

Board of SBVI Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2022
Ramkota, Pierre, SD and via Zoom

Members Present via Zoom: Jill Kundtz, Ryan Groeneweg, Tana Buresch, and Richard Crawford.

Members Present in person: Cole Uecker, Kendra Ringstmeyer, Burdette Clifford, Kellie Hauglid, Nichole Nelson, Elaine Fritz, Chelle Hart, Jeff Nelson, Gaye Mattke, and Kate Kosior.

Others Present: Shawnie Rechtenbaugh, Ronda Williams, Becky Blume

Members Absent: Cheri Knispel

Jill Kundtz, Chair, called the meeting to order.

There was consensus on approval of the agenda.

Chelle Hart made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 3, 2021, meeting. Cole Uecker seconded. Motion carried.

Gaye introduced the Department of Human Services Secretary, Shawnie Rechtenbaugh. Secretary Rechtenbaugh informed the group that the legislative session ended with the budget approved. This included a six percent increase for providers. The Department is also working on a strategic plan which has four key focus areas that include Operational Excellence, Telling Our

Story, Talent Development, and Financial Responsibility. To meet these areas, SBVI is developing a satisfaction survey that will encompass all SBVI consumers. SBVI will increase outreach with the use of social media, as well as continuing targeted outreach to Tribal VR, optometrists, etc. Staff will have the opportunity to participate in training to provide optimal services. The Department CFO takes an in-depth look at the budget and maximizes every penny available to spend. SBVI reports on their specific strategic plan goals. These goals and initiatives may also be used for the SBVI State Plan.

Board Member Updates:

Jill Kundtz is the spiritual care coordinator at Monument Health. Monument Health is looking to hire a full-time chaplain.

Ryan Groeneweg is the director of Community Education at the Center for Disabilities. He is preparing for the Special Education conference next week, where they expect 450 participants.

Tana Buresch represents the SD Parent Connection. They have been busy with training and conferences. The call volume has also increased.

Richard Crawford is a new member of the Board. He is looking forward to serving. He has been blind since he was ten years old. He spent 70 years in Iowa and moved to Sioux Falls before COVID. He is a past member of the Iowa Commission for the Blind and is active in the blind community.

Cole Uecker works at Disability Rights SD. Tim Neyhart is retiring, and Cole has been hired as the Executive Director and is transitioning to that position. He is ready to get back out into the public and do normal activities.

Kendra Ringstmeyer has worked for the Department of Labor and Regulation for 11 years. She oversees the federal grants and discussed a new program/partnership between the Department of Corrections and Lake Area. Lake Area is onsite teaching precision machining. Apprenticeships are also available.

Kate Kosior is the Director of the Braille and Talking Book Library and was recently appointed to the Board of SBVI. She started virtual programming activities, podcasts, etc., which have been well attended. A contract to install a recording studio at the School for the Blind in Aberdeen is finalized. She is also working on a Newline contract.

Burdette Clifford is with the Tribal VR program. The tribe is still playing it safe with COVID.

Kellie Hauglid supervises the seven vocational rehabilitation counselors in SBVI. Five were hired during COVID, so they are focusing on in-person services rather than virtual ones. March 22nd is Rehabilitation Counselor Appreciation Day.

Nichole Nelson is preparing for upcoming summer events, including Youth Leadership Forum, Transition Week, and SDSBVI summer school.

Elaine Fritz is the parent of a deaf/blind child. They are completing guardianship paperwork. Matt discontinued the VR program because he's limited in what he could do; however, his counselor was able to get him to do more than he would do for Mom. They continue to explore all options.

Chelle Hart represents South Dakota Association of the Blind (SDAB). They held a virtual meeting which went well. SDAB currently has 66 members. The American Council of the Blind national convention is planned in Omaha in July 2022.

Jeff Nelson operates the restaurant at EROS through the Business Enterprise Program. Since September, the restaurant has been closed, but it may reopen soon because EROS employees are supposed to be coming back to work. He also has vending routes.

Gaye Mattke let the Board know of Zay Norman's sudden passing. He was a Board member and advocated for the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. Condolences were sent to Zay's family on behalf of the Division and Board of SBVI. Gaye is stationed in Sioux Falls, but she comes to Pierre at least once a month.

