

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
FRIDAY, JUNE 11, 2021

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Keith Clark, At-Large, Secretary  
Teresa Sheeler, NFB, Board Chair  
Bill Johnson, AER  
Basil Julian, Lions  
Theresa Petrey, ACB

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

James Caton, ASBVI

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Erika Evans, At-Large  
Stephanie Smith, ASB

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

June Richardson, OIB  
Larry Wayland, FAIRS  
Harold Brewer, VFP  
Sandy Rowland, VFP  
Kara Aaron, BVA  
Lisa Reynolds, AER  
Sharon Giovinazzo, WSB

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, Mason Murphey, Jim Pearson, and Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes.

Others Present:

**Motion to Approve the Meeting Agenda**

Mrs. Terry Sheeler, Chairperson, called the June DSB Board Meeting to order. She asked for some corrections to the June meeting agenda. She mentioned the item "SFY 2021 Budget" – Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes – \*Vote required" This item should read "SFY 2022 Budget" – Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes – \*Vote required". In addition, the section of the agenda which says "DSB Board Meeting Logistics", there should be a section entitled "The Attorney General's

Response”. Bill Johnson moved, and Basil Julian seconded the motion to approve the agenda for the meeting. The motion carried.

### **Motion to Approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting on March 12, 2021**

Chairman Sheeler asked if the March minutes could be approved, after requesting a change. She corrected the dates for the National Federation of the Blind national convention with the correct dates of July 6th-11th, not July 6th-10th. Mr. Bill Johnson asked that the corrected March minutes be approved. Mr. Keith Clark seconded the motion. The motion carried.

### **DIRECTOR’S REPORT – Dr. Cassondra Williams-Stokes**

Dr. Cassondra Williams-Stokes began her Director’s report by thanking the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) staff, and the DSB Board for their participation and support during this quarter. She indicated that there has been a wealth of planning this quarter. Dr. Williams-Stokes mentioned that the DSB board meetings are open to the public. The agenda and meeting information is posted on the DSB website. DSB requests that representatives from each organization on the DSB Board forward meeting information to their constituents due to the meeting being held on Zoom.

Dr. Williams-Stokes stated that information has been shared with the Governor’s office regarding potential board applicants for AER, Lions, and National Federation of the Blind positions that expire on June 20, 2021. DSB has not received confirmation as to when these positions will be replaced. As a reminder, members who are term limited will serve until the official appointment is received from the Governor’s office. The supervisory responsibility of the DSB Board is to provide oversight for the agency operations to include budget, policy making and revisions, employment engagement, professional development under state and federal law. DSB has provided training for members to ensure members have knowledge of expectations.

Dr. Williams-Stokes provided an overview of the “Why” behind the actions listed on today’s agenda. She mentioned that the DSB Board has a responsibility to approve the annual operations plan. The plan is presented during the DSB Board meeting, and a vote is required. Professional development is a federal requirement that mandates that the agency recruits qualified staff to implement the Vocational Rehabilitation program. DSB is authorized in Act 207 to provide financial support for those employees to receive the certifications. The Board sponsors the Employee of the Year (EOY) process and the employee tuition scholarship to address these requirements. The EOY program recognizes at least three employees across the agency in different categories as applicable. Employees must score as “highly effective” or “role model” on the annual evaluation to be considered. Additionally, the Consumer of the Year (COY) program allows the Board to review successful employment outcomes for consumers and employer participation.

DSB staff continued efforts to improve program implementation this quarter. As the Administrators provide updates, the updates will demonstrate the productivity that occurs within the agency. Dr. Williams-Stokes stated that staff continue to address policy revisions to ensure the agency actions align with federal guidelines. The organizational structure and HR functions continue as priorities for the DSB leadership. DSB meets on a regular basis to track service delivery and quality of services. She also mentioned that staff are reminded that the mission for this agency is to promote independence for the consumers and assistance to meet desired employment goals. Efforts to recruit new vending managers are underway and Jim Pearson will provide more information regarding that initiative. COVID-19 has shifted many opportunities away from our consumers but has opened new possibilities for DSB to expand program offerings. We are busy working with partners to explore those options.

