

Florida Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (FRCB)
Quarterly Meeting Minutes and Public Forum – Orlando District
Thursday, July 23, 2020
8:30 – 5:00 PM
Teams Call

Chair Mikey Wiseman called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. with introductions.

Council Members Present:

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

Council Staff

Selena Sickler

Former FRCB Members

Howard Bell, Jorge Hernandez

DBS Staff

Bridget Giles, Marian Rezkallah, Sandra Brown, Kelli Parker, Elizabeth Castro, Pamela Jones, Vanessa Medina, Dan O'Connor, Mary Grant, Peggy Styron, Janice Hameline, Jermesa lee, Genevieve English-Charles, Sila Miller, Wayne Jennings, Ted Pobst, Bobbie Howard Davis, Pamela Ortiz

Adoption of Agenda

Misty Porter made a **motion** to accept the agenda. Denise seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Denise Valkema made a motion for Paul Edwards as chair, Misty Porter seconded the motion. Paul was confirmed by acclamation.

Denise Valkema made a motion for Kim Carr as first vice chair. Misty Porter seconded the motion. Kim was confirmed by acclamation.

Paul Edwards made a motion for Misty Porter as second vice chair. Denise seconded the motion. Misty was confirmed by acclamation.

Director's Report

Robert Doyle presented his report.

Director Doyle thanked Mikey for his work on the Council. He congratulated Paul, Misty and Kim on their newly elected positions on the Council.

Director Doyle stated that he had been in contact with the Commissioner's office regarding appointments and that DOE leadership has been in contact with the Governor's office. Director Doyle stated that a factor in the delay in the process is due to the resignation of the person working with the Department. He is hopeful for appointments soon.

Director Doyle thanked the Districts for their participation in the meeting.

Director Doyle stated that DBS had 822 successful job placements for 2019-2020. The LRPP Goal was 755. He thanked DBS staff and CRP's for their collaboration leading to a successful year despite COVID 19.

District Recognition 2019-2020

Goals:

- District 1 – Pensacola: 18% increase over LRPP Goal
- District 2 – Tallahassee: 16% increase
- District 3 – Jacksonville: 4% decrease
- District 5 – Daytona Beach: 7% increase
- District 6 – Orlando: 63% decrease
- District 7 – Tampa: 100%
- District 9 – Ft. Myers: 129%
- District 10 – West Palm Beach: 114%
- District 11 – Sunrise: 115%
- District 12 – Miami: 147%

The Johnny Slaton Award is given to persons for reaching over 30 successful closures for the year. The winners include Nancy Bateh (42), Delcie Pasco (33) and Cesar Vigo (32).

The Johnnie Slaton Award for the most placements was presented to John Mosley (30).

The Juan Carlos Diaz Leadership Award went to the Daytona Beach/Cocoa offices.

Director Doyle recognized Marian Rezkallah for her outstanding team leadership.

DBS has been able to do some hiring, despite the hiring freeze. This has been accomplished by implementing a 'Critical Hire' process.

Budget 2020-2021

- A \$500,000 allocation for the Blind Babies Program was vetoed.
- \$500,000 of non-recurring funds for the Children's Program was not included in the budget. \$500,000 of recurring dollars was included.
- An additional \$300,000 extra dollars was added for the Older Blind Program.
- \$150,000 for Contractual support for IT Training Program at the Rehab Center.
- \$70,000 was included for an accessible van lift for the Rehab Center.

DBS is required to hold back 1.5% General Revenue dollars from state funds each quarter.

Budget 2021-2022

DBS has been asked to contemplate 15% in contingency cuts in programs and services.

DBS has asked for additional funding for shelving and HVAC system at the Rehab Center in next year's budget.

DBS would like to make available between \$100,000 and \$150,000 to offset to support initiatives that have been forced during the current environment.

Impact of COVID19

DBS has looked at the impact of COVID 19 on all programs and we have seen some decreases. There has been a 12% decrease in the number of authorizations, 6% decrease on the number of applications and 5% decrease on the number of clients served under authorizations.

Conklin Center Update

CVI and Conklin are looking at a merger. DBS is working to serve clients in the community. There have been a number of individuals that have been referred and DBS is paying CVI under authorizations. There are authorizations that have been issued and a number that are in the pipeline.

Additional DBS Updates

DBS is continuing to take a cautious approach on bringing back residents to a residential program in the future. DBS is evaluating data and cost and having meetings to discuss findings. There is no date yet as to when the residential program at the Rehab Center will open.

DBS is continuing to telework. DBS is beginning to bring back individuals into the office 2 or three days a week to reduce the number of staff in the office at any particular time. The office is not officially open to the public. We are continuing to meet face to face by appointment.

DBS will not be eliminating virtual training moving forward and hopes that this will improve on serving clients in rural communities. DBS is not eliminating face to face training.

DBS is looking to expand the use of Vispero licenses to more people throughout the state. DBS has completed a draft of what we would like the Rate Study to look like. DBS will share it with the Council and Blind Services Foundation. DBS is intending to speak with San Diego State and a couple more universities.

