

Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind
Quarterly Meeting Minutes
Microsoft Teams
Telephone Conference Number: 1 (850) 583-5063
Conference Room Number: 323-637-401

May 27, 2021

Chair Paul Edwards called the meeting to order with the introductions of new council members.

Council Members Present

- Paul Edwards
- Robert Doyle
- Kim Carr
- Misty Porter
- Bessie Outman
- Howard Bell
- Jennifer Coburn
- Jorge Hernandez
- Robert Kelly
- Donte Mickens
- Bruce Miles
- Nancy batch
- Patricia Lipovsky
- Douglas Ingram

Council Staff

- Brandis Hall

Adoption of Agenda

Due to technicalities proper adoption did not occur, consensus was made by moving forward with the agenda.

Approval of February Meeting Minutes

Misty Porter made a **motion** to accept the West Palm Beach meeting minutes. Kim Carr **seconded** the motion. The motion was passed.

Director's Report

Director Doyle presented his report.

- Welcome new council members.
- Florida Division of Blind Services is the largest blind Service Agency in the nation.
- DBS is also a national leader in their Business Enterprise Program
- The primary focus of this council is on the employment programs, but the division of Blind services serves individuals from birth to the end of the life spectrum.

Rate / Sustainability Study

- San Diego State University is helping us in this area.
- The rate study envisions all programs and consist of data, cost, contracts, and various other analyzations. Evaluations, comparisons, recommendations and strategies will be given to implement change are underway.

Staff Updates:

- Thi Le has been added to DBS senior leadership team as the new IT Manager.
- Mitchell Clark has returned from retirement to resume his role with DBS as Bureau Chief of Operations and Compliance.
- Alex Kelly, DOE Chief of Staff has been promoted to be Deputy Chief of Staff in the Governor's Office.
- Bethany Swanson, now the Interim Chief of Staff and Senior Chancellor Eric Hall continue to provide leadership under the direction of Commissioner Richard Corcoran

Critical Hires:

- Although a number of positions are pending approval, a good group of positions have been approved for hire.

Budget Update:

- 6% hold back of funds from last year has been released.
- 289.75 positions will be maintained (no positions lost)
- State Agencies will begin to increase salaries so that a minimum salary would at least be \$13.00 per hour for staff.

- Children’s Program Services has been given a budget of \$900,000.00. This represents an additional \$400,000 from last year.
- Funds budgeted for Lighthouse of Collier \$90,000.00
- Funds budgeted for the Miami Lighthouse \$150,000.00
- Funds budgeted for the Lighthouse of Pasco \$50,000.00
- The Older Blind Program was funded \$300,000 less than the prior year.

Director Doyle discussed key legislation that passed this year such as House Bill 173 which lowers the age to start looking at individualized education plans for students.

He also discussed House Bill 1507 which creates a no wrong door entry strategy for Florida’s workforce system.

DBS Employment Report

Bridget Giles presented an overview of the Employment Report. While the fiscal year has not closed, the following trends were noted:

- Tallahassee, West Palm Beach, and Miami have reached and exceeded the annual goal.
- Counselors that exceeded their personal goal: Kia Williams D10 (closed 31 cases), George Rosario D12 (closed 30 cases), and Delcie Pasco D12 (closed 29 cases).
- The total number of clients served for the third quarter was 3628 compared to last year when 3636 were served
- Total number of closed cases 406 of which 196 were successful
- Last year successful closed cases was 502
- The number of unsuccessful closures after receiving services is 117
- Last year unsuccessful closures after receiving services was 135
- Rehabilitation rate for closed cases was 63%
- Average hourly wage is \$30.53
- Highest wage is \$201.92
- The lowest wage is \$8.50

The top 5 reasons for unsuccessful closures are:

- Unable to locate (54 cases)

- Refused services or no further services (44 cases)
- Failure to cooperate (30 cases)
- Does not require VR services (22 cases)
- Other Reasons (18 cases)

DA Report: District 10

Cesar Vigo, District Administrator, presented the report.

- District 10 serves five counties: Indian River, Martin, St. Lucy, Okeechobee, and Palm Beach and covers a total population of 2,187,990 residents
- District-10 covers 50 High schools, 1 State University (Florida Atlantic University), and 2 State Colleges (Indian River State College and Palm Beach State College).
- Palm Beach County's unemployment rate in January 2021 was 4.8% and in February 2021 4.5 %, Indian River 4.7% to 4.4 %, Okeechobee 3.8 % to 3.3 %, Martin County 3.6% to 3.4 %. St. Lucie from 5.1% to 4.8 % . .