Unified State Plan Updates: Submission of the full WIOA State Plan is required every four years, with State Plan updates to specific sections every two years. The deadline for the two-year updates is March 15. The four core programs that need to complete updates include

Adult Dislocated Worker, Youth Programs, Wagner-Peyser, and Vocational Rehabilitation (including SBVI and the Division of Rehabilitation Services). The Department of Labor and Regulation and Vocational Rehabilitation work closely to develop and submit the updates. The updates will be submitted by March 15, 2022.

SBVI had six sections that needed to be updated. Ronda and Gaye updated sections, including the Input of the State Rehabilitation Council to include Board participation in activities. The Comprehensive System of Personnel Development consists of staff retention/retirements and training. Annual estimates reflect a decline in numbers served due to Covid. Goals include the activities related to strategies. The state strategies include underserved and minority information. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has been collecting baseline data on performance. VR and the Rehabilitation Services Administration will be negotiating expected levels of performance for those indicators. SBVI used a tool provided by Rehabilitation Services Administration to gauge the expected levels of performance. Moving forward, if negotiated levels of performance are not met, RSA will provide technical assistance. If performance levels continue to be below negotiated levels, sanctions could include loss of federal funds.

Board Activities:

Disability Awareness Day – Ryan traveled to Pierre to represent Center for Disabilities. In addition, he brought "Grandpa's White Cane" books for distribution at the SBVI booth. There were 14 total organizations present,

nine in-person, and five booths with information. Approximately 25 legislators and 50 public citizens passed through. It was held on crossover day for the legislative session, so the afternoon was fairly quiet. The date for the next Disability Awareness Day at the Capitol is February 22, 2023.

Governor's Awards – Cole gave an update that only one nomination has been received thus far. The nomination packets will be going out soon. Several nominations are made by staff within the Department or other state agencies. There was a discussion at the planning committee meeting about raising awareness for the event. The October time frame seems to work for the presentation. Committee would like to increase media presence. The "other" employer category was changed to "public" employer. The deadline for nominations is Monday, May 2, 2022. Kendra offered to put information in the DLR newsletter. Ryan also offered to put information on a scroll of upcoming events at the Special Education Conference.

Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) – Chelle and Nichole represent the Board of SBVI on the NDEAM planning committee. The committee met on March 2 to review ten requests for funding. Both in-person and virtual events are being planned around the state. In the past, the Board of SBVI has provided up to \$5,000 to support these events. Chelle Hart motioned to continue funding for NDEAM activities up to \$5,000. Nichole Nelson seconded. Motion carried.

Mike Klimisch with National Federation of the Blind (NFB) contacted Gaye regarding a public forum in conjunction with the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) convention on April 22-23, 2022, in Rapid City. The Board supports this forum, and members facilitate. The information regarding stipends available for first-time attendees at the convention will be shared with NFB.

SBVI Program Updates:

Independent Living Older Blind (IL) – Sandy Neyhart reported a change in the Rehabilitation Teacher staffing. Heather Prince resigned and Stephanie Grover was hired in her place and began on March 14th. She will be attending training at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind beginning March 21. While in Sioux Falls, she will also be able to do mentoring with Rehabilitation Teachers from there.

Currently, there are approximately 251 active consumers in the IL program. Most of the services are now done face to face, with only occasional virtual visits.

SBVI plans to purchase additional CCTV units if year-end purchases are approved. There are approximately 220 units in the "pool," but once they have been in service for ten years, they need to be replaced due to maintenance issues. At this time, there is no waiting list for the CCTV lease/loan program.

The Fall Conference is scheduled for October 11-13, 2022, in Sioux Falls. Sandy is involved with planning Independent Living related topics for breakout sessions.

If Board members would like to attend, registration and expenses will be covered.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) – Ronda Williams reported that she is also on the Fall Conference planning committee and in the process of finding presenters for the conference. The theme is “Today’s Vision: Tomorrow’s Reality.” A Murder Mystery for the evening social is also being planned. More information will be coming in the near future.

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program is fully staffed, and new counselors are involved in ongoing training. VR saw the highest increase in applications in January 2022 in over a year.

