

Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (FRCB) Quarterly Meeting Minutes

Holiday Inn

2003 Apalachee Parkway
Tallahassee, FL

February 6, 2020

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

Council Members Present:

Mikey Wiseman, Robert Doyle, Paul Edwards, Kim Carr, Denise Valkema, Misty Porter

Former Members who are waiting on reappointments:

Paul Kurtz, Jorge Hernandez, Tracie Inman, Howard Bell

Former Members on the Phone:

Patricia Lipovsky

Council Members Absent:

Dwight Sayer

Former Members in Attendance:

Robert Kelly

Council Staff

Selena Sickler

DBS Staff

Bridget Giles, Wayne Jennings, Ana Saint-Fort, Marian Rezkallah, Brandis Hall, Regina Harris, Charlie Hittinger,

Attendees in the Audience: Jenny Bopp representing Florida Independent Living Council.

Mikey announced that Tallahassee was under a significant weather advisory and there may be a need to amend the agenda.

Adoption of Agenda

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

Membership on the FRCB

Director Doyle stated that he has had discussions with the General Counsel's Office and RSA. He stated, based on reading the code of federal regulations and state law, that once a member's term has expired, his term is over. Director Doyle stated that members who are officially appointed to the Council are Mikey Wiseman, Denise Valkema, Dwight Sayer, Kim Carr, Misty Porter and Paul Edwards. He stated that Howard Bell's position is a perpetual position and encouraged him to reapply.

Paul Edwards made a **motion** that the FRCB send a letter to the Governor asking him to work on appointments so that the meaningful operation of the Council can be reinstated. Denise seconded the motion. Mikey, Paul, Denise, Misty and Kim had a discussion. Director Doyle had no comment. Mikey asked Paul to write the letter with copies to RSA and the Governor. The Council voted and the **motion** passed.

Mikey recognized Jenny Bopp who stated that FILC is in a situation similar to the FRCB regarding appointments.

Director's Report

Robert Doyle presented the Director's Report.

Staff Updates

- Director Doyle recognized his new assistant, Regina Harris.
- Debra Cardy has been hired as the District Administrator in District 1.
- Jeanne Fiore has been promoted to Assistant DA in District 3.
- Lisa Wise is the new Assistant DA in District 5.
- Mary Cross is the new Assistant DA in Gainesville.
- DBS is still working on filling the vacancies in Fort Myers.
- Pamela Vinson is officially the new Assistant DA in Miami, District 12.
- DBS is still working to fill the position of Program Consultant.
- Lisa Marie has taken a position with the DBS IT Team.
- Bryan Hudnall has been promoted to a position of Staff Director in the DOE IT Department. DBS is currently looking at other candidates.

IT Consolidation is moving forward. The DBS contract with Case Management System, Alliance is set to expire June 30. DBS plans to extend the contract.

DBS has been able to execute the contract with Vispero which will expand access to JAWS, Zoom Text and Open Book to any DBS client. Florida is the first state in the nation to have this type of agreement. CRP's and Core Workforce Partners will have access to the software.

The Council had a discussion regarding consolidation. Director Doyle stated that his current belief right now is that the only area of consolidation is IT. He said that if anything bigger were to happen, it would involve legislative approval.

Budget

Director Doyle stated that the House and Senate budget have been presented and there will be negotiations. Overall initiatives that are still in the budget include; a van lift at the Rehab Center; additional dollars for blind babies; additional dollars to implement an IT program at the Rehab Center. One of the cuts is a less than full restoration of dollars for the Children's Program. Overall, the budget for DBS is estimated to be less than 1% less than it was last year.

Strategic Plan

Director Doyle informed the Council that DBS is working on the Strategic Plan. He stated that the four goals are staying the same but the strategies are being adjusted. The Strategic Plan is on the DBS Website for public comment. The Division is looking at what areas that can move DBS beyond where we are now in order to increase the number of clients served. DBS continues to look at strategies to help eliminate losing clients as well as outreach.

