

Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (FRCB)
Quarterly Meeting Minutes
DoubleTree by Hilton Orlando Downtown
60 S. Ivanhoe Boulevard, Orlando FL 32804
July 27 - 28, 2023

Council Members Present

- Arthur Moody
- Bruce Miles
- Denise Valkema
- Donte Mickens
- Doug Ingram
- Jorge Hernandez
- Misty Porter
- Patricia Lipovsky
- Paul Edwards
- Paul Martinez
- Robert Doyle
- Robert Kelly
- Roxann Mayros
- Sead Bekric

Council Members Virtual Participation

- Nancy Bateh
- Sophia Eccleston

Council Members Absent

- Ciwanda McDonald

Council Staff

- Brandis Hall
- Alexandra Diggs
- La'Toya Mitchell

Chairman Jorge Hernandez called the meeting to order with introductions and Pledge of Allegiance led by Doug Ingram.

Adoption of Agenda

Doug Ingram made a motion to accept the meeting's agenda. Denise Valkema second the motion. Motion passed.

Approval of May 2023 Meeting Minutes

Doug Ingram made a motion to accept May 4th – 5th 2023, meeting minutes with corrections. Denise Valkema seconded the motion. The motion was passed.

Director's Report

Director Doyle presented his report.

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA):

Charles Triplett, DBS staff, is heading up the effort of the CSNA. Charles updated the council.

- Currently working on making all the scheduling arrangements with Chaz Compton, Project Director, and his team Chip Kinney and David Knowles.
- All three of these evaluators will cover assessing the entire state of Florida.
- The goal is to have everything completed by the end of this year so that it coincides with current plans for creating the state plan.
- Chaz is overseeing the evaluation in the Tallahassee, Pensacola area, September 25 – 29, 2023.
- Chip is covering Jacksonville, Daytona and the Career, Technology, and Training Center (CTTC), July 31st – August 4th and August 7th – 11th, 2023.
- David is the lead evaluator for the West Palm Beach, Sunrise, and Miami areas starting July 31st, 2023.
- David is leading the Tampa, Orlando and Fort Myers area, August 21st – 25th, 2023.

Misty Porter inquired about invites to family and friends to be included in the evaluations or interviews. The council was informed that parents and clients are invited.

Charles invited the council to participate in an interview with Chaz during his Tallahassee visit.

Florida Department of Education, Senior Chancellor, Kimberly Richey spoke with the council.

- Chancellor Richey is intimately familiar with RSA, Program Administration, and the DBS programs and how vital they are to ensuring that individuals who are blind and visually impaired have the support and the services they need.
- Florida is uniquely situated to have an impact and to influence the lives of all individuals with disabilities and focus on improving outcomes.
- DBS is working on updating rules, contracts, and various policies and procedures. Chancellor Richey is looking forward to the continuation of collaboration with the Division and the council's feedback that will influence programs, influence policy, and help the Division make important decisions that are going to impact the lives of individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

Outcomes:

- DBS closed out the state fiscal year successfully with the second highest year on record in terms of outcomes.
- 921 individuals were able to successfully obtain employment, advance improvement, and move forward employment.

Director Doyle acknowledged all DBS districts for their employment outcomes.

- District 1, Pensacola – exceeded goal at 118.6 %.
- District 2, Tallahassee – exceeded goal at 116.28%.
- District 3, Jacksonville – 93% of overall goal.
- District 5, Daytona – exceeded goal at 104%.
- District 6, Orlando – met goal at 100%.
- District 7, Tampa – exceeding goal at 101%.
- District 9, Ft. Myers – exceeding goal at 110%.
- District 10, West Palm Beach - exceeding goal at 223%.
- District 11, Sunrise – exceeding goal at 114%.
- District 12, Miami – exceeding goal at 183%.

Overall DBS exceeded legislative prescribed (LRPP) goals by 122% this year.

The new name of the Rehab Center is the Career, Technology and Training Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired:

- The center has high bed utilization.
- CompTIA – program is underway, now in it's second cohort.
- Web Accessibility Apprenticeship – currently identified 3 clients to hire for the program.
- Discussions are underway about working with the Division of Career Adult Education to bring back the GED program.
- The center is planning a blind and vision impaired vision Impaired awareness day.

VisionServe Alliance

Lee Nasehi, President/CEO presented this report.

The Big Data Project (BDP):

Among people age 65+ years

- Stand-alone state reports estimating the prevalence of blindness and low vision at the state and county levels.
- Stand-alone state reports describing social, economic, health, and quality of life factors at state level among people who are blind and have low vision compared to older people without blindness and low vision.

