

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2019

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Keith Clark, At-Large, Secretary  
Sandra Edwards, ACB  
Stephanie Smith, ASBVI  
Erika Evans, At-Large  
Teresa Sheeler, NFB, Chair

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Kara Aaron, BVA  
Eric Yarberry, WSB  
June Richardson, OIB  
Lisa Reynolds, AER  
Larry Wayland, FAIRS

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Basil Julian, LIONS  
Bill Johnson, AER

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

James Caton, ASBVI  
Sandy Rowland for Harold Brewer, VFP

DWS Representative: Dr. Charisse Childers, Director of the Division of Workforce Services (DWS)

Attorney General's Office Representative: None

Governor's Office Representative: None

**Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) Board Meeting Support Staff:** Betsy Barnes, Megan Lamb, Crystal Anderson, Mason Murphey, Jim Pearson, Brian Sanders, Terrence Boatwright, LaTasha Mays, and Dr. Cassondra Williams-Stokes.

**Others Present:** All DSB Staff members.

**Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting from September 13, 2019**

DSB Board Chair Terry Sheeler asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the last board meeting. Keith Clark moved, and Stephanie Smith seconded a motion to accept the minutes with three corrections from last Board meeting mentioned by Board Secretary, Keith Clark. The motion carried.

**Proposed Changes to the Minutes of the Last DSB Board Meeting – Keith Clark**

Keith Clark mentioned changes to be made before the minutes are approved. Mr. Clark stated the following: Board member James Caton mentioned that going without Order of Selection (OOS) since 2003 is a long time and moving forward hoping to ensure that the OOS would always be a part of the State Plan. Dr. Williams-Stokes mentioned that a vote is required to continue with the goals of the State Plan for 2020. Bill Johnson made the motion. The motion was seconded by Basil Julian. A vote was taken, and the motion carried.

**Addition to Assistant Director's Report – Keith Clark**

Mr. Clark added that then Assistant Director, Angela Thomas, stated in her report at the previous Board meeting that DSB has changed the way they process accounts receivable and account payables, due to the Transformation. Accounts receivables are preparing weekly calculations for

federal drawdowns. Once DSB has prepared the calculations, they complete a revenue receipt form. When the deposit slip is returned to DSB, the request is forwarded the treasury to get the Federal money moved to pay for the expenses. There are two different forms one is called Direct Pay and the other one is called Purchase Requests. The P Card process for DSB remains similar with one additional step. Since DSB is no longer under the Department of Human Services (DHS), DSB is going into the accounts payable system to find the document number that is associated with the P-Card process. For procurement, at the beginning this fiscal year DSB still had some outstanding contracts that were active. All contracts have now been closed that were associated with DHS. Replacement contracts were automatically created due to their new funding and coding. Ms. Thomas stated that DSB is working to resolve all pending contracts. Purchase requisitions have been created, and DSB will request purchase orders when the contracts are restored.

### **Correction to Consumer Input – Terry Sheeler**

Terry Sheeler added her National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Convention report had been split into two sections, the second with the heading “Legislation”. She then asked if there were any further corrections to be made and none were added.

### **Motion to Approve the Minutes of the December 13, 2019 Board Meeting**

Keith Clark moved, and Kara Aaron seconded a motion to accept the minutes with three corrections from last Board meeting mentioned by Board Secretary, Keith Clark. The motion carried.

### **Motion to Approve the Agenda**

Kara Aaron moved, and Stephanie Smith seconded the motion to approve the agenda for the meeting. The motion carried.

### **Address from Director of the Division of Workforce Services (DWS) – Dr Charisse Childers**

Division of Workforce Services (DWS) Director, Dr. Charisse Childers, addressed the Board. Dr. Childers mentioned that she became the Director of the Division of Workforce Services in July 2019. Previously, she had been the Director of the Department of Career Education, since 2015. With the transformation of state government, Division of Services for the Blind, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, and Adult Education are operating under the Division of Workforce Services. She thanked the DSB Board for their understanding and cooperation. A lot of changes have happened since July 1<sup>st</sup>, not just in structure, but in physical location. She said she does appreciate the staff, from the DSB offices throughout the state for working with DWS staff in the local offices. She mentioned that it is important for DSB to provide services to clients in the local areas as much as possible. The move to the DWS offices allows all WIOA Workforce Innovative Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners to improve service delivery to clients. Dr. Childers mentioned that she looks forward to a comprehensive case-management system to help serve the consumers in Arkansas. Dr. Childers expressed her appreciation to Dr. Williams-Stokes on her cooperation and work as they have gone through this transformation. She said they were probably ready for the break between Christmas and New Year’s so they can all get ready to start the new year. She did mention that the fiscal session this year does not start until April. Normally fiscal year starts at the end of January and the first part of February. When they return for the new year, they will be spending that time making sure their budgets are in line within the Department of Commerce and within the

Division of Workforce Services. The agency will review the budget and appropriation prior to July 1 of 2020 and should be in one appropriation bill. Dr. Williams-Stokes will tell you a little bit of progress we are making with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services providing the shared services for DSB. Dr Childers thanked everyone around the state, and the Board.

