

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2020

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

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

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Kara Aaron, BVA  
Harold Brewer, VFP  
James Caton, ASBVI  
Sharon Giovinazzo, WSB  
Larry Wayland, FAIRS

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Lisa Reynolds, AER  
June Richardson, OIB

Attorney General's Office Representative: None

Governor's Office Representative: None

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

Others Present: Joseph Baxter, Commissioner of Arkansas Rehabilitative Services, Dr. Charisse Childers, Director of Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Tom Masseur, Executive Director of Disability Rights Arkansas.

**Motion to Approve the Meeting Agenda**

Bill Johnson moved, and Erika Evans seconded the motion to approve the agenda for the meeting. The motion carried.

**Motion to Approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting on September 11, 2020**

Keith Clark moved, and Basil Julian seconded the motion to accept the minutes from the previous meeting on June 12, 2020. The motion carried.

**Director's Report – Dr. Cassondra Williams-Stokes**

Dr. Cassondra Williams-Stokes began her Director's report by thanking the DSB staff for working to ensure they met the needs of consumers, and she thanked the DSB Board and Chairman Sheeler for their support. She noted that there were challenges and great things to celebrate this year. Dr. Williams-Stokes thanked the Board for participating in the Board training earlier that day, the topic of which was Assistive Technology presented by the DSB Technology Director and staff. She noted that the more information the Board and the DSB staff have will help to ensure DSB's services remain relevant to assist consumers to meet employment goals. She thanked the DSB Board members for their efforts to address questions as needed. She also thanked the Division of Workforce Services (DWS) and Dr. Charisse Childers for their partnership. She noted that the DSB Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors are members of the local Workforce Boards, which serves as a resource for firsthand information.

**Pandemic Implementation – Dr. Cassondra Williams-Stokes**

The Governor issued an update the day before this meeting regarding the extension of the emergency pandemic order of safety measures through the end of 2020. Two new mandates were included that extended emergency work from home and remote service delivery. Virtual meetings have been required for DSB meetings since March 2020 to adhere to the COVID-19 requirements.

**Staff Training – Dr. Cassondra Williams-Stokes**

Dr. Williams-Stokes stated that DSB staff training is a priority for front line employees and supervisors. DSB's focus for 2021 will be on leadership training to ensure leaders are prepared for the changes to come. Cross training is used to ensure DSB continues to deliver quality services in the event of staff turnover.

**National Partnerships – Dr. Cassondra Williams-Stokes**

DSB is working to strengthen their national partnerships to expand training opportunities for staff. DSB continues the partnership with the Council of State Agencies for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). The Director, Assistant Director, Field Administrator, and Technology Administrators of DSB are participating in workshops and meetings with CSAVR to strengthen DSB's rehabilitation and delivery across the state of Arkansas. Dr. Williams-Stokes added that the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) has also been a crucial partner for DSB. NCSAB is hosting their national meeting this week and DSB is an active participant. Additional organizations attending the CSAVR conference included representatives from San Diego State University, Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC), and George Washington University. The trainers from these groups shared information regarding VR trends, Rehabilitation Services Administration requirements related to data collection and

Measurable Skill Gains (MSG). Mississippi State University has been a key partner with assisting DSB to increase the capacity within the Older Individuals who are Blind program will present at the NCSAB meeting this week as well. Mississippi State was able to provide insights on the new 7OB report which is a state report submitted annually for the Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) program. RSA has stressed the importance of quality over quantity and DSB has enhanced its services and policies to address this requirement. Dr. Williams-Stokes also noted that DSB has participated in the San Diego State University Executive Leadership program in previous years. RSA recently awarded the new Technical Assistance grants. WINTAC, and U of A Currents were some of the entities that were awarded these grants. U of A Currents is the Center for the Utilization of Rehabilitation Resources for Education, Networking, and Training & Service provides training and consultation to the disability and vocational rehabilitation communities that are part of the University of Arkansas College of Health and Education Professions.

#### **Training – Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes**

Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes talked about the training opportunities for DSB staff. She mentioned that Crystal Anderson, Dr. Megan Lamb, and LaTasha Mays provided training on new policies for staff during the year. DSB will continue to provide training to ensure quality services are available.