Goals of Big Data Project

- Provide state-specific data on prevalence of blindness and low vision plus other circumstances among people aged 65+.
- Provide state-specific, county-level estimates of the prevalence of blindness and low vision.

Data to Support Advocacy, Fundraising, and Resource Allocation

- Successful advocacy and fundraising activities tell a compelling story.
- Data regarding people's circumstances is another part of the story.
- Data regarding the prevalence of blindness and low vision among older people is part of the story and resource allocation.
- Data that is rigorous, comprehensive, and gathered consistently across the nation provides credibility.

Working Age Adults

- Preparations in place to launch BDP Phase Two:

- Outcomes to develop better understanding of Prevalence of vision impairment among people aged 18-64, circumstances they experience, distribution across employment categories.
- Useful for improving opportunities to promote work, improving overall health and quality of life, and producing actionable data to promote increased employment.

Big Data Project Serves as a Foundation

- Informs strategic planning and resource allocation.
- Drives policy development.
- Engage stakeholders.
 - State and federal elected officials.
 - State and federal departments such as Aging, Public Health, Vocational Rehabilitation.
- Data to accompany anecdotal evidence.
 - Advocacy efforts for funding and policy changes.
 - Fund development efforts such as grant-writing, fund-raisers.

University of Central Florida Student Accessibility Services

Kevin Price, Assistant Director of Accessible Technology Student Accessibility Services presented this report.

Student Accessibility Services Mission (SAS)

- Purpose: We envision UCF to be a fully accessible campus and inclusive environment for people with disabilities.
- We do this by:
 - **A**cknowledging disability as an aspect of human diversity.
 - **C**ultivating awareness of the environment's barriers.
 - **C**ollaborating on and proactively facilitating accessible environments and experiences.
 - **E**ducating faculty and staff to create and maintain access in their spheres of influence.
 - **S**hifting to an inclusive-minded attitude.
 - **S**upplementing with reasonable accommodation as a last resort measure to ensure access.
- Statistics
 - Enrollment at UCF is around 68,000 students.

- 2945 Students connected to Student Accessibility Services and increasing steadily.
- 133 Blind/Low Vision Students connected to SAS.
- Universal Design and Accommodations
 - Digital Accessibility Policy Adopted June 2022
 - UDOIT and Center for Distributed Learning (CDL)
 - Accommodations through Student Accessibility Services- Interactive Approach
- Common Accommodations
 - Extra Time on Exams
 - Screen Magnification/Screen Reading for Exams
 - Course Materials Accessible for Screen Reading Technology Use
 - E-text Accommodation (Valid Receipt Necessary of Purchase)
 - Enlarged Print Handouts/Exams
 - Braille
 - Scantron Assistance
- Not provided through SAS
 - Housing Accommodations (housing does that)
 - Parking Accommodations
 - Mobility/Transportation on campus
 - Preferential Seating in classes
 - Tutoring (SARC)
 - Don't need to register trained Service Animal with our office.
 - Academic Counseling (Advisor)
 - Personal Counseling (CAPS)
 - Extra time on Course Assignments **without** Flareups due to a disability.

Technology

- Loaning Hardware
 - Talking Calculator
 - Digital Recorders
 - Handheld Magnifiers
 - Large Key Keyboards
- Desktop Video Magnifier/Low Lighting for Proctored SAS Exams
- Accessible Software (Standard Microsoft Office available for all UCF Students)-Supports from AT Services (atservices@ucf.edu)

- Fusion (JAWS/Zoomtext)
- Kurzweil 3000
- Otter AI

Employer Recognition

Ed James, District Administrator, District 6, recognized Lowes Hotel at Universal Orlando.

The district also recognized a self-employed client, Will Reese, a photographer who is legally blind.

District Administrator Report: District 6

Ed James, District Administrator, presented the report.

- District 6 currently has 20 full-time employees.
- The district currently employs four visually impaired staff members.
- District 6 has a mixture of new and seasoned staff members all with one thing in common- a passion for helping people who are blind or visually impaired. While there are still a few vacancies, the district has been able to fill the ADA, 3 counselors, EPS and IL/CP RT positions in the past six months.
- District 6 met its goal of 100 VR successful closures.
- Budget
 - Older Blind \$4000
 - Independent Living - \$13,400
 - VR - \$1,454,999

A full detailed report has been provided to the Council.

DBS Employment Report

Bridget Giles, Bureau Chief, presented this report for quarter 4.

Quarter 4 Performance Outcomes:

- Total number of clients served for Q4 3755.
- 642 closed cases of which 429 were successful.
- Rehabilitation rate for closed cases was 80%
- The average hourly wage is \$14.27.
- The highest wage is \$40.30.

