

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2019

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Keith Clark, At-Large
Sandra Edwards, ACB
Erika Evans, At-Large
Bill Johnson, AER
Basil Julian, LIONS
Terry Sheeler, NFB
Stephanie Smith, ASBVI

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Kara Aaron, BVA
James Caton, ASBVI
Sharon Giovinazzo, WSB
June Richardson, OIB
Lisa Reynolds, AER
Larry Wayland, FAIRS

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

James Gatewood, Vendors

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: None

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Board Meeting Support Staff: Betsy Barnes, Charlie Cain-Davis, Kandy Cayce, Mason Murphey, Amber Neal, Jim Pearson, Brian Sanders, Tina Shores, Lou Talley, and Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes.

Others Present: Anthony Sheeler, National Federation of the Blind (NFB), and Irma Nelson, former Vendor Facility Program (VFP) Committee member.

Approval of the Agenda: Basil Julian moved, and Bill Johnson seconded the motion to approve the agenda for the meeting. The motion carried.

Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting from December 14, 2018: Basil Julian moved, and Bill Johnson seconded a motion to accept the minutes from last Board meeting. The motion carried.

Director's Report – Dr. Williams-Stokes, DSB Director

DSB Director Williams-Stokes discussed DSB staff updates since the December Board meeting. Sally Mahan retired. Janie Raschke is our new Agency Fiscal Manager. Diana Grasha is a new Administrative Assistant for Tina Shores in Fort Smith. Elizabeth Pettit is the new Administrative Assistant in Fayetteville. Latasha Age is the new Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) counselor in Pine Bluff. Mary Douglas, our longtime Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) Program Manager, and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Area Manager for the Batesville and Pine Bluff areas, retired in February.

State Issues

Ms. Williams-Stokes thanked the Board members for going through the transformation process with DSB. DSB is expected to be part of the Division of Workforce Services, under the Department of Commerce, after July 1, 2019. DSB will continue implementation of the State Plan as approved as we navigate through these changes.

DSB Board Appointments

There are no new board member appointments from the Governor's office until after July 1, 2019. DSB will work on replacements to represent the consumer groups, especially National Federation of the Blind (NFB), and American Council of the Blind (ACB).

WIOA

RSA is concerned about the organizational structure of the transformation regarding Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). RSA wants to clarify DSB's position as a Designated State Unit (DSU) and the Designated State Agency (DSA) for Division of Services for the Blind. Act 910 indicates that the Department of Commerce Secretary, in conjunction with the DSB Board, will hire and fire the DSB Director. RSA has requested clarification from Arkansas regarding the intent of this organizational structure to ensure it aligns with federal regulation.

VR Scope and Policies

The other item was the extent to which the DSB Director can determine the scope and develop policy of the Vocational Rehab (VR) program. WIOA regulation requires policy making authority to remain at the DSU level for the administration of the VR program. Decisions involving hiring, firing, policy, evaluations, and the expenditures of VR funds should remain at the DSB Director level. Additionally, development of the DSB State Plan is a shared responsibility for DSB Director and the DSB Board. The federal WIOA regulation indicates "Those functions cannot be delegated to any other individual or any other agency". Decisions on eligibility and determination will be made within DSB and the DSB Board. Overall, the regulation dictates that policy determination and implementation, allocation and spending of the VR funds, and making sure we take part in the one-stop delivery system in accordance with Workforce Services and WIOA.

National Issues

Director Williams-Stokes stated that DSB was invited to participate on a panel to discuss their experience with the Mississippi State University (MSU) Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) Technical Assistance process. The panel discussion will focus on the process, information shared during the MSU visits, and improvements made to the Arkansas OIB Program from MSU recommendations. The panel takes place during the Spring meeting of National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB).

RSA Approval

DSB requested and received prior approval from Rehabilitation Services Administration in January for Board members to attend the 2019 national consumer group meetings. DSB Board member Sandra Edwards will attend the American Council of the Blind (ACB) national meeting. DSB Board

member Keith Clark will attend the National Council of State Rehabilitation Counsel (NCSRC) meeting which will be held April 6-7, 2019, in Bethesda, Maryland.