#### **RSA Monitoring Review – Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes**

DSB's virtual RSA monitoring review has concluded. DSB will continue to follow up with RSA to answer questions and address any areas that require additional clarification regarding information shared during the process. RSA's state liaison, Shannon Moler, was been promoted and Jessica Davis is the new RSA liaison for Arkansas. Ms. Davis will be available to help with any technical assistance requests and VR related questions. Dr. Williams-Stokes explained why the monitoring review is important. The documentation process is important to ensure the agency is in position to meet federal and state audits requirements. Many of the requirements from WIOA have changed. The most recent review was in 2011. This audit included a review of 3 years of performance data and record collection. RSA noted the tremendous amount of work DSB has done to update policies and procedures to align with WIOA updates. The final monitoring report may be available within 6 months due to the federal approval process. Dr. Williams-Stokes thought it might be no sooner than the spring 2021 before DSB receives the final report.

Dr. Williams Stokes concluded her report with informing the board that she will serve as the Secretary of NCSAB for one additional year. The floor was opened for questions or comments.

#### **Comments**

Bill Johnson thanked Dr. Williams-Stokes and DSB for the Board Training on Assistive Technology earlier that day. He stated that Gustavo Manzanales, the Technology Supervisor, and Owen Thomas, a Technology Counselor provided an excellent presentation.

### **Assistant Director's Report**

#### **Financial Report – Betsy Barnes**

Included in the board packet is the SFY 2021 Budget Report and Expenditures for July 1, 2020 to Sept. 30, 2020. DSB spent \$767,859 in Client Services and \$980,660 in Agency Operations for a total Quarter expenditure of \$1,749,520.42. DSB recently received a VR Federal grant award of \$970,457 for FFY21 to be used until another continuing resolution is passed or Congress approves the full FFY21 budget. These funds must be spent by September 30, 2021. RSA released a quarterly allotment of \$55,886 for the OIB program until additional federal funding is passed. The Supported Employment funds will be available when the full FFY21 budget is passed. The biennial budget for SFY22 and SFY23 was approved in November by the Legislative committee. DSB requested \$6,391,082. There was a small increase in employee benefits charged to each state agency which increased State General revenue by approximately \$28,000. The program budget request was for a total of \$4,646,700 for the two state fiscal years.

#### **Human Resources – Betsy Barnes**

DSB has 56 employed staff or 71% of positions filled. Since the September Board meeting several staff joined the DSB family and they are: Launa Faulkner, QA Statistician, Samuel Kimbley, Counselor Fort Smith office, Stephen Partridge, Business Engagement Coordinator, Scolisha Ridley, Rehab Assistant Jonesboro office and Ginger Robertson, DSB Receptionist. DSB has 14 staff working from home. Among the 22 vacant positions, 1 has been approved for hire and will begin within the next 30 days. The Department of Transformation (TSS) Office of Personnel Management launched a new interactive careers website, ARCareers, or [arcareers.arkansas.gov](http://arcareers.arkansas.gov). All new vacancies will be advertised on the new system. The Arkansas State Jobs employment website will not be active after December 31, 2020. Mid-point evaluations were conducted for DSB employees in October.

#### **Staff Development Report – Betsy Barnes**

Ms. Barnes commended the staff for their excellent work in making our Field Day and Statewide training a big success. This was the first and she hoped the only COVID driven virtual statewide DSB would have. They were fortunate to have Dr. Bailey Oliver, Assistant Professor of Applied Communications at UALR conduct a training on Emotional Intelligence and Practices to utilize to communicate high emotional intelligence within the workplace. The year 2020 had

many challenges. DSB staff moved from DHS to DWS. The agency spent the previous nine months providing services while working around COVID-19. They selected this training because an effective way to improve communication skills is to strengthen emotional intelligence. It's about being able to listen well, to motivate and inspire others, to control your reactions, and to build strong relationships. Emotional Intelligence covers self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. All DSB staff were required to take Ethics I and II during the year's evaluation period as part of their Professional Development Plan. Staff are encouraged to take advantage of other trainings offered on-line. DSB has seven staff enrolled in Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling programs, and one enrolled in Orientation and Mobility of the Blind (O&M) program at UALR. Two were scheduled to graduate in 2021, and one applied to take her Certified Rehabilitation Counselor's (CRC) exam.