DBS has had dialogue within the Division and is evaluating broadly what to do with the positions at the Rehab Center. There have been suggestions to use the same classification for similar positions that are in the district offices such as counselors and employment placement. DBS has also been evaluating the credentials of the staff at the Rehab Center. Ed Hudson is looking at the credential requirements to determine if the requirements can be strengthened while exploring the impact on the

budget. The goal is to continue evaluating with the goal of putting together a proposal to present to the Department in the third quarter.

Contract Monitoring

DBS is continuing the monitoring process such as looking at contract compliance and observing instruction. Amy Grissom, who is a Florida Certified Contract Manager, is leading the monitoring team. The monitoring process includes Amy and a couple of DBS Contract Managers meeting with local District Administrators.

Mikey expressed an interest in hearing from Amy and asked if the Council was interested as well. The Council expressed learning:

- What is the full scope of the process?
- How they are received by the Districts?
- A contract can be interpreted in different ways depending on who is reading it. So, are the CRP's being monitored according to topic or according to their interpretation of the contract?
- What is the approach?
What are the findings? What is the report showing?

Director Doyle stated that at the last call with the Florida Agencies Serving the Blind, they requested to look at the credential requirements for staffing. FASB suggested changing the staff credentials. DBS will have a follow-up phone call with FASB. Director Doyle recognized the shortage of credentialed individuals and stated the Division's desire to ensure that services are being delivered by qualified individuals. Director Doyle stated he wanted to bring the discussion before the Council and offered to send the requirements to the Council for their review and input. Director Doyle stated that FASB specifically stated they wanted to look at the requirements at the Rehab Center.

Mikey suggested to create a subcommittee to provide input to DBS. Mikey asked if Kim Carr would chair the committee. She agreed. Paul Edwards and Denise Valkema also volunteered to be on the committee.

Robert Kelly asked if there was a standard written report regarding the monitoring that was presented to the agencies. Director Doyle stated that Amy has a standard protocol which she will share with the Council at the next meeting. He stated that thus far, the reports have not been

completed, but upon completion of the first report, a copy would be sent to the Council.

The Council discussed the DBS Endorsement for access technology. Director Doyle stated that the Division plans to maintain the endorsement and also allow the CATIS Certification in lieu of the DBS endorsement.

VR Report

Bridget Giles presented an overview of the VR Report, SFY 2nd Qtr. 2019-2020.

The total number of closed cases is 359; the number of unsuccessful closures after receiving services is 103; the number of successful closures is 165; rehabilitation rate for closed cases was 62%; average hourly wage is \$17.45; highest wage is \$17.28; the lowest wage is \$8.46.

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The top 3 reasons for unsuccessful closures are:

- Unable to locate (52 cases)
- Refused Services or No Further Services (46 cases)
- Failure to cooperate (23 cases)

Howard Bell suggested that CAP be included on conference calls between the state office and the districts when discussing procedures. Bridget stated that she would be sure to include Howard on the meeting invites.

Wayne Jennings recognized Director Doyle for his outstanding leadership since coming to the Division of Blind Services. He thanked him for his support and for the opportunity that he has provided to District 2. Wayne presented Director Doyle with a plaque for employing over 40 visually impaired citizens since arriving at The Division of Blind Services.

Morning Break

Mikey called the meeting to order with introductions.

Apprenticeships

Ted Norman, State Director of Apprenticeship, gave a power point presentation on Apprenticeships. He presented an overview that included: National Structure of Apprenticeship; Purpose of Apprenticeship/Components; Common Terminology; Myth Busting;

Registered Apprenticeship Sponsorship; Apprenticeship Models; Structure of Registered Apprenticeships in Florida. For more information, you can go to the DOE website -www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/appreticeship-programs/

Mikey announced that due to the severe weather bulletins and school closures, a decision to cancel the public forum needed to be addressed. Paul Edwards **moved** that the FRCB Public Forum be cancelled. Misty seconded. The motion passed.

Paul Edwards read the letter to the Governor regarding expiring terms, Appointments/Reappointments on the FRCB. Mikey made a **motion** to accept the letter as written with the exception of the edit to include the information that two of the six members terms are set to expire this year. Denise Valkema made a motion. Misty seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Bridget Giles gave an update on the DBS State Plan. Bridget will provide a copy of the entire report to the FRCB when available.