Consumer Group Meetings

The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) will be April 6-12, 2019. Betsy Barnes will attend with Crystal Anderson and Megan Lamb. Ms. Anderson and Ms. Lamb will also attend the Social Security Administration (SSA) training, which will update DSB staff with the latest SSA information to help our consumers. DSB currently review cases to identify those potentially eligible for an SSA reimbursement, however the new software purchased recently will assist with the identification process and potentially benefit OIB and other VR programs.

DSB Mission and Vision

Since the December Board meeting, Ms. Williams-Stokes has visited almost every field office to meet with staff to ensure they understand their roles and the mission and vision of DSB. The last office to visit will be Texarkana.

Organizational Changes

The DSB Director plans to meet with supervisors about some of the organizational and program changes being considered. Since Mary Douglas' retirement, responsibility of the Batesville office has been assigned to Amber Neal, who currently manages the Jonesboro and West Memphis offices; and the responsibility of the Pine Bluff office is assigned to Brian Sanders, who manages the Little Rock and Central Arkansas areas. These changes will better distribute equally the regions throughout the state. Tina Shores is assigned to OIB, and Lou Talley is assigned to case reviews.

Small Business Program

The DSB Small Business Program must be restructured to ensure the process aligns with requirements needed to be successful in the business industry. DSB will work to revise this process and suspend accepting any new small business proposals. This approach will ensure our staff are trained, and consumers have the best information during this process.

Program and Administration Evaluations

DSB plans to provide evaluations of programs to the DSB Board. DSB strives to provide quality services throughout program and administrative areas.

Field Services Report – Betsy Barnes, Field Administrator

Staff Updates

Betsy Barnes thanked the field services staff for doing a great job meeting the challenges of the WIOA act. Ms. Barnes recognized the DSB Area Managers and listed some changes to DSB staff. Mary Douglas, DSB Area Manager and OIB Manager, retired February 28, 2019. Her areas of Batesville and Pine Bluff will be split between two existing area managers. Tina Shores, Area Manager for the northwest offices of Fayetteville, Fort Smith and Harrison, will take over as the new OIB Manager. Amber Neal, Area Manager for the northeast offices of Jonesboro and West

Memphis, will take over the Batesville office. Lou Talley, Area Manager for El Dorado and Texarkana, also leads the case reviews team. Brian Sanders, Area Manager for Little Rock, will take over the Pine Bluff office. LaTasha Mays has been promoted to Rehabilitation Manager over the Pre-ETS program. New staff members who have been hired by DSB are LaTasha Age, the new Pre-ETS Counselor in Pine Bluff; Diana Grasha, the new Administrative Assistant II in Fort Smith; and Elizabeth Pettitt, the new Administrative Assistant II in Fayetteville. DSB is in the process of hiring three new Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselors; one each in Pine Bluff, Texarkana, and Little Rock, to fill vacant positions. Additional DSB vacancies include Pre-ETS counselors in Harrison and West Memphis, a VR counselor in El Dorado, and the DSB Business Engagement Coordinator.

Meeting the Challenge of WIOA

In the VR program, DSB currently has counselors working 23 caseloads. They are challenged daily in coordinating services that match each individual's Individual Plan of Employment (IPE). VR Counselors work to utilize supported employment and job placement vendors.

Pre-ETS

DSB has a Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) program for students age 16 through 21. For this program DSB has seven positions, and only five are filled. DSB has a new Pre-ETS resource guide, a three-page document, which makes information accessible about the Pre-ETS services. DSB has developed a new dual case management system that enables Pre-ETS and VR Counselors to have shared caseloads and document potentially eligible clients.

Jump Start

The DSB Jump Start program will run from June 3, 2019, to June 21, 2019, for 30 students. The application deadline was March 1st. DSB is working toward attending and coordinating transition fairs. The Student Transition Youth Learning Experience (STYLE) program with World Services for the Blind (WSB) continues to provide Pre-ETS services in the central area of the state and northwest Arkansas. DSB is continuing to monitor its Pre-ETS funds and spending to meet the requirement of spending close to \$900,000. There are monthly financial planning meetings with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS).

Case Reviews

Lou Tally and her team have been busy with case reviews. In January the case review team will be in El Dorado and Fayetteville, and in February, Harrison. In compliance with federal regulations, the review team will work on closed cases. DSB was not audited by RSA this year, but we will be ready if DSB is audited next year.

Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB)

Last week Tina Shores and Betsy Barnes attended the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) Leadership Conference in Arlington, Virginia. On the first day, Mississippi State University (MSU) staff conducted a leadership summit for forty-plus OIB managers. DSB continues to implement its long and short term plans for the program to incorporate additional monitoring and quality assurance activities. DSB also continues to provide independent living aids. As technology changes daily, DSB will do its best to keep up-to-date on technology and equipment.

Assistive Technology

A new technology loaner program is in the works for Pre-ETS students to be able to test or try out new equipment before purchasing. The loaner program will be available to all students in Arkansas. DSB wishes to thank World Services for the Blind (WSB) for allowing the agency to “house” the program at WSB.

Project Search

Applications have been sent out for Project Search. This is a great opportunity for individuals ages 18 to 35. Training will be at various hospitals: UAMS, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, Hot Springs, North Arkansas hospitals, Camden, Jonesboro, Fort Smith, Pine Bluff, and Forrest City. Nine months of training will occur, consisting of three ten-week rotations.

Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center Agreement (WINTAC)

DSB has several major projects with WINTAC that will enhance services for clients including:

- Integrated Resource Team (IRT) - DSB will start IRT between now and June. IRT is a case management pilot project with counselors from two DSB offices, involving 10 to 12 clients, co-enrolled with the Division of Workforce Services (DWS) and Career Education. The IRT strategy will develop employment goals and align resources around these clients and their goals to meet or exceed WIOA performance goals.
- Peer Mentoring – This is a pilot program to add peer mentoring to Jump Start.
- Career Index Plus – This is training for staff using labor market information with their case management.
- Business Engagement – This will provide consultation for designing and setting up the program.
- Supported Employment – WINTAC will assist with training for vendors.

Deaf-Blind

For the Deaf-Blind consumers, DSB will have an interagency team of Arkansas Rehab Services (ARS), DSB, Transition, Education, and other providers working together to develop a new program for individuals who are deaf and blind. This program will be conducted at Goodwill. DSB staff will participate at the Helen Keller National Center in New York for training and assistance with developing this program.

Policy and Procedures

A new draft of the VR Policy and Procedures Manual should be completed at the end of March, 2019. DSB will need to make changes and updates to the OIB manual. The promulgation process will be shortly afterwards.

Finance Report – Janie Raschke

Janie Raschke gave a brief report. With 63% of the fiscal year passed, DSB is on target with expending the 2019 budget. DSB had problems with the software program ALLOCAP, which pays

indirect costs. DHS is working with the vendor to address the issues. In regard to contracts, DSB has submitted 4 contracts for legislative review and expects to receive a response in May, 2019 for approval to begin those contracts by July 1, 2019.

Vending Facility Program (VFP) Report – Jim Pearson

Jim Pearson congratulated Gustavo Manzanales for his promotion to Rehabilitation Program Coordinator for the Technology Department. His old position, Rehabilitation Specialist, will be advertised soon. Also, Debra Newton has moved into the position of Fiscal Analyst and will take care of finances for the Business and Technology (B and T) Section.

VFP Five Year Strategic Plan 2019-2024

Mr. Pearson went over the five year strategic plan for B and T, for the SFY 2019 through SFY 2024.

Participants

VFP will continue to partner with Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI) and VR counselors interested in Jump Start and other students who are legally blind and graduate from high school or college, in training and licensing in the Vending Facility Program.

Current Managers

VFP will work with the current managers to increase profitability by review of operations, product selection, inventory control, and providing customer service training at the annual seminar. VFP/DSB will provide the avenue for managers to participate in the training courses offered by the Hadley Institute, DHS, and World Services for the Blind (WSB). VFP will upgrade the accounting process to increase internal controls and review of manager's reporting standards, customer relations, management, and marketing.

New Locations

Regarding new locations, VFP will review state, federal, and private sector sites for future operations and partner with DSB for funding and initial site opening cost. Director Bennett of the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT), approved our highway agreement for locations for another three years to 2022. The new agreement starts on October 24, 2019. Public bids and awards will take place in April and May 2019. James Hart was placed as the manager of the Donaghey Plaza South cafeteria, and Sara Skroh was placed at the Federal Building site. The Pulaski Tech location is temporarily closed due to renovations by the school.

