</u>

Director Winter stated, “All right, so the last for my report is the Order of Selection. So, as I said earlier, DSB is officially under an Order of Selection. RSA approved or deemed Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind to be under an Order of Selection with all case all priority categories closed on June 01, 2026, of this month and we implemented it into our case management system on June 10, 2026. So currently all categories are closed and that means any individual applying for services with DSB, they still go through the eligibility determination process. Right? So, if they need an assessment to help with their eligibility determination, we still provide those types of things and any services that are utilized for eligibility determination, we still provide those types of services. But once they become eligible, they are placed in a priority category and that is based on functional limitations at the time of assessment. And right now, all of our categories are closed.”

Director Winter added, “So DSB has three priority categories, most significantly disabled, more significantly disabled, and significantly disabled. And so right now all of those three categories

are closed. We had an all staff call just on Wednesday before we actually implemented Order of Selection in the case management system just to explain that to all of our staff, right? What it is, how it affects their daily activities, what kinds of conversations you should be having with current case load, what kind of conversations you should be having with applicants, right, and constituents that are looking to us for services. Just to make sure that our messaging was consistent with everyone. And just to be clear Order of Selection does not affect current caseloads."

Director Winter continued by stating, "So, anyone that has a current VR case with the Division of Services for the Blind, Order of Selection does not affect them. They get kind of grandfathered in, right? What it does affect is those that are applying for VR services. So even individuals that we are currently serving, let's say in pre-employment transition services, if they have not applied for VR, whenever they apply for VR, they would be placed on the wait list. But it does not affect their PRE-ETS services. So, we can still serve those that are currently receiving PRE-ETS with our PRE-ETS money. Okay? They just will not be able to receive any VR services above and beyond that at this time. It also does not affect job retention cases. So, any individual that is potentially going to lose their employment because of their disabling condition and that employment is at immediate danger, they would get exempt from the Order of Selection. DSB can still provide its services to those individuals just around job loss. Right now, if they came to us and said, 'Hey, I'm going to lose employment. I need Jaws or whatever to make sure that I stay employed.' We could provide them with that technology. Now, if they came to us and said, 'I want to increase my employment. I need to go get training.' They would be put on a wait list for those types of services."

Director Winter stated, "So DSB is officially on the Order of selection now which is not a bad word per se or is not really necessarily a terribly bad thing. Now hopefully we can open categories. It is not a good thing to have all your categories closed. So, hopefully whenever we open some categories, what it really is, it is a way that you can focus on the federal dollars that we are getting on the individuals that are in the greatest need of the services that we provide."

Director Winter explained by saying, "So, it would not in this instance, right, whenever we determine eligibility, we will say, 'Yes, you are eligible for DSB services and you are a priority one or you are a priority two or you are a priority three.' So, each individual gets placed in one of those three categories if they are eligible. If they were not placed in a category, they would be ineligible, right? Which would not matter for Order of Selection or not. Now with regard to the wait list. So, whenever they are put on a wait list, we pull people off the wait list based on their priority category and the date in which they applied for services. So right now, quarterly so it will be myself, Ms. Rayvern Lewis, who is our Field Administrator, and Ms. Raychel Fults, who is our statistician. We will meet quarterly and we will look at the budgets that we are getting from fiscal right? To see if there is anyone or how many individuals can we maybe can pull off the wait list this quarter. It is going to be based on really the individuals on the wait list and how much historically it has cost to serve individuals in that priority category."

Director Winter stated," So we say, hey, we had 50 people exit services this month. So, they are closed. They have moved on and maybe that freed up some money and maybe we can pull in 10 or 12 individuals based on that because a closed category means everyone that is in that

eligibility category goes on wait list so right now with all categories closed every person that applies for our services right now is going to be put on wait list. Now, at some point, as funding becomes available, we could totally open up like priority category one, right? So, if you were determined eligible, but you are in category 2 or three, you would still be put on a wait list, but if you were in category one, then you would go into that plan development."

Dr. Ernest Huff stated, "As a parent, having a blind child, it is hard to navigate this. Like Sadie was supposed to, I do not even know what category she is in, but I know before funding ran out. She was supposed to get a computer with Jaws. She was supposed to get rail refreshable device. She was supposed to get a lot of things that helped her there at WSB. She did not get any of it and it all disappeared. So, we wound up because we have the means of buying her a computer with Jaws and things like that. You know, I know a lot of people in the blind and visually impaired community do not have the means to buy a lot of these things. And so, it just makes me wonder how this whole process is. Like I said, there is just not a lot of communication. And when Sadie left the school for the blind and moved into graduate high school, she actually stayed a year longer because we were not sure what could happen and what she did. There just was not a good transition from K12 to post-secondary or workforce or even getting a job. And so, if I am confused as a new board member, I mean, and trying to work through this and navigate it, how do people that are blind and visually impaired, how do they navigate this system? Sort of my general question."