Director Doyle announced that he had sent out an email to the Council that would be discussed later in the afternoon.

The Council adjourned for lunch and planned to reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

EPS (Employment Placement Specialist)

Stacy Smith, DBS Statewide Business Consultant, presented a report.

Stacy reported for 2019, EPS placements were 157. These placements represented industries such as IT, Cyber Security, Healthcare, Professional and Paraprofessional, Banking, Finance and Retail.

Stacy stated that an EPS spends 75% - 80% of their time doing job development. A major part of the business engagement process involves face to face meetings with employers, learning about the company, performing a needs analysis and establishing relationships. During this business engagement, the EPS explains about DBS services that can help them with their employment needs. This includes work experiences, DBS Internship Program and job readiness program.

The EPS also assists job seekers with band meets with them at least once a month. The EPS assists job seekers with building resumes and interviewing skills. They meet with the job seeker and the counselor at least once a month which helps with communication and keeps everyone informed. The EPS is also responsible for accurate documentation.

On a national level, DBS has helped clients gain employment with the IRS and Amazon.

Lighthouse of the Big Bend (LBB)

Jalonda Thompson presented a report.

Some of the highlights included a diversification in funding. Some of this funding is from United Way of the Big Bend and is earmarked for LBB's Employment Readiness Training and Support program. This program will provide non-DBS funding for paid work experiences for people in Leon, Madison, Franklin, Gadsden, and Wakulla counties.

The Gadsden County satellite office is now open. This space is shared with Eye Associates of Tallahassee at the Capital Medical Regional Medical Center annex in Gadsden County.

The organization has participated in 18 outreach activities since the beginning of the fiscal year (10/01/2019) for a total of 48 hours.

LBB was competing for name recognition and has rebranded with a new logo.

Upcoming Events include: Techno Demo Day – July 2020; Power-Up TKO Tournament – Fall 2020; Transition Camp – Summer 2020; LBB Client Committee – Fall 2020.

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services - BEESS

Jennifer Coburn presented an update.

Enrollment

Currently, for this school year, 14.4% of students in Florida public schools have been identified as a student with a disability. The number of Florida students who have been identified as having a sensory impairment is 9,000. For students identified as either visually impaired or dual sensory

impaired, this number is 3,286. In April 2019, students registered with the Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired is 1,624. The number of teachers for visually impaired students is 253.

Performance

The percentage of Florida students graduating as a whole is 86.9%. The Federal Uniform Graduation Rate for students with disabilities is 80.6% for 2018-2019.

The Standard Diploma rate for students with disabilities is 85.7% for 2018-2019.

Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired (FIMC-VI) is a statewide resource center responsible for providing braille, large print text books, student activities and professional development to Florida teachers and students. Among the number of activities provided by the FIMC, the Florida Cane Quest had 46 students across the state participating in activities that test students with cane and orientation and mobility skills. The 20/20 Florida Regional Braille Challenge has currently been scheduled in Tampa, Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville and Orlando. The FIMC is partnering with the Lighthouse of Palm Beach on a two day assistive technology workshop April 23 & 24.

Mickey suggested that the Council should visit the FIMC the next time they are in the Tampa area.

Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD)

David Darm presented a report.

The CTD was created by the 1989 Legislature. The CTD has a trust fund which is funded by license tag renewal fees which support statewide coordination of transportation services. A "Community Transportation Coordinator" (CTC) is designated in each county to deliver and coordinate services. CTD works with funding partners to purchase trips through the CTCs.

The Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) delivers Transportation Disadvantaged services for each county. The CTC works with a local coordinating board (LCB) to identify service needs.

The 2019 Legislature appropriated \$10 million in recurring funding to support innovative projects that: Increase access to employment; Promote cross-county trips; and Reduce barriers to accessing public transportation services.

Where does the CTD see a partnership at the local level? The first step is to determine the customer's needs. David Darm made several suggestions which included working with a local DBS District job seekers in that area who are looking for employment. He also suggested working with DBS job seekers in the multi corridor.

