

**Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (FRCB)**  
**Quarterly Meeting Minutes**  
**Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired**  
**408 White Street**  
**Daytona Beach, FL 32114**

February 5, 2019

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Chair Robert Kelly called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and introductions.

Council Members Present:

Nicole Attong, Howard Bell, Paul Edwards, Robert Kelly, Paul Kurtz, Patricia Lipovsky, Bruce Miles, Mikey Wiseman, Denise Valkema, Dwight Sayer, Kim Carr, Tracie Inman, Jorge Hernandez, Robert Doyle

Council Members via Phone:

Louise Peyton

Council Members Absent:

Rose Conry, Leanne Grillot

Council Staff:

Selena Sickler

DBS Staff

Bridget Giles, Ana Saint-Fort, Marian Rezkallah, Sila Miller, Phyllis Heath, Tami Oates

**Adoption of Agenda**

Paul Edwards made a motion to accept the agenda. Denise Valkema seconded. The motion passed.

**Election of Officers**

Bruce Miles made a motion for Mikey Wiseman as chair. Paul Edwards seconded the motion. Mikey Wiseman was voted chair by acclamation.

Bruce Miles made a motion for Dwight Sayer as vice chair. Paul Edwards seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Patricia Lipovsky made a motion for Paul Edwards as second vice chair. Louise Peyton seconded the motion. Tracie Inman made a motion for Denise Valkema as second vice chair. Bruce Miles seconded the motion. Paul Edwards deferred to Denise Valkema. The motion to nominate Denise Valkema as second vice chair passed.

Robert Kelly turned the meeting over to Mikey Wiseman.

### **Committee Nominations**

Bruce read the responsibilities of the Planning, Evaluation, and Executive Committees and committee membership was established as below:

#### **Planning Committee**

Paul Edwards, Chair

Howard Bell

Kim Carr

Jorge Hernandez

Tracie Inman

Robert Kelly

Paul Kurtz

Denise Valkema

#### **Evaluation Committee**

Bruce Miles, Chair

Nicole Attong

Howard Bell

Tracie Inman

Robert Kelly

Patricia Lipovsky

Louise Peyton

Dwight Sayer

## **Director's Report**

Director Doyle congratulated Mikey Wiseman and welcomed new Council members. He stated the relationship between DBS and the FRCB as being collaborative and communicative.

Director Doyle stated that Governor Ron DeSantis had made a number of executive orders impacting education and workforce. These will have some impact of vocational rehabilitation, benefitting DBS programs and CRPs.

Director Doyle acknowledged Commissioner Richard Corcoran and Chief of Staff J Alex Kelly.

DBS Leadership had the opportunity to meet with new DOE Chief of Staff J Alex Kelly. This was an opportunity to share DBS accomplishments over the past 5 years. The accomplishments included the overall increase in outcomes, average business enterprise earnings, technology enhancements, and improvements at the Rehabilitation Center and Braille and Talking Books Library.

DBS was asked to make a presentation before the House Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee regarding DBS programs and services. The presentation went well.

The Governor's budget has been submitted. The budget includes a reduction of non-recurring funds, which includes \$500,000 from the Florida Agencies Service the Blind Children's program, and a \$200,000 reduction from non-recurring funds for a special project at the Lighthouse of the Visually Impaired and Blind in Pasco. The Budget also includes a \$500,000 increase to support a DBS proposal to expand accessibility to all partners.

DBS has hired Sila Miller to fill the position of Client Resolution Specialist. A new hiring package has been put together for a new Contract Supervisor. Robin Goldstone Garcia has relocated to Naples and wants to stay on board. DBS is working on a long term solution to keep her on board.

The DBS reorganization package has been approved. It provides for Client Services to report to the Director. Three supervisory positions have been repurposed from other positions: Program Administrator to oversee policy and quality control; a position to oversee the Babies, Children, Independent Living and Older Blind Programs; and a service support position to oversee the employment placement program process. These three positions will report to the Chief of Client Services.

DBS acquired new software which helped to recover 1.7 million dollars in social security reimbursements.

DBS is interested to increase the number of certified work incentive counselors throughout the state.

DBS is working to provide tenure pay for long term employees and reclassify the EPS position which would raise the reclassification level based on duties and responsibilities.