Director Winter answered, "I think that is a great question. I mean, ideally, the answer lies with the relationship between the counselor and the participant, right? So just making sure that you are in constant contact with your counselor, in constant contact regarding where your plan status is, what your intentions are, where we are on the IPE, or if you need to amend the IPE. So, if your plans are changing or the participants plans are changing, then making sure that we are communicating that, with the counselor. The more communication between both parties, the better and the smoother the process seems to work. But it is not an easy process. I mean each counselor has more than one individual on their case load, right? So sometimes communication can be challenging. I will admit that. But just making sure that we are keeping those lines of communication open is really probably the best way."

Chairman Tiffany Moore added, "And I can add on to that. As someone who worked with hundreds of transition age students accessing DSB services. I will say families needed some coaching on how to navigate the system and so once referred, I always coached parents on communication. You can have phone calls; you can meet in person but always follow up with a written email. This is just to have your own documentation of what the goals are, and what you are pursuing. Even though there is a documented IPE, and all those things are there, as far as regular communication; I always encourage them to just follow up with emails. And that seemed to really help families."

Director Winter wrapped up by stating, "Good advice. All right, any other questions for me on the Director's report? Because that's pretty much all I got right here."

DSB Leadership Reports:

Field Services Update – Rayvern Lewis:

We have continued to handle various demands and persistent operational changes. Despite any challenges, as a team, we strive to deliver innovative problem-solving and high-quality service. We aim to ensure that we reach out to every consumer on the caseloads, assess needs, establish goals, and recognize wraparound services to address those goals.

Upcoming Training dates for the field staff: Pre-ETS Training, and MSGs Training; coming soon; QA Tool Training, Wednesday, June 17, 2026

2026 Performance, January, February (Furlough), and March

In January 2026, DSB closed the rehabilitation plans of 13 successfully employed individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired, compared to 27 closures at the same time last year. This brings the number of individuals successfully employed year-to-date to 52 for the federal fiscal year, compared to 49 at the same time last year. Individuals closed in the current month are now employed in positions such as Tax Preparers, Meter Readers, Utilities, and Registered Nurses. They now earn an average of $473.76 weekly. Services to individuals aged 55 and older, who also have significant vision problems, are provided under the older individuals who are blind program (OIB). To date, the number of older individuals successfully rehabilitated totals 182 for the federal fiscal year, compared to 50 for the same time last year. Such services to blind individuals aged 55 and older measurably improve their abilities to function more independently.

In February, DSB closed the rehabilitation plans of 0 successfully employed individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired, compared to 27 closures at the same time last year. This brings the number of individuals successfully employed year-to-date to 52 for the federal fiscal year, compared to 49 at the same time last year. Individuals closed in the current month are now employed in positions such as Tax Prepares, Meter Readers, Utilities, and Registered Nurses. They now earn an average of $473.76 weekly. Services to individuals aged 55 and older, who also have significant vision problems, are provided under the older individuals who are blind program (OIB). To date, the number of older individuals successfully rehabilitated totals 229 for the fiscal year, compared to 206 for the same time last year. Such services to blind individuals aged 55 and older measurably improve their abilities to function more independently.

In March, DSB closed the rehabilitation plans of 0 successfully employed individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired, compared to 27 closures at the same time last year. This brings the number of individuals successfully employed year-to-date to 52 for the federal fiscal year, compared to 49 at the same time last year. Individuals closed in the current month are now employed in positions such as Tax Prepares, Meter Readers, Utilities, and Registered Nurses. They now earn an average of $473.76 weekly. Services to individuals aged 55 and older, who

also have significant vision problems, are provided under the older individuals who are blind program (OIB). To date, the number of older individuals successfully rehabilitated totals 249 for the fiscal year, compared to 215 for the same time last year. Such services to blind individuals aged 55 and older measurably improve their abilities to function more independently.

In April 2026, DSB closed the rehabilitation plans of 11 successfully employed individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired, compared to 3 closures at the same time last year. This brings the number of successfully employed people year to date to 76 for the federal fiscal year, compared to 169 at the same time last year. Individuals close in the current month are now employed in positions such as Aerospace Engineers, Cabinetmakers, and Bench Carpenters, and Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians. They now earn an average of $731.20 weekly. Services to individuals aged 55 and older, who also have significant vision problems, are provided under the older individuals who are blind program (OIB). To date, the number of older individuals successfully rehabilitated totals 258 for the federal fiscal year, compared to 289 for the same time last year. Such services to blind individuals aged 55 and older measurably improve their abilities to function more independently.