Staff Members:

The District 10 staff currently has ten employees and one vacant position:

- 1 District administrator
- 1 Assistant District Administrator
- 2 Human Services Program Consultant I / VR counselors
- 1 IL/CP counselor
- 1 Rehabilitation Technician
- 1 Rehab technician/ Office Assistant (a merge position)
- 1 Employment Placement Specialist
- 1 Reader-Driver
- 1 Senior Processor (Vacant)

Performance Goals:

- District-10 team has consecutively reached its vocational rehabilitation placement goal for ten years.
- Despite the recent pandemic (COVID-19), DBS district-10 expects to exceed its placement goals this year. The vocational rehabilitation goal for District-10 is to close 43 cases as employed successfully during this Fiscal year 2020-2021.
- District-10 has placed 63 participants in employment this fiscal year

- D10 already successfully closed 20 cases, and are working to close the rest of the 43 cases on employed status. D10 current Rehab rate is 68.97%.

Current open cases (YTD):

- Blind Babies (BB): 65
- Children’s Program (CP): 18
- Independent Living Programs (IL): 169
- Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR): 123
 - College cases: 28
 - Pre-ETS (Transition): 32
 - PE (Potentially Eligible): 4

Expenditures (YTD)

- BB - Physical and mental restoration: \$400.00
 - CP - Physical and mental restoration: \$515.95
 - OB - Physical and mental restoration: \$2,535.72
 - OB - Training: \$694.90
 - OB - Transportation: \$525.00
 - PE - Pre-ETS orientation and mobility training: \$2,748.00
 - VR - Physical and mental restoration: \$130,413.11
 - VR - Rehabilitation technology services: \$73,418.70
 - VR - Training: \$67,254.00
 - VR - Maintenance: \$30,504.00
 - VR - All others, including family services & small: \$11,190.81
 - VR - Transportation: \$5,040.00
 - VR - Eligibility needs assessment: \$3,000.00
- Total: **\$328,240.19**

Employer Recognition

Cesar Vigo, District Administrator – District 10 West Palm Beach, recognized The City of Boynton Beach. Debbie Majors, Grants & ADA Coordinator, accepted the award on their behalf. He also recognized Palm Tran, West Palm County's public transportation system. Mr. Clinton Forbes, Executive Director, accepted the award on their behalf.

Florida School for the Deaf and Blind (FSDB)

Carol Fratti, Outreach Coordinator presented this report –

- FSBD serves blind babies in Palm Beach, Martin, Indian River, St. Lucie and Okeechobee counties.
- FSBD is currently serving 42 kids
- Staff includes 7 Parent Advisors (serve families directly)
- 2 Regional Coordinators and 1 Outreach Coordinator
- Referrals come from Early Steps, Ophthalmologists including Bascom Palmer, Eye Institute Therapists, and others in the community to whom FSBD comes in contact with on a regular basis.

Client Satisfaction Survey (CSS) Quarter 1 - 3 Report SFY 2020-2021

Dr. Minna Jia presented an overview of the SFY QTR 1-3 Report 2020-2021.

- The Florida State University Survey Foundry (FSUSF), Institute of Science and Public Affairs conducted a telephone survey of former DBS clients on a monthly basis
- Employment-bound clients with cases “closed” between July 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021 comprises the population surveyed for this third quarter report.
- DBS provided the names, addresses, phone numbers and demographic information for 611 former clients
 - Successful Closures – 357 Clients (68 Post Closure)
 - Unsuccessful Closures –254 Clients
- 70% of the 109 responding clients indicated that they “Strongly Agree or Agreed” that DBS services provided skills necessary to conduct a job search independently and 71% agreed that DBS services prepared them for employment.
- Case closure awareness for 2020-2021 QTR 3 is 84%.
- 90% or more clients had high levels of satisfaction with DBS.
- 96% of responding clients felt welcome when they first contacted DBS. This satisfaction level was 92% in 2019.
- The combined efforts of repeated attempts, callbacks, and obtaining new numbers resulted in completed interviews for 35% (n=211) of former clients (n=611) who left the program between July 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021.

