

**Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (FRCB)**  
**Quarterly Meeting Minutes**  
**May 5, 2022**  
**Daytona Beach, FL**

**Council Members Present**

- Bateh Nancy
- Bell Howard
- Doyle Robert
- Edwards Paul
- Hernandez Jorge
- Ingram Doug
- Lipovsky Patricia
- Mickens Donte
- Miles Bruce
- Outman Bessie
- Valkema Denise

**Council Members Absent**

- Coburn Jennifer
- Kelly Robert

**Council Staff**

- Brandis Hall
- Alexandra Diggs

**Adoption of Agenda**

Patricia Lipovsky made a motion to accept the agenda. Bruce Miles seconded the motion. The motion was passed.

**Approval of February 10-11, 2022, Meeting Minutes**

Paul Edwards made a motion to accept February 10-11, 2022, meeting minutes. Douglas Ingram seconded the motion. The motion was passed.

**Director's Report**

Director Doyle presented his report.

Appointments Update:

- The Division of Blind Services (DBS) did receive clarification from the Governor's office on individuals who are awaiting reappointment. The individual may continue to operate in full capacity until a new appointment is made or the person reappointed.
  - Governor's Office requested that more than one person to be sent for consideration for each seat.
  - Currently 12 seats are waiting to be appointed or reappointed.
  - The DBS team spent time researching current term, applicants, and potential prospects.
  - Documentation has been sent to the Governor's Office in support of new appointments and reappointments.
- Bruce Miles mentioned there is currently a clause in the FRCB By-Laws that states, "State and federal law establish the Council's lengths of terms".
- Howard Bell expressed concern about the member holding their seat until reappointment or new appointment being a Federal Law. However, Director Doyle thought it was more of an executive policy.
- Donte Mickens indicated that he needed more clarity on the topic, suggesting that an internal document be drafted by the appropriate committee summarizing what the understanding is, this will ensure current and future members are aware of the approach and policy.
- Attorney Nicole Saunders was asked to join the meeting to provide clarity on the matter. She joined later in the meeting.

#### Staff Updates:

- Senator Manny Diaz Jr. has been appointed to Commissioner of Education, effective June 1, 2022.
- Interim Commissioner Jacob Oliva recognized DBS's own Maureen Fink, as the Department of Education Employee of the month.

#### Policy and Budget:

- The incoming Commissioner's Office has asked DBS to provide policy initiatives that we would like to see in the next legislative session. Director Doyle requested that the Council provides input as well.
- Paul Edwards petitioned for DBS and DOE to recognize the difficulty of finding sufficient funding to appropriately serve the Older Blind community.
- Paul Edwards suggested that the Council put in a budgetary request to permanently allocate funds so that the Children's Program can be stable and effective.
- Paul also petitioned that DOE, and the State writes into policy the importance of appointments to entities such as the FRCB, these are important components that require attention from the Governor's Office and should be taken seriously.
- Jorge Hernandez expressed concern that the one million dollars allocated for the Children's Program is not enough to support the program.
- Amy Grissom, Executive Director of Florida Agency Serving the Blind (ASB), agreed that one million dollars is not a sufficient amount to provide services and equipment for the Children's Program.
- ASB is looking into incorporating mental health and family services for the Children's Program. Amy Grissom suggested that allocated funds for all basic services of the Children's Program should be 1.75 million – 2 million dollars.
- Mrs. Grissom clarified that since the budget cut from the Children's Program, no services have been stopped. However, the number of children that were able to be served were affected.

#### WIOA:

- DBS is obligated to use the same performance measure as the Department of Labor and other entities in the workforce system.
- DBS is now expected to establish 20% of clients involved in a credential program to attain a credential in the next program year.
- DBS negotiated with RSA to a level of 49.3% of clients will be still employed in the second quarter after the exit the program and then it's a similar measure for the fourth quarter.
- By law, DBS is required every three years to complete an assessment to identify the needs of the program. This explores and identifies underserved

populations and a variety of other issues. This is called the Triennial Needs Assessment and/or the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The CSNA includes interviews with staff, contractors, and employers

- San Diego State University will complete our CSNA again this year.
- DBS takes the information gathered from the assessment to update its state and strategic plans.

#### Contract Renewal:

- DBS is updating contracts for the Blind Babies Program, Children's Program, Adult Program, and Older Blind Program.
- DBS is adding a 3% administrative fee to the contract.
- The CRPs remain eligible to receive up to an additional 10% for exceeding other contract thresholds.
- Several administrative requirements were removed from the contract.
- DBS will now screen any non-vocational clients who are under age 67 to determine their interest in employment. The previous age for this screening was 62.

#### **DBS Employment Report**

Bridget Giles, Bureau Chief, presented this report.