- The lowest wage is \$11.00.

The top 5 reasons for unsuccessful closures are:

- Unable to locate (65 cases)
- Refused services or no further services (33 cases)
- Other reasons (26 cases)
- Failure to cooperate (28 cases)
- Does not require VR services (18 cases)

A full detailed report has been provided to the Council.

Lighthouse Central Florida, Inc

Kyle Johnson, President/CEO, presented the report.

- Eight instructional team members are legally blind, serving youth and adults.
- During the last fiscal year, which ended 9/30/2022, Lighthouse Central Florida helped over 800 people and their families to live beyond the restrictions of vision loss.

Over the past 12 months, Lighthouse Central Florida has continued to work with clients and families of all ages to meet their objectives.

- Our Youth Programs saw an increase in hours provided and an increase in engagement, with clients coming in eager to learn.
- Previous clients have found employment through multiple organizations, including at Lighthouse Works (a popular place to want to work).
- Key partnerships and collaborations include the Division of Blind Services, Advent Health University, Orange and Seminole County Public Schools, The Orlando Fire Department Bomb Squad, Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, Edible Education, and various local senior living communities.

A full detailed report has been provided to the Council.

Chantel Buck, President/CEO of New Vision for Independence, Inc was unable to join the meeting. The presentation was omitted but a full detailed report has been provided to the Council.

Policies/Procedures and Administrative Rules

Director Doyle discussed the administrative rule proposals in order to give the FRCB opportunity to provide input.

Brandis will send handbook and manual details to Council.

Raven Calloway requested that CRPs are included in reviewing and adding suggested comments of the handbooks/manuals.

Florida Agencies Serving the Blind

Amy Grissom, Chief Executive Officer, presented a post event summary report.

- Florida Agencies Serving the Blind's Going Beyond Vision Loss Summit and Camp for Transitional and VR Students
- The event took place June 11-15, 2023, in Orlando, Florida.
- Number of attendees
 - Summit: 122
 - Camp: 57
- Sponsoring Organizations: Gibney Foundation, Orcam, NON-24, Southeastern Plastic Surgery, Misty Kits LLC., Vispero, Patriot Vision Industries, and North Florida Abstract and Title.
- The combined outcome of these events was a great response from the students, agencies, and other participants.

A full detailed report has been provided to the Council.

RSA Monitoring Report

Doug Ingram, Jorge Hernandez and Paul Edwards presented to the council.

- Policy and procedure updates have been requested.
- Clarification in College Handbook if one desires a graduate degree.
- CRP service category came into question.
- The authority to spend all funds is needed.

Bruce Miles asked if the RSA monitoring visit included both DVR and DBS. Director Doyle informed the council that it was just DBS.

July 28, 2023

Agenda Items for October 25th – 27th 2023

- State Plan Discussion
- Client Satisfaction Survey
- Conklin Center Report
- Moore Communications Update
- Florida Instructional Materials Center
- DSO Report
- Gifts and Donations Update
- Hillsborough Transportation

July 2024 Meeting

July 2024 meeting will be in Orlando, FL.

The dates were set for July 24th – 26th, 2024.

The district that will be presenting for July 2024 will be selected in the May 2024 meeting.

Unfinished Business

Doug Ingram requested an FRCB Appointment Vacancy Expectation document be sent to the Council. Brandis will send the Vacancy Expectation list to the Council.

Terms Expiring August 31, 2023 – Doug Ingram, Bruce Miles, Paul Edwards, Denise Valkema.

The council inquired about Administrative Hearings. Director Doyle is in correspondence with the legal team and the DBS team to construct an appropriate document to share with the council.

New Business

Robert Kelly raised a discussion about VisionServe Alliance new Big Data Project regarding working age blind individuals. A brief discussion was had.

Paul Edwards made a motion to strongly urge DBS to support the Big Data Project by purchasing the Vocational Rehabilitation component of the Big Data Project Report. Robert Kelly seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Doug Ingram informed the council that the VA has changed how it processes and communicates with individuals that are low vision. The VA, along with the federal government, is starting to view veterans vision loss disability prior to reaching the milestone of being legally blind. A brief discussion was held.

Donte Mickens requested an update in 2024 on enrollment at the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. Misty Porter will invite Pauline Wagner, Executive Director of Parent Services and overseer of the income and eligibility team.

The council held a brief discussion about touring the Tampa Lighthouse. Brandis will set up a tour with the facility during the October 2023 quarterly meeting.

Chairman Hernandez inquired about council members attending the RSA Fall Conference. Director Doyle informed the council that up to two members may be permitted to attend. Nancy Bateh will notify Brandis to confirm that she can attend. Denise Valkema will also attend. There is no virtual option for this meeting.