#### **Assistant Director's Report- Betsy Barnes**

Assistant Director Barnes stated that the DSB SFY 2021 Budget Report and Expenditures for January 1, 2021 to March 31, 2021 are included in the board packet. DSB expended \$871,514 on Client Services and \$1,042,703 on Agency Operations for total quarterly expenditures of \$1,914,217.

DSB has 51 employed staff or 69% of positions filled. Since our March Board meeting, staff that have joined the DSB family are: Caletha Stewart, El Dorado, and we welcome back Donna Thelen, Little Rock Rehab Assistant. Judith Renick at our Harrison office will retire as of July 1st. DSB has 22 positions that are either advertised, conducting interviews, or pending completion of background checks or hire dates. All staff that were on COVID-19 leave or working from home returned to work in the office as of May 17th. Supervisors conducted the Performance, Goals, Compensation System (PGCS) evaluations – annual evaluations during this quarter. All DSB staff were required to take Ethics I and II during this year's evaluation period as part of their Professional Development Plan. Staff have been taking advantage of other trainings offered on-line. Supervisors will review the 2020-21 PGCS evaluations with their staff starting June 21, 2021. The Professional Development training requirement for 2021-22 includes Community Outreach: An Overview course. All staff will identify a second training course with their supervisor that correlates with their position and job duties. A list of approved courses will be provided to all staff. The Governor has announced there will be merit increases based on employees' performance evaluation ratings. The increase will be effective July 1, 2021. The maximum increase is 3% for all state agencies. We are waiting on additional information on the allocation process. The performance measures for the 2021-22 PGCS's will remain the same as 2020-2021.

DSB has five staff enrolled in Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling programs, and one enrolled in Orientation and Mobility of the Blind (O&M) program at UALR. Congratulations to Kay Clark who recently graduated with an MRC and has taken her Certified Rehabilitation

Counselor's (CRC) exam. We also extend congratulations to Rhonda Garmon and Contrena Bowie for completing the APAC Certified Public Manager program.

This quarter staff attended the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) conferences virtually. At this time, the CSAVR 2021 Fall Conference will be an in-person event occurring in Savannah, Georgia November 2021.

Ms. Barnes announced the new Quality Assurance Manager, Sherlyn Harris, begins Monday, June 14th. Ms. Barnes stated that interviews have been conducted for two new Quality Assurance Auditor positions.

DSB is in the process of developing an Employment Module in AWARE to use when tracking performance measures. Training will be provided to staff to ensure a successful launch of the module. Going forward, other modules will be developed to assist with tracking performance outcomes.

### **Field Services Administrator's Report**

Dr. Megan Lamb presented the Field Administrator's report by stating that DSB has completed the promulgation of the Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB) Policy Manual, and part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) policy manual. Chapters 1-5 and 13 of the VR Policy Manual and the OIB Policy Manual will go into effect on June 11, 2021. The policy manuals have been shared with staff and placed on the DSB website. Area managers will be provided with a review of the policy changes on June 14, 2021.

### **Fiscal Close Out**

DSB is approaching the 2021 State Fiscal Year close out and has implemented new procedures to ensure a smooth process for close out. All staff are to re-issue authorizations by June 11th. Beginning the week of June 14th, staff should work to determine what can be paid that week and what will need to be cancelled for close out. Each caseload will complete a spreadsheet tracking cancelled authorizations and submit the final copy to the Field Administrator. All payments in AWARE will stop for the 2021 fiscal year on June 18th. This does not mean that services stop as staff may still draft authorizations, they will just have to hold payment until the new budget is issued in July. Once the new budget has been issued, staff will have 2 weeks to reissue any cancelled authorizations from the close out period and document this on the tracking spreadsheet. The process will allow DSB to ensure that any authorizations cancelled for close out are reissued and prevent any issues with payment of services due to the end of the fiscal year.

### **Business Engagement**

Stephen Partridge, DSB Business Engagement Coordinator, is working to build connections with a variety of businesses around the state. He has developed connections with several employers and provides support to help companies understand the technology needs of our consumers. Citizen's Bank is seeking to hire a consumer as well as work with our staff to learn more about JAWS and options with technology for employees. Mr. Partridge has also connected with University of Arkansas-Little Rock on a project for consumers interested in computers and the cybersecurity field.

