

South Dakota Board of Service to the Blind & Visually
Impaired Draft Minutes
Friday, June 11, 2021
Red Rossa, Pierre, SD

Members Present: Catherine Greseth, Tami Francis, Gaye Mattke, Ryan Groeneweg, Alan Vandenburg, Elaine Fritz, Nichole Nelson, Koni Sims, Jill Kundtz, Marcia Hultman.

Members Absent: Jenny Anatra, Cheri Knispel, Cole Uecker, Tana Buresch, Burdette Clifford, Zay Norman

Others Present: Ronda Williams, Raymond Tracy, Dawn Backer

Catherine Greseth, Chair, called the meeting to order.

Koni Sims made a motion to approve the agenda. Jill Kundtz seconded. Motion carried.

Koni Sims made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 19, 2021 meeting. Jill Kundtz seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comments: None.

Board Member Updates:

Catherine Greseth's term is expiring at the end of June. Catherine continues to work in Rapid City for Bridging South Dakota. This organization is for employing individuals with disabilities by educating employers. She also advocates for the reduction in violence against individuals with disabilities. The amount of physical violence is three times higher than people without disabilities. She continues to work on the Windmills

training. She recently spoke to Zonta International to raise money for different women's groups. Their theme this year is poverty and disabilities. She also works as a trainer for Infinite Possibilities. That training is to assist people to understand that they have the power to make life what they want.

Tami Francis has expanded her business as Saddle Creek Acres, selling products produced on her farm along with the jackets she's been making. She has been raising cows for customers and renovating their barn.

Ryan Groeneweg discussed events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the South Dakota Center for Disabilities which will be held September 28-30, 2021 during the South Dakota Conference on Developmental Disabilities. On September 25, the 1st Annual Run, Walk, and Roll event will be held at Cherry Rock Park. This event will include a 10k, 5k, and Fun K. Ryan has been working with Koni Sims to coordinate assistance for people who are visually impaired to have a safe running environment for the event.

His current position has expanded. Ryan is currently the Director of Community Education, and recently began a new role as Director for Board Certified Behavioral Analysts at USD which will address a workforce gap in behavioral analysis. The first cohort will begin this fall. He is also taking the Curriculum Instruction Doctoral program at USD; he is almost complete except for his dissertation.

Alan Vandenburg is enjoying retirement. He retired on June 8, 2020. He and his wife traveled to Michigan at the same time they lifted the mask mandate in May. Finally,

they can travel more. He continues to be busy with serving as treasurer for the South Dakota Association of the Blind.

Nichole Nelson just completed Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) 2021. She is preparing for Transition Week at the Rehabilitation Center in Sioux Falls. She reported to the Board that YLF was a success. Many support personnel were on hand to assist the youth attending the event. Among the activities were speakers who had found success as a result of the conference and self-advocacy.

Koni Sims announced the South Dakota Association of the Blind convention will be held on Sept. 17-18, 2021 in Aberdeen at the Fairfield Inn. Her mother-in-law passed away recently. She is working with Ryan Groeneweg for the 1st Annual Run, Walk, and Roll event. As part of the Voting Task Force as a communications and outreach specialist, she has participated in 25 presentations on how to vote. She is running for a position on the National American Council of the Blind (ACB) Board; their convention is being held virtually on July 16-23, 2021.

Jill Kundtz has been busy at the hospital. She is now working in patient care and as a Spiritual Care Services Coordinator at the Monument Health Rapid City Hospital. The pandemic didn't reduce her work. She had a few COVID patients and now works more with emergency care at the hospital due to accidents.

Marcia Hultman and her husband bought a cabin and moved it onto a family farm by Belle Fourche. They have various wildlife on the property, as well as two beehives. Her sister had a stroke last year, and Marcia is helping her navigate resources. Marcia watched the graduation online

of her youngest son, who will continue with pursuing his Masters.

Gaye Mattke shared that the Department of Human Services offices at Hillsvew Plaza have been closed for remodeling since early February. SBVI state office employees have been working from home. They will be moving back into Hillview on Thursday, June 17. She also announced she will be moving to Brandon and will be moving her office to the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind sometime in August. She will be in Pierre regularly, but no definite schedule yet.

Membership Update: Jenny Anatra has resigned from the Board because she moved out of the State. Gaye has asked Linda Turner, Director of Special Education for a nominee to represent the State Education Agency. Four Board member positions expire on June 30, 2021. Koni Sims, Catherine Greseth, Alan Vandenburg, and Marcia Hultman's positions expire as they have served the maximum number of terms. Elaine Fritz and Zay Norman's first terms expire, and both have agreed to be nominated for a second term. SBVI solicits nominations based on requirements in the Rehabilitation Act, and the Governor appoints nominees to the Board of SBVI. Fifty percent of Board members must be blind or visually impaired.