For the past five years, DRS and SBVI have been working on expanding pre-employment transition services to students in South Dakota by offering funding through a request for proposal process for summer pre-employment transition services for students. This year, 13 applications were submitted along with proposed budgets from entities all around the state, including a center for independent living, school districts, Center for Disabilities, and CSD. DRS and SBVI reviewed and approved all the applications, with a few minor changes requested on budgets. Once approved, applicants can begin planning for the summer initiatives.

An SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation case file review is scheduled for April 25-29, 2022. This review will be done remotely, with reviewers working at their home office,

reviewing other counselor's cases. Casefile reviews are completed annually to ensure federal requirements and state policies are being met, quality services are provided to individuals, and it is a good training opportunity for staff. In addition, it is an opportunity to see how other counselors manage their caseloads, document progress, and implement best practices.

SBVI and DRS have contracted with Russ Thelin to assist with the comprehensive statewide needs assessment that is required for the State Plan. Russ will be presented on the process later in the meeting.

SBVI is planning an All-Staff training July 26-28 in Sioux Falls. The focus will be on diabetes and its impact on vision.

SBVI has contracted with Independent Living Choices (ILC) in Sioux Falls to hire Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Specialists to provide services in local communities. ILC hired an O&M Specialist who is located in Mandan, ND. The coverage area is statewide. Discussion was held about the difficulty with finding and hiring qualified O&M Specialists in South Dakota.

SBVI updated the financial need policy for Assistive Technology devices and services. As long as the device or service is needed for the employment goal, the consumer does not need to meet the financial need to receive a device or training.

Rehabilitation Center for the Blind - SDN Communications sold the building that houses the Rehabilitation Center. The new owner, a private investor, is continuing leases with the state offices housed in the building.

There are five students attending skills of blindness classes. Due to COVID students were taught in separate classrooms for the safety of staff and students. This reduced the number of students in training at one time. As the number of COVID cases decreases, we will evaluate and increase student numbers when possible. We welcomed a new student from Wyoming Vocational Rehabilitation; WY will fund the training fee, which provides additional funding to SBVI.

The Hy-Vee grocery store located across the street from the Center closed on January 1. This is unfortunate as clients attending the Center used this store for training and purchased items for training at the Center. All Hy-Vee accounts were moved and set up at a new location approximately 2.5 miles away. The staff tried to use the online ordering system, but accessibility hasn't worked, so they are working closely with Hy-Vee to find a workable solution.

Chad Ray, the newly hired Orientation and Mobility Specialist, will be attending the University of Nebraska Lincoln to obtain a Master's in Special Education with a certificate in Orientation and Mobility. It will take about 2.5 years to complete the course. Bob Smith and Ardell Fiedler are certified in O&M and mentor him.

Autumn Pitz, SD Vocational Resources employment specialist, is now a certified employment specialist. She accomplished this by attending training and passing a certification test.

Transition week is scheduled for June 12-16, 2022. There have been 12 first-year students and three second-year students referred. Interviews are being held to learn about each student, their goals for employment, and any additional information necessary to determine their eligibility to attend.

Business Enterprise Program (BEP) – Ray Tracy reported that the cafeteria at EROS located by Brandon remains closed, but vending is available. EROS staff will be returning to work in person, but the vendor will see how many people return before considering reopening the cafeteria. BEP would like to obtain a five-year contract for the Sioux Falls vending route. The Aberdeen vendor has a small vending route and is currently looking at other vending options. The Huron vendor is operating as normal. The Pierre vendor is notified when a vending machine needs to be filled or repaired.

Bid packets for interstate vending were mailed out. The bid opening occurred on March 10th. The contracts with third party vendors will be for five years rather than three years. Third party vendors provide a percentage of total sales per location, after taxes, to SD BEP. Successful bids for interstate locations for commissions to the BEP range from 54% to 68%. Funds from the

interstate vending go toward machine replacement, repair, health insurance, benefits, and retirement.

The BEP is implementing a pilot program using card readers in vending machines. Vendors have been hesitant to use card readers because of the fees involved. BEP would pay for these fees during the trial period. Other states have informed BEP that the number of sales makes up for the fees. Vendors are given a choice if they want to participate in this pilot program.