### Field Services Operations

The Annual Field Services Meeting is scheduled the week of July 12<sup>th</sup> via Zoom. Training provided will include topics on Job Readiness, Service-E in AWARE, and Employer Engagement. Staff will also participate in a workshop on Cultural Humility during this virtual program.

Jump Start will be both in person and virtual this year. The virtual Jump Start will take place from June 14<sup>th</sup> to June 17<sup>th</sup> with ACE Academy. This session will focus on Self-Advocacy and meet using Zoom each day. DSB will also host an in-person Jump Start program with 12 students. The in-person program will teach students about self-advocacy and a variety of workplace readiness skills. Students will get hands on experience with independent living technology as well during their lessons.

### **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 the highway rest areas in the vending program are operational except for the White River location. The White River facility has water and sewer issues; thus, Mr. Pearson is not sure when this location will reopen. For the rest area vending stands, sales are down 50%, as COVID-19 has changed the way people utilize rest areas. Mr. Pearson noted that this trend is present in other states as well.

The state office locations have managers working half days but are operable. On the federal manned locations, the post office is open in North Little Rock. However, the Federal Building in downtown Little Rock, and the Veterans Administration (VA) facility in Fayetteville are still closed. These facilities in Little Rock and Fayetteville will possibly reopen later this year. The National Council on State Agencies of the Blind (NCSAB) released an announcement from General Services Administration (GSA) indicating that federal employees could continue teleworking which may present a barrier to the Randolph Sheppard Program. COVID-19 has hurt all states with regards to the vending program. States are trying to work together and share ideas. There are three openings for vendors: the Pulaski County Court House, DHS location on Main Street Little Rock, and the Revenue Office in downtown Little Rock. The Vending Facility Program (VFP) has one trainee in the works for one of the open locations. The vending program

needs two additional trainees. Mr. Pearson requested that if board members know of anyone interested in the program, have the people reach out to DSB.

The Federal Financial Restoration payments for vending managers were voted on and set aside by Congress. A plan of distribution has been approved by Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) for funds to be distributed to qualified vending managers. The payments will go out after the new SFY begins in July 2021. DSB is working to get the special payments set up in AASIS to distribute to qualified vendors to assist with their losses.

Due to the merger of East Arkansas Community College with Forrest City Vocational Technical School, Harold Brewer, the manager in Forrest City since 1969, and DSB were asked to vacate the location in Forrest City. A new location is being identified for Mr. Brewer.

The DSB Technology Lab has resumed normal operations and look forward to having clients in the lab for training.

### **AIRS Report- Theresa Bertram**

Theresa Bertram updated the DSB Board concerning Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS). AIRS is moving into the summer programming schedule. 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 weekly. The telephone number for AIRS Plus is (844) 888-0981 and the platform has approximately 300 listeners. Newsline has approximately 300 listeners signed up but 30 loyal users. AIRS has 277 likes on Facebook. Mrs. Bertram is working to set up Instagram and Snapchat accounts to ensure the youth audience is connected.

The AIRS summer schedule includes Summer Seminars from Hadley School for the Blind on Fridays at 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Topics include, veterans' benefits, living well with diabetes and vision loss, support for macular degeneration, home-based self-employment and changing nature of the workplace. National programming includes "Drugstore Flyers", a nutrition health show, "What the Tech", and other shows of interest. A complete listing of shows and schedules can be found on the AIRS website.

Local programs include "501 Life Magazine", "About You", "About the River Valley", and others. AIRS has started local newspaper reading including "Mena Star", "Dequeen Bee", "Petit Jean Country Headlight", and "Pocahontas Star Herald". Ms. Bertram stated that a response from the Mountain View paper is pending and that other newspapers can be heard on AIRS Plus. The AIRS Plus platform has additional newspapers available for listeners. AIRS provides shows specifically for job seekers that list job advertising for both DSB and other companies. The

Reading Service has many shows to help the consumers who are blind prepare for the job market. While we do not control Newline, we do work to update the “Cleveland County Herald”, “Nashville News Leader”, “Pine Bluff Commercial”, “Press Argus Careers”, “Walden News”, “De Queen Bee”, and “Carroll County News”. These newspapers are only available if you have a Newline account.