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

#### **DSB Board Training**

Dr. Williams-Stokes thanked the Board for attending the training provided on Thursday and stated that she hoped the information provided is beneficial. She indicated that the information shared will make a difference in how the Board make decisions, how they operate, and to be informed with everything DSB does day-to-day.

#### **DSB Staff Update**

Dr. Williams-Stokes said thank you to DSB staff, who endured quite a bit this quarter. The move to Division of Workforce Services (DWS) took a great deal of time and planning efforts on many DSB staff. She also thanked Jim Pearson for his assistance with the logistics during this entire process. She reported that DSB still has a few issues to work out involving computer access but will continue to work with DWS IT staff to manage the process. Dr. Williams-Stokes mentioned co-location with DWS and stated that Jim Pearson will discuss that issue in his report. Dr. Williams-Stokes asked that all new DSB employees stand and she pointed out that there are many new DSB employees since the Board meeting in September. She further stated that DSB will continue working to fill vacant positions. She also thanked Contrena Bowie for organizing the statewide meeting.

#### **National Issues**

Dr. Williams-Stokes reported that RSA contacted her the previous week to confirm DSB as one of the six state agencies to participate in a monitoring visit in 2020. The site visit will consist of a comprehensive review of policy implementation, program delivery, and fiscal management. RSA will ask participation from board members and some stake holders that DSB works with, as well as consumers and staff. RSA also provided a list of documents prior to the visit, with the deadline January 15, 2020. DSB is currently working to be prepared for the visit ahead of time. RSA may contact Dr. Williams-Stokes before January 15<sup>th</sup> about the meetings.

#### **Combined WIOA State Plan**

The combined Workforce Innovative Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan draft is due December 21, 2019. The final plan will be submitted by March 2, 2020. The state plan is the guide DSB uses to measure progress for the federal fiscal year. The DSB board was updated on the status of the goals and strategies for the state plan during the training Thursday. The revised policy recommendations will also be listed in the state plan for 2020.

#### **Rehab Services of Arkansas (RSA) Changes**

Dr. Williams-Stokes reported that RSA has removed the prior approval requirement for DSB Board out-of-state travel. The announcement was made in October at the NCSAB Fall 2019 conference. However, she stated that DSB will continue to vote to send board members to the national consumer group meetings. Both National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) meetings took place in

October and November of 2019. Keith Clark attended the NCSRC conference as representative for the DSB Board.

### **Governor's Shared Services Initiative**

The Governor has moved forward with his Shared Services Initiative to make government more efficient. Every state agency is tasked with using shared services to be more efficient. DSB submitted a proposal for RSA to allow ARS to provide administrative support in human resources, procurement, and other business tasks. DSB will continue to use the fiscal staff they have and will not replace the Chief Fiscal officer. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) will begin to provide support in these administrative areas beginning January 1<sup>st</sup>. DSB and ARS will ensure the Rehab funds remain separate and have set up a tracking system for accuracy.

### **HR Related Issues**

Dr. Williams-Stokes reported that Assistant Director, Angela Thomas, resigned the previous month for personal reasons. She said the position of Assistant Director was advertised for two weeks and closed on December 6th. She hopes to have the position filled by mid-February.

### **Consumer Update**

DSB staff members were able to attend the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) state meeting November 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup>, in Hot Springs, Arkansas. NFB members offered advice on how to improve service delivery to consumers during the meeting. Dr. Williams-Stokes further stated that some of the reports presented to the Board are as a result of consumer feedback. DSB wants to encourage consumer feedback, especially from NFB-Arkansas and Arkansas Council of the Blind (ACB).