Afternoon Break – adjourn until 3:40 p.m.

Blind Services Foundation Vocational Evaluation Tool (BSFVET)

Paul Edwards presented an update.

Paul reported that the BSFVET will begin to be used in Canada. Three weeks ago, a small group met in Tampa to outline the work to be done for the third and final year of the project. The outline includes: fine tuning the tool; creating an ability to automatically score; altering the weighting of some of the systems; developing a manual that describes how the test should be administered; developing a manual that explores a range of other tools that may be needed to be used as supplements; accessibility components of those tools.

Paul stated that information was received from DOE regarding where we stand on making the test available on the internet under Creative Commons. It seems the tool should have been copyrighted first. The Foundation will continue to explore options. The final placement of the tool and how it will be distributed after the project is completed is still a question.

To this date, 55 DBS clients have taken the test; 20 people who have taken the test have provided feedback; 5-7 evaluators have been interviewed to get their feedback.

Dr. Karen Wolffe provided training a state-wide for all counselors in January.

Client Satisfaction Survey Subcommittee

Selena read the edits the subcommittee voted on at their meeting on December 10. Paul Edwards stated he would answer any questions since the chair, Bruce Miles was not at the meeting. Director Doyle stated his concern with the wording of the question. Director Doyle stated that a lot of negatives might be received because the type of services that they are looking for may not lend itself to a vehicle for that person's outcome. Director Doyle recommend to rephrase the question either within the committee or at the meeting now.

Paul Edwards stated the purpose of the question is to try to access whether or not the services that are available from the Rehab Center are being widely advertised so that those who could legitimately benefit are getting the opportunity to hear about them.

Mikey suggested kicking it back to the committee.

Paul Edwards **moved** to defer the discussion until after a committee meeting can be held. Denise seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Accessibility Subcommittee

Jorge Hernandez gave an update.

Jorge asked two questions: Is there a safeguard where the information being sent to the client is in the format that they requested?

At what stage does the client have the opportunity to ask for information in a certain format? Director Doyle stated during the intake process. He then deferred to the field. Ana Saint-Fort stated there was a section in the online application for services.

Mikey stated that he felt the subcommittee should continue to operate in order to address any concerns or make recommendations especially during the IT consolidation.

DA Report

Wayne Jennings recognized Charlie Hittinger to give the DA report.

Charlie announced that the district office had moved to a new location at 3900 Commonwealth Blvd. The District has hired its first intern. Currently, there are 3 employees with visual impairments. The District has 15 currently employed.

Over the past couple of years, the district has made a push on targeting their outreach to pharmacies and eye doctors.

Supported Employment

Director Doyle presented a report.

Director Doyle stated that he wanted to make the Council aware about the challenges the Division has been facing regarding the supported employment program. He confirmed that the Council had received and read the letter that was emailed to the Conklin Center.

He explained that supported employment services are a set of intensive set of employment services that are offered to individuals who have a severe and multiple disabilities.

The federal government mandates that DBS offer supported employment services throughout the state and DBS does this through contracts with the CRP's. Florida has the only residential service facility in the nation to offer supported employment services for people who have visual impairments and one or more other disabilities . That facility is the Conklin Center.

Director Doyle stated that DBS had conducted a monitoring late last year which also led to a Comprehensive Contract Review of the Conklin Center. Several significant issues were discovered during the onsite monitoring that raised concerns for the division. Some of the issues include: insufficient qualified staffing; a lack of performance of core services such as orientation and mobility; the facility did not have a certified VRT to perform orientation and mobility services; issues where clients records in the case file did not appear to match what DBS requested services, concerns over the validity of information in the files; concerns that the center did not serve the required number of individuals that the contract called for; denial of services to clients; suspicions of selective selection; over 50% of the Board had turned over; over 50% of the staff had turned over; policies and procedures had been changed without notification to DBS; A survey was performed that showed that 82% of the clients indicated there was a lack of moral; 70% felt the problems were due to the new leadership; 75% felt like the Center was going in the wrong direction; a lack of communication

with the Division regarding staff changes; staff indicated that unannounced visitors were not welcome; issues with outreach such as out of 30 listed outreach activities, only 2 involved reaching out to possible clients.