Board Terms/Vacancies/Member at Large Position: The Member-at-large position on the Executive Committee is currently vacant. Richard Crawford agreed to step into this position. There were no other nominations. Cole Uecker made a motion to appoint Richard Crawford to the Member-at-large position. Ryan Groeneweg seconded. Motion carried.

Three members have terms expiring on June 30, and there is one vacant position. Nichole Nelson has served one term and has agreed to reappointment. Cheri Knispel has served the maximum number of terms, and Zay Norman's position is vacant. Nominations are needed for two positions. The requirements that must be met are two blind individuals, and at least one must represent business and industry. Tana Buresch has also served the maximum number of terms, but that nomination must represent a parent training and information center, which is the SD Parent Connection. The deadline for nominations is April 1, 2022. Members whose terms

expire can serve until the Governor appoints their replacement.

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) Update: The last SILC meeting was on December 15, 2021. Secretary Rechtenbaugh gave a Department of Human Services update at that meeting. Arlene Poncelet with Developmental Disabilities Council also gave an update. Discussion on updating descriptions of the subcommittees took place. Each member of the SILC is expected to participate on a committee. There was a discussion on the Governor's Awards. The next SILC meeting is on April 14 via Zoom. The SILC also must develop the State Plan for Independent Living. This will be due in June 2023, so meetings will be held to obtain feedback in early 2023.

Director's Comments:

The Annual Report is available in hard copy format. It has been sent to Board member via e-mail and alternative formats are available upon request.

2022 Legislative Session was interesting. There were no significant bills related to the Department of Human Services or Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. The Governor's recommended budget was approved for SBVI.

At this time, there is nothing to report for the 2023 Budget. The Chief Financial officer of Budget & Finance in the Department of Human Services, Steven Kohler, previously worked for Bureau of Finance and Management. He works with Department of Human

Service divisions to manage budgets and ensure sure allotted money is spent on needs in the divisions.

Jessica Spencer has been hired as the Strategic Project Director. She will be stationed in Rapid City. She has worked in and inspected nursing homes. She also worked with Vocational Rehabilitation in the past. Alexa Moeller has been hired as the Department attorney. She will be stationed in Rapid City. She comes from the Pennington County State's Attorney's Office in Rapid City.

New member orientation will be held via Zoom. A Doodle poll will determine the date so that participants can select the time that works best for them. New and existing members are invited to attend.

A discussion was held on the platform used for Board meetings in the future. If everyone attended via Zoom, everyone would be equal. However, not all Board members use technology equally. The hybrid meetings where members attend via Zoom or in-person are another option. However, without the proper equipment, those on Zoom cannot hear. Gaye will look into purchasing the OWL technology for use at future meetings. Meetings could also be held in state conference rooms where technology is available for better microphones and speakers. All in-person is the third option. At this time, it was decided to try the OWL and go with a hybrid meeting in June.

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA):
Russ Thelin with Known Way Consulting contracted with

SBVI to assist with the CSNA. He has a significant background in Vocational Rehabilitation as he worked for Utah Vocational Rehabilitation for 25 years. The CSNA needs to be done every three years for the Unified State Plan. The CSNA identifies the rehabilitation needs of populations including minorities, most significantly disabled, unserved or underserved, and youth; and the need for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs. Discovering this information allows SBVI to set goals and develop strategies that must be included in the State Plan.

Russ has contacted the CSNA Executive Committee, which consists of Agency Directors, Assistant Directors, and Board Chairs. He has developed six stages in the CSNA process. He will review existing data and reports, conduct targeted activities, gather and review the information, and report on the findings.

After analyzing the findings, Russ will offer advice to determine the goals and strategies based on the results.

The Board's role will be to work jointly with SBVI and the larger DHS group to provide input and guidance. Russ asked the Board for things that make SBVI (or South Dakota) unique. Some responses included: finding professionals to provide services, maintaining staff, transportation, SSA disincentives, Section 511 sheltered workshops, and local transportation committees.

The PowerPoint used during Russ' presentation will be shared with Board members.

The next Board meeting will be held in Pierre on June 3, 2022. It will be a hybrid meeting with the option of joining in-person or via Zoom.

Cole Uecker made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Chelle seconded. Meeting adjourned.