Accounting

Ernest Hart tracks manager's vending machine sales by machine counts and performing on-site reviews of locations for increasing the internal controls of the sales and reporting required by the Vending Operating Procedures Manual (VOPM). The accounting process of the VFP is being updated and changes made to increase productivity and processing of all VFP task with SAGE software. Total Business Solutions is the lead contractor for the upgrades to SAGE. Credit card sales at locations and reporting of these sales will be audited. Managers will be contacted to address these issues on an individual basis for reporting purposes.

Infrastructure Funding Agreements

The Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFA) required by WIOA and DWS have been completed for all comprehensive sites, and DSB will provide for a phone presence only at this time. The sites currently under agreement are: Hot Springs, Harrison, Fort Smith, Conway, Jonesboro, West Memphis, Hope, Camden, North Little Rock, Batesville, Searcy, Newport, Pine Bluff, and Little Rock.

Director's Report Continued

Ms. Williams-Stokes continued with her report. Letters were mailed out last week to all consumers providing information on the consumer groups, NFB and ACB, as well as information on DSB Reading Services and NFB NEWSLINE. State and national contact information for the consumer groups was included.

Board Committees

Board Chair Terry Sheeler listed the members of each Board committee. She noted that nothing has changed except for members who resigned, or term expired. The Legislative Committee members include Sandra Edwards, Basil Julian, and Sharon Giovinazzo. Mary Douglas was the DSB advising staff and will need to be replaced. Advising Consultant for Consumers is Donna Walker. The Advising Consultant Detail on Average Salaries served by Staff was Angela Young, who has left and needs to be replaced. The Budget Committee includes Keith Clark, Erika Evans, and Terry Sheeler. The By-Laws Committee includes Bill Johnson, Kara Aaron, and James Caton. The Employee of the Year (EOY) committee includes Basil Julian, Kara Aaron, and Stephanie Smith. The Consumer of the Year (COY) committee includes Lisa Reynolds, Terry Sheeler, James Caton, and Beverly Kindle, who has resigned and will be replaced by James Gatewood. The Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) Committee is Terry Sheeler, Sandy Edwards, Keith Clark, and June Richardson; Bill Johnson is no longer on that committee. The Blind Unemployment Committee includes Bill Johnson, Erika Evans, and Larry Wayland.

New Business

2018 Data Results – Crystal Anderson and Megan Lamb

Crystal Anderson and Megan Lamb presented results of consumer data collected in 2018 in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is a bipartisan agreement signed into law in 2014. Collection of consumer responses began July 1, 2017. Collaboration between state partners is designed to strengthen the workforce, remove barriers, and promote education. Partners include the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB), the Division Workforce Services (DWS), Adult Education, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The purpose of WIOA is to ensure that any barriers to employment are removed.

List of Six Values Collected

DSB has six values we collect. First, we measure the second quarter of employment. We get verification of employment status six months after case closure. Second, we measure employment one year after case closure. Third, we measure median earnings the second quarter after exit, and the median earnings of agency participants. This applies to rehabilitated and non-rehabilitated closures if

the consumers have been determined eligible. Fourth, we measure credential attainment, including high school diploma or GED, bachelor's degree, nationally recognized certifications like commercial driving license (CDL), nursing license, and industry specific certificates or diplomas. Fifth, we look at measurable skill gains. These include report cards, transcripts, standardized test scores, or any milestones that lead to credential attainment. Sixth, DSB looks at effectiveness in serving employers.

Job Retention and Penetration

Each state measures and reports on two of these three measures: retention, penetration, and repeat business. Arkansas reports on retention and penetration. To measure retention DSB looks at participants employed in the fourth quarter after exit with the same employer as the second quarter after exit. To measure penetration DSB looks at the percentage of employers in the state receiving services from any partner agency. States who measure repeat business look at whether an employer receives services more than once in a set period of time.

Statistics – Megan Lamb

PY2017

Megan Lamb listed what DSB statistics measure. For the Program Year 2017 (PY2017) the results for these six factors are: first, the national employment rate was 47.8%. (this is a state rate which measures general agencies, VR agencies, Workforce Services (DWS), and all partners together); second, 144 participants were tracked by DSB; third, 36 participants had second quarter wages for DSB; fourth, the DSB employment rate was 25% for DSB of second quarter wages; fifth, 36 participants had fourth quarter wages (not all were the same 36 participants), also a rate of 24%; sixth, the DSB employment rate was 25% (coincidence – not all were the same participants as the second quarter).

