

Board of SBVI  
Draft Minutes  
September 24, 2021  
Via Zoom

Present: Jill Kundtz, Ryan Groeneweg, Kellie Hauglid, Chelle Hart, Cole Uecker, Tami Francis, Burdette Clifford, Nichole Nelson, Zay Norman, Jeff Nelson, Gaye Mattke.

Absent: Elaine Fritz, Cheri Knispel, Kendra Ringstmeyer, Tana Buresch

Others Present: Kate Kosior, Ronda Williams, Dawn Backer, Sandy Neyhart, Ray Tracy, Becky Blume

Jill Kundtz, Chair, called the meeting to order.

There were no public comments.

Ryan Groeneweg made a motion to approve the agenda. Cole Uecker seconded. Motion carried.

Cole Uecker made a motion to approve the minutes from the June meeting. Ryan Groeneweg seconded. Motion carried.

Membership Update/Appointments

Gaye Mattke welcomed new members to the Board. Kendra Ringstmeyer, who was not available for the meeting, works for Workforce Development in Department of Labor and Regulation and replaces Marcia Hultman. Chelle Hart is a former SBVI employee who has

also served on the Statewide Independent Living Council and South Dakota Association for the Blind. She replaces Koni Sims. Jeff Nelson takes over for Catherine Greseth. He works with the Business Enterprise Program and operates the EROS Cafeteria and oversees a vending route in Sioux Falls area. Kellie Hauglid is the SBVI counselor supervisor and replaces Alan Vandenburg on the Board.

Zay Norman and Elaine Fritz were reappointed to another three-year term on the Board.

Kate Kosior has been nominated to the Board and is awaiting appointment by the Governor.

#### Board Member Updates

Tami Francis is owner of Saddle Creek Acres. She was recently married.

Ryan Groeneweg works at USD Center for Disabilities. He informed the Board that Amy Scepaniak was hired for Rose Moehring's position. He is also on a Brain Injury Network group that is working with a University in Kansas City to conduct a survey. Upcoming events sponsored by Center for Disabilities include Run, Walk, Roll on September 25<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 a.m., a conference on Development Disabilities next week, and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala on September 29. The Gala will be held at the Ramkota in Sioux Falls. People who started the Center for Disabilities will be in attendance and will take you on a trip down memory lane.

Nichole Nelson is the transition specialist at the School for the Blind. SBVI staff held an all staff meeting in Aberdeen in August and were given a tour of the new school. School for the Blind began classes in-person on September 8.

Jeff Nelson was recently appointed to the Board. He operates the EROS Cafeteria through the Business Enterprise Program. However, EROS Cafeteria is currently shut down due to low number of federal employees currently working at EROS.

Kellie Hauglid previously worked as a certified rehabilitation counselor and a program specialist within SBVI. She has been promoted to supervisor of the seven vocational rehabilitation counselors around the state. Kellie recently hired a counselor in the Sioux Falls office and currently has one vacant position in Sioux Falls.

Burdette Clifford announced that programs are limited due to Covid.

Kate Kosior moved to South Dakota in May. She is the manager of the Braille and Talking Book Library, implementing new programs at the library. She is also getting married soon.

Cole Uecker works as a staff attorney at Disability Rights South Dakota. He manages the Client Assistance Program. He has been busy at work and is looking forward to NDEAM events and fall conference.

Zay Norman has been dealing with the drought conditions. He recently celebrated his 32<sup>nd</sup> wedding anniversary.

Gaye Mattke relocated to the Sioux Falls area. Her office is located at the South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. She intends to be in the Pierre office monthly.

Jill Kundtz is the new Chair of the Board of SBVI. She works as a Spiritual Care coordinator at Monument Health. She does have close contact with Covid patients and asked for prayers for her brother who was diagnosed with Covid.