### **Disability Rights of Arkansas (DRA)**

DSB is working to resolve challenges communication problems with Disability Rights Arkansas (DRA). DSB has since developed a plan to improve that process. DRA was able to meet with DSB and were able to explain to DSB staff how DRA operates and the support they provide consumers. Dr. Williams-Stokes stated that she learned a lot about how DRA operates in meetings with them and wants to make sure that DSB is educated in DRA's process and understand their advocacy process. The goal going forward is to make sure communication with DRA helps consumers.

### **Field Services Report – Betsy Barnes, Field Administrator**

#### **DSB Local Offices Relocated to the Division of Workforce Services (DWS)**

Betsy Barnes reported that the DSB Field Services staff have relocated to 10 new offices – from the Department of Human Services (DHS) local offices to the Division of Workforce Services (DWS) offices in Fort Smith, Fayetteville, Harrison, Jonesboro, West Memphis, Little Rock, El Dorado, Texarkana, Hope and Russellville. DSB has moved in with Division of Workforce Services (DWS) and Adult Education Section (AES, formerly Career Education Services). DSB is now in 10 new offices and have begun collaborating with DWS.

### **Field Services Staff Update**

DSB has advertised to replace the position of Field Services Administrative Assistant. Ms. Barnes mentioned that her previous Administrative Assistant, Lisa Fore, left to work for DSB Quality Assurance section. There are still Administrative Assistant positions open in Fayetteville, Little Rock, and Jonesboro, including Vocational Rehab Counselor openings in El Dorado, Fort Smith, and Little Rock. DSB has filled the position of Pre-ETS counselor in West Memphis, but there is still an opening in the Harrison office.

### **Case Management System for Counselors**

A new case management system is still in the works for DSB's counselors. It will be another year before we can change from the old system of numbers, and how many successful closures, to one measuring the WIOA performance measures of employment in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit, median earnings, and credential attainment. The counselors will continue to count successful closures in order to fulfill their performance goals. They must document the information on successful employment in second quarter and fourth quarter after exit, median earnings, credential attainment. RSA will release the baseline numbers this year, and we will implement the new performance measures for the counselors.

### **Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Changes**

Ms. Barnes reported DSB changes in the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) program. DSB will implement the new program January 2020. Students aged 14 to 16 will only receive Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services. Students 16 to 21 will receive both VR and Pre-ETS services. If the students do not qualify for VR services, they will only receive Pre-ETS services. When they finish school, are no longer a student, or reach age 22, they will make the transition to a regular VR counselor.

### **Field Services in 2020**

Ms. Barnes reported that, as DSB looks to the new year, the goal is to develop more providers and training for high in-demand jobs. DWS provided a training on apprenticeship this week which will help DSB staff to provide more opportunities for apprenticeships across the state. Additionally, DSB plans to invite Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) consultants back to implement an integrated resource team program in Jonesboro and West Memphis. The goal is to provide eight to ten clients with wrap-around services with DSB, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), Division of Workforce Services (DWS), and Adult Education Section (AES formerly, Career Education Services).

Ms. Barnes reported DSB has made changes to its Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) program. DSB is looking to utilize staff members with prior experience as rehab teachers and train new counselors to provide OIB services. DSB also looks forward to reviving the small business program and is working to update the policy and procedures. The focus this year is also going to be on outreach, not only for DSB employees, but to reach out to consumers. Another area DSB will improve is serving the minorities and underserved in rural areas where people are hard to locate.

Ms. Barnes said DSB would work to finish the State Plan and submit the draft the following week. She thanked staff and the Board for their input. DSB has completed the RSA-2 and the 7-0B federal reports OIB and will submit before the deadline.

### **Jim Pearson – Vending Facility Program Report**

Jim Pearson presented an update on the move from the Department of Human Services (DHS) to the Division of Workforce Services (DWS). Mr. Pearson thanked Ron Sneed, Dr. Charisse Childers and Dr. Williams-Stokes for their efforts. He reported that all DSB offices have been moved. DSB has phone and internet service, but their computer files on the server are not accessible. This move was taking place as part of the Workforce Innovative Opportunity Act (WIOA). DSB is meeting with RSA this week to discuss the Randolph Sheppard program. DSB has been operating under the Randolph Sheppard program since 1940, and there may be some changes made depending on the interpretation of the law. RSA has requested that the agency discontinue the accounting support provided over the years for the Vending and Facility Program (VFP) managers.

### **Vending Facility Program (VFP) Staff Update**

Mr. Pearson reported that there have been several changes in VFP, some internal and some with people moving on to other opportunities. He also mentioned the vending facility at the 1515 Building was closed because DSB was losing about one thousand dollars a month and did not have a new manager for that location. DSB also needs to find a manager for the DHS Main Street cafeteria location.

