

Board of SBVI Meeting
Minutes
September 20, 2024
DDN with locations in Pierre, Sioux Falls, Aberdeen,
and Rapid City

Members Present: Ronda Williams, Richard Crawford, Jeff Nelson, Ryan Groeneweg, Cole Uecker, Nichole Nelson, Kelly Deckert, George Seamon, Burdette Clifford, Mike Hommel

Others Present: Sandy Neyhart, Becky Blume, Raymond Tracy, Bailey Terry, Deb Ver Steeg, Cherie Gerry, Allison White, Felicia Alspach

Members Absent: Pam Fisher and Carla Miller

Ryan Groeneweg, Chair, called the meeting to order.

Richard Crawford made a motion to approve the agenda, second by Jeff Nelson. Motion carried.

Jeff Nelson made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 14th Board meeting, second by Richard Crawford. Motion carried.

There were no public comments.

Board Member Updates:

George Seamon: National Library Service conference in Washington DC was attended recently by staff from the State Library. He has been working with American Printing House to get Federal Quota Funds spent for the year.

Burdette Clifford: Sicangu Co tribal vocational rehabilitation program has been through a lot of transitions in the last several years, so they are continuing to work through those changes.

Kelly Deckert: He is a student at SDSU Masters in the Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling program. Program has moved to a new building on campus. Local Brookings support group recently re-circulated flyers as their meeting time has changed. Kelly offered to provide an updated flyer if any Board member is interested. The Brookings National Federation of the Blind (NFB) group is also up and running and has twenty members currently.

Nichole Nelson: New school year started recently. There were a lot of students that attended the summer program which led to two new residential students at the School for the Blind. "Your Race, Your Pace" 5k event is Saturday, September 21st in Aberdeen. Dana Stillman was introduced to the Board as the new Transition Specialist.

Jeff Nelson: Business Enterprise Program (BEP) at Earth Resources Observation and Science Center (EROS) has been steady, but slightly slower in the summer. BEP received the contract for the new State One-Stop building in Sioux Falls and will be doing a staged opening starting in January.

Richard Crawford: He attended the University of South Dakota (USD) Center for Disabilities Walk, Run, and Roll event and had an NFB booth with informational handouts. He has been speaking at several events around town and will be presenting at the Cosmopolitan Club on October 17th. There will be a presentation

held by American Foundation for the Blind on October 25th to demonstrate a new Braille display.

Ryan Groeneweg: USD Center for Disabilities hosted the Walk, Run, and Roll event in September.

Cole Uecker: Disability Rights of SD is working on annual reports as their fiscal year is nearing the end. With school starting, they are working on a lot more Special Education work. They are planning an event in Lower Brule to host training on a few different subjects.

Cole brought up a concern and discussion was held regarding the removal of the Assistant Director position within SBVI. Richard Crawford made a motion to draft a letter to communicate the concerns of the Board that would be sent to the Governor's Office. This was seconded by Kelly Deckert. After discussion, it was decided that the Executive Committee will draft a letter on behalf of the Board within the next few weeks. The letter will be sent to Tom Martinec (Deputy Secretary and Ronda's supervisor), Shawnie Rechtenbaugh (Department Cabinet Secretary) and Governor Kristi Noem, and shared with Board of SBVI members. Motion carried.

Mike Hommel: He is a new member and attending his second meeting. He has enjoyed learning more about the board each time we meet.

SBVI Program Updates

SD Rehabilitation Center –Cherie Gerry provided the update to the Board. Katy Manke is the new Assistive Technology teacher and started on May 24th. She has been accepted and started into the Assistive Technology master's program in Boston, MA and will

be the only person in South Dakota with the certification once she is finished. She has also re-started the monthly Assistive Technology clinics.

Cherie Gerry, Program Specialist, has completed her Vocational Evaluation certification and is waiting to hear on her approval. Kama Kwiecinski, Center Counselor, has been accepted into SDSU's Master's in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling program and started this fall.