Ms. Bertram gave commendation to her volunteers, staff, and Friends of AR Information Reading Services (FAIRS). It was announced that the service has lost a volunteer due to the individual pursuing an opportunity to be a part of the production of “Matilda” in a theater in Northwest Arkansas. Ms. Bertram stated that feedback has been received from listeners throughout the state regarding how much AIRS means to them.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **WIOA Update-Dr. Megan Lamb**

Dr. Lamb stated that the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) is from October 1st through September 30th of the following year. The data presented today encompasses the period from October 1, 2020 through today.

Dr. Lamb presented the Independent Living Center expenses from October 1, 2020 to present; VR expenses for World Services for the Blind (WSB)- \$409,666.28; Alphapointe - \$72,317.78; Louisiana Center for the Blind- \$81,300.00; World Services for the Blind Pre-ETS- \$14,670.00; and World Services for the Blind OIB- \$10,450.00. The outcomes of these expenses were as follows: WSB VR has 23 participants with open cases; Louisiana Center for the Blind has 3 participants with open cases; Alphapointe with 3 participants with open cases; WSB-OIB with 1 participant with a closed (met goal) case; WSB-Pre-ETS with 4 participants with 4 open cases.

For the same period of October 1, 2020 to present, the expenses by service category were as follows; assessment was \$15,084.93; diagnosis and treatment \$519,935.60; training \$828,812.41; job services \$26,847.00; transportation \$5,791.72; maintenance \$19,639.85; rehabilitation technology \$234,282.45; supported employment \$0; reader services \$100.00; personal attendant services \$5,368.00; other services \$495,905.70; technical assistance \$0. Training category as follows: graduate college was \$16,415.85; four-year college \$318,450.12; junior college \$63,390.64; vocational \$124,725.45; on-the-job \$1,000.00; disability skills training \$163,567.07; and, miscellaneous (costs that were more specific to the consumer’s individual needs) \$141,263.28. Job services as follows: job search assistance \$9,497.00; job placement \$17,100.00; on-the-job supports time limited \$250.00; and on-the-job supports supported employment \$0.

Dr. Lamb explained that the RSA II not only outlines expenditures but identifies the specific number of actual participants who receive each service. This chart represented “paid for” services between October 1, 2020 to present in these categories. The breakdown is as follows: assessment 35; diagnosis and treatment 237; graduate college 3; four year college 60; junior

college 14; vocational training 16; on-the-job training 1; disability skills training 17; miscellaneous training 14; job search assistance 5; job placement assistance 7; on-the-job supports time limited 1; on-the-job supports supported employment 0; transportation 19; maintenance 12; rehabilitation technology 88; reader services 0; personal attendant services 1; other services 72 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 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year. The Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) includes: 50 with 4 secondary diploma, 1 educational functioning level 48 secondary report cards or post-secondary transcripts, 1 training milestone, and 1 skill progression. There were 5 clients who had more than one Measurable Skill Gain. The Q2 rate is 25.6% 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
  - ▶ 16 Credentials
    - ▶ 1 Associate's Degree
    - ▶ 4 Bachelor's Degrees
    - ▶ 11 Secondary Diplomas

#### Employment Rate PY2019

- ▶ 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit – 27% (97 Participants)
- ▶ 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit – 31.4% (125 Participants)

#### Employment Rate PY2020

- ▶ 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit – 60 Participants
- ▶ 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter After Exit – N/A

#### Median Wages PY 2019

- ▶ At Exit - \$11.00 40/week
- ▶ 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit - \$5892.21/quarter or \$12.27 per hour

#### Median Wages PY 2020

- ▶ At Exit - \$11.75 p/hour
- ▶ 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit - \$6352.10/quarter (\$13.23 p/hour)



## Program Outcomes

► July 1, 2020 – June 10, 2021

### **2021 Consumer of the Year Process – Dr. Megan Lamb – \*Vote Required**

Dr. Lamb stated that each DSB VR caseload will choose an outstanding consumer whose case was closed successfully within the last two Federal Fiscal Years. Supervisors will provide a recommendation for caseloads that are currently vacant. The Counselor will submit the nomination and consent form to the Field Administrator, Area Manager, and the regional Administrative Assistant. Once the nominations are received and reviewed, DSB will order trophies for the consumer and their employer to be presented to them. The counselor will also alert the State Senator and Representative of the honor for the consumer.

