

Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI)  
Meeting Minutes  
June 2, 2023  
Via Dakota Digital Network with sites in Rapid City, Pierre,  
and Sioux Falls

Members Present: Kate Kosior, Gaye Mattke, Richard Crawford, Chelle Hart, Cole Uecker, Ryan Groeneweg, Nichole Nelson, Jill Kundtz, Kendra Ringstmeyer, Burdette Clifford.

Members Absent: Elaine Fritz, Kellie Hauglid, Jeff Nelson.

Others Present: Becky Blume, Ronda Williams, Raymond Tracy, Kiersten Sombke, Kama Kwiecinski, Danielle Bartlett, Bailey Terry.

Jill Kundtz, Chair, called the meeting to order.

Ryan Groeneweg made a motion to approve the agenda. Chelle Hart seconded. Motion carried.

Richard Crawford made a motion to approve the March 10<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes as submitted. Ryan Groeneweg seconded. Motion carried.

There were no public comments.

Board Member Updates:

Jill Kundtz is the spiritual care coordinator at Monument Health. She has been doing training with nurses as several patients are blind.

Richard Crawford is a member of NFB. He has been doing public speaking events on blindness. He shared NFB's appreciation to the Division for implementing the release of information so the organization can contact clients.

Kendra Ringstmeyer spoke about the apprenticeship program through the Department of Labor and Regulation. The Governor announced nearly 8 million in funding for the Registered Apprenticeship program over the next three years. Funding is available for sponsors, training providers, businesses, mentors, and apprentices. The summer passport series is available for young adults. More information can be found at

[https://dlr.sd.gov/workforce\\_services/individuals/young\\_adults/young\\_adults\\_summer\\_passport.aspx](https://dlr.sd.gov/workforce_services/individuals/young_adults/young_adults_summer_passport.aspx). The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Symposium was held on May 4th. DLR is working on a four-year WIOA State Plan and there will be public comment period in January 2024. The WIOA Plan will be implemented in April 2024. South Dakota's first Broadband Summit was held on May 3rd. The Covid funding has ended so budgets have to be looked at closely. Kendra will be attending the Vision 2030 conference.

Burdette Clifford stated that the Tribal VR program transitioned from Sinte Gleska University to Red Code. The finances are transitioning, and the program will be fully staffed again.

Ryan Groeneweg let the Board know that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Run, Walk, & Roll will be held on September 9<sup>th</sup>. This is a community event to engage all disabilities. He was selected to be an ambassador for Usher Syndrome Coalition for South Dakota. This coalition is a resource for people diagnosed with usher syndrome and their family members. Nancy O'Donnell is the Executive Director and is working to have ambassadors in every state, plus expanding globally.

Chelle Hart, a member of South Dakota Association of the Blind, stated that they have been planning for White Cane Day in October. The American Council of the Blind conference and convention will be held virtually beginning on June 19 and a portion will be in-person beginning on Friday, June 30 in Chicago.

Cole Uecker, Disability Rights SD (DRSD) represents Client Assistance Program on the Board. The annual cook-out was held in Kyle with about 150 people in attendance. They are hoping to replicate community interaction across the state. Another goal is to increase outreach to tribal nations, plus immigrant and migrant communities as well. SD Disability Rights is looking for feedback for future events, regarding formal (with vendors/booths/etc.) versus organic (cookout, personal) style of event.

Kate Kosior SD Accessible Library Services – Program name changed on April 1. Adult Summer Reading Program is kicking off this week. Author Elizabeth Wetz is attending an event later this month, June 26, 2:00. Newline contract was approved for ALS and NFB. They have been dealing with continued staffing issues – Marsha left at beginning of the year, another staff member retired, and Kate is leaving at the end of June. They are interviewing and offering positions but offers are not being accepted. Kate's position will likely be filled internally.

Nichole Nelson informed the Board that the official last day at School for the Blind and Visually Impaired was June 1<sup>st</sup>. Summer session begins on Monday, June 5<sup>th</sup>. Transition week will also be held in June at the Rehab Center in Sioux Falls. Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) is being held June 5-9.

Transition specialist, Kiersten Sombke, was introduced. She has been in education field for over 24 years.

Membership Updates: Gaye Mattke reported that appointments for those positions that expired on June 30, 2022, have not been appointed yet. In addition to those appointments, Jill Kundtz, has served the maximum terms and her term will expire on June 30, 2023. Ryan Groeneweg's term also expires on June 30, 2023, but he has agreed to be reappointed. Members may continue to serve after their terms expire pending appointments for their positions.