The meeting was interrupted by a brief power outage due to significant weather conditions in the Tallahassee area. We dialed back in and the meeting continued.

Director Doyle continued his report. He stated that the Division had heard from stakeholders, current and former Board Members; current and former staff as well as clients and their families. He stated that DBS staff were on site today for additional monitoring.

Director Doyle stated that the Division disliked the position that it was in, however, they were prepared to cancel the contract if the Center could not raise its standards to the standards as set forth in the DBS contract. Director Doyle stated that any students at the Center would continue to be served without delay. He assured the Council that DBS would transition the students to the Rehab Center at least in the short term. He stated that he had been thinking about long term solutions like bringing in another provider to help with those services.

Mikey thanked the agency for its transparency. He stated that the Conklin Center is a renowned and unique facility and is a staple in Florida when it comes to offering services to the most significantly visually impaired citizens. Mikey reminded everyone that part of the Council's job is to analyze and advise on issues that are brought before the Council regarding issues that DBS is experiencing.

Mikey opened the floor for comments by the Council, people on the phone and people in the audience who wished to express their feelings. He stated the Council's concerns are with the clients. Mikey asked the Council to keep in mind the issue of new referrals as it could be a topic that the Council might want to opine on. Mikey stated the possibility of the Council making a recommendation on professional counseling to current clients in the Conklin Center. Mikey asked the Council to keep in mind the possibility to make recommendations regarding an oversight committee.

Mikey recognized a speaker on the phone who thought she had dialed into the public forum. Mikey explained that a cancellation notice of the public

forum had been sent out due to the inclement weather in the Tallahassee area. The Chairman gave her the opportunity to speak. She spoke about her initiative on an apprenticeship program and asked if the information could be shared. Mikey asked her to send the materials to the FRCB for review.

Mikey asked Robert Kelly to speak. Robert stated that he supported Director Doyle and the Division because there needed to be accountability. He stated that significant money is contracted to the Conklin Center and significant results are expected. Robert stated that over the past year, the entire core of certified personal no longer work for the Conklin Center. He stated that that is a tremendous loss of capacity. Robert stated that there was the opportunity for resurrection. He stated that this is a leadership problem. He indicated that he would offer his advice to DBS and the Conklin Center.

Mikey made an announcement that a notice had been sent out stating that the public forum was cancelled due to inclement weather in Tallahassee.

The Council stated its support for the agency. There had been a discussion regarding writing a letter stating their support for DBS. The Council had a discussion with regard to bringing forth recommendations to DBS.

Director Doyle stated that he had also sent the email to Elly du Pre, The Director of The Florida Agencies Serving the Blind.

Mikey entertained a motion for the record stating that the Council supports DBS and its endeavor regarding its collaborative and reconstructive efforts with the Conklin Center that everyone comes to the table with the best of intentions and that the next report the Council receives will be positive. Paul Edwards made the motion. Denise seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Paul made a motion to adjourn and Misty seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned.

February 7, 2020

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

Council Members Present:

Mikey Wiseman, Robert Doyle, Paul Edwards, Kim Carr, Denise Valkema, Misty Porter

Council Members Absent

Dwight Sayer

Former Members waiting on reappointments

Paul Kurtz, Jorge Hernandez, Tracie Inman

Former Members in Attendance

Robert Kelly

Attendees on the Phone

Patricia Lipovsky, Allison Flannigan,

Council Staff:

Selena Sickler, Brandis Hall

DBS Staff

Bridget Giles, Wayne Jennings, Ana Saint-Fort, Marian Rezkallah, Regina Harris

Shared Initiatives between VR and DBS

Allison Flanagan spoke about shared initiative between DBS and VR.

Allison stated that the bulk of the shared initiatives between DBS and VR are administrative.

Allison stated that a challenge facing VR is the staff turnover. One initiative is making sure that new counselors can work together to develop the plan and determine who will provide the best services for the client.

Allison stated that Pre-employment transition services continues to be a huge focus of VR and that she sees a lot of opportunity in that area for collaboration.