Chairman Sheeler called for a motion to approve the COY process. Mr. Keith Clark motioned, and Mr. Basil Julian seconded the approval of the Consumer of the Year (COY) process. The motion carried.

### **2021 Employee of the Year Process – Ms. Betsy Barnes – \*Vote Required**

Ms. Barnes thanked Chairman Sheeler and the Board members serving on the EOY Board Subcommittee. Staff that achieved a rating of Role Model “5” or Highly Effective “4” for the 2020-2021 rating period will be eligible for consideration for the EOY honor. The goal is to have an outstanding employee nomination in each of 3 categories: 1) Clerical Services/Caseload Support, 2) Direct Consumer Services/Counselors with caseloads, and 3) Administrative Support Services or all non-caseload personnel. One of the 3 category winners will be selected by the Board as the overall DSB Employee of the Year (EOY). The winners will be announced at the September DSB Board meeting and recognized at the December Board meeting.

Chairman Sheeler called for a motion to approve the EOY process. Basil Julian made the motion; Mr. Bill Johnson seconded it. The motion carried.

### **DSB Board Meeting Logistics – Mrs. Terry Sheeler**

#### **Elections: Chairman/Vice Chairman – \*Vote Required**

Chairman Sheeler stated that terms for the following board members expire on June 30, 2021: Terry Sheeler, Basil Julian, Theresa Petrey and Bill Johnson. However, these members will remain on the board until the Governor issues new appointments. Chairman Sheeler read from the DSB Board Bylaws information about the responsibilities of the board chair, vice-chair, and secretary positions. A copy of the bylaws was distributed to members before the meeting. Chairman Sheeler asked for nominations for a board chair, and vice chair. She asked for board chair nominations three consecutive times. Mr. Bill Johnson nominated Mr. Keith Clark as the DSB board chairman. Mr. Clark accepted the nomination. Mr. Julian motioned to cease

nominations and approve Keith Clark as DSB Board Chairman. Mr. Bill Johnson seconded. The motion carried.

Chairman Sheeler called for nominations for Vice Chairman three consecutive times. Mr. Clark nominated Ms. Stephanie Smith. Chair Sheeler nominated Ms. Erika Evans. The nominees were not in attendance; thus, nominations and votes would be tabled for the next meeting in September. Chairman Sheeler noted sending an email to board members regarding the nomination and voting on new people to serve in the chair, vice-chair, and secretary roles on the DSB Board. In an Executive board meeting, Ms. Evans indicated interest in serving as board vice-chair. She announced that due to Mr. Clark moving to the board chair position, the secretary position is open. Dr. Williams-Stokes mentioned there will need to be a new chair for the OIB Advisory Committee, since Mr. Clark will assume the DSB Board's Chair position. Getting a new chair for the DSB OIB Advisory Committee will be worked on by the next meeting in September 2021. Ms. Sheeler asked for nominations for the DSB Board Secretary. Since none were given, this nomination will be tabled for the September 2021 meeting.

Mr. Johnson asked that the minutes reflect his commendation to Chairman Sheeler for her excellent job as the DSB Board Chair for the past few years. Much happened over the past eight years regarding the DSB transition, change in Director, and the evaluation of the DSB Director. Chairman Sheeler did an excellent job throughout all these changes. Mr. Johnson proposed the board honor Mrs. Sheeler in some way. Chairman Sheeler stated that she could not have done the job alone and expressed appreciation to the DSB Board and the staff.