PY2018

For the Program Year 2018 (PY2018) – current year: first, no national employment rate reported; second, 212 participants were eligible for tracking; third, 83 participants had second quarter wages; fourth, DSB employment rate was 39.2% (an improvement over 25%); fifth, fourth quarter data is not yet available; sixth, note that this is only two quarters – the final statistics are not in because the year is not complete.

Median wages PY2017

Nationally, the median hourly wage at exit was \$12.30. The median number weekly hours worked at exit was 32 per week. For DSB, the median hourly wage at exit was \$11.00, and the median number weekly hours worked was 40 per week.

Measurable Skill Gains

Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) is a trickier value to measure, because consumers are in different programs with different milestones. Credential attainment for others is not currently being measured. For DSB, 21.0% of VR participants earned measurable skill gains in PY2017 – Arkansas VR reported 23.2% for PY2017. DSB is above Federal average; 101 measurable skill gains were recorded in PY2017. DSB is only allowed to measure one skill gain, per client, per reporting year. For example, a high school student may have four report cards in a year, but we only get credit for

one of those. Most of those skill gains reported were from secondary diplomas or high school degrees, followed by post-secondary transcripts, and other things of that nature.

Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Effectiveness in serving employers is measured statewide. The first measure we reported penetration was with Workforce Services (DWS), because it has all of the information from all of the states. Using DWS labor market information, there are 103,065 employers in the state of Arkansas. Of that, all of the partners together served 5,920 of those employers in some capacity. This is a 5.7% state penetration rate of our state employers.

Retention

Retention is how many clients received wages in both the second and fourth quarter with the same company. For retention, 36 participants had second quarter wages. Of those, 23 participants with the same company in the fourth quarter. This gave DSB a retention rate of 63.9% for the fourth quarter.

Governor's Information Update

Ms. Williams-Stokes said that there is no additional information, other than what has been provided. She said she is available to answer questions about the subject.

Vending Facility Program – Newspaper Article

DSB Director Williams-Stokes discussed the newspaper article in the February 24, 2019, edition of the Arkansas Democrat Gazette that talked about the Vending Facility Program (VFP) and former DHS cafeteria manager Beverly Kindle. Ms. Kindle is a former VFP representative and voting member of the DSB Board. Dr. Williams-Stokes mentioned that many of the concerns noted in the newspaper article had not been presented to her beforehand to allow DSB to address the issues. Contrary to that reported in the article, DSB has not received recent reports of fake money from any of the vendors. She stated a meeting was held with Vending Facility Committee to discuss concerns and recommendations for improving the VFP process.

When Ms. Kindle reported these issues to Dr. Williams-Stokes, the DSB Director did speak with DHS Deputy Director Keesa Smith. The article was sent out to all DHS employees and the issue of theft from the DHS cafeteria was mentioned to let all DHS employees know what was expected of them. There would be consequences if anyone was caught stealing from the cafeteria. She stated there has not been any concrete evidence brought to her attention. There has been mention of adding a security camera or upgrading the existing camera in the cafeteria. This is not a one-sided issue. There have been complaints of customers and vending employees both acting unprofessionally. DSB Staff and VFP managers will receive customer service training. DSB will keep the Board up-to-date on these matters.

Consumer Input on Newspaper Article

Irma Nelson, a former Vending Facility Program (VFP) Committee member and former DSB Board member, asked to speak about the vending article in the Democrat Gazette. She was in agreement with Beverly Kindle and said she had similar experiences as a vending stand manager. She

questioned the blindness qualifications of the current vending facility manager at the DHS VFP cafeteria and expressed concerns of nepotism in his hiring. She also complained about a vending machine at the Library for the Blind. She said she had spoken with those in charge of the program about these things, but wasn't satisfied with the results.

Other Comments

Terry Sheeler asked whether there were any other comments or discussions. There were none. Ms. Sheeler thanked Irma Nelson for her words and said the Board appreciated her input. She then asked for clarification, since Beverly Kindle left, of the number of people who have run the VFP cafeteria at DHS since the last Board meeting on December 14, 2018.

Turnover in VFP Management

Dr. Williams-Stokes said that Sherrill Owens was a manager at the DHS Vending Facility. James Hart passed all the training and met all eligibility qualifications to be a vendor. Dr. Williams-Stokes said she is open to hear anything that any vendor wishes to share with her. As part of DSB's customer service values, DSB does not condone mistreatment of any consumer or employee. We do know that not all people behave as we expect them to in a work environment. She stated that when evidence supports wrongdoing against DSB policy, DSB is in the position to use disciplinary action, whether it is a vendor or an employee.