- All 211 of the responding clients surveyed received services from DBS according to the record provided by DBS, while 180 clients received services from both DBS and local providers.
- 9% of clients left DBS due to Covid 19
- 95% of clients would recommend the services from their local providers, with 93% being satisfied or very satisfied
- Who assisted the clients in finding employment? 35% stated DBS Counselors, 3% stated DBS job placement specialist, the local provider assisted 1% of clients, and an outside contractor assisted 5%.
- During the first three quarters of 2020-2021, 41% of the responding clients reported they were employed during the time of the Customer Satisfaction Survey.

**Coalition for Independent Living Options, Inc.
 Laura Cusack, Senior Victim Advocate, presented.**

The Coalition for Independent Living Options, Inc. (CILO) is a private non-profit, client-directed civil rights organization for children and adults with all types of disabilities. Incorporated in 1990, CILO primarily serves Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie and Okeechobee counties.

CILO works off of the Americans with Disabilities Act. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, a disability is defined as:

- A Person with a Physical or Mental Impairment that Restricts One or More Areas of Major Life Activities
- A Person with a History or Record of Such Impairment
- A Person Whom Others Perceive as Having Such Impairment

Types of Disabilities

- Physical (ex: paralysis, broken arm)
- Mental/Emotional (ex: PTSD)
- Sensory (ex: blind, deaf, and/or hard of hearing)
- Developmental/Intellectual (ex: Autism Spectrum Disorder)
- Cognitive (ex: ADHD, learning disabilities)
- Medical/Hidden (ex: diabetes, cancer)

CILO is

- Consumer-Driven
- Consumer-Controlled
- Consumer-Oriented

It is required that CILO staff is 51% of staff have some type of disability.

Five Core Services:

- Advocacy
- Independent Living Skills
- Peer Counseling/Support Groups
- Information and Referral Services
- Transition Services

Auxiliary Programming:

- ALERT Youth Program (ages 14-26)
- Social Service Assistance Program
- Voter's Access Program
- Social Security Disability/SSI Benefit Services
- Educational Advocacy and Transition Services
- Training and Technical Assistance Program
- Architectural Survey and Accessibility Studies
- Crime Victim Services
- Equipment Lending and Recycling Program (Treasure Coast Only)

Individuals seeking services from CILO or wanting to refer a consumer can call or email:

referrals@cilo.org

(561) 966-4288

Toll-Free: 1-877-581-6887

www.cilo.org

lcusack@cilo.org

Lighthouse for the Blind Palm Beaches

Mary Allen, Interim Executive Director, presented a report.

MISSION:

To assist persons with visual impairments to develop their capabilities to the fullest and to utilize them in the pursuits of life which are the right and privilege of all.

Service Area

- 5 counties (Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River and Okeechobee)

Services Offered:

- Current contracts with DBS: ILOB, ILAP, VR, TS, BB
- Children's Services-sub contractor for FASB
- Activities of Daily Living
- Orientation & Mobility
- Assistive Technology
- Adjustment to Blindness Counseling
- Low Vision Clinic and services
- Blind Babies Program
- Children's Program -summer camp and year round activities
- Transition Program
- Used Equipment Grant Program
- Clubs; Boot-up, Book Club
- Social/Rec-Focus Group
- Aids & Appliances Store
- I&R
- Community Education/Outreach

21 staff (some staff are dually certified. 3 staff are blind or visually impaired)

- 2 CVRTs
- 2 Vision Rehabilitation Therapists
- 2 COMS
- 4 O&M
- 4 Assistive Technology staff
- 1 Intake Specialist Community Educator

- 1 Adjustment to Blindness Counselor
- 7 Youth's Services staff (TVI & COMS)
- 1 Administrative Assistant
- 1 Marketing and development
- 1 Accountant
- 1 Director

Statistics: Period = 7/1/20 – 3/31/21 or 10/1/20 – 3/31/21 (*) Contract Deliverable Requirement (CDR) Actual Deliverables to Date (ADA)

- ILOB – CDR 79, ADA 130
- ILAP – CDR 14, ADA 23
- VR* – CDR 63, ADA 51
- TS* – CDR 20, ADA 14
- BB – CDR 20, Ada 19

Exciting Things Happening

The year 2021 marks 75 years of Lighthouse for the Blind of the Palm Beaches providing services to the community.