### **Future Meeting Locations/Zoom**

Chairman Sheeler lead a discussion concerning the future location of DSB Board meetings, either on Zoom or face-to-face. Mr. Clark mentioned that he would like to meet face-to-face but understands people wanting to be safe as well. Mr. Julian suggested a combination of both in-person and virtual meetings. Dr. Williams-Stokes offered flexibility with the board as to how to meet. Dr. Stokes indicated uncertainty regarding the December DSB statewide meeting as to if it would be in-person or virtually. She stated that she hoped to have a decision made by the next board meeting. Mr. Clark will revisit this issue of future board meetings during the September 2021 meeting. The September meeting will be on Zoom, but members will be advised if there is any change.

### **Attorney General Response – Mrs. Terry Sheeler, Chairperson**

Chairman Sheeler stated that the purpose of this topic is to keep the DSB Board and records updated. She confirmed that she has communicated with the Attorney General's office for several months regarding the DSB Director position and the DSB Board completing the evaluation of Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes. The Attorney General's (AG's) opinion read as follows: "The evaluation of the DSB Commissioner lies with the Board's Chair. The AG trust

the DSB Board will comply with all applicable federal regulations, and any grant funding conditions and requirements to avoid any interruptions of Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) or any other funding.” On May 20, 2021, at 1:55 PM, Mrs. Sheeler received by email the evaluation paperwork for Dr. Cassondra Williams-Stokes. The evaluation was completed by the DSB Board Chair, Terry Sheeler. The email correspondence stated the paperwork needed returned by Friday, May 21, 2021 by 4:00 P.M. to Dr. Childers. An Executive DSB Board emergency meeting was called. The evaluation was completed and returned by email from the DSB Board Chair, Terry Sheeler, to Dr. Charisse Childers at 11:17 A.M. on May 21, 2021.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **SFY 2022 Budget – Dr. Cassondra Williams-Stokes – \*Vote required**

Dr. Williams-Stokes began the report by giving commendation to the DSB Board for their work during the past year. She broke down the new State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2022 budget as follows:

- **Administrative Operations-** \$ 6,461,679 – to include \$1,084,457 of State General Revenue (SGR). Expenses in this allocation pays for employee salaries and benefits, agency operations, professional development, and travel.
- **Program Operations-** \$4,686,768 –
  1. OIB- \$264,858
  2. Randolph Sheppard- FRRP Grant -\$40,000-direct payments to vending managers
  3. Social Security Administration (SSA) Cost reimbursement-\$80,000
  4. Supported Employment -\$30,974
  5. Supported Employment (Youth with the Most Significant Disabilities)-\$36,000
  6. Vocational Rehabilitation- \$3,421,922
  7. State General Revenue \$813,014 – will be used to meet grant award match and Maintenance of Effort requirements.

Chairman Sheeler called for a vote on the 2022 DSB budget. Mr. Clark motioned to approve the SFY2022 budget, and Mrs. Theresa Petrey seconded. The motion carried.

### **State Plan Update – Dr. Megan Lamb**

Field Services has been working with DSB Administration and Quality Assurance (QA) staff to ensure the agency can track and report on the measures in the State Plan. It is important that DSB is accurate with updates of required information submitted to RSA to demonstrate that the goals outlined in the State Plan are met.

As part of this process, several tasks have been identified to improve our success. Field Services will provide all staff with a new electronic form to submit employer outreach to the Business Engagement Coordinator. This information will be collected in Excel automatically upon submission. This will allow for easier updates to the AWARE system of outreach conducted by field staff. As part of this process, the QA Team is working to restrict access to the Employer section of AWARE to ensure accuracy of the information entered. Once the Business

Engagement Coordinator can enter accurate locations of employer outreach and employer service, we can be more efficient and accurate with reports on the services DSB provide to employers as required by the Effectiveness in Serving Employers Performance Measure and our state plan.

Additionally, during our July Field Services meeting, training on the Job Ready Status indicator in AWARE will be provided to all staff. As part of this training, staff will review the items in the state plan that DSB has indicated it will provide and expect from participants in Job Ready Status. Dr. Lamb explained that as part of this training staff will also review the difference in a consumer who is employed but still needs services, and a consumer who is ready to begin their 90-day countdown to closure as an employed consumer. The updated process will help DSB improve tracking of the case management progress and support counselors to reach their performance goals.