DBS is now serving clients out of the Panama City office.

DBS is continuing to communicate with George Washington University to perform a rate study.

A committee made up of people from DBS and CRPs has been formed to look at contracts for babies, children, seniors and independent living programs.

Director Doyle gave an overview of consumer earnings data over the past 5 years.

Director Doyle reported on a bill that was introduced to Congress which is focused on helping states transition from shelter workshops to competitive integrated pay.

DBS is waiting to see if RSA will open the regulations regarding Competitive Integrated Employment.

Director Doyle stated that the vision of DBS is to provide services and support to whomever needs it regardless of membership or non-membership of services providers to certain organizations.

The Council had a discussion regarding the 1.7 million dollars in social security reimbursements for 2018. The Council would like to offer suggestions on which areas to allocate some of those dollars. Mikey stated we would add the discussion as an agenda item for the May meeting.

### **VR Report**

Bridget Giles, Bureau Chief presented an overview of the VR Report SFY 2018-2019 2nd Quarter.

The division served 3323 consumers; the total number of closed cases is 365; the number of unsuccessful closures is 200; the number of unsuccessful closures after receiving services is 124; the number of successful closures is 165; the rehab rate through quarter 2 is 52%.

The top 5 reasons for unsuccessful closures were unable to locate or contact, refused services or no further services and failure to cooperate, does not require VR services and other reasons.

### **Morning Break was at 10:00 am**

#### **Employer Recognition**

Phyllis Heath, District Administrator for District 5, recognized Disability Solutions and Merry Maids.

#### **District 5 Report**

Phyllis Heath presented her report for District 5 with the district office located in Daytona Beach and a Satellite office in Cocoa. The district serves clients in Brevard, Flagler, Putnam and Volusia counties. Phyllis highlighted that the district has exceeded their goal for successful closures every year. With a goal of 71 successful closures for this year, the district has already reached 41.

### **Client Resolution Specialist Policy, DBS Appeal Process**

Robert Doyle introduced Sila Miller, the new Client Resolution Specialist. Director Doyle presented an overview of the client resolution process. He stated the first step would be to talk to the counselor along with the District Administrator to resolve at the local level. The client always has the option of reaching out to Disability Rights. Ninety eight percent of disputes are resolved before they are appealed.

Director Doyle stated there are four ways that an individual can ask for assistance: District Review; Administrator Review; Mediation; Formal Review.

The Council requested a report regarding the complaints/appeals coming into DBS. The report would identify key areas within the state and help the FRCB determine the location of their quarterly meetings. Director Doyle agreed.

The Council asked if there was a statutory requirement on advising the Council of Administrative Hearings. Director Doyle acknowledged there was. The topic will be added to the agenda at the next meeting.

The Council asked if DBS could provide a snapshot of key issues that have been identified. The Council stated the importance that all clients are made aware the DBS Appeal policy and the options they can pursue to get their complaint resolved. DBS assured the Council that the information is provided to the client during the intake process.

Director Doyle will send the Council a copy of his report regarding the DBS appeals process.

### **Client Assistance Program Report**

Howard Bell stated that the Client Assistance Program (CAP) is mandated by congress in any state that receives funds for its vocational rehabilitation program. The CAP is put in place to be a voice to advocate and inform consumers of vocational rehabilitation program policies and procedures and assist them in their client resolution efforts. CAP is a program connected to Disability Rights Florida. CAP works to bridge the communication gap between the consumer and the state agency. Howard stated that CAP strives to foster good relationships between DBS and clients. He expressed his hope that all DBS decisions were

communicated in writing and include the DBS policy that supports their decision. Howard stated he looks forward to working with Sila Miller.

## **Adjourn for Lunch**

### **Rehabilitation Center f/t Blind and Visually Impaired**

Ed Hudson, Bureau Chief presented a report to the Council. The report highlighted the programs offered at the Rehabilitation Center such as Independent Living Skills, Pre-Employment and Transition.

The Rehabilitation Center invites family members of individuals attending the center to come and participate in the student's training to gain a better understanding of the training that student will receive.