SDRC staff provided a hands-on training for City of Sioux Falls staff in Orientation & Mobility and are planning a second training for a new group of City staff.

Four USD Medical Students completed three days of training at the Rehab Center for their Cultural Immersion program in August. Feedback was very positive.

First Quarterly Workshop was held on September 13th via Zoom. Forty participants watched Mary Carrell share different tips and tricks for people with vision impairments in their home and kitchen. The recording will be made available for those not able to attend.

April Schulte, Center Manager, met with new DHS Media Specialist and will be working with him on October 1 to create video content in time for White Cane Day on October 15th. She has also been working with the National Library Service (NLS) to get approval for two NLS e-readers for training at the Center. April attended the SD Association of the Blind Convention at Joy Ranch September 6 – 7.

April Schulte, Chad Ray (Orientation & Mobility instructor), Cherie Gerry and Koni Sims met with Joe Martin from Via Transportation of Sioux Area Metro to discuss concerns with the new changes made to bus routes.

Vocational Rehabilitation – At the last meeting, Ronda Williams reported that SBVI was out of compliance for Timeliness of Eligibility to Plan Development. SBVI was placed into a Corrective Action Plan from Rehabilitation Services Administration. Goals in the action plan include SBVI revising a policy for the counselor manual to require supervisory approval for extensions for eligibility and plan development to ensure extensions are necessary and not a result of agency failure. SBVI will need to be above 90% timeliness and accuracy for two consecutive quarters to consider the Corrective Action Plan to be completed. The previous quarter results were at 100% compliance. The position of Vocational Counselor/Rehabilitation Teacher in the Pierre area is currently vacant, but plan to hire soon. Four Rehabilitation Counselors around the state are starting their master's programs this fall to start working towards their education and Rehabilitation Counselor certification, with one counselor completing their certification this fall. David Woodruff is working to get SBVI vocational rehabilitation staff on board with SaraWorks, a Digital Assistant program. This program automatically does client follow-up, data entry, and appointment reminders. The intent is to utilize an assistant for case management duties so counselors can focus on providing guidance and counseling and providing services to clients.

Independent Living – Sandy Neyhart reported that the Rapid Area Vision Education (RAVE) peer support group held their meeting last month and discussed holding their first White Cane Walk from

Rapid City Public Library to Main Street Square (6 blocks) on October 15th. Sandy has joined the DakotaLink Advisory Board. The open position in Pierre should be filled in early October. An individual recently went through a Low Vision Exam at the Rehabilitation Center and found that a specific device met her needs perfectly. The cost of the device was outside of the budget available for client services, but this person was able to receive the device thanks to funds that were made available from the Lions Club Foundation.

Business Enterprise Program – Raymond Tracy informed the Board that High Country Coke in Rapid City had incorrectly been underreporting prices and commissions. To resolve this, \$11,400 has been paid to BEP in June to correct those commissions. BEP Program is expanding in the Sioux Falls area One-Stop. Jeff Nelson will be the vendor on-site with 7-8 vending machines at the location, plus a micro-market. Project will likely start in January 2025. Aberdeen BEP received communication from Pepsi in July that their snack vendors were being sold. BEP has decided to take back control of those machines and is working to make them viable for a blind vendor to manage. Pierre now has 18 of 31 vending machines installed with Credit Card readers. Interstate vending performance has decreased but revenue is still good.

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC): Ryan Groeneweg reported that SILC met on September 5th via Zoom. Jennifer Lewis reviewed Consumer Satisfaction Survey results. Overall responses were positive for both Independent Living Centers in the state. Independent Living Choices (ILC) reported that services were provided to 1,500 individuals in the last quarter, and they had 322 new applicants with nearly 70 being

under the age of 25. Western Resources for Independent Living reported that services were provided to 471 individuals in the last quarter, with 80 new applicants. Almost 50 of the applicants were under age 25. SILC presented the annual Champion of Independent Living Service Award to Shelly Pfaff during their meeting. Pre-employment Transition Services were offered at eight ILC sites for 44 individuals. The next SILC meeting will be held in December via Zoom.