- The total number of clients served for the third quarter was 3565 compared to last year when 3628 were served
- 449 closed cases of which 237 were successful
- 197 successfully closed cases last year
- 121 unsuccessful closures after receiving services this year
- Rehabilitation rate for closed cases was 66%
- Average hourly wage is \$16.63
- Highest wage is \$29.12
- The lowest wage is \$10.00

The top 5 reasons for unsuccessful closures are:

- Refused services or no further services (53 cases)
- Unable to locate (47 cases)

- Failure to cooperate (23 cases)
- Does not require VR services (13 cases)
- Other reasons (13 cases)

Improvements for Quarter 3:

- Signed and stamped application for services
- Maintenance forms completed, and justifications entered
- Releases of information forms signed and dated

A full detailed report has been provided to the Council.

### **DA Report: District 5**

Ted Pobst, District Administrator, presented the report.

District 5 has two locations, one in Daytona Beach and the other in Cocoa. The District is comprised of 4 counties, Putnam, Volusia, Flagler, and Brevard with approximately 140 miles on the coast.

District 5 currently has 5 open positions:

- Rehabilitation Technician
- Staff Assistant
- 2 Human Services Program Consultants
- Word Processor/ Receptionist

There is one individual working at District 5 who is visually impaired.

Open Cases:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Program: 332
- Independent Living Programs: 169
- Children's Program: 36
- Blind Babies Program: 12

The District's employment program includes special programs for the college students (16), for the Transition Students (20), and for Supported Employment (20).

Occupational Placements for the first two quarters of fiscal year 2021-2022:

- Clerical and Administrative Support: 6

- Computer and Mathematical Occupations: 1
- Education, Training, and Library Occupations: 1
- Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations: 0
- Healthcare Support Occupations: 1
- Managerial and Administrative: 2
- Prod, Const, Operating, Maint & Material Handling: 9
- Professional, Paraprofessional and Technical: 9
- Sales and Related Occupations: 6
- Service Occupations: 18

Activities for this Year:

Transition Students to participate in the Conklin Davis Center Saturday Programs every other week during the school year and during the summer months. Events have included informational interviews with employees from Disney World and Sea World, visits to Stetson University, tours of Florida School for the Deaf and Blind.

A full detailed report has been provided to the Council.

### **The Council heard from Nicole Saunders, Deputy General Counsel**

- Attorney Saunders informed the Council of Article 2, Section 5B of the Florida Constitution. This authority allows constitutional officers i.e., FRCB members, to serve in their position under the State Constitution and Florida Law until a successor qualifies for that position, or they are reappointed. That person receives all rights and responsibilities of memberships such as voting and attending meetings.
- Reference: Florida Supreme Court supported case - State vs. Bird Reporter 163 Southern \*page 248
- Patricia Lipovsky suggested that the Council includes such authority in the FRCB By-Laws.
- Director Doyle asked if this authority applies to members who have completed two 3-year consecutive terms.
- Attorney Saunders assured the Council that the State Constitution is a superior authority that supersedes over the competing Federal Guidance. Any member

who completes two 3-year consecutive terms will have the right and duty to actively serve in their seat until a successor qualifies for that position.

- A By-Law Subcommittee meeting will meet at a later date to update the FRCB By-Laws to match the guidance.

### **Employer Recognition**

Ted Pobst, District Administrator, District 5, recognized Metra Electronics. Metra Electronics leadership team accepted the award on their behalf.

- Metra has provided full-time employment in their packaging department. Presently, there are 4 individuals who are visually impaired employed full-time with benefits at Metra.

### **Conklin Davis Center for the Visually Impaired**

Ronee David, Executive Director, presented the report.

- After losing its state contract in 2020, later that year the Conklin Center was able to acquire a contract with The Division of Blind Services. In 2021, after working with Director Doyle, they were able to re-instate the contract for residential services. The Conklin Davis Center for the Visually Impaired is now operating the residential program which is at full capacity.

Senior Program:

- Has the most students of any of other service.
- 200+ clients in 4 counties; Volusia, Flagler, Putnam, and Brevard.
- Students learn daily living skills, Computer Technology, and Orientation and Mobility.
- Additional social activities: Luncheons are held every other month and we often have 75 or more in attendance.

Vocational:

- 140 clients served this past year, many receive training in computer technology, orientation and mobility, job readiness, and job placement.
- 31 clients have been placed in new jobs.

- A staff of 6 are assigned to the job placement and job coaching tasks with clients.

#### Residential Program:

- Has 16 dormitory rooms and 3 one-bedroom apartments.
- Students attend a 2-week evaluation and if appropriate, they take part in a more in depth 6 – 12-week evaluation.
- Once evaluations are completed, students enter training.
- Students generally move into the apartments once they effectively learn the skills to live independently.
- Students also learn budgeting and they are encouraged to save at least \$5,000 in their Able Account.
- Students also work in the Job Simulation Program. In this program, students learn employment skills by participating in an actual job.