### **Expenditure Budget Report – Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes**

Dr. Williams-Stokes stated that the Expenditure Budget Report was included in the packet for the DSB Board members. The report provides an overview of what was expended during the quarter and will give an idea of what has been submitted to the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) and RSA. There have been many changes in policy and expectations at the federal level in the past year for DSB. She encouraged board members and staff to continue to view the challenges experienced in the previous six months and make those positive opportunities to improve DSB. Dr. Williams-Stokes also invited the Board to look at those experiences and provide feedback to help make improvements in the way DSB do business and provide for their customers.

### **Questions from the Board**

June Richardson asked where Workforce Development [Division of Workforce Services] is located. Dr. Williams-Stokes said #1 Commerce Way. The address was #1 Verizon Way and DSB is in the old Verizon building. Dr. Williams-Stokes also mentioned that the next DSB Board meeting will be at the Arkansas Real Estate Commission building where the Board meeting was held in September of 2018.

### **Old Business – Teresa “Terry” Sheeler, Board Chair**

#### **DSB Board Appointments**

As of December 3, 2019, the Governor appointed the following people, Theresa Petey, Little Rock, replacing Sandra Edwards, her service will expire in 6/30/2021. Teresa Sheeler, Fayetteville, was re-appointed, her service will expire on 6/30/2021, James “Basil” Julian, Conway, was re-appointed,

his service will expire on 6/30/2021, Stephanie Smith, Conway, was re-appointed, service will expire 6/30/2023, Erika Evans, Sherwood, was re-appointed, her service will expire on 6/30/2023, William “Bill” Johnson, Little Rock, was re-appointed, his service will expire on 6/30/2021, Keith Clark, Paragould, was re-appointed, his service will expire on 6/30/2023.

### **Board Committee Members – Terry Sheeler**

Ms. Sheeler listed the DSB Board Committees and Members. The Legislative Committee is Theresa Petrey, to replace Sandy Edwards, Basil Julian, and Sharon Giovinazzo. The Budget Committee is Keith Clark, Erika Evans, and Terry Sheeler. The By-Law Committee is Bill Johnson, Kara Aaron and James Caton. The Employer of the Year (EOY) Committee is Basil Julian, Kara Aaron, and Stephanie Smith. The Consumer of the Year (COY) Committee is Lisa Reynolds, Terry Sheeler, and James Caton, and Harold Brewer, but he has Sandy Rowland coming in for him. The Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) Committee is Terry Sheeler, Theresa Petrey, Keith Clark, and June Richardson. The Blind Unemployment Committee is Bill Johnson, Erika Evans, and Larry Wayland.

### **Eligibility – Betsy Barnes**

Betsy Barnes reported that the previous day, in DSB Board Training, Megan Lamb presented an overview of the new Eligibility Policies for DSB. Ms. Barnes stated that it is a process of cleaning up and making sure DSB has the required documentation, including eligibility letters, and to streamline the processes used by the agency. Ms. Barnes then asked the DSB Board to approve these three policy changes.

Board Chair Terry Sheeler suggested the Board approve the changes individually.

### **Motion to Accept the New Policy of Eligibility**

Ms. Barnes recommended the changes be approved. Terry Sheeler asked for a motion to approve the changes made to the eligibility policy. Keith Clark made the motion to approve, June Richardson seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion passed.

### **Order of Selection – Betsy Barnes**

Betsy Barnes reported that the previous day, Megan Lamb had also presented an overview of the DSB Order of Selection (OOS) policy. In this presentation were new priority definitions and added job retention. Ms. Barnes further stated that this does not mean that DSB is implementing Order of Selection. DSB is requesting the Board approve the Order of Selection policy to ensure that the option is available should the agency need to move to an OOS.

Dr. Williams-Stokes asked the List of Priorities for the Order of Selection to be read for the record. Betsy Barnes asked Dr. Megan Lamb to read from her presentation.