#### SBVI Program Updates

*Rehab Center for the Blind* – Dawn Backer informed the Board that Chad Ray was hired to fill the vacant O&M position. It is difficult to hire a certified O&M specialist, so it was relisted as an orientation and mobility teacher who would get certified. Bob Smith returned to help provide instruction to Chad and the students who are more advanced.

Transition Week was held June 13-17. Nine students attended. It was a great event and planning is underway for next year's transition week, June 12-16, 2022. Counselors have been provided with the information so they can promote the week all school year.

Referrals to the Rehabilitation Center picked up during the summer with additional transition age students.

However, between rising numbers for COVID and new staff, referrals are slowing.

First Friday is assistive technology assistance available to anyone with visual impairments to get their questions answered about iPhone, iPads, Zoomtext, JAWS etc. Any SD resident with vision loss can call the Rehabilitation Center's AT instructor to get help by email, video chat or in-person appointment.

Employment skills training is a combination of in-person and virtual clients. The virtual **World of Work** has been great to help people get training they need without traveling to Sioux Falls. The class focuses on employer expectations for various jobs based on the interests of the participants. The discussion is about job searches, and how to present themselves throughout the application process and in job interviews.

SDN Communications own the building that SDRC is located at and they have put the building up for sale. Dawn is not too concerned at this time as the State leases the entire building. SDRC has a lease in place until March of 2025.

Numbers continue to be lower in most areas. Skills of Blindness numbers are steady.

*Vocational Rehabilitation* – Ronda Williams is the assistant director for SBVI. She has been working on the year end data report for the vocational rehabilitation program. The number of clients is down compared to

previous years due to the pandemic. The Voc Rehab counselor positions have seen significant turnover since May 2020. The caseloads are smaller due to this, but counselors are doing more outreach.

Fall Conference is scheduled for October 26-28 in Deadwood. There is a pre-conference on October 26. Board members who would like to attend can still register by contacting Becky or Ronda.

Ronda has also been working on the vocational rehabilitation portion of the Annual Board Report, which is due to the Governor and RSA by December 30. The document includes reports from Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living, the Rehab Center for the Blind, Business Enterprise Program, as well as Board membership and activities, success stories and consumer satisfaction survey results. Ronda will be contacting new members for a short biography and photo to include in the report. A draft of the annual board report will be available for members to review at the December meeting.

*Independent Living Older Blind (IL OB) Program* – Sandy Neyhart is the manager of the IL OB program and supervises Rehabilitation Teachers who deliver services to older individuals with vision loss seeking to maintain their standard of life. Sandy hired a new rehabilitation teacher to replace Chelle Hart 15 months ago and the training has gone well. There were 230 new applications in 2021, which is a higher number of applications than in 2020 but not as many as 2019. Services are intended to

be short in duration and individuals can reapply for services when they have changes in their vision or require additional training. Staff have larger caseloads currently with 45-50 people compared to 35-40 in the past. Staff are providing more direct home-based services to those who are comfortable with in-person training. If the applicant is concerned about virus exposure, staff have the skills and resources to provide training to an applicant through telephone or by mailing information to them.

The CCTV lease/loan program currently has 216 machines. Twenty-five new machines were purchased in May. Consumers who were using units that were older than 10+ years, were offered the option to keep the machines and use their deposit to pay for the unit. The CCTVs have changed over the years and the program tries to keep up with the ever-changing technology.

Sandy has been coordinating two Independent Living training sessions for Fall Conference.

Statewide Peer Support groups have continued to meet using the Zoom platform. These meetings are scheduled for the last Tuesday of every month. If you are interested in participating, please let us know so you can be sent the link information.

*Business Enterprise Program* – Ray Tracy is working with vendors regarding the Federal Relief Fund Payments (FRRP) given by RSA due to the pandemic. These were

distributed to BEP vendors September 16 and amounts varied depending on uncompensated loss.

Due to increasing restrictions with federal employees, EROS Cafeteria is temporarily closed. The vending option is still available.