### **White Cane Safety Day – Betsy Barnes**

DSB has not let COVID-19 stop them from having a wonderful White Cane Safety Day on October 15th. World Services for the Blind graciously open their doors and connected us by Zoom so that everyone could celebrate the event. Some of the highlights were: Eric Yarberry shared the History of White Cane Day. A testimony was provided by Brian Sanders, DSB Supervisor. Whitney Musick thoroughly entertained us and tested our knowledge while playing White Cane Day Kahoot. The final highlight of the day was an O&M Demonstration of Griffin a young student at the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI).

### **2021 Going Forward – Betsy Barnes**

Ms. Barnes stated that DSB is looking forward to putting the Year 2020 behind us and ringing in the New Year 2021. Going forward, DSB will continue to revise agency policies and procedures as well as monitor to improve practices. Other areas to improve include contract development, monitoring guidelines and leadership development.

### **Employee of the Year – Betsy Barnes**

Ms. Barnes stated the best part of her report was recognizing DSB staff for the outstanding work they do day after day throughout the year. Many of our staff stepped up and filled additional duties to work as a team and get the job done. There was no such thing as "that's not my job". She truly thanked everyone for going the extra miles and giving 150% to fill the gaps and provide the needed services for the clients DSB serves. For 2020, eight employees received exceptional evaluation ratings of Role Model and Highly Effective. She was proud to announce these individuals were Crystal Anderson, Contrena Bowie, Kay Clark, Rhonda Garmon, Jacob Grace, Amy Jackson, Dr. Megan Lamb, and Debra Newton. Ms. Barnes asked that we join her in congratulating them. There were no questions and Ms. Barnes wished the board a happy holiday.

## **Field Administrators Report**

### **Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) – Dr. Megan Lamb**

Dr. Megan Lamb reported that DSB recently completed Technical Assistance from the Mississippi State OIB-Technical Assistance Center. As part of this process DSB provided numerous trainings to staff, worked on the OIB policy, and updated their low vision kits. The OIB policy was moving forward in the promulgation process. In October all DSB counselors and supervisors were provided a full day of training in-person on their low vision kits and new items added to them. Staff and trainers provided great feedback on the trainings and Dr. Lamb stated she believes this will help DSB serve their clients.

### **Training – Dr. Megan Lamb**

Additionally, all Field staff participated in their regional technical assistance trainings with the Quality Assurance (QA) Team. For this year's statewide, field staff also attended additional trainings on the Authorization and Payment process as well as Measurable Skill Gains (MSG). During their monitoring process, DSB discussed MSG in depth with RSA to ensure that staff have the most up-to-date information on accurately reporting this information for DSB. This is especially important as MSG, as a performance measure, are now required to meet the set goal and is no longer included in the baseline.

### **Monitoring – Dr. Megan Lamb**

Field Services participated in DSB's recent monitoring review by RSA. As part of this review they discussed policy, procedures, and outcomes for the Field Services section. Using the feedback from RSA and by taking notes on the RSA priorities, Field Services continues to work with DSB's Quality Assurance Section for training and guidance to improve successful outcomes.

### **Updates – Dr. Megan Lamb**

DSB Field staff continues to work to update forms and processes to enhance customer service and to make the forms more user friendly. Additionally, staff continued to work on subsequent policy chapters to prepare them for submission to the board.

### **Human Resources Vacancies – Dr. Megan Lamb**

Field Services was excited to welcome new staff in the previous month and hope to welcome more as positions are filled. DSB hired a Business Engagement Coordinator, Receptionist, VR counselors, and Rehabilitation Assistants.