Department of Labor Update: Marcia Hultman, Department of Labor & Regulation Secretary shared that a Cabinet Retreat was held at Joy Ranch. The Joy Ranch was explicitly built to be accessible to people with disabilities and Marcia recommended those who had an opportunity visit the resort which is located by Watertown.

In 2020, 40,000 South Dakotans applied for and received unemployment benefits, almost 11% of our workforce. Pandemic unemployment services will be ending on June 26, 2021.

Department of Labor employees did not work remotely because the agency did not have the technology, but the agency can provide remote services to people.

On April 1, 2021, the DLR offices opened as a hybrid model. Now South Dakota is experiencing the greatest workforce challenge she has ever seen. Help is wanted in every community in South Dakota. Only 3,000 individuals are currently receiving benefits, and the State has 24,000 job openings.

South Dakota Department of Tourism reported that they have reached 50% capacity compared to last year at this time, which was record-breaking. People are traveling more by car and want rural experiences.

Schools shutting down impacted women workers, who stayed home, and families adjusted to the single-income lifestyle. A minor factor is unemployment insurance benefits. Foreign labor visas have a cap; J-1 visas are college-age individuals coming here for the experience. Currently, there is no cap, but workers cannot travel from their home country due to COVID restrictions in their country of origin. Only 50% of kids 16-19 work due to the culture.

The DLR encourages businesses to be flexible. They may have to pay more for services. DLR offers short-term certification training, finding barriers to employment so they create a "bubble" of support for them providing training, gas money, mentors and matching to employers such as Department of Health contact tracers. Remote

work will be a new reality in the workforce. Two hundred thousand South Dakotans are not working for various reasons (retired, college students, caretakers, etc.).

SBVI Program Updates:

South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC): Dawn Backer, Manager at the Rehab Center, shared that referrals to the Rehabilitation Center have been lower in part due to the pandemic. Now that they're open and providing training, they are encouraging people to schedule a tour and meetings to talk with staff. They are continuing with some virtual training if necessary, but instruction is best in-person.

First Friday will be held on July 9, 2021. First Friday offers assistive technology training and technical assistance to any South Dakotan with a visual impairment. Residents with vision loss may also call the Rehabilitation Center's Assistive Technology instructor, JoMarie Laughlin, to get help.

South Dakota Vocational Resources developed a 6-week virtual World of Work curriculum to educate clients statewide. The class focuses on employer expectations for various jobs based on the interests of the participants.

Ron Gehrts, the Employment Specialist at SDRC, retired on June 8, 2021. Autumn Pitz was hired to fill the position beginning on June 14th. She has worked as an Employment Specialist in Aberdeen, so she came to SBVI with good experience.

The Orientation and Mobility Specialist position has been open since last January. We have been unable to hire a

certified candidate. The position was relisted for an orientation and mobility teacher willing to obtain certification.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR): Ronda Williams, SBVI Assistant Director, reported that the VR program is fully staffed with Counselors who are meeting with clients, doing outreach in their communities, and working to increase the number of clients participating in training.

An All Staff Training is planned to occur in Aberdeen on August 10-11, 2021. The agenda includes a tour of the SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired's new school located on the Northern State University campus

The annual Vocational Rehabilitation Case File Review was held May 10-14, 2021. This is an excellent training opportunity for newer staff. A report will be completed with the results of the review to determine training needs.

Gaye and Ronda are also working on performance metrics for the Division that will be incorporated into the Department of Human Services (DHS) strategic plan. Department leadership will meet in Chamberlain on July 27-28, to work on a strategic plan for DHS. SBVI is considering three goals as performance metrics in the strategic plan:

- increasing access to SBVI services,
- increasing access to assistive technology devices and services and
- exceeding the national average for employment rate.

Baseline data originated from the past year for the metrics and projected increases have been developed for the next three years.

Business Enterprise Program (BEP): Ray Tracy, Program Specialist, informed the Board that Congress passed the Randolph-Sheppard Financial Relief and Restoration Payments (FRRP) in December 2020, and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) was directed to manage the funds. In January, South Dakota was notified the BEP would receive \$22,663.00 to be distributed to the BEP vendors. The Vendor Committee provided input on how the funds should be distributed in a special meeting on June 9, 2021. A plan will need to be approved by RSA before FRRP funds are awarded to the South Dakota BEP.

Pierre, Huron, and EROS vendors are open and doing limited business. Aberdeen Cafeteria is closed but will begin vending soon.

Independent Living Older Blind: Sandy Neyhart, Program Manager provided a report that was shared by Gaye. Rehabilitation Teachers are responding to inquiries about services and assisting people with the application process in the manner the client is most comfortable with. Staff are conducting home visits with individuals who are ready to have services face to face, which is almost everyone. Letters are being drafted with the intent to send them to 76 people who were referred for Independent Living services since October 2019 but declined to complete an application.

Twenty-five new CCTV's were purchased since the last Independent Living report. The additional purchases allowed SBVI to remove units from the Lease/Loan program that are 10+ years old.