Interstate remittance has seen a decrease during the Summer 2021.

Ray will be attending a meeting with RSA to discuss changes to the RSA 15 report.

### Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

Ronda Williams and Ryan Groeneweg attended the SILC meeting held on Wednesday, September 22 via Zoom. It was Ryan's first meeting as Board of SBVI representative. The Champion of Independent Living award was presented to Helen Hartman during the meeting. This award was initiated in 2015 and recognizes individuals or businesses who have gone above and beyond to help those with disabilities live independently.

Other SILC agenda items included Fall Conference, National Disability Employment Awareness Month events, Governor's Awards announcement, and Centers for Independent Living and Division reports. The next meeting will be in early December via Zoom, but the date has not yet been announced.

### Board of SBVI Activities

The Governor's Awards ceremony will be held October 5 at 11 a.m. at the Capitol Rotunda. A reception will follow



at the Ramkota. Board members who wish to attend the event can contact Becky and expenses will be covered. Tami Francis and Cole Uecker are the Board of SBVI representatives on the larger Governor's Awards committee. Selections were made by the committee and then passed along for the Governor's approval. Discussion was held regarding adding a category for the Governor's awards. It was determined that a time will be scheduled to discuss this and take suggestions to the Governors Awards committee. The Public Relations committee also met and will continue thinking of worthy nominees for future Governor's Awards.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). Twelve communities across the state received funding for events. Several events will be held via Zoom. Some communities are sharing a presenter. NDEAM flyers will be shared for events in your area. Cole Uecker made a motion that the Board of SBVI provide monetary support up to \$5,000 for NDEAM activities/events. Nichole Nelson seconded. Motion carried.

2021 NDEAM theme is America's Recovery: Powered By Inclusion.

Both Board of SBVI representatives on the NDEAM committee are no longer Board members. Nichole Nelson and Chelle Hart volunteered to be representatives on the larger NDEAM committee.

White Cane Day is October 15, 2021. The local Sioux Falls committee did not reconvene this year so there is

no White Cane March. Gaye Mattke did submit a proclamation to the Governor's office and a news release.

A draft of the annual Board Report will be available by the December meeting. Ronda will be in contact with the new members and new Chair for short biographies. Submission deadline is December 30.

### State Plan Goals & Strategies

The Board was involved in writing the Goals & Strategies, and these need to be updated every two years. Gaye read through the goals and strategies. She explained the successes and struggles to meet the strategies during the pandemic. If Board members attend events, please notify Gaye or Ronda as it could be included as a strategy.

### Director's Comments

DHS is working on strategic planning and updating of the goals and strategies. Some SBVI highlights are financial responsibility and talent development. It is a good opportunity to tell our story. Gaye will share the completed document.

Steven Kohler was hired as Chief Financial Officer for the Department. He comes from Bureau of Finance and Management and is very knowledgeable. Gaye meets with Steven weekly to discuss budget, but he is also learning of the services SBVI provides to the citizens of SD.

Jenna Howell was hired as Senior Attorney. She is also learning about SBVI services.

Legislative Session will be held January 11 – March 10, 2022, with veto day on March 28. DHS directors and senior staff meet daily during Session to discuss bills. Gaye does not know of any bills at this time that will affect SBVI. SBVI does not plan to ask for expansion in the budget request.

The Department has been discussing employee compensation in order to hire and retain employees. There will be better incentives for new hires.

In the future, the State of South Dakota will roll out the Citizens Portal. This will be a one stop shop for driver licensing, fishing licenses, etc. The portal won't directly relate to SBVI because our services are eligibility based.

The next Board of SBVI meeting will be held December 3, 2021, at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind in Sioux Falls. There will also be a Zoom option for those who can't travel. Orientation for new members will be schedule the afternoon of Thursday December 2<sup>nd</sup>. A tour of the Rehab Center will also be scheduled.

Chelle Hart made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ryan Groeneweg seconded. Meeting adjourned.