Field Activities

DSB supervisor and staff are preparing for an in-house QA Tool Training. This training will provide a consensus on how everyone closes set reviews.

- Time set aside daily.

With the current closures, applications are eligible, and employed

- Work through all closure requests per set and close only those with current guidelines

What would be the delay for not meeting deadlines?

- 12 days from the day of creation

Duplicates requests

- Provide a list to be cross-checked. Spreadsheet.

Section 4

- marks as completed- still pending
- Effects denominator

Written process for how to submit a closure for review set.

Jumpstart Update:

Arkansas Workforce Connections, Division of Services for the Blind, and Arkansas School for the Deaf and Blind are collaborating this year to bring Jump Start Initiative 2026. This year's event will take place June 21-26.

Jump Start will be a one-week, in-person, summer program that provides paid work experience, educational resources, and independent living skills to students who are blind or visually impaired upon graduation from high school. Students will be placed in their field of interest and transported back and forth to work. Concluding with a talent show along with the students' graduation from the program.

Closing

The field services staff will continue to demonstrate dedication, professionalism, and a commitment to providing quality services to clients. Our efforts will remain focused on maintaining effective communication, timely service delivery, and addressing client needs in a responsive and timely manner.

DSB Assistant Director's Report – Dr. Megan Lamb's Report:

DSB State Plan Updates:

Dr. Megan Lamb began by stating that, "The State Plan, which was touched on a little bit. So, the Order of Selection (OOS) was approved to go on the State Plan and was approved. RSA has asked for a couple of small wording changes to the State Plan, which was presented to the board last time. While they were not actual changes to how DSB does anything. RSA just wanted the agency to say it a little different, like instead of listing numbers of counselors and clients, they wanted us to list it as a ratio, things like that. So, the agency did make all those changes and submitted it back and RSA is sending it up to the next level of approval from there. DSB got a notice just today that the financial needs assessment will go in once approved. So, the agency may have to do that. Yet, I have another question, but once they approve the Financial Needs Assessment, it also has to go in the State Plan. So, DSB may have to make one more modification before the final permanent two-year plan goes into place. However, DSB is in good shape with that. Overall, RSA approved most of the updates and information for the agency. So, it is good to be here."

Dr. Lamb added, "As Mr. Nathan Winter mentioned, we did a training on Order of Selection for staff on Wednesday. The PowerPoint presentation was uploaded to SharePoint and DSB is also working on getting the recording downloaded and uploaded to SharePoint so that staff can go back and rewatch it when they have questions. One important distinction is with Jumpstart, which is that Jumpstart students are VR eligible PRE-ETS students. So, those students would not directly be impacted by the Order of Selection because they already have IPs, but it would be potentially incoming students of course that would impact it. Fortunately, that is good news for the Jumpstart students."

Dr. Megan Lamb said, "I think one of the things leaderships did talk in detail with staff about was kind of how to navigate those conversations when they get referrals, for students with a disability so that families can make that choice that's best for them. Do you become a potentially eligible client first, so that you can receive the five PRE-ETS for a little while and then decide to apply for VR and then therefore your five prius can continue? Do you go straight to a VR application, and you are wait listed for all services? And that's a family's choice based on where they feel their needs are best served. But that way counselors can hopefully have that conversation with them, so that a family can make an informed choice on that. And all of that is in the system along with the updated eligibility letter that explains Order of Selection, disability priority, and gives applicants their appeal information and contact information as required in case, if they do want to appeal their priority category determination."

Performance/Training:

Dr. Megan Lamb added that, "On the performance side, the agency has seen a lot of improvements and there are few more that we think will be a hit. DSB is going to run a rerun at the end of this month on all of the wages to see if any additional wage information has become available. The agency is also working with our QA team and ARS's team to possibly do a survey of individuals who are not showing up in the unemployment insurance database to see if staff can get self-reported wages from clients to increase agency numbers on both sides. With that, staff have been working with the Quality Assurance (QA) team to build that survey. So, thank you to Dr. Sherlyn Harris and her team over there for that. So, the agency hopes to see that improve the DSB's numbers as well. After that, DSB will just resubmit the past quarters to hopefully show that update at the end of quarter four (Q4) and be over or closer to all of our performance measures. But I am confident that DSB will be at or over for MSG and credential attainment based on what we found. The wages are just the hard part because we really cannot control whether somebody's working at a company that reports to you or not. So that's the trickier one to get the data on. I am happy to answer any questions."