For several months SBVI has facilitated a Peer Support group which is held via Zoom and managed and lead by Heather Prince, Rehabilitation Teacher.

Governor's Awards: Tami Francis is one of the Board of SBVI representatives on the Governor's Awards committee. She suggested that the awards need another category to recognize individuals who have overcome obstacles but don't have the opportunity to obtain degrees. She suggested adding a category such as "triumph over personal obstacle" or "entrepreneurial" type of award. She gave an example of a person with a disability who obtains a Ph.D. vs. someone who has ID/DD, very different situations to compare for an outstanding individual with a disability award. Tami and Cole are the Board of SBVI representatives on Governor's awards committee. An adhoc committee to further discuss this issue will include Tami and Ryan; Cole will be asked to join since he is on the Governor's Awards committee but is absent today. This will be a topic of discussion at the September board meeting. Ronda will be the SBVI staff liaison for the committee and will set up a Zoom meeting to discuss this issue and bring suggestions to the next board meeting.

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC): A meeting was held by Zoom on June 3 and included an overview of services offered by Communication Services for the Deaf and their summer transition program. Matt Cain, Director of Independent Living Choices provided an overview of their programs, services, and coverage areas in the state.

The Western Resources for Independent Living Executive Director has resigned but they have assured stakeholders they are still accepting referrals and providing services in the interim. There was also a presentation about the Rapid Transit system.

Officers were elected, and SILC members reelected the same officers. Alan Adel is the Chair and he is on the Board of WRIL, Mark Koterwski is the Vice Chair and he works for CSD, Members at Large are Mark Sternhagen and Tasha Jones.

The next meeting has not yet been scheduled.

Ryan Groeneweg's name has been submitted as a nomination to be the Board of SBVI representative on the SILC. Catherine Greseth has one year remaining in her term on the SILC.

Public Relations Committee: Tana Buresch, Catherine Greseth, Jill Kundtz, and Sandy Neyhart, met on Zoom for a discussion on the Governor's Awards on April 6th. Packets for submitting nominations for Governor's Awards were distributed to committee members and to SBVI staff with the offer to collaborate on any prospective submissions they may consider for the award categories. No nominations were drafted by the committee, but consensus was that they will consider candidates for nomination throughout the year.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM): Catherine Greseth reported that budgets were approved for 12 communities. Some communities are sharing speakers, some are hybrid, and others are holding

events virtually. NDEAM occurs in October, and Board members will be invited to participate in these events.

Youth Leadership Forum: Nichole Nelson reported that 42 student delegates were selected, 35 showed up. Kevin Locke did hoop dancing, played flute, and told stories. Derek Johnson football player with an amputation talked about his story. Students learned more about their disabilities. They participated in an agency "scavenger hunt." Mike Webb presented on assistive technology.

Board Sponsorships and Stipends for Consumer Conventions: There were no requests for sponsorships by the Board. Gaye will forward information on stipends to Koni for the SDAB convention.

Election of Officers: The Board Executive Committee also serves as the nominations committee for Board officers. The slate of candidates to be considered were:

- Jill Kundtz, Chair
- Tami Francis, Vice Chair
- Ryan Groeneweg, Member-at-Large

Catherine Greseth called for any more nominations. Having heard none, Koni Sims made a motion that nominations cease, and the nominees recommended by the Nominations Committee be elected. Catherine seconded the motion. After a call for discussion and having heard none, the Chair called a vote. The slate was elected unanimously.

Director's Report: Gaye Mattke, SBVI Director, informed the Board that this year the All Staff Training will be held

in Aberdeen on August 10-11. The SBVI All Staff Training was canceled last year because of the pandemic.

Information on the Vocational Rehabilitation Fall Conference was distributed. The conference is scheduled at The Lodge in Deadwood on October 26-28, 2021. The cost to attend the conference is covered by the Board budget. Members should contact Becky if they're interested in attending.

Remote Service Delivery: Staff have the option to request work from home. Staff must meet the requirements of:

- having office space at home,
- not currently on probation or have performance issues,
- ensuring office coverage,
- access to the internet,
- be subject to review every six months,
- available to meet with clients

SBVI will not be reducing office space at this point. Remote work must be an advantage to the State and clients.

Caseload Targets: Caseloads are at an all-time low right now. Supervisors are working with counselors and teachers to establish outreach strategies and goals to increase caseloads.

Department of Human Services Updates: SBVI state office staff will be moving back into offices at Hillsvue next Thursday, June 17th after renovations took place beginning in February 2021.

South Dakota Association of the Blind (SDAB) Conference will be held on September 17-18, 2021, in Aberdeen.

Koni Sims made a motion to hold the next Board meeting in Sioux Falls, Alan Vandenburg seconded. Motion carried. Members voted unanimously to hold the next Board of Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired meeting in Sioux Falls on September 24, 2021, at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. Conference calls will be an option for those not able to meet in person.

Koni Sims made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jill Kundtz seconded. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Minutes prepared by Raymond Tracy, Program Specialist.