The social security program is a new program designed to help clients understand their benefits and how these benefits relate to employment. The clients are provided counseling with extensive follow up to ensure they are using the work incentives appropriately.

The Rehabilitation Center has increased safety/security on the campus by installing a video surveillance system. Fencing has been installed around the campus. The gates are not completed yet.

Over the past several years, the Rehabilitation Center staff has been working with the DBS IT team to create and implement a Rehabilitation Center Management (RCM) database geared towards the data tracking and reporting needs of the Center. After much work and testing the RCM is operational and being used to gather information.

### **Bureau of Braille & Talking Book Library**

Jim Woolyhand, Bureau Chief presented a report.

The Braille and Talking Book Library was established in 1950 as the state Regional Library for Braille and Talking Books. The Library has three departments that serves our patrons: the Reader Services Department, Circulation Department, and the Productions Department. Together we serve the 30,000 patrons in Florida who rely

on us to provide the ongoing services that continues to be an important part of their daily lives.

The projected initiatives and goals of our services at the Braille and Talking Book Library is often related to initiatives established by the National Library Services. NLS has addressed the following initiatives that will be researched with the goal of being implemented during the next 3 to 5 years: Braille e Readers; readership will expand due to outreach efforts and simplified eligibility requirements; regulations will be changed to ease access for people with dyslexia and other reading disabilities, as NLS develops the capacity to serve them; NLS plans to have available a new talking-book machine/playback system in five years. It will have wireless connectivity, a voice user interface, an “easy mode” for automatic download of books. The following are six NLS future projects for 2019, and beyond: Braille eReader; Modified smartphone; voice user interface, streaming service, synthetic speech, and self-service tools.

### **Friends of the Talking Library**

Paul Kurtz, President presented a report.

The Friends of the Library supports the Braille and Talking Books Library. Just recently, they purchased new headphones and microphones. Most of the money is raised through outreach. Paul announced the upcoming board meeting and provided the call in numbers for anyone wanting to participate. That number is 515-604-9973, access code: 248757. The yearly dues are \$10 per year. Council member, Patricia Lipovsky, is also a member and is the editor of the newsletter.

### **Adjourned at 2:00 p.m. for Tours of the Rehab Center and the Library.**

### **Wednesday, February 6**

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Chair Mikey Wiseman called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and introductions.

#### Council Members Present:

Nicole Attong, Howard Bell, Paul Edwards, Robert Kelly, Paul Kurtz, Patricia Lipovsky, Bruce Miles, Mikey Wiseman, Denise Valkema, Dwight Sayer, Kim Carr, Tracie Inman, Jorge Hernandez, Robert Doyle

Council Members via Phone:

Louise Peyton

Council Members Absent:

Rose Conry, Leanne Grillot

Council Staff:

Selena Sickler

DBS Staff

Bridget Giles, Ana Saint-Fort, Marian Rezkallah, Sila Miller, Phyllis Heath, Stacy Smith, Bridget Giles, Sila Miller, Jeff Whitehead, Tami Oates

Paul Edwards made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from Orlando 2018 and Miami 2018. Denise Valkema seconded the motion. The motion passed.

**Agenda Items**

- Sunshine Review -Patricia Lipovsky
- Gifts and Donations – Bruce Miles
- Social Security Reimbursement- Nicole Attong
- CWIC – Mikey
- Legislative Update from Director Doyle- Paul Edwards
- Rate Study- Kim Carr
- Vocational Evaluation Project - Paul Edwards
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment
- Update from Leanne Grillot

**FRCB Meeting Location February 2020**

Paul Edwards made motion for Tallahassee. Denise Valkema seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Bruce Miles made a motion as a second alternative for Pensacola. Dwight Sayer seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Bruce Miles made a motion for February 5, 6, 7, 2020. Denise seconded the motion. The motion passed.

## **Old Business**

Bruce Miles read the Bylaws change, Article IV Section 7(B). The changes included replacing the word “Council” with “Executive Committee” in the first sentence. A second sentence was added, “After the Executive Committee reports to the Council, a letter will be sent to the governor and to the member in question”. In the third sentence, replace the word “may” with the word “will”. Bruce made a motion to accept the changes. Dwight seconded. The motion passed.