Mr. Ernie Huff asked if there was an exact number of how many blind and/or visually impaired Arkansans are actually working with regard to receiving services?

Dr. Megan Lamb responded by saying that, "I do not have it in front of me, but we can get that number. Closures in our data in reference to

what we can verify. Obviously, there may be more. We assume there is more that we do not know about such as self-employed individuals or things of that nature after they exit. Typically, our rate has been about 50% of closures that are successfully employed. Last year, our total was 155 for the year of people who left us employed. We know that some end up employed after they leave us, it is just that they take the skills they learn, and they get a job later on."

Financial Report – Theresa Helliwell/Stephen Giese:

Ms. Theresa Helliwell demonstrated a PowerPoint Presentation during the DSB Board meeting. The financial report was provided to DSB Board members via email prior to the meeting.

Cancellation of Board Teams – Chairman Tiffany Moore:

Chairman Tiffany Moore asked Director Nathan Winter to elaborate on the reason for suspending the following board teams as directed. Mr. Winter started by stating, "It does not mean that we do not think these teams are important, or that we do not think that they will work. But what basically the agency is saying is, do we really need a sub-team of board members in this area, potentially Ex-officios board members? Do we really need those teams in place to do the work that the agency needs to do as a whole, right? Or would we rather just have those discussions in more of an open board forum that we can address openly rather than in a separate forum? Additionally, the

Consumer of the Year (COY) and Employee of the Year (EOY) are included, just for right now with everything that is going on recently. It just may not be necessary to continue and suspending those teams currently until we can get more board members potentially would be ideal, especially since everyone right now is just kind of new."

Chairman Tiffany Moore then asked for a motion to suspend the board component of the Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) team at this time. Dr. Ernest Huff made the motion to approve of suspending the OIB team. Roy DePriest seconded, and the motion carried.

Chairman Tiffany Moore also asked for another motion to suspend the Consumer of the Year (COY) and Employee of the Year Teams in conjunction to the OIB team cancellation. Dr. Ernest Huff made the motion to approve the cancellation of the EOY and COY teams. Roy DePriest seconded, and the motion carried.

Suspending Attorney General's Legal Consultation – Chairman Tiffany Moore:

Chairman Tiffany Moore stated that there is another action item not on the agenda. Chairman Moore began by saying, "I will explain it as best I can. Given the dynamics that we are a new board, and we are in some ways a new agency getting our footing. A member of the previous board had requested some legal consultative services if you will from the Attorney General's Office in the past, and so they have been attending board meetings. However, as Chairman I am not seeking any legal consultative services from the Attorney General's office at this time. So currently, the agency is utilizing DSB and the legal team within Department of Commerce essentially. Therefore, a letter was drafted, and I signed it and it was to basically to inform the Attorney General's Office that DSB is not really in need of their services necessarily. While there may be a time that we reach out in the future, at this time the agency is not in need of consultative services.

Chairman Moore added, "if we should need them at a meeting, then we would reach out, but at this time, it is just not a necessity. So personally, it is my personal opinion that we do not need the Attorney General's legal consultative services in our board meetings at this time. As we are all learning, it is quite complex and we probably need the Department of Commerce legal team in on these conversations. So, I am making the motion that or I am asking if anybody would make a motion to support suspending the request of the Attorney General's legal consultative services at this time.

Dr. Ernest Huff took a moment to ask and confirmed before the motion was made whether any members on the board needed legal consultation from the Attorney's General Office at this period of time.

Chairman Tiffany Moore stated that, "the short answer is no, but the longer answer would be as the board is learning when it comes to RSA and how the agency gets social security funds? The importance of carryover funds, and then the ways that we are measured with RSA is critical, because the funding and how the agency governs is really unique to DSB and ARS, right? So, it

is my opinion that the Department of Commerce legal team is more applicable to the needs of the board within the organization. And not to disregard the Attorney General's office. But it is just that I do not think it is a need the agency has at this period of time and the Attorney General's legal consultants do not necessarily need to be in attendance at board meetings currently."

Ms. Mollie Hernandez asked, "if it is a paid legal permanent retainer for DSB?"

Chairman Tiffany Moore responded, "No, it is not! And we can request it again. However, we do now have a Department of Commerce legal team that is here, ready, and willing to assist the board in whatever it needs and the organization would just prefer to rely on the legal team that is in-house."

Director Nathan Winter added that, "Really, I think the request came from the board prior to them even coming to the Department of Commerce, if I am not mistaken. Whereas maybe the agency at that time did not possess legal representation within the agency for themselves specifically. However, now we do have a Commerce legal team that is here, ready, willing, and able to assist the board in whatever it needs, and the organization would just prefer to rely on this legal team that is in-house. Like Chairman Moore said, if we ever need the AG's office, I know that they are willing and ready to assist whenever we do need them to. But for most matters of the board, the agency can just lean on our internal Commerce council.