### **List of Priorities – Dr. Megan Lamb**

Consumers will be served according to their rank on the list of priorities with Priority 1 being served 1<sup>st</sup>. Dr. Megan Lamb said that Priority 1 is a list of individuals in line for DSB services with the most significant disability, whose disability severely limits four or more functional capacities (such as

mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome and requires substantial Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services over an extended period of time. Priority 2 includes individuals, with more significant disabilities, eligible for DSB services with a significant disability whose impairment limits three functional capacities in terms of employment outcome and requires substantial VR services over an extended period of time. Priority 3 includes individuals eligible for DSB services with a significant disability whose impairment limits one or two functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and requires substantial VR services over an extended period of time. Another category in Order of Selection is Job Retention. Job Retention refers to Individuals who are at immediate risk of losing employment may be served outside of the Order of Selection. Immediate need means that an individual would almost certainly lose his/her current job if not provided specific services or equipment in the very near future that would enable him/her to retain that employment. Only services or equipment needed to maintain that current employment may be provided outside of the Order of Selection. If the individual loses their job or chooses a different employment outcome, they will resume their waiting list status. Also, any additional services or needs for the consumer must be provided under the established Order of Selection.

### **Motion to Approve the Order of Selection (OOS)**

Terry Sheeler mentioned that the Order of Selection was emailed to the DSB Board members before the meeting and asked for a motion to accept the policy. Keith Clark moved that the policy would be accepted. Stephanie Smith seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

### **Pre-ETS Policy – Betsy Barnes**

Betsy Barnes stated that the Pre-ETS policy was revised at the request of Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC). Megan Lamb provided Board training on this the previous day. Ms. Barnes asked the Board to approve the changes for the Pre-ETS policy.

### **Motion to Adopt State Plan**

The Board approved DSB State Plan Goals during the September meeting. Ms. Barnes stated that the Board received an update on the strategies to meet those goals over the next two years, thru 2022. Ms. Barnes thanked the Board for their input and asked the Board to approve these strategies, activities and policy recommendations. She said DSB would submit the draft Combined State Plan the following Friday, December 20, 2019.

Terry Sheeler asked for a motion to accept the updated DSB State Plan for 2020-2022. Keith Clark moved to accept the DSB State Plan for 2020-2022. Stephanie Smith seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion carried.

### **New Business**

#### **DSB Needs Assessment – Crystal Anderson**

Crystal Anderson mentioned that she met with the DSB Board the previous day. Ms. Anderson gave a quick overview of what was covered. The DSB Quality Assurance Section conducted a needs

assessment for the 2020 State Plan to ensure that DSB is operating as effectively as possible. Key stakeholders, which includes the DSB consumers, DSB partners including Board Members, World Services for the Blind (WSB), Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) and DSB staff have been asked to complete surveys. DSB also plans to reach out to the National Federation of the Blind (NFB)-Arkansas, and Arkansas Council of the Blind (ACB). There have been electronic surveys sent to all the DSB staff and consumers. Paper surveys were mailed to consumers without email addresses on file. There will be 1,313 traditional surveys to employers with instructions for returning. And non-electronically with a self-addressed stamped envelope. They hope to receive responses by January 17, 2020.

#### **World Services for the Blind (WSB) Report-Eric Yarberry**

Eric Yarberry reported that a written report from World Services for the Blind (WSB) had been submitted by WSB President Sharon Giovinazzo. Ms. Giovinazzo was not present, but Mr. Yarberry did not have a copy of the report and no report was provided.

#### **Disability Rights of Arkansas (DRA) Report – Tom Masseau**

DRA Director, Tom Masseau was not present, and no report was provided.

#### **Arkansas Statewide Independent Living Counsel (ARSILC) – Dr. Sha Anderson**

Arkansas Statewide Independent Living Counsel (ARSILC) Director, Dr Sha Anderson was not present. DSB Board Chair stated that the ARSILC report was included in the Board packet.

#### **NEWSLINE and Friends of Arkansas Information Reading Service (FAIRS) – Larry Wayland**

Friends of Arkansas Information Reading Service (FAIRS) president Larry Wayland provided his report. Mr. Wayland explained the purpose of the Arkansas Information Reading Service and NEWSLINE. These services aid people who are print disabled, including visually impaired, dyslexic, and people who cannot turn pages, by giving access to newspapers for people who cannot read a print newspaper. There are several different means by which they can access information: the telephone by calling a number, the smart phone with app to download the newspaper, and the computer by going to [www.airs.actn.org](http://www.airs.actn.org). These different options make access to information convenient for people who might otherwise not be able to use the resources. The advantage of access to NEWSLINE on a smart phone, consumers can skip ahead while reading and get through a newspaper quickly. Another device is the Victor Stream Reader; this device will download your newspaper automatically. NEWSLINE is important for individuals with a disability to gain access to news from approximately 350 publications including the Arkansas Democrat Gazette and the local news which is not as accessible as national news. Mr. Wayland mentioned that this service is especially valuable to people who grew up without any access to printed newspapers. He also mentioned that he along with Donna Walker and FAIRS president, Richard Fleming, have conducted outreach visits to Lions Clubs to get the information out about NEWSLINE with the hope of increasing the number of NEWSLINE users. Mr. Wayland invited DSB counselors to invite their clients to use NEWSLINE and announced that there will be some personal training on NEWSLINE by Scott White, Director of NFB NEWSLINE program. He also noted that news

service is available during bad weather. NEWSLINE is also looking into the possibility of adding new papers in Arkansas.