Open Discussion

The council held a brief discussion about visiting the Daytona campuses and additional visits with the CRP's.

Committee Report

Paul Edwards provided a brief report for the CRP subcommittee.

The subcommittee discussed what they thought would be the best plan for moving forward in interaction with legislators in February. The subcommittee does not believe it to be appropriate to develop specific requests for this year's legislature due to timing. They, however, are willing to support any request DBS has already submitted. It is believed that a presence at the legislature level needs to be established. The subcommittee will continue to work and call on representatives from the National Federation of the Blind on to the committee to encourage a united approach to the legislature. Materials need to be developed

that will be presented jointly and will present a clear and unequivocal picture of what the consumers and service providers believe are appropriate steps forward for people who are blind. The subcommittee believes that the collaboration should continue after February 2024 and aims to develop some specific proposals that will be presented during the committee period of the legislature 2024.

Misty Porter inquired about other agencies the subcommittee is going to reach out to.

Paul Edwards informed the council that the subcommittee is looking to partner with the Florida chapter of the National Federation of the Blind, the Florida Council of the Blind and Blind Veterans, and Florida Agencies Serving the Blind. Other agencies will be invited to participate after logistics have been finalized.

An Employment subcommittee was formed.

Members: Jorge Hernandez (overseer), Misty Porter, Denise Valkema, and Doug Ingram.

Goals of the subcommittee:

- Distribute more information to the consumers.
- Making contacts.
- Opportunity for employment.
- Enter more competitive employment.
- Interact with individuals in a normal business day.
- Community Partnership (establish more connections)
- Highlight what is working well and what to educate future employers.

Director Doyle gave the council a brief update on the business Enterprise Program.

Sead Bekric inquired about positions for the Business Enterprise Program. Director Doyle informed the council discussions are underway about reclassification, salary increases and position vacancies.

The council held a brief discussion about new AV equipment for the quarterly meeting. Brandis will work on acquiring new updated equipment for the council.

Sunshine Law

Nicholas Cleary presented this presentation.

- Florida's open meetings law, which is commonly referred to as the Sunshine Law, protects the public from closed door decision making and provides a right to access to meetings of boards and commissions at both the state and local levels.
- Sunshine Law applies to all meetings of any board or Commission of any state agency or authority.
- Meetings of a public body must be open to the public.
- Minutes of the meeting must be recorded. Sunshine Law requires written minutes. Albeit a verbatim transcript is not required, just a summary of what occurred at the meeting.
- The public must be given reasonable notice that such meetings are going to occur.
- The public must be given a reasonable opportunity to be heard on the matters being considered at the meeting.
- The law applies to all discussions or deliberations, as well as the formal action that taken by a public body, more specifically, the law applies to any gathering, formal or casual of two or more members of the same public board to discuss some matter on which foreseeable action will be taken by the public body.
- A meeting under Florida's Sunshine Law includes things such as telephone conversations, virtual meetings over zoom or teams' conversations via text message, emails or other instant messaging services, members of a public body are not prohibited from meeting together socially, provided that matters which may come before the body are not discussed at such gatherings.
- meetings cannot be held in a facility that discriminates or unreasonably restricts access.
- It is permissible to use technology to accommodate overflow.
- Members of a public body cannot use a non-member as a conduit to communicate with another member.

- Discussions about Council business between two or more members, including telephone calls or email exchanges, are subject to the Sunshine Law.
- Public bodies that are subject to Florida's sunshine Law must provide reasonable notice of all meetings, such that the media and the public can attend the meeting.
- Members of the public must be given a reasonable opportunity to be heard on a proposition before a public body.
- The Florida Attorney general's website is myfloridalegal.com
- Council members cannot accept gifts or anything of value if that gift is based on an understanding of that your official action, like a vote or recommendation, will be influenced by such a gift.
- Council member may not cast a vote on any matter that would provide direct financial benefit to the member or otherwise give the appearance of a conflict of interest under state law, so the essence of Florida's ethics laws can sort of be distilled down to do not use your public position for private benefit or to engage in behavior that could be seen as a conflict of interest between your public duties as a Council member and your private interests.

Roxann Mayros inquired about noticing committee meetings separately when planned during FRCB quarterly meeting. Attorney Cleary informed the council that both meetings can be included on the same notice.

Sead Bekric inquired about members score cards being part of public record. Attorney Cleary informed the council that if the information is for personal use and not shared between members, it is not subject to public record.

Doug Ingram motioned to adjourn. Denise Valkema seconded. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned.

*Technical difficulties occurred during the duration of the meeting. Various portions of the recording are inaudible.