Mr. David McCoy interjected and asked Chairman Moore to read the letter to the board that was submitted to the Attorney General's office.

Chairman Tiffany Moore proceeded to read the letter to make the board aware of the details specified within the signed and submitted letter to the Attorney General's office.

Mr. David McCoy then added that while DSB is entitled to the services of the Attorney General's office. As the agency goes through the Order of Selection - CAP performance plan merger of realignment structuring. It is important to note that the Department of Commerce legal staff already serves Workforce Connection agencies regarding plans and legislation. And in this process a "single legal voice" should be relied upon while DSB is moving through the process of reorganization.

Chairman Tiffany Moore asked for a motion to suspend legal representation from the Attorney General's office. Dr. Ernest Huff made the motion to approve of suspending DSB's Attorney General's legal Consultation. Roy DePriest seconded, and the motion carried.

Approval of a Hearing Officers List – David McCoy:

Mr. David McCoy stated that with regard to Order of Selection and Due Process reviews, clients have the right to make a dispute based on the denial of services, purchases, and/or eligibility. This process is required to take up to 60 days from beginning to end. Therefore, to resolve any disputes with clients individualized plans (IP) as well as to be in compliance with federal regulations, the board is required to maintain a list of hearing officers. The hearing officers are vital because they are responsible for determining any written decisions. Mr. David McCoy then took a moment to

share his screen and to review with board members, pending applications he recommended to the board members to approve upon.

Mr. Roy DePriest asked how many officers were needed in total?

Mr. David McCoy responded that with best practices 3 hearing officers will be adequate? However, he only brought forward 2 applicants today to present.

Ms. Mollie Hernandez stated that, "for the record, I would like to say that I will not be participating in this vote."

Chairman Tiffany Moore asked for a motion to make Allen McClain and LaToya Howard the hearing officers regarding representation of DSB's Due Process formal mediations. Mr. Roy DePriest made the motion to approve of electing Allen McClain and LaToya Howard. Judy Ricci seconded, and the motion carried.

Mr. David McCoy stated that, "Chairman, can I make a suggestion on your votes so that it is clear with the public meeting laws that if there is none opposed, that you state that the vote was unanimous in this case with uh Mollie Hernandez abstaining. This is just so there is a clear record that anyone in the public or anyone in the recording could know how each member voted."

Chairman Tiffany Moore then confirmed by saying, "So we had a unanimous vote to approve the hearing officer's list with Mollie Hernandez abstaining."

Mr. David McCoy wrapped up by taking a moment to state, "With regard to talking about goals offline, you really cannot operate individually. Anything you do really needs to be all together. And so, it is like the board is not complete unless you are all together in a called meeting. And if you need to discuss items, make sure you do not do that one-on-one. Especially items that you may vote on, on the agenda that are specific action items or business. We just want to make sure that everybody is compliant and that if you need to talk to each other then you may need to call a meeting to have those discussions, so they are out in the public, particularly items you are going to vote on.

New Business Section:

Consumer Input:

Mrs. Allison Hatfield stated, “I am Allison Hatfield. I am here at Commerce, so I know a lot of you. I wear a couple of different hats. I am Chief of Staff, general counsel. So, first I want to thank our whole DSB team. I know this has been a journey that we are working to ultimately land as the best Division of Services for the Blind in the country, which is the ultimate goal of Secretary McDonald and Governor Sanders. So, thank you to our team and thank you to the board members. I know a lot of you are new to this space but are very invested in this community. So, you are very valuable to us. We appreciate you. At the next meeting, which I think is in September, I think Mr. David McCoy, your general counsel, and I have talked a little bit about this, which is to bring in probably the Attorney General's Office with us to do some FOIA training on the Freedom of Information Act and what those laws say and how we are supposed to operate. I know a lot of things is new to you all and you have done a great job. Thank you, Chairman Moore. You said at the beginning, I am a novice Chairman here; and you have done an excellent job. So, thank you for leading us. So, therefore, we will offer that next time though and be able to answer in the public forum; but provide that training and answer questions and that's all. Thanks everybody!”

Schedule for the Next Meeting

The next DSB Quarterly Board Meeting is scheduled for Friday, September 11, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. (Commerce Building/Zoom)

Motion to Adjourn

Chairman Tiffany Moore asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Roy DePriest made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Dr. Ernie Huff seconded. The motion carried.

ADJOURNED at 11:59 a.m.