Dr. Williams-Stokes stated that the NEWSLINE training has not been scheduled but will take place sometime in the spring or summer of 2020.

Brian Sanders mentioned that there are jobs available on the NFB NEWSLINE website. Sandra Edwards added that TV listings are available on NEWSLINE. Larry Wayland added that many cable television stations also broadcast a descriptive service.

### **Consumer Input**

#### **American Council of the Blind (ACB) – Sandra Edwards**

Sandra “Sandy” Edwards, Representative of the Arkansas Chapter of the American Council of the Blind (ACB) announced the ACB state convention will be the weekend of April 18<sup>th</sup> at the Hilton Garden Inn on Kanis Road in Little Rock. The meals have been decided and will be \$18. Ms. Edwards said to save the date for the following weekend. The ACB national convention is set for July 3<sup>rd</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> at the Renaissance Hotel, in Schaumburg, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, in July 2020.

#### **National Federation of the Blind (NFB) – Terry Sheeler**

Teresa “Terry” Sheeler, president of the Arkansas Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) announced the dates of the coming national and state conventions. The NFB national convention for 2020 will be in Houston, Texas. The convention will be held July 14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>. The NFB state convention will be in the fall of 2020 and they are working to secure a venue. Ms. Sheeler also reported that NFB gives out 30 scholarships a year, and she wanted the DSB counselors to be aware. The deadline to apply is March 31<sup>st</sup>. Applicants will need a letter from the NFB Board. She wanted them to be aware there will not be much time to apply for a scholarship after the next Board meeting in March 2020.

Sandy Edwards mentioned the ACB also awards scholarships and their deadline for application is February 14<sup>th</sup>. Terrence Boatwright asked whether these scholarships are available for graduate students, or just college students. Sandy Edwards responded that these scholarships are available for college students, including older returning students who were going for a second career. Terry Sheeler mentioned the applications can be found at the NFB website, [nfb.org](http://nfb.org), and Sandy Edwards said applicants can go to [acb.org](http://acb.org) to find application forms.

Terry Sheeler announced the date of the next DSB Board meeting to be March 13, 2020, and as Dr. Williams-Stokes reported earlier, the meeting will occur at 1:00 pm, and will take place at the Arkansas Real Estate Commission (AREC) building. The location will be sent out to the DSB Board.

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

June Richardson, Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) chair, mentioned that she had not attended the last meeting in September. Since that time many things have occurred since that time. Lions

World Services (World Services for the Blind, WSB) no longer has a contract with the Division of Services for the Blind for the OIB program and OIB will be done in-house. A lot of details have not been worked out as of this meeting. She believes they will be looking for staff to fill those positions, and people who are used to working with blind and elderly persons. Ms. Richardson said she did not know how long it would take to get this worked out and worried about what might happen to the clients during that time.

Dr. Williams-Stokes stated that the OIB contract is effective until June 30, 2020. Tina Shores, OIB Coordinator, is assigned as the liaison to the OIB Committee and is responsible for triage of the OIB referrals. DSB will provide vendor options for consumers who need specialty services. DSB does have the funds and resources. DSB will continue to work with Mississippi State (MSU) to improve the program. DSB does not intend to add any new staff positions outside of the 78 positions authorized to the agency. DSB will use existing staff to provide services to OIB consumers. More information regarding development of the OIB program will be available at the March Board meeting. DSB does try to hire certified VR counselors, and if none apply DSB will downgrade the certification requirement, per the agreement with RSA. DSB will use available funds to pay for education for those counselors to obtain their certification. As far as Orientation and Mobility (O & M), DSB has one staff member working to obtain O & M certification. Dr. Williams-Stokes said it will take resources, time, and qualified individuals to restore the OIB program.

### **Congratulations**

Terry Sheeler congratulated the DSB Board members on their appointments and re-appointments, and Sandra “Sandy” Edwards on her many years of service to the Board.

The meeting was adjourned.