- Lighthouse moved to a new facility in January 2021. On Thursday, April 15, 2021, Board Members, Palm Beach County Commissioner Mack Bernard, donors, clients, DBS and staff gathered for a ribbon cutting ceremony along with the Chamber of Commerce of the Palm Beaches to officially open the doors of the new facility. In addition to the ribbon cutting ceremony, guests were treated with a socially distant tour of the new facility which included the unveiling of our new 75th Anniversary Donor Wall, staff demonstrations of various teaching techniques and lunch.
- Rebranded with a new logo and shortened our website and email address for staff.
- Resumed most of the youth services in-person including group activities for the Children and Transition clients. Adults are still learning ADL and AT skills remotely, but have started to offer individual and small groups at the center. LBPB has not resumed social activities for the adults in person.

- Planning for our Children’s and Transition summer programs are underway. Parents are open to group instruction/activities, community integration/exploration and travel.
- In honor of our 75th anniversary, LBPB is hosting a 75th Anniversary Gala on December 2, 2021.
- The EnVision 20/20 Luncheon, originally scheduled for 2020, is rescheduled again, for March 2022.

LBPB regularly applies for grants for funds to purchase new or updated adaptive devices and/or for supplemental program support.

Lighthouse for the Blind of the Palm Beaches
5601 Corporate Way, #210 West Palm Beach, FL 33407
561-586-5600
info@lhp.org
lhp.org

Foundation Fighting Blindness

Michelle Glaze, Associate Director of Professional Outreach, presented this report.

FFB was established in 1971 by a group of individuals who were either impacted by an inherited retinal disease or they had a loved one that was affected by it.

The mission of the organization is to drive research to find treatments and cures for the entire spectrum of Reynolds generative diseases.

This includes:

- Retinitis Pigmentosa
- Stargardt disease
- Usher syndrome
- Leber congenital amaurosis
- Age Related AMD

Largest private funder of retinal degenerative disease research in the world – raised \$816 million.

Research funded: lab, translational, clinical trials, career development awards, natural history, registry, genetic testing.

Resources:

- Website: www.fightingblindness.org
- Patient Support: 1-888-394-3937 or Email: info@fightingblindness.org
- Chapters: 40+ volunteer-led chapters across the U.S.
- Research Updates: Chapter Webinars, Clinical Trials May
- Events: VisionWalk, Hope from Home, Dining in the Dark
- Continuing Education Courses: April 5th
- My Retina Tracker Genetic Testing Program

Why Genetic testing?

- Can confirm or change clinical diagnosis.
 - InformedDNA study showed that clinical diagnoses for IRD patients changed in 13% of cases after genetic testing.
- Provides more accurate prognosis.
- Confirms inheritance pattern, risk for other family members.
- Potential qualification for clinical trials or gene therapy.

Clinical Trials:

- 40+ Clinical Trials Underway
- Foundation-funded research attracting commercial investments
- Foundation's portfolio: 90 projects (global)

Best-in-Class Partnership for No-Cost Genetic Testing and Counseling:

- Blueprint Genetics
- Informed DNA, Genetics Decoded
- FFB My Retina Tracker Registry

Helping constituents and families manage IRDs.

Drive clinical research for patients with inherited retinal diseases.

Getting patients on path to clinical trials and treatments.

Gene Replacement Therapies in Development:

- AGTC: XLRP (RPGR), achromatopsia (CNGA3, CNGB3)
- MeiraGTx/Janssen: XLRP (RPGR), achromatopsia (CNGA3, CNGB3)
- Biogen: Choroideremia (CHM), XLRP (RPGR), RP (PRPF31)

- 4DMT: Choroideremia (CHM), XLRP (RPGR)
- Horama: RP (PDE6B, CRB1)
- Novartis: RP (RLBP1)
- Iveric bio: RP (RHO), LCA (CEP290), Best disease (BEST1), USH2A
- Atsena: LCA (GUCY2D, MYO7A-USH1B)
- Odyli-MEE: LCA (RPGRIP1)
- Numerous other genes targeted: ABCA4

Luxturna: Spark's RPE65 (LCA & RP) Gene Therapy

The first and only FDA approved gene therapy for the eye or for any inherited disease. This is a gene replacement therapy that was approved in December of 2018 and it has been spun out by a company called Spark Therapeutics. This is for mutations in RPE 65, so a specific gene mutation and RP 65 mutations can cause LCA as well as Retinitis Pigmentosa.