A full detailed report has been provided to the Council.

#### **Client Satisfaction Survey (CSS)**

Dr. Minna Jia presented an overview of the SFY QTR 1 Report 2021-2022

- Impact of COVID-19 still exists
- Survey Population: July 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021 – 455 clients
- Successful Closure – 264 Clients (67 Post Closure)
- Unsuccessful Closure – 191 Clients
- Less clients came to DBS for employment reasons, but employment services experiences improved.
- 88% thought DBS provided the necessary skills to conduct job search (69%, 2020)
- 38% expressed DBS Assisted in Securing Employment (30%, 2020)
- High levels of satisfaction with DBS training: at least 91%
- Braille Training is at a 100% satisfaction rate (89%, 2020)
- Job Skills Services satisfaction level increased from 2020 (60% to 85%)
- Low vision training received a 95% satisfaction rate (94%, 2020)
- Counselor Responsiveness improved to 90% (85% 2020)
- Career counseling received a 91% satisfaction rate, decreased from 93% in the previous year
- 15% left because they obtained employment for 90 days (30%, 2020)

- 18% expressed confusion over their case closure status (27%, 2020)
- When clients were asked whether they are aware that their cases had been closed, 12% said no (11%, 2020). Cases reopened increased from 4% to 7%

Program improvements:

- Accessibility/Communication: 24% (26%, 2020)
- Employment: 7% (10%, 2020)
- Training: 6% (0%, 2020)

A full detailed report has been provided to the Council.

### **Braille and Talking Book Library Update**

- Bureau Chief position is currently vacant.
- DBS participated in the recent Friend of the Library luncheon.
- 63 volunteers help contribute to the success of the Library.
- A task force has been put in place to identify various strategies that can be implemented to help increase the number of patrons at the Library.
- Due to an ink shortage, there has been challenges running the newsletter. It may be a digital copy available in the future.
- Updated shelving is a top priority for the Library.

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**May 6, 2022**

\*Chair Jorge Hernandez called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance and introductions.

### **Council Members Present**

- Bateh Nancy
- Bell Howard
- Doyle Robert
- Edwards Paul
- Hernandez Jorge

- Ingram Doug
- Lipovsky Patricia
- Mickens Donte
- Miles Bruce
- Outman Bessie
- Valkema Denise

### **Council Members Absent**

- Coburn Jennifer
- Kelly Robert

### **Council Staff**

- Brandis Hall
- Alexandra Diggs

### **Approval of February 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Meeting Minutes**

Paul Edwards made a motion to accept February 10th and 11th, 2022, meeting minutes. Doug Ingram seconded the motion. The motion was passed.

### **Agenda Items for July 28th - 29th 2022**

- Orlando Public Transportation Update
- By-Law Amendment Discussion
- Sunshine Law Presentation
- Needs Assessment Update
- Library Update
- Hiring People with Disability Discussion
- Rate Study Update
- Gifts and Donations
- Legislative Update

Bruce Miles made a motion to have May 2023 meeting in Lakeland, FL. Doug Ingram second. The motion was passed.

The dates were set for May 3rd – 5th 2023.

### **Old Business:**

The Council held a brief discussion about the convenience of having the meetings in the hotels versus a secondary location. The Council may hold future meetings or Public Forums at local Lighthouses.

The Council expressed the importance of onsite visits for the future.

### **New Business:**

The Council held a discussion about allowing guest to share their personal experiences at the Public Forum.

Bruce Miles suggested having a formal Public Forum decorum script that can be read at the beginning of each Public Forum.

Paul Edwards or Robert Kelly will draft a letter for the council and present it at the next meeting.

The Council held a brief discussion about Appointments application accessibility.

### **By-Laws Discussion:**

Bruce Miles read the recommended changes of the By-Laws.

Section 7: B

“The Chairperson will notify the Governor in writing of any member failing to attend [in person] two (2) quarterly meetings per calendar year without an excuse acceptable to the Executive Committee. After the Executive Committee reports to the Council, a letter will be sent to the Governor and to the member in question. The notification will include the request to have the member removed from the Council.”

The suggestion was to remove “in person”

All recommendations have been provided to the Council.

Patricia Lipovsky made a motion to accept the suggested changes.

Paul Edwards second.

Motion was tabled. Council members decided to read all suggested changes to the By-Laws before accepting any changes.

Motion was withdrawn.

Bruce read all suggested changes to the FRCB By-Laws and confirmed that all council members were sent a copy prior to the meeting.

Brandis will revise the wording “telephone/virtually” to make it consistent with “virtual/telephonic” throughout the FRCB By-Laws.

Doug Ingram motioned to accept the By-Laws amendments.

Paul Edwards second the motion.

The motion passed.

Paul Edwards made a motion to adjourn, Bessie Outman seconded the motion.

The motion passed.