Paul Edwards read the letter to the Council regarding Competitive Integrated Employment. Paul Kurtz made a motion to amend the letter per the discussion of the Council and send the amended letter for signature. Bruce Miles seconded the motion. The motion passed.

## **New Business**

Paul Edwards suggested that the new Council members introduce themselves. Mikey welcomed the new members. Kim Carr, Misty Porter, Dwight Sayer, Tracie Inman introduced themselves and gave a brief bio.

Director Doyle informed the Council that DBS would be looking into the outcome data of the districts to determine best practices and will share with the Council.

## **Open Discussion**

Dwight Sayer announced that his church is going to Jamaica on a mission trip if anyone is interested.

Paul Kurtz announced that if anyone was looking for religious material in braille to contact him.

Director Doyle suggested sharing the recent resolutions that were passed by the Florida Council of the Blind. Paul Edwards stated he would send them to Selena. Paul gave a brief overview of the three resolutions regarding access technology readiness: consider access technology as an area of special interest for the next needs assessment; consider setting up adult education classes regarding access technology; create collaboration between FASB and DBS to establish standards that would measure what people are learning in the area of access technology.

Nicole Attong suggested a presentation of the collaboration between VR and DBS at the meeting in Tallahassee. Mikey reiterated to look at a snapshot of dual cases. Mikey suggested inviting Cecil Bradley to present to the Council.

### **DBS State Plan**

Director Doyle presented a report. After WIOA was passed, Florida agencies elected to submit the Unified State Plan together with its core partners. The plan is submitted every 4 years and updated every 2 years. The new state plan is due in 2020. DBS will be required to submit a Certificate of Lobbying this year to RSA. DBS will be responsible for collecting but not submitting data relating to 101A of the Rehabilitation Act. Director Doyle stated he is working to get additional clarification from RSA and will follow up with the Council in between the next meeting, or at the next meeting. Director Doyle will send a copy of the state plan to the Council.

Mikey asked about the status of the Common Performance Measure. Director Doyle offered to provide data at the next meeting.

### **Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment**

Chaz Compton with San Diego State University presented an update. The report is being compiled and a rough draft should be available by the end of the month. The Evaluation Committee will review by phone.

Director Doyle provided a brief overview of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment for the new members of the Council. The Council had a discussion and agreed on the importance of understanding the data from the needs assessment but also the context of the data. Director Doyle stated that the data is utilized to establish the DBS state plan. Mikey stated he had confidence in San Diego State University. Paul stated the importance of recognizing that the data is a snapshot that the data was not data provides a snapshot of DBS and not a comparison.

### **Vocational Evaluation Update**

Paul Edwards presented an update. Paul stated that the FRCB became interested in how data was being collected and the instruments that DBS was using to access the job readiness of clients who are blind or visually impaired. The Blind Services Foundation funded the project and contracted with Dr. Karen Wolffe to develop a

new vocational evaluation tool. Currently, the tool is being field tested and we are waiting on the feedback which we expect to receive by the end of the year. The Council discussed Paul will provide an update at our next meeting.

### **Adjourn for Lunch**

#### **Conklin Center for the Blind**

Carolyn McGhan, Adult Programs Director, presented a report.

The mission of the Conklin Center is to help adults who are blind or low vision with additional disabilities be independent and contributing citizens. The Conklin Center serves adults who are blind or low vision with additional disabilities that are residents of the State of Florida. The services offered include orientation and mobility, job readiness, safety, medical care management, adult daily living, adult basic education. Upcoming Events include: Thursday, February 7 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm “Connect with Conklin”, Thursday, March 21 7pm “Shining the Light for 40 Years – Gala Concert”.

#### **Center for the Visually Impaired**

Chris Dixon, Program Manager presented a report. Chris provided an update on an initiative that developed training programs to place clients in hotels in the Volusia county area. Chis Dixon reported that CVI had launched a new Blind Babies Program and are currently serving 4 babies. The goal is to serve about 30 babies with in the next two years. Mr. Dixon reported on the development of Tech Time Remote, an after hour’s program in which clients can call in remotely and learn about the latest updates regarding assistive technology. CVI has served 89 clients in 2018.

The meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m. for tours of the Conklin Center and The Center for the Visually Impaired.