Eight clinical trial were done at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the foundation fighting blindness drove about \$10 million towards funding for this project. The children and these trials reported remarkable results with this gene therapy.

SparingVision's Neuroprotective Gene Therapy

- Rod-derived cone viability factor (RdCVF) preserves cones
- SparingVision (France) developing a gene therapy that expresses RdCVF
- For RP, Usher syndrome, related conditions – gene independent
- Phase 1/2 clinical trial planned for late 2021

SparingVision has developed Rod-derived cone viability factor to the retina in the hopes to preserve cones and thus preserve vision.

Bionic Sight Phase 1/2 Clinical Trial

- Optogenetics – harnesses ganglion cells after all/most photoreceptors lost.
- For advanced vision loss, works independent of mutated gene.
- First to report vision improvements: light, shapes, motion
- Report was for 4 people receiving low dose
- Other optogenetic trials: GenSight, Allergan

This trial has had positive implications for individuals with advanced diseases and may even have some implications for individuals down the road to help preserve

vision earlier on in the deterioration process, so some good reasons for optimism and a lot to be hopeful for.

FightingBlindness.org
mglaze@fightingblindness.org
info@fightingblindness.org

Florida Outreach Center for the Blind, Inc.
Carolyn Lapp, Executive Director presented this report.

Mission

“The mission of the Florida Outreach Center for the Blind, Inc. is to develop and administer programs that will integrate blind and visually-impaired persons into the social, economic, and spiritual lives of their community.”

- The Florida Outreach Center for the Blind, Inc. (FOCB) is a community based 501(c)(3) organization that has provided rehabilitation training and support to the blind and visually impaired in Palm Beach County since 2003.
- COVID-19 pandemic did not stop FOCB from providing services to those with vision loss in Palm Beach County.
- Daily operations and instruction continued uninterrupted. Training, workshops and social opportunities for our students, staff and volunteers were provided through the telephone and the Zoom conferencing platform.
- A weekly social, and e-mail list serve were created to keep our staff, students and volunteers informed.
- When the Center was closed, FOCB took the opportunity to remodel the facility, they now have a modern and brighter environment for blind people to learn life skills.
- The Center re-opened its doors for in-person training on October 5, 2020.

FOCB Staff

- Five Staff Members (All five are blind)
- Three Independent Contractors (1 is blind)
- Over 44 volunteers

At least fifty percent of our volunteer board of directors are required to be blind or have a family member who is blind.

Service Area and Need

- 33,000+ individuals with severe visual impairment live in Palm Beach County
- 25% of those over the age of 18 are living below the poverty level

Services Provided

Client Training in the following areas:

- Braille
- Independent Living Skills
- Computers, iPhones, Tablets, Note Takers, & Assistive Technology
- Orientation and Mobility

Classes are provided to individuals of all ages at no cost to them.

- English
- Spanish
- French
- Creole

Adapted for Vision and Hearing Impaired Individuals

Client Programs and Support Groups

- Book Club
- Craft Classes
- Hearing and Vision Impaired Support Group
- Kids' Club
- Senior Outreach Program
- Zoom workshops and weekly socials

Advocacy

- NFB Convention
- Local Transportation Meetings
- Transportation Disadvantage Day in Tallahassee
- White Cane Awareness Day Event

Statistics

- Older Blind open cases in Aware: 40
- Vocational Rehabilitation: 5

- Clients served that are not in aware: 28

Total: 72 clients Overall Served Annually: 231 Contract through DBS: 28

Agenda Items

- October Meeting
- Recognition of Employment Outcomes
- Beacon Council Update
- Library Patron Trends Update
- Rate Study update
- Financial Consequences Comparisons
- Sunshine Law Presentation
- Gift and Donation Update

The Council discussed meeting in person for future meetings.

Bruce Miles motioned that the Council resumes in person meetings for the October St. Petersburg meeting. Bessie Outman second motion. The motion was passed.

October's quarterly meeting will be held in person and virtually (Hybrid). Any council member that plans to participate virtually must inform Brandis Hall by September 1, 2021.

The Council would like to hear an update from Jennifer Coburn during the October meeting.

Bruce Miles made a motion to have May 2022 meeting in Daytona Beach. Patricia Lipovsky second. The motion was passed.

The council held a brief discussion about future meeting dates and travel.

Bruce Miles made a motion to adjourn. Jennifer Coburn seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.