Paul Edwards asked Allison if she was comfortable with the current move to join some of the elements of the agencies is not moving in the direction where there would be a call for the two agencies to be joined together. Allison responded that she had not heard of any discussion of a merge. She stated that she would not be in favor of a merge and she thinks DOE is satisfied with her and Director Doyle running the agencies.

The Council had a discussion regarding training of staff for Deaf/Blind clients at DVR and DBS. Allison stated she felt very strongly for training especially because of the turnover rate. Allison stated that Cecil was in charge of training new staff for Deaf/Blind clients. Director Doyle stated that DBS has Deaf/Blind training for staff at their annual meeting. He stated there are approximately 30 shared cases of Deaf/Blind Clients.

Council Business

Election of Officers

Paul Edwards made a **motion** to defer the election of officers until the May meeting and ask current serving officers to continue in their positions. Denise Valkema seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Mikey called the question.

Denise Valkema made a motion to accept the Jacksonville meeting minutes. Paul Edwards seconded the motion. The **motion** passed.

NCSRC Spring Conference

The Council had a discussion regarding their continuing participation in the NCSRC spring training conference. The Council stated the importance of taking a position at the conference regarding appointments and sharing with RSA to exert pressure on state government to influence the appointments process. The Council suggested reaching out to NCSRC ahead of time to request the discussion of appointments be added to the agenda.

Paul Edwards made a **motion** to ask for participation in the NCSRC Spring Conference. Denise seconded the motion. The motion passed. Director Doyle agreed with FRCB participation.

Paul Edwards made a **motion** that the FRCB chair request the subject of appointments be added as an agenda item to the NCSRC Spring Conference. Denise seconded. The motion passed.

Cross Appointment between the FRCB and the FRC

The Council had a discussion regarding the Cross Appointment between the FRC and the FRCB. The Council stated it was important to maintain the relationship with the other councils throughout the state. The Council will table the discussion until the May meeting with the hopes of having new appointments.

Agenda Items

Elections of Officers and Committees

Cross Appointment Discussion

NCSRC

Fair Hearing by Director Doyle

Lighthouse for the Visually Impaired & Blind

Lighthouse of Pinellas, Inc.

Lighthouse for the Blind & Low Vision

Florida Instructional Materials – Explore the possibility of a Tour

Public Forum

Update on the Budget

Update on Contracts – Older Blind

District Administrator Report

Report from Amy Grissom on Contract Monitoring– (Contract Management 101)

- What are monitoring components?
- What are the consequences?
- What are the norms?
- What are the expectations?
- What will trigger concerns?
- Trends

St. Petersburg Meeting Discussion - May 13, 14, 15, 2020

Kim Carr will have a subcommittee teleconference before the May meeting. Paul can report to the group since Kim will not be present.

Misty and Kim will not be at the May meeting due to professional commitments.

Mikey stated if there would not be a quorum, then there would not be a meeting.

Director Doyle stated that he may take the opportunity to have the District Administrators and Assistant District Administrators meet on the dates of May 13, 14, and 15 since we already have a contract.

Paul Edwards suggested having the meeting for one day rather than meeting on Friday since the FCB moved their meeting to the same dates as the FRCB.

Paul Edwards made a **motion** that discretion be given to the chair regarding the May meeting: either not holding it for quorum reasons or making it a one day meeting to be held on Thursday. The motion would include moving the meeting. Denise seconded the meeting.

February 2020 Meeting Location

The Council suggested and discussed having the meeting in Pensacola. Denise Valkema made a motion to hold the meeting in District 1 - Pensacola. Paul seconded the motion.

Paul Kurtz announced that he would be requesting withdrawal of his reappointment application due to personal reasons.

Director Doyle thanked Paul for his service and wished he and Pam well. He also recognized Robert Kelly and thanked him for his years of service on the FRCB.

Mikey thanked Tracie Inman for her participation on the FRCB on behalf of the deaf/blind as she awaits her reappointment. Mikey thanked Robert Kelly for his service. He thanked Jorge Hernandez for his service.

Denise made a motion to adjourn. Paul seconded the motion.