Customer Service

Ms. Sheeler stated that, as Chairman of the Board, she had spoken with Dr. Williams-Stokes. Ms. Sheeler said a lot of people have called her and she hoped that as an agency that serves the people, DSB would make sure that these programs are working. She said, "That is very important. I'm sure a lot of people feel caught in the middle. I hope we can rise above it and make corrections as needed, if things need to be corrected."

Outreach

Contact was made with Tom Masseur, the Director of Disability Rights Arkansas (DRA), to identify what contact had been reported by Christy Park and mentioned in the newspaper article. Also, Senator Mark Johnson contacted Dr. Williams-Stokes to inform her that DSB's appropriation bill was on hold until the issues were resolved with the VFP site at the State Capitol and until he visited the DHS cafeteria. Dr. Williams-Stokes also spoke about customer service and went on record saying that DSB focuses on customer service and listens to complaints to meet consumer needs.

VR and OIB Surveys – Megan Lamb

Megan Lamb gave a brief summary of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) surveys and goals. For VR consumers, DSB sent out 408 surveys and got back 106 with an overall satisfaction rate of 92.37%. For the OIB consumers, DSB sent out 95 surveys and got back 53 with an overall satisfaction rate of 97.1%. Full report is available in DSB Board Packet.

Travel Expenses

The annual approval of Board member expenses for travel was discussed. The approval covers plane tickets and other travel expenses because some Board members will travel out of state. Prior

approval for out of state meetings and events must be approved by RSA. Board member Bill Johnson moved and Board member Keith Clark seconded. The motion passed.

Friends of Arkansas Information Reading Services (FAIRS) Report – Larry Wayland

DSB Board member and FAIRS President presented the report on Friends of Arkansas Information Reading Services (FAIRS). FAIRS purchased a back-up machine for Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS) just in case the main one goes down. The new machine allows the Director of AIRS to remain on the air in the event of equipment failure. FAIRS and NEWSLINE are services available on iPhones and computers. NEWSLINE has over 200 publications available.

NEWSLINE

One part of AIRS is NFB-NEWSLINE, which DSB purchases from the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). Newslines are a service that can be accessed by computer, telephone, and reading technology devices like the Victor Reader Stream. NEWSLINE is free to the blind and visually-impaired in Arkansas. About 350 publications are available. These publications include newspapers from all over the country. DSB is currently spending about \$30,000 a year for this service. The service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Feedback

DSB Gustavo Manzanales mentioned that some people have had trouble accessing the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. He said when using Alexa and other smart speakers, the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette has issues. Mr. Wayland said he would ask Mr. Smith to look into those issues.

Disability Rights Arkansas (DRA) Report – Dani Fields, Staff Attorney

Ms. Dani Fields, a staff attorney with DRA, gave a brief report. DRA is currently assisting two DSB clients. DRA has two open cases with DSB clients; both cases are in their infancy. Issues that will be addressed are concerning employment, education, and consent, as well as training opportunities.

ARSILC Report – Sha Anderson

Sha Anderson was not present and no report was given. Her reports for the previous three months are in the Board member packet.

World Services for the Blind (WSB) Report – Sharon Giovinazzo

OIB Program

With the Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) contract, World Services for the Blind has served over 400 clients since July 1, 2018. The clients have benefited from direct one-on-one instruction and techniques of daily living, technology, and orientation, and mobility. WSB has group events throughout the state, focusing on vision loss. The turnout for these events is good and better than it has been in the past. Many of the clients' needs are beyond what WSB can provide. The most requested services are transportation to and from appointments; shopping; housekeeping; financial assistance; medical prescriptions; and food. WSB does have some partnerships with doctors who are able to get some medical samples of prescriptions.

Training Clients

All WSB rehabilitation specialists carry food, such as rice and beans, and slow cookers (usually donated by the Lions) that they use for cooking demonstrations. WSB has helped clients with ridesharing applications for their smartphones, including how to use Uber and Lyft where available. The WSB Healthy Habits program includes using instant pots and induction cook pots. Induction cook pots are safer to use and prevent burning. They also provide something to give family members for Christmas.

