

Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI)  
Meeting Minutes  
March 10, 2023  
Via Dakota Digital Network with sites in Rapid City, Pierre,  
and Sioux Falls

Members Present: Elaine Fritz, Kellie Hauglid, Jeff Nelson, Gaye Mattke, Richard Crawford, Chelle Hart, Cole Uecker, Ryan Groeneweg, Nichole Nelson, Jill Kundtz, Kate Kosior.

Members Absent: Kendra Ringstmeyer, Burdette Clifford.

Others Present: Rob Jonas, April Schulte, Trisha Hanson, Becky Blume, Ronda Williams, Sandy Neyhart, Raymond Tracy

Jill Kundtz, Chair, called the meeting to order.

Richard Crawford made a motion to approve the agenda. Ryan Groeneweg seconded. Motion carried.

Richard Crawford made a motion to approve the December 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting minutes as submitted. Kellie Hauglid seconded. Motion carried.

There was no public comment.

Board Member Updates

Ryan Groeneweg informed the Board that the Center for Disabilities is hosting a Special Ed conference in Deadwood on March 14 & 15, 2023.

Richard Crawford will provide in-service training for North Dakota School for Blind parents on April 1, 2023.

Kellie Hauglid explained the process for claims for her work as a Federal Rehabilitation Counselor. Plans for these clients are over 40 pages. Her insurance company recently hired an office assistant through vocational rehabilitation.

Jeff Nelson recently implemented a self-checkout kiosk at EROS. As a result, he can monitor sales on his phone.

Chelle Hart gave greetings from the SD Association of the Blind. Unfortunately, she has been ill and is now on the mend.

Jill Kundtz informed the Board that Monument Health hired another full-time chaplain. The hospital has been full.

Cole Uecker has had a busy couple of months at the Capitol with legislature going on and keeping track of bills. There were no blindness-related bills. The Department of Human Services bills included discharge procedures for people with a developmental disability and certification for sign language interpreters. He was also glad the Governor vetoed the bill holding assault on teachers at the same level as an assault on law enforcement. He met with Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation in Sisseton recently. He is taking a trip to Mexico.

Nichole Nelson notified the Board that interviews for the Superintendent of the School for the Blind are being conducted. In addition, students are participating in Project Skills. Students are also preparing for state testing. She will be vacationing in Arizona.

Elaine Fritz just returned from a trip to Arizona. Matt will be graduating this spring and has applied for a program at LifeScape. He has an interview for SSI. She has been with the City of Sioux Falls for 20 years. She hasn't had to assist with snow removal this year and has been spending snow days with Matt.

Kate Kosior explained that the Winter Reading Program is going on now through the State Library. In addition, an author event with Phil and Sandy Hamman, authors of *The Duct Tape Killer*, will be held on Monday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 4 p.m. via Zoom. Links are on the website, and all are welcome to join.

#### Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)

The Strategic Planning and Policy Committee met twice to review the CSNA and recommendations from Russ Thelin of Known Way Consulting. Ronda was able to run trend data on guidance and counseling, as that was a concern. The timeliness from application to service provision of VR clients has increased over time, which could impact keeping client's engagement in service delivery. The committee is looking at all the information and will meet again to draft goals and strategies to present to the Board. The findings from the CSNA are similar issues faced by vocational rehabilitation agencies nationwide. Cole advised that the agency does not need to do things better but do "more." He suggests working with more people/agencies to make SBVI more productive. Ryan stated that there is a training need.

## Board Activities

*Disability Day at the Capitol* – There were several tables with information; however, many providers couldn't attend due to the weather. Nevertheless, the fruit was served and well received. Cole handled several different tables in his many roles. Self-Advocates for Change were in attendance. They sent emails to their local Representatives/Senators informing them they would be there that day. Self-Advocates also walked around the Capitol, testified in a committee meeting, and brought disability awareness. SBVI supplied vision simulators, Grandpa's White Cane books, and annual reports for the Board of SBVI table. The date for 2024 Disability Awareness Day at the Capitol is February 28, 2024.

*Governor's Awards* – Ryan and Cole have agreed to continue to serve on this committee. Nominations may be submitted online at any time; however, the 2023 Governor's Awards nominations deadline is May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023. If you have submitted someone in the past and they did not receive the award, please feel free to nominate them again. The categories include Distinguished Service, Individual with a Disability, Employee with a Disability, Employer (large and small), and Transition. If the Board would like to make nominations, Sandy can assist as staff liaison of the Public Relations committee. The Governor will decide the date, and the ceremony will be held in the Rotunda. Travel costs will be reimbursed for members who choose to attend.