**Consumer of the Year (COY) – Dr. Megan Lamb**

The year 2020 was a challenge for everyone. DSB recognized all the consumers and business partners for their success and hard work to show our appreciation for their efforts during the pandemic. A slideshow was created to highlight the achievements for each Consumer of the Year and their employer. All consumers and employers received a plaque from DSB as part of this recognition. The slide presentation is available on the DSB webpage and a copy was emailed to the DSB Board. The slide show for Student of the Year was included as well. Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes thanked the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Communications section for creating an accessible video.

**Vending Facility Program (VFP) Administrator’s Report – Jim Pearson**

Business and Technology Program Manager Jim Pearson gave a report for the Vending Facility Program (VFP). Mr. Pearson indicated that Covid-19 has provided many challenges for the VFP statewide and staff worked to eliminate possible service barriers. Most highway locations were open for business, except for the two White River sites. He stated sales were down about 50% from the previous year. Of the twelve manned locations all three federal sites remained closed. He stated that he did not expect those operations to re-open until the first of the year. Many other sites were basically vending machine operations only. Sales at manned locations were down about 70% overall, due to Covid-19 issues. Many people are still working from home, which decreases the traffic at these locations.

**VFP Management Opportunities – Jim Pearson**

The VFP has three vacant locations that requires a manager: The Department of Human Services (DHS) in Little Rock, the Pulaski County Court House in Little Rock, and the Pulaski County Revenue Department in Little Rock. All three were vending machine operation only.

**Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Changes – Jim Pearson**

Mr. Pearson reported that the Rehab Services Administration (RSA) federal officials are requiring many changes in the VFP’s policy and procedure manual. He stated they are working with RSA on policy issues, an ongoing process in rewriting the policy to meet new standards. The VFP has encouraged vending managers to attend the teleconferences every quarter to keep up with events and policy changes. RSA has covered the policy changes required and has expressed the need for active participation of the states in these discussions. The section on VFP manager leave was covered at the meeting in November. Most of the major changes have been completed and the remaining policy changes are in the works. Mr. Pearson stated that VFP goal is to ultimately make the mangers independent entrepreneurs.

**Tech Lab – Jim Pearson**

Mr. Pearson thanked Mr. Johnson for his comments on the staff at the Technical Laboratory. Gustavo Manzanales, Wally Thomas, and Jo McAdoo are working to keeping up with the changes in electronics and software. The Tech Lab has served clients by cell phone and electronic communication during this time and averaged about six clients per month due to social distancing requirements.

**Laptop Computers for DSB Staff – Jim Pearson**

Mr. Pearson reported that many DSB staff received updated laptops. The laptops will make working from home easier if it becomes necessary and provides DSB employees with better security and firewall capability away from the office. The laptops also enabled DSB staff to join this Zoom meeting with use of a built-in camera.

**Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS) – Theresa Bertram**

Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS) supervisor Theresa Bertram provided an update on the streaming service. She reported that the computer used for streaming on the Internet crashed. The Public Broadcast System IT department was able to help by switching it out with a device called a “raspberry pi”, an electronic device that many radio stations use for streaming services. The AIRS website has been updated to ensure the broadcast can remain on the air when Flash was no longer supported.

**New Content – Theresa Bertram**

Mrs. Bertram indicated that she has trained with Scott White and plans to add a few newspapers to the AIRS reading list. AIRS plus has increased from 12 publications to 19 publications. Those are available if consumers register with NEWSLINE, or free with AIRS Plus. AIRS Plus is a telephone service that allows consumers to hear many of the programs, readings, and publications on demand over a smart phone by calling (844)888-0981. This number is for callers in Arkansas only.

**Comments**

Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes added that AIRS is in partnership with Friends of Arkansas Information Reading Services (FAIRS) the advisory committee designated to help provide reading services to blind consumers in Arkansas. This concludes the Director’s and staff reports.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Combined Agency Proposal Update – Joseph Baxter, ARS Commissioner**

Commissioner Baxter, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) Commissioner thanked Chairman Sheeler for providing him with time for an update to the combined agency proposal. A little over a week before this meeting, Department of Commerce leadership directed them to hold on moving forward with the draft of their combined legislation and any related discussion. The RSA liaison has been notified of the hold and that was most recent update. Commissioner Baxter asked for questions.