WSB Referrals of Clients

Many of WSB's new clients are referrals from doctors. For OIB, there has been an increase in macular degeneration, which has resulted in an increase in the number of clients for WSB. WSB will attempt to contact every new referral it is given. In contacting new clients, WSB sometimes has a problem with people who do not answer the phone. Some do not answer the phone if they do not recognize the phone number. Also, sometimes relatives will want to talk on behalf of the client, but WSB needs to speak directly to the client. Additionally, many people have phone numbers that are disconnected. They may have a burner phone that runs out of minutes or may have a regular phone disconnected because of non-payment.

WSB Vocational Youth Program

WSB has worked with Student Transition Youth Learning Experience (STYLE) program year-round. Last summer it served 78 students statewide with 33 of them on the WSB campus; all are learning soft skills and independent living skills. WSB is working with Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes, LaTasha Mays, and Betsy Barnes to do a projection for this summer. WSB would like to know how many staff to hire. WSB provides services for people who cannot benefit from Jump Start.

WSB Training

WSB continues to grow its vocational side. Over the last two years it has offered online training. This allows Arkansas to keep more money and keeps clients, many from out-of-state, from having to relocate for training. WSB works on a lot of partnerships throughout the United States. WSB is currently working with some NIB (National Industries for the Blind) agencies.

WSB Partnerships

WSB has partnered with Touching America Massage Academy in Maumelle and has two full-time students there. WSB has about an 85 percent placement rate with students who go through this vocational program. With WSB 47 percent of the referrals come from out of the state.

Older Individuals who are Blind Report (OIB) – June Richardson

There is a total of 14 OIB Board members from agencies who serve older individuals. Much of what they do has been mentioned in this meeting already. These Board members and agencies include: Sandra Edwards, Arkansas Council of the Blind (ACB); Sharon Giovinazzo, World Services for the Blind (WSB); Terry Sheeler, National Federation of the Blind (NFB); Vince Aklin, Mainstream; John D. Hall, Library for the Blind; Lori Raines, Division of Aging, Adult and Behavioral Health Services (DAABHS); Dr. Pat Smith, IFB Solutions; Jimmy Sparks, NFB; June Richardson, Veterans

Administration (VA); Dr. Cassondra Williams-Stokes, DSB; Sharon Anderson, Area Agency on Aging; Erin Cates, DSB; and Betsy Barnes, DSB. Bill Johnson, who represented the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) and works for the Arkansas Prostate Cancer Foundation, resigned late last year, due to time constraints. Mary Douglas, has recently retired from DSB and is no longer on the OIB board. She has been replaced by Tina Shores, DSB.

Board Member Bill Johnson Asked to Address the Board

Bill Johnson spoke about Irma Nelson's comments about the article in the February 24, 2019, edition of the Arkansas Democrat Gazette. Mr. Johnson said he had wanted some time to think before speaking about this matter. His experience with DSB began in January 2004. He has served on the Board since 2012. In his experience in dealing with folks from DSB, without exception, the people of that organization have in their hearts the mission of this organization. He said he understands there are some bad folks with some bad intentions. This occurs throughout society. However, he feels the author of the article took a shot at the entire Division and that's just not right. You guys are out there working to serve the individuals. Each and every one of DSB staff has a good heart, and he did not want to leave the meeting with individuals from DSB feeling that people do not appreciate what they do. He personally does appreciate DSB. He thanked DSB and the Board for their time.

Consumer Input

American Council of the Blind (ACB) – Sandy Edwards, Arkansas Chapter Representative

The ACB state convention is planned for May 3, 4, and 5, 2019, at Hilton Garden Inn, North Little Rock. The invitations have gone out. The ACB national convention is set for July 5-12, 2019, in Rochester, NY.

National Federation of the Blind (NFB) – Terry Sheeler, Arkansas Representative

The NFB national convention will run July 7-12, 2019, in Las Vegas, NV at Mandalay Bay. Reservations can be made beginning January 1, 2019. The NFB state convention will be in Hot Springs. Dates have not been confirmed with the hotel yet.

The Board members, both regular and ex-officio, were asked to remain for the evaluation of the DSB Director.

The next Division of Services for the Blind Board meeting is scheduled for June 14, 2019, at Donaghey Plaza South.

The meeting was adjourned.