*National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)* – Nichole Nelson informed the Board that the

total request was \$44,050 due to more advertising platforms and national speakers. The request is always higher than the actual cost of activities. The Board of SBVI generally contributes up to \$5,000. Nichole Nelson made a motion to contribute up to \$5,000 for NDEAM activities. Kellie Hauglid seconded. Motion carried.

### SBVI Program Updates

*Independent Living* - Sandy notified the Board that there is currently a Vocational Counselor/Rehabilitation Teacher position vacant at the Rapid City office. Interviews are underway. The IL program mailed out 71 surveys in January, with over 1/3 returned. The consumer can write their name and number if they feel they need more services, and Sandy follows up with a phone call.

The CCTV lease/loan program has 212 units. The program has purchased some DaVinci machines that magnify and also have speech. The cost difference is approximately \$1,500. People with CCTVs aging out are allowed to buy the machine by surrendering the \$50 deposit. Information on the CCTV program can be found in the annual report.

Sandy is attending the Independent Living Older Blind conference in Savannah, Georgia, March 13-17. She will participate in a panel and is learning that South Dakota has a great program compared to other states. The SBVI All Staff training will be held in Sioux Falls in July. Sandy has been in contact with Dr. Thomas Porter to be a speaker for the meeting.

*Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)* - SBVI has had several rehabilitation counselor vacancies and are working to fill those positions in Rapid City and Sioux Falls. The Rapid City position has been vacant since early December 2022. Ronda, Sandy, and David have been conducting interviews. The Sioux Falls counselor position was offered to a Certified Rehab Counselor from the South Carolina Commission for the Blind. She will begin in May. Ronda has also been involved with interviews for the Transition Specialist position with SD School for the Blind since SBVI contracts with them. That position has been vacant since June 2022.

Ronda completed a targeted case file review of 67 cases of clients enrolled in training, secondary, postsecondary, and other credential training. The performance measure for identifying skills gains was substantially lower last year. The case file review results did show the need for improvement in many areas. She traveled to Sioux Falls, Aberdeen, and Rapid City offices to review overall findings with staff, then met individually to review the results of each rehabilitation counselor's cases, provide technical assistance, and get suggestions for improvements in the case management system. The feedback was positive. SBVI annual case file reviews will be completed by SBVI counselor's desk audit style. This will likely occur end of April or in May.

Ronda participates in quarterly meetings for region 8 via Zoom with field managers from other states in the region, discussing policies, federal requirements, performance levels, and quality assurance activities. Utah has invited Region 8 Vocational Rehabilitation staff to Park City, Utah June 20-21, 2023, to meet in person. Others invited include Directors, Assistant Directors/Field

Managers, training officers and other program staff. Ronda will be unable to attend due to work-related activities, but Gaye Mattke and David Woodruff will represent SBVI at this meeting.

*SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC)* – SDRC has seen some recent staff changes with promotions, and two new people were hired. The employment specialist position is still open.

The Center is in the process of a complete remodel, including new flooring, new furniture, and new paint. An open house will be held after the remodel is finished.

Transition week interviews have begun with 17 referrals. Transition week will be held June 11-15 at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. April has been meeting with the Bureau of Information and Technology (BIT) regarding the case management system. April is a member of the Young Professional Network and recently attended an event where she introduced the chief of police. She also took time to explain what she does and suggested new recruits get training in blindness. She is trying to create more awareness. Elaine mentioned that the City of Sioux Falls has a really good training site, and if the training is listed there, it may be released to all City staff. SDRC will be included in a Sioux Falls business publication promoting the new furniture at the Rehab. Center.

*Business Enterprise Program (BEP)* – The new micro market at EROS was implemented in January 2023. It has been successful. It has flexibility for the customers. Jeff and Ray can monitor it at all times. The lack of on-site EROS employees has been difficult for the cafeteria.

Federal employees are required to work one day per week on-site.

The Aberdeen site has temporarily been assigned to the Huron vendor. Ray is in the process of interviewing a new candidate for that location. If a candidate is approved, training will need to take place. The Aberdeen site has credit card readers in three machines. The Huron vendor was injured but is still at work. The Pierre site installed credit card readers in two machines at the Mathews Training Center as a pilot. BEP will pay the monthly fee and equipment costs for the pilot. The cost of the product will cover the transaction fee. The monthly fee is \$47 per machine. The pilot is slated to end in mid-August. The Interstate vending has been affected by the weather and interstate closures, but hopefully it will pick up soon with summer travel.