### **Questions**

Board Chair, Terry Sheeler, began by mentioning a letter from the Governor, Asa Hutchinson, in which he thanked them for the recent letter expressing their concerns with the proposal and the merger of the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) with the Arkansas Rehabilitative Services (ARS). The Governor's letter reads as follows, "I appreciate yours and the Board of Director's feedback on this important issue. I recognized the importance of the role played by the Board of Directors to ensure the blind and the visually impaired are given the opportunity to shape the operations of the agency in the way that best meets the unique needs of the community it serves. The insight of the Board members, as we evaluate the proposal to determine its impact on those services. Please be assured that the concerns have been noted and will be weighed into my decision as to whether the proposal will be approved to move forward." Ms. Sheeler's question was, that If the DSB Board were informed that the proposal was approved, but received a letter from the Governor that the proposal was under consideration, how could the DSB Board eliminate the information inconsistency in the process, and was the SRC committee supposed to be the vehicle for this process?

Commissioner Baxter stated that is all the information they have. The right way to address that would be to use the chain of command and speak with the Department of Commerce leadership. Just make sure that you are getting the information you need, including Dr. Charisse Childers, the Director of Workforce Services. Does that answer your question?

Chairman Sheeler asked whether their communication was supposed to be with Dr. Childers?

Commissioner Baxter replied that, in one respect yes, for information as to moving forward with the draft legislation. But, if you were moving over to SRC, and their subcommittee, that absolutely was the decision at the last SRC meeting, was to use that subcommittee to communicate any concerns back and forth between both the DSB Board and the SRC. They are scheduled to meet the following week, on December 17<sup>th</sup>, at a regular scheduled meeting, and there is a line item on the agenda to discuss the status. He further stated that he anticipated that the subcommittee would provide an update during the next meeting. Again, the SRC subcommittee should be

reporting out on any meetings or discussions that have taken place, and as a part of that update he would share the information about the hold on the draft legislation.

Chairman Sheeler stated that she was looking for a way to eliminate that inconsistency.

Commissioner Baxter indicated that the information he had available is that the draft legislation is still under consideration. He guessed that the best opportunity to eliminate communication issues is to engage with Workforce services leadership and, use Dr. Stokes, to proceed with any questions you might have. He stated his directive has been clear, that they are to hold on this draft legislation and proceed no further, including any discussions leading to it.

Chairman Sheeler stated that she was seeing some inconsistency with what he was saying and what the Governor was saying. Commissioner Baxter stated that he could not speak for the Governor. Chairman Sheeler asked what the deadline for the legislation to be submitted was, for it to move forward. Commissioner Baxter stated the proposal has been submitted. Chairman Sheeler asked whether the proposal was submitted to the legislators scheduled to meet in January? Commissioner Baxter stated that the information has not been submitted to legislators, but has been shared the Governor's office, via the Commerce Leadership. That is the first step. Chairman Sheeler asked if the proposal was still with the Governor? Commissioner Baxter stated that was the last information he had.

Chairman Sheeler asked what plans did they have for DSB as a separate section, or within another section of ARS, and has an organizational chart been created, and will that be shared with the DSB Board and when? Commissioner Baxter stated that at this point he had to refer back to what was stated earlier, that he was directed by Commerce leadership not to discuss anything related to the VR combined proposal, so he really could not answer that question at that point.

Chairman Sheeler asked whether the merger proposal would be referred to in a timely manner?

Commissioner Baxter stated if you are referring to the proposal, the process that they talked about last, with the SRC subcommittee, and his commitment to keep Dr. Stokes involved with any discussions, that's the last process they put in place.

Chairman Sheeler asked whether any other Board members have questions for Commissioner Baxter?

Bill Johnson replied that the status is that DSB is on hold and asked how would the DSB board be notified when they are no longer on hold. Will the Board be notified directly, or would that be coming from Dr. Williams-Stokes, or Dr. Childers, or Commissioner Baxter?