Board of SBVI Activities:

Governors Awards Ceremony will be held at Capitol Rotunda at 11 AM on September 24th with the ceremony being livestreamed for those unable to attend.

White Cane Day is October 15th. Brookings, Rehab Center, Rapid City and Sioux Falls all have planned awareness events around that date.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month activities in October. This year's theme is "Access to Good Jobs for All." The schedule of events is included with the minutes. There is a virtual training hosted by Mychelle Gerrigan with Firelink Digital regarding Website Accessibility on October 23rd.

SBVI leadership staff are in the early stages of compiling information for the 2024 report. Draft copies will be sent to Board prior to the next meeting and will request discussion and approval of the report at that meeting. The Board of SBVI Annual Report is required to be submitted to the Rehabilitation Services Administration and Governor Noem's office by December 30, 2024.

Membership Update/Appointment Updates/Election of

Officers: SB76 was signed into law in March, regarding timeline of re-appointments for Boards. With this law, members up for re-appointment are considered reappointed if they have not received a response from the Governor's Office within 120 days. Richard Crawford, Jeff Nelson, and Kelly Deckert are waiting on re-appointments. Several nominations are waiting for appointment from the Governor's Office.

Ronda Williams facilitated the discussion and vote for election of officers.

Richard Crawford made a motion to nominate Ryan Groeneweg for Chair position. Second by Jeff Nelson. Motion carried.

Jeff Nelson made a motion to nominate Richard Crawford for Vice Chair. Second by Kelly Deckert. Motion carried.

Richard Crawford made a motion to nominate Jeff Nelson for Member-at-Large. Second by Nichole Nelson. Motion carried.

Director's Report – Ronda Williams:

DHS Updates: DHS 101 training for staff has continued to be a successful training initiative. This initiative is part of the DHS Strategic Plan to provide training to all Department of Human Services staff to educate them on other division's services within the department, encourage local referral resources and service collaboration. All SBVI staff have now attended DHS 101 training.

Fall Conference theme is "Don't Stop Me Now" and will be held October 29th-31st at the Lodge at Deadwood. Registration is due by October 15th. Board members are welcome to attend, and

expenses will be covered by the Board. Contact Becky Blume if interested in attending.

White Cane Safety Day video content is being developed with DHS Media Specialist. Ronda mentioned that anyone involved in White Cane Day events can send her the information to be shared on the DHS Facebook page.

SD Association of the Blind State Chapter Convention at Joy Ranch was attended by several SBVI staff in early September. Stipends are available for consumers to attend. This year, three ladies attended and used the stipends. Ronda read their reports. Board members are also welcome to attend these conventions.

State Plan Goals for FY2025: Ronda gave an overview of the State Plan Goals and Strategies for FY25. A copy of the Goals and Strategies is included with the minutes. Board members should consider how they can contribute to the success of these goals and strategies. An item for discussion was how to track counselor/client engagement as full partners in development of services and what counts as engagement. Another discussion item was identifying activities to reach individuals from minority backgrounds. Mentoring opportunities of new staff was also discussed. Richard Crawford encourages all SBVI staff to read books about successful blind people. It is a free resource. It was also suggested that SBVI administration attend national blind conventions. Transition goals and strategies were also discussed. Some schools are not participating or referring students to the program. With the hiring of transition specialist, hopefully, this will help increase referrals. SBVI will communicate with Parent Connection to help ensure families are informed of services for transition age youth.

Richard Crawford wants to reiterate that staff encourage parents to sign release for SDAB and/or NFB to contact them for more information, resources and support.

The next meeting will be held on Friday, December 13, 2024, via DDN.

Jeff made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Richard Crawford. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.