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

Steve Stewart, a long-time advocate, and member of the SILC passed away in February 2023. He dedicated over 30 years of his life to advancing the rights of people with disabilities. Steve worked for the Division of Rehabilitation Services as a Rehabilitation Engineer and retired in 2017.

Matt Cain with Independent Living Choices (ILC) inquired about hosting an independent living (IL) training. Matt spoke of what was offered in years past of an event specifically for IL staff, which allowed time for networking and learning from one another. He didn't know if the budget would support this, but ILC would be willing to send staff to something of this nature.

Mike Harsma, SDHDA, Single Family Development Director provided information on the Governor's House



Program, the Dakotaplex Program, which started in 2019. The program terms include the following:

- Must be placed within the city limits in communities of 5,000 or less in population
- The community must show a documented need for housing via a housing study or market needs analysis
- Can be purchased, owned, and managed by a community, a non-profit, or a for-profit developer
- It cannot be owner-occupied but must be offered as an affordable rental.

BuildSpec Loan Program provides no/low-interest rate construction loans to encourage the speculative building of affordable homes in SD. This is a partnership between SDHDA and SD Home Builders Association. The

Homeowner Rehabilitation Program. There are funds for eligible organizations to assist low-income homeowners in rehabilitating their homes. Eligible organizations administer the program and provide funds to qualifying homeowners at or below 80% area median income through zero percent interest, conditionally forgivable loans to rehabilitate the homeowner's residence.

Assistance can be used to make essential improvements, bring houses up to physical codes as well as improve energy efficiency and accessibility. The next SILC meeting is Thursday, April 6, 2023, via Zoom.

### Director's Report

Richard Crawford and Lerae Olesen created a document giving permission for SBVI staff to provide a client's name to the organizations for them to contact to offer support as they work to overcome obstacles, they may experience due to their vision loss. If the client is

agreeable to being contacted, the document will be signed by the client and kept in the case file.

Lerae and Richard will also speak at the SBVI All Staff meeting explaining the role of consumer organizations. Dr. Porter and Molly Christiansen will also present. The Bureau of Human Resources has also been invited to present and staff recognition will conclude the training. The local staff will arrange for evening social activities. The meeting is scheduled for July 25-27, 2023, in Sioux Falls.

Gaye gave a membership update. Jill Kundtz will have served the maximum number of terms at the end of June 2023. Gaye has received three nominations. The Governor's office has requested more than one nomination be submitted so Gaye will be submitting all three nominations. Statewide representation is also something that will be considered. Appointments and reappointments are still pending for those who expired in 2022. Kate Kosior will be up for reappointment in June 2023, so Gaye will be in contact with her.

The 2023 Legislative Session wrapped up on March 9, 2023. Veto day will be March 28, 2023. The Department has Legislative Task Force (LTF), and they met daily during the session. There were no bills regarding blindness. SBVI's budget was adequate, so there was no expansion request. Divisions of Developmental Disabilities and Long-Term Services and Supports had were contacted regularly due to lobbying by providers and advocates from more funding for Community Support Providers and elderly services.

The Department has scheduled DHS 101 onboarding sessions for staff. Each division provides information specific to their programs and services. There has been positive feedback from employees. The third session will be April 12-13, 2023.

Jeff Overcash was hired as the Chief Financial Officer. He comes from the private sector in Chicago. Steven Koehler, former CFO accepted an appointment to Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Finance and Management and will help with training.

There have been several remodels happening in DHS offices. Within a couple of years, Sioux Falls will have a new building. The building will house several state agencies. It will be located in eastern Sioux Falls. The City of Sioux Falls has purchased the old location and will tear down the building once vacated. Aberdeen is looking at properties for a new location. Rapid City has a new building where several agencies are co-located, but SBVI remains in the same location. Finally, Pierre's local office will eventually have a new building along with several other state agencies within blocks of the capitol.

Richard Crawford motioned that the next meeting be held on June 2, 2023. Chelle Hart seconded. Motion carried.

The next meeting will be June 2, 2023, beginning at 9 a.m. Central time, 8 a.m. Mountain time, via DDN.

Meeting adjourned.