Commissioner Baxter stated the most expeditious way would be back through the chain of command, from Commerce Leadership, through Dr. Childers, and direct to himself, and Dr. Stokes, and they could communicate, as were directed, any further status updates. But the subcommittee was committed to being a vehicle for a back-and-forth discussion; but for the question about the status of moving forward, that most likely would be coming back through the chain of command, and down through agency staff. Bill Johnson asked whether the status was on hold until further notice. Commissioner Baxter agreed with the comment.

### **DSB Board Training – Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes**

Dr. Williams-Stokes shared information about a training for boards and commissions. She stated that board has received similar trainings in past years to ensure they are aware of the legal responsibilities as a board member. She also thanked the Board for participating in the Assistive Technology Training and stated that the resources can provide members with the information to make informed decisions for the Division of Service for the Blind.

### **Questions**

Teresa Petrey asked whether Dr. Williams-Stokes could get with her later and go over the information share during the training. Dr. Williams-Stokes agreed to do that.

### **Promulgation of New Policy Manual – Betsy Barnes**

Betsy Barnes reported that DSB is moving forward with promulgation of 6 chapters of their new Policy Manual. These Chapters are: General Requirements; Informed Choice; Referral and Intake; Eligibility; Order of Selection; and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). The chapters have been reviewed and approved by WINTAC, RSA, and the DSB Board. DSB was waiting to have them approved through the promulgation process. She indicated that DSB plans to submit the new OIB manual and move forward with the promulgation process as well. Staff will continue to update the policy manuals as needed.

### **Quality Assurance Report – Crystal Anderson**

Ms. Crystal Anderson, the Quality Assurance (QA) manager, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the overall process and sub processes that direct an organization effectively. “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail,” she stated. QA’s goal is to be proactive. The four specific tasks performed by QA are: system administration; training and technical assistance (TA); monitoring and reviewing; performance accountability/ reporting. Ms. Anderson introduced the QA team to the

Board. Lisa Fore, Auditor, is responsible for monitoring and reviewing programmatic activities for federal, state and agency compliance. Launa Faulkner, Statistician, responsible for researching, compiling, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting programmatic performance statistics and related activities. Crystal Anderson, Quality Assurance Manager, is responsible for system administration, facilitating training/technical assistance efforts, consulting with senior leadership and sections administrator, and managing overall QA processes.

### **2020 Quality Assurance Highlights – Crystal Anderson**

Launched the QA tool in Aware (a case management system from Alliance Enterprises for vocational rehabilitation records management). Designed QA Tool Procedural Guide. Designed and implemented new case review procedures and templates. Designed a new supervisor comprehensive case review template. Conducted TA sessions (technical assistance) with all field regions, discussing policies and procedures and data validation. QA designed and implemented the “Secondary Approval for Authorization” process and implemented official “DSB Payment Process” in Aware. Finally, QA designed a “DSB Caseload Assignment Process” in Aware.

### **2021 Quality Assurance Objectives – Crystal Anderson**

Looking ahead to 2021, QA’s objectives include improved internal controls including system updates and written processes and procedures. Section plans to utilize intense statistical reporting, including Tableau Analytics (a business intelligence software), and monthly RSA-911 error and anomaly analyses. QA will increase data-driven case reviews by adding an additional auditor position. Finally, they aim to improve by streamlining consulting, training, and technical assistance.

### **RSA Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) Update – Dr. Megan Lamb**

Dr. Megan Lamb gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) Update. Dr. Lamb began by addressing the RSA-II report. The RSA II includes annual Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program costs for the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY), currently from October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020. Costs are separated by service category. Includes number of individuals service in each service category. Total expenditures to community rehabilitation programs. Current fiscal numbers are from October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020. Report submitted to DSB board via email.

### **Independent Living Center Expenses and Outcomes – Dr. Megan Lamb**

Dr. Lamb broke down DSB’s independent living center expenses; for World Services for the Blind (WSB) DSB spent \$331,301.51; for Alphapointe it was \$45,631.20; for Louisiana Center for the Blind it was \$13,866.48; for WSB Pre-ETS DSB spent \$14,670.00; and for WSB OIB it was \$5,225.00. The outcomes of these expenses were as follows: WSB VR had one participant

closed “Rehabilitated”, one participant closed “Other than Rehabilitated”, and 18 participants with open cases; Louisiana Center for the Blind had an outcome of one participant with an open case; Alphapointe had one participant with an open case; WSB Pre-ETS had four participants with open cases; and, WSB OIB had a result of one participant with an open case.