Program Updates:

*Vocational Rehabilitation* – Ronda Williams welcomed Kiersten to her new role as transition specialist. The annual Case File Review (CFR) has been completed. The CFR includes all counselors, administrative staff, and program specialist to review 100 cases. Ronda will share findings with the Board at a later meeting. She also meets with counselors individually to discuss findings. CFR is conducted to make sure SBVI is following federal requirements, state laws and agency policies, but also as a training for counselors. Ronda attended the outreach event in Kyle that was sponsored by Disability Rights South Dakota. She also met with post-secondary disability coordinators. SBVI has had quite a bit of turnover, and there are currently 2 vacant counselor positions in the Sioux Falls office. David Woodruff and Ronda have been interviewing for the positions. DRS and SBVI staff will be meeting with other program specialists from Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Montana, and North Dakota in Park City, Utah, in August. They will be discussing best practices,

federal monitoring reviews, and hiring/retention issues and initiatives.

*Business Enterprise Program* – Ray Tracy reported that EROS implemented a micro market in January. The usage is steady; however, people are buying more inexpensive items, so the profits are decreasing. The EROS facility will be celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on August 19<sup>th</sup>. Premium Food and Beverage will now be paying 25% commission on cold food items sold out of their vending machines. The contracts will be amended to show this change. The Aberdeen vendor candidate decided to withdraw his interest in the program. The location is assigned to the Huron vendor as a satellite at this time. The BEP will be adding credit card readers to the machine in Aberdeen. Huron vending remains steady. The Pierre site is operating as normal. The credit card pilot project at the Mathews Training Center has seen increasing sales. Crane repair person will be coming to Pierre next week and will install credit card readers at the Capitol location vending machines. The credit card pilot will end mid-August and at that time, the vendor will be responsible for paying the fees. Interstate vending remains steady. All locations are currently open however, the Spearfish rest area will be undergoing construction soon. The Vivian rest area was open but had to close for a time due to vandalism. Jeff Nelson and Ray will be attending National Association for Blind Merchants Field of Dreams in Des Moines, IA, to meet and discuss trends in other states. The BEP currently has approximately 78 machines and they have designated signage that machines are operated by a blind vendor.

*South Dakota Rehab Center for the Blind (SDRC)* – April Schulte was happy to report that SDRC is fully staffed! The remodel is finished other than a few items to be delivered in

July. The open house on April 27<sup>th</sup> was a great success. Eleven students will be attending Transition Week June 11-15. Activities include a tour of EROS and presentation from Jeff on the BEP along with a lunch, tours at the Humane Society, Keloland News, and Amazon. Other activities include a panel with blind organizations, a presentation by the director of accessibility at Augustana, and several fun activities in the evenings. April attended the NFB convention in Rapid City in April. Referrals to SDRC are picking up. April met with the executive director for the SD Lions Foundation. Along with new counselor hires attending SDRC, other states have been sending staff for training.

*Independent Living Older Blind* – Gaye reported on this program in Sandy's absence. Applications are down this year with 125 applications since October compared to 172 a year ago. SBVI received approval to purchase 16 new units for the CCTV Lease/Loan program. The consumers who have machines being replaced will have the opportunity to keep the machines by giving up their deposit. The program currently has 226 machines. Government agencies and non-profits can be given surplus property, so nursing homes and assisted living facilities may be good recipients of machines to be on surplus. Sandy attended a the Independent Living Older Blind national conference in Savannah, GA, in March. She participated in a workgroup in May to rewrite best practices for the older blind program with a focus on community outreach.

#### Board Priorities/Planning:

The Governor's Awards nominations were due May 5<sup>th</sup>. The awards ceremony date has not been set yet. It is scheduled by the Governor's office, but generally held in October at the Capitol Rotunda.

October is designated as Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM). The Board voted to contribute funds for DEAM events. You will be informed of the dates/locations of these events when made available.

Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) is June 5-9 at Northern State University in Aberdeen. There is an awards luncheon on June 9, Ronda, Gaye, and April plan to attend the luncheon. There are three blind attendees and one assistant team leader who is blind.

NFB held a public forum in conjunction with their convention in Rapid City in April. Topics of discussion included: transportation, access to orientation and mobility training, and connecting students with organizations. The Board will contribute up to \$500 for hosting the public forum. Stipends are also available for first time attendees.

SBVI staff are working on the State Plan which is due by end of March. There are 12 attachments, with one being addressing the State Rehab. Council (Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired). This attachment will include information about membership including term expiration dates and vacancies. Ronda will schedule a meeting with the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee to discuss and draft attachments to address results from the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment to share at the next Board meeting.

#### Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC):

Ryan Groeneweg shared highlights from the SILC meeting in April. CSD (formerly known as Communication Services for the Deaf) became a new 501(c)3 entity, which prompted a name change to SD Deaf Resources & Outreach Programs (SD DROP). All services will remain the same. SD Association

of the Deaf will host its biannual conference in Pierre on June 23 and 24. Partners in Policymaking graduation was in Sioux Falls on April 22.

Independent Living Choices (ILC) will host summer transition camps. ILC is a strong supporter of providing all core services which includes transition services. DRS is helping to fund these camps. ILC is in its second year of work on the Repair Affair event, partnering with the Home Builders Association and the city of Sioux Falls. The program targets the elderly and persons with disabilities and can be utilized to complete home projects. The Home Builders Association provides all the labor, which directs all the monies towards funding projects, i.e., ramps, installation of grab bars, steps.

Western Resources for Independent Living (WRIL) recently moved the main office with signage to make it more visible in the community. WRIL is struggling to find timely contractors to work on projects. WRIL is working with the Douglas School District to host a youth summer transition program.

Ben Tiensvold, Community Outreach Coordinator, for the Community Health Worker Collaborative Program in South Dakota spoke at the SILC meeting. Ben spoke about the collaborative and explained that a community health worker (CHW) is a frontline public health worker and trusted community member who has an understanding of the community served. The worker serves as a link between health/social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality of cultural competence of service delivery. CHWs in South Dakota have different titles. A certified CHW has completed an approved CHW training program and received CHW certification. A Community Health Representative (CHR) is an individual who has completed an approved CHR training program through Indian



Health Services. Ben reviewed the reimbursement rates for CHW services. Ben spoke of SD Medicaid Reimbursement requirements. CHWs must be provider ordered (MD/DO, PA, NP, CNM, or Dentist). Individual CHWs must be employed and supervised by an enrolled CHW agency. The goal is to have 300 CHWs and CHRs by June 1, 2024. The 2nd annual CHW conference was held May 15-16, in Sioux Falls.

Wayne Weston is the Director of Oyate' Center at the USD Center for Disabilities, which is an educational outreach effort focused on Native Americans with disabilities. He informed the SILC of Alpha Camps, which are transition camps for Native American students with disabilities.

Champion of IL Services solicitations will be disseminated the middle of May with a due date later in June.

Next SILC meeting is June 29 via Zoom.

#### Election of Officers:

The Board Executive Committee also serves as the nominations committee for the Board. They brought forth the following slate of candidates to be considered for nomination:

- Ryan Groeneweg, Chair
- Richard Crawford, Vice Chair
- Cole Uecker, Member-at-Large

Jill Kundtz called for any other nominations. Having heard none, Rich Crawford made a motion to approve the slate of officers put forth by the nominating committee. Chelle Hart seconded. Motion carried. The slate of officers brought forward were approved with a unanimous vote by Board membership.

#### Director's Report:

SBVI Administrative Staff held a retreat in Pierre to discuss recruitment, retention, and succession planning. The

Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) employees Brent Tifft, Organizational Development Psychologist and Kathy Hildebrandt, Organizational Development Analyst, for Employee Engagement and Talent Management were present at the meeting and addressed results from SBVI Engagement Survey, Exit Survey Findings/Trends from SBVI Staff, Supervisor Effectiveness Index Survey results (i.e., survey results for each supervisor), and new hire survey trends to address recruitment, retention and succession planning. Communication was a topic as younger staff communicate differently. The next engagement survey will take place in January 2024.

The annual SBVI All Staff Training will be held July 25-27 in Sioux Falls. Dr. Thomas Porter will address low vision services and Barbara Mora with Eschenbach will have vision aids available for demonstration. Molly Christiansen will present on team building and NFB of SD and SDAB will present on the role of consumer organizations. Recognition will also take place.

The Fall Conference will be held in Pierre, Oct. 23-25. SBVI has contracted with Chris Downing, a blind architect, as a keynote speaker. The draft agenda-at-glance will be shared with SBVI Board members. Contact Becky if you're interested in attending.

All state employees will receive a 7% increase in pay, in addition, salary policy includes some pay grades receiving up to 20% increases to address market value of positions. Many positions in SBVI received additional pay increases, it is hoped this help with retention and recruitment.

The state plan will need public input prior to submission. It was decided to have a public meeting via DDN with sites at SBVI offices. A facilitator and staff will be present at each site. The date will be decided at the September meeting.

Rich Crawford shared that he has been speaking to service clubs and recently joined the Sertoma Club. The Sertoma Club is raising \$500,000 for an inclusive park area and playground equipment for Sertoma Park.

The next Board meeting will be held September 15, 2023, at 9 a.m. via DDN with sites in Sioux Falls, Pierre, and Rapid City.

Richard Crawford made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ryan Groeneweg seconded. Meeting adjourned.