Dr. Lamb explained that the Business Engagement Coordinator is working to revise and update the Small Business Policy for DSB to encourage more self-employment success. He is also reorganizing the Small Business Committee to review requests. As part of this, Katherine Andrews, Director for the Small Business Entrepreneurship Development Division-Arkansas Economic Development Council has agreed to serve on our committee.

### **OIB Update**

Mr. Keith Clark did not have a report for this quarter regarding Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB) and asked Dr. Megan Lamb to provide an update on the OIB program. Dr. Lamb stated that DSB is in the process of purchasing new Lightbox cleaning devices from Eschenbach. The device allows staff to safely clean their low vision kit items between each use to ensure safety of staff and consumers. DSB will continue to use the resources from Mississippi State University and their Technical Assistance Center (TAC) to provide training to staff. The OIB TAC website offers a variety of courses for those new to OIB and those who want to continue to develop. All staff are encouraged to sign up for the free courses as time permits. In addition, two of the courses from the National Research and Training Center (NRTC) website were required for all DSB staff as part of professional development for 2021 evaluations.

### **OIB Policy and Promulgation**

The Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB) Policy Manual has completed the promulgation process and goes into effect June 11, 2021. The manual formalizes the process to ensure DSB is following all federal regulations and guidance for the OIB program. The final manual is posted on DSB's website as required. The OIB manual has been distributed to all field staff.

## OIB Services and Outcomes Update

DSB is currently serving 206 individuals in the OIB program. Since the last meeting in March, DSB has received an additional 78 OIB referrals to our program. Since November of 2020, staff have closed 12 OIB cases successfully with the consumers meeting their goals. DSB continues to provide assistive technology devices and training, surgical and therapeutic treatment, orientation and mobility training, and transportation services to our consumers. Most consumers are seeking assistive devices to aid them in maintaining their daily independence goals at home and the training on how to use them.

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

Mollie Hernandez provided the Disability Rights Arkansas (DRA) Quarterly Report. Mrs. Hernandez mentioned working for the Client Assistance Program (CAP). She noted that many times people in the community of blindness will deal with her on advocacy issues. There have not been a significant number of cases from DSB for the current quarter. There has been a slight increase in cases due to outreach efforts DRA conducted. In April, there was a DRA three- day conference, and May, Director Masseau, spoke to the NFB Central AR Chapter. Mollie noted DRA hopes to have a close partnership with National Federation of the Blind AR. DRA wants to increase outreach to the community of those who are blind. DRA wants those in the community of blindness to gain competitive employment.

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

No representative from the Arkansas State Independent Living Council responded to give a report. The reports for the months of March, April and May 2021 were included in the DSB Board packet.

## **CONSUMER INPUT**

### **Arkansas Council for the Blind – Theresa Petrey**

Board member Theresa Petrey announced that the Arkansas chapter of the American Council of the Blind (ACB) is in the planning stages for the state convention. This year the state convention will be held via Zoom August 13-14, 2021. Information regarding streaming and ACB Radio is still being decided regarding the state convention.

The National ACB convention will be July 18-24, 2021 and will be available on all ACB channels. An array of topics will be discussed, and virtual tours will be conducted. A guest speaker will discuss the September 11 Flight 93 from Pennsylvania. An audio description of the

Summer Olympics will be available on Friday, July 23, 2021. For additional information, interested parties may contact Theresa Petrey.

### **National Federation of the Blind (NFB)**

Chairman Terry Sheeler provided the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Arkansas report. The NFB national convention will be July 5-10, 2021. Information can be found at the national NFB website at <http://www.nfb.org>. The agenda will be available soon.

The NFB state convention will be Oct 29-30, 2021. Registration information can be found at <http://www.nfb.ar.org>.

The Spring 2022 state convention will be April 1-2, 2022 in Springdale, Arkansas at the Holiday Inn.

SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING – Friday, September 10, 2021

3:00 P.M. ADJOURN

Chairman Sheeler asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Julian motioned to adjourn Mr. Johnson seconded. The motion carried.