### **Expenses by Service Category – Dr. Megan Lamb**

For the same time period of October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020, the expenses by service category were as follows; assessment was \$18,520.98; diagnosis and treatment \$474,245.20; training (including college and on-the-job training) \$947,778.36; job services \$30,963.03; transportation \$16,458.58; maintenance \$10,578.08; rehabilitation technology \$312,646.93; \$0 supported unemployment; reader services \$51; personal attendant services \$2,490.00; other services \$401,156.33; technical assistance \$2,144.64. Training was further broken down by category, as follows: graduate college was \$32,153.97; four year college \$435,298.97; junior college \$25,210.97; on-the-job training \$17,670.00; job readiness training \$42,578.25; disability skills training \$43,298.32; and, miscellaneous (costs that were more specific to the consumer’s individual needs) \$166,656.47. Dr. Lamb broke down job services into four separate categories: on job search assistance \$3,247.00 was spent; job placement \$22,716.03; on-the-job supports “Time Limited” \$0; and, on-the-job supports “Supported Employment” was \$5,000.00.

### **Participants Receiving Each Service – Dr. Megan Lamb**

Dr. Lamb noted that the next chart did not represent the total number of participants because, each participant can receive more than one service, but in the total served they would only be counted once. This chart represented “paid for” services in these categories. Any services that were not paid for would not be represented on the RSA II, such as counseling and guidance. The breakdown went as follows: assessment 43; diagnosis and treatment 278; graduate college 4; four year college 65; junior college 10; vocational training 18; on-the-job training 7; job readiness training 4; disability skills training 14; miscellaneous training 11; job placement assistance 11; on-the-job supports “Time Limited” 0; on-the-job supports “Supported Employment” 2; transportation 47; maintenance 11; reader services 1; personal attendant services 2; other services 93; technical assistance 1.

### **WIOA Performance Measures – Dr. Megan Lamb**

Measurable skill gains (MSG) is the one measure that is a negotiated rate that DSB with ARS must meet as a combined entity. The negotiated rate for Arkansas is 24%. For measurable skill gains in Program Year 2019 (PY19), which is July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020, DSB had 66 MSG. There were 35 consumers who received their secondary diploma and 34 consumers who received their secondary report card or post-secondary transcript; note, the reason this does not equal 66 is that three of these consumers had both, and RSA will only give credit for one

MSG per consumer. For program year 2020, which began July 1, 2020, DSB counted 33 MSG, with one secondary diploma and 33 secondary report cards or post-secondary transcripts; one consumer received both but gets credit only for one. For credential attainment, such as a bachelor's degree, or a technical certificate or license, there were five Credential attainments, one vocational or technical certificate, one associate degree, and three bachelor's degrees. In PY 2020, DSB reported one credential attained, with one associate degree. Dr. Lamb expected more to arrive with the end of December, as more students would graduate. The employment rate for RSA is calculated on the calendar year. For the second quarter rate of January through December of 2019, the employment rate for PY19, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after exit, 27%, or 97 participants. For the fourth quarter after exit, there were 31.4% or 125 participants. This showed growth between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters after exit for PY19. Median wages at exit DSB reported a median rate of \$11 per 40 hours per week. For the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after exit DSB reported \$5892.21 per quarter. For the retention rate, this is the consumer serving the same employers for PY19 in both the second quarter and the fourth quarter, DSB reported almost 49.8% with 103 participants.

## **New Business**

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

Tom Masseau, Executive Director of Disability Rights Arkansas provided a report. He noted that it has been a while since he provided a report for the DSB Board. Mr. Masseau noted that Covid-19 had an impact on the work of DRA, in terms of overall monitoring, training and outreach activities, but DRA continues to receive phone calls. The number of calls coming in for consumers seeking services from DSB is quite low. DRA, as a member of the Arkansas Rehabilitation Council, has been active in monitoring the proposed combined proposal. DRA is not in agreement with the proposal, and Mr. Masseau stated they would continue to watch the dialogue and see where things end up. He stated that DRA was doing a lot for facility-based services. Mr. Masseau then asked if there were any questions or comments.

### **Comments and Questions**

Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes stated she was pleased to hear that inquiries and reports on DSB were low. She commended Disability Rights Arkansas and the DSB staff for their collaborative efforts and noted that during the previous year the agency has looked at how to triage requests and issues. She stated that the process is working well, and DSB has communicated with staff at Disability Rights to make sure that cases presented were followed through which may have helped to keep the number of complaints low. She thanked DRA for working with DSB on these issues.

Tom Masseau thanked Dr. Williams-Stokes and agreed that the lines of communication have improved, and he was encouraged by the collaboration. He hoped that providing information back and forth would continue.

Kara Aaron asked whether DRA had any blind voters call with concerns about access to voting, or were there less, due to Covid-19. Tom Masseau stated they did not with voting. He reported that DRA conducted some trainings and partnered with local groups to train constituents. This year DRA received less than 10 calls from individuals who had difficulty voting, or accessing the polls, but none were from the blind or visually impaired. Dr. Williams-Stokes stated that DSB partnered with Arkansas State Independent Living Council (ARSILC) to provide more information regarding voting rights for individuals with disabilities. Tom Masseau reported that DRA conducted a lot of voter training for people with all types of disabilities, and one of the things they found is that, in Arkansas, guardianship plays a role if someone has the right to vote. The right to vote is taken away if an individual has full guardianship, unless they petition to have it restored. Mr. Masseau stated that DRA is working to identify ways to decrease guardianship restrictions. He stated that the law was passed in 2011 before he came to the state. A request to reverse guardianship includes an individual must petition the judge to reverse it and allows that individual the right to vote. He stated that the history of the law originates to the Alexander Human Development Center.

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

Arkansas Statewide Independent Living Council (ARSILC) Executive Director, Sha’ Anderson, was not present to provide the ARSILC report. Chairman Sheeler reminded the Board that her ARSILC reports were included in the DSB Board packet.

#### **NEWSLINE Utilization Report – Larry Wayland**

The Friends of Arkansas Information Radio Services (FAIRS) board is still meeting by phone. He stated there was not much to add to Theresa Bertram’s AIRS report, but he does think that Ms. Bertram is doing a good job. He stated AIRS is always looking to add more content. Mr. Wayland noted that the number of listeners was about the same and encouraged people to get the word out about NEWSLINE and AIRS. Anyone who is eligible for talking book services through the Library of the Blind is also eligible to access service through NEWSLINE. Mr. Wayland did ask Theresa Bertram whether AIRS was able to get Michael Hingston set up for his presentation at the NFB Arkansas statewide convention.

#### **Comments**

Theresa Bertram replied that they have not received anything from Mr. Hingston.

Larry Wayland stated that, for people who do not know, Michael Hingston led a group of people from the 78<sup>th</sup> floor of Tower One at the World Trade Center twin towers. He later wrote a book called “Thunder Dog” about his experience. Mr. Wayland hopes they will be able to broadcast Mr. Hingston’s presentation on AIRS.

### **Consumer Input**

#### **Arkansas Council of the Blind – Erika Evans**

Board member Erika Evans announced that the Arkansas Council of the Blind (ACB) plans to hold the next state convention as a virtual meeting in April 2021.

#### **National Federation of the Blind (NFB) State Convention 2020 – Terry Sheeler**

National Federation of the Blind (NFB) did hold their convention. The state convention was held as a virtual event and had a large attendance. A new state president, Nina Chadwick, was elected at this meeting. She announced that the national convention, scheduled from July 6<sup>th</sup> through July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021, is still under consideration as to whether they will meet in New Orleans, Louisiana, or virtually.

### **Next Meeting**

Chairman Sheeler announced the next scheduled DSB Quarterly Board Meeting will be Friday, March 12, 2020, at 1:00 p.m. This may be scheduled as virtual meeting on the Zoom platform.

Meeting adjourned.