DBS is still needing to hire a DA in the Ft Myers office.

Mikey announced that members of the FRCB Committees do not have to be a Council member in order to serve on committees. Mikey encouraged former Council members to serve on the committees.

The Council agreed to table the appointment of committees until the next meeting.

VR Report

Bridget Giles, Bureau Chief of Client Services, presented an overview of the VR report for quarter 4, 2019-2020.

The total number of clients served is 3495 compared to 3544 during quarter 4 from last year.

The total number of closed cases is 628; the number of unsuccessful closures after receiving services is 193; the number of successful closures is 334; rehabilitation rate for closed cases is 63%; the highest wage is \$134 per hour for a paraprofessional in the IT field; the lowest wage is \$5.19 per hour for a dancer/choreographer.

The top 3 reasons for unsuccessful closures are:

- Unable to locate (85 cases)
- Refused Services or No Further Services (63 cases)
- Failure to cooperate (46 cases)

The meeting adjourned for morning break.

District 6 Administrator Report

Ted Pobst reported on District 6. He stated that District 6 is comprised of 5 counties, those being Orange, Seminole, Osceola, Sumter and Lake Counties. District 6 also serves all of The Villages, which is partially in Marion County. Ted gave an overview of closures, staff and financial statistics. He reported that in Mid-March, the physical office of District 6 was closed to the public due to COVID19.

District 6 is located in the Hurston Towers State Office building, which has been closed to the public since that time as well. Calls from counselors were forwarded to clients, that was, until the implementation of the soft phone. Through the passage of time, all personnel are working from the office one day per week.

New Vision for Independence

Chantel Buck, President/CEO presented a report. She stated that once in person services had ceased due to the pandemic, a mass mailing was sent out to all clients informing them about the closure. Weekly support group meetings were held in which community resource speakers presented information to clients. In April, virtual services were offered. Uber conference was offered to seniors that would eliminate the need for them to enter conference code numbers for phone meetings. Group resource classes were initiated and keyboarding classes were offered to VR clients.

Lighthouse of Central Florida

Mike Walsh, Chief Programs Officer, presented a report. Mr. Walsh stated that there are two divisions in Lighthouse of Central Florida: Lighthouse Works with 202 employees, 8 are visually impaired and the Rehabilitation Division with 27 employees, 10 of which are visually impaired. The Lighthouse of Central Florida offers a full range of services and includes Blind Babies to school age, VR, Transition, Independent Living. Looking into the future, the goal is surviving COVID19 with dedication and creativity and keeping clients engaged.

Business Enterprise Program

Bill Findley, Bureau Chief, presented the annual report. Bill reported comparative sales figures for SFY July 2019 to May 2020 are down 10.5% when compared to the same time period the year prior. He stated that the downturn is due to COVID19.

A few of the positive accomplishments in the facilities included completion of the Air Force Permit. We are hoping to install 18 machines to start at Tyndall AFB and more when they complete more construction. We are currently in direct negotiations with the Navy for the follow-on contract for Panama City. A micro market was established at DCF in Tampa. Some positive news with training includes eight new licensees compared to seven previous SFY. A Daytona a mini-micro market was set up for both customer and training purposes.

Some of the relief and support that has been provided to vendors include: BBE and Committee quickly voted to waive the set-aside paid by vendors back into the program for reports submitted in April, May and June; BBE has consistently communicated any and all financial relief opportunities available to vendors; BBE and the Committee began to draft a Fair Minimum Return policy for vendors; Director Doyle and DBS responded to my request for assistance for over the counter facilities that were expected to reopen from closure or have more customers as we approached June 1; RSA is waiting on Congress to approve the waiver for states to use federal funds states already have to replace lost stock and expired products; Congress is taking up the request for funds to aid Randolph-Sheppard vendors nation-wide.

Blind Services Foundation Vocational Evaluation Tool (BSFVET)

Paul Edwards provided an update on the BSFVET. He stated that the project was in its third and final year of funding. The team is working to put together legislation that would allow the tool to be available on the Creative Commons System. The team is developing a manual to accompany the tool.

Council Business

Paul asked if there was a **motion** to approve the FRCB meeting minutes from February, 2020. Denise Valkema made a motion. Misty Porter seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Paul asked for a **motion** to approve the May 27, 2020 minutes. Denise Valkema made a motion. Misty seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The Council discussed having the July 2021 meeting in Orlando if the FRCB meets face to face. Director Doyle agreed and stated he would like to continue having the DA's and Assistant DA's also meet during that time. Paul asked for a motion to have the July 2021 meeting in Orlando. Misty Porter made a **motion** to accept Orlando and Kim Carr seconded the motion. There was no objection to working around the dates of the ACB meeting July 26-30 and the NFB national meeting in New Orleans.

The Council discussed the next FRCB meeting in Fort Myers, October 28-30. The Council agreed to hope for the best at having a face to face meeting knowing that the state has to make the final determination regarding travel.

The Council discussed the location of the May 2021 meeting. Mikey made a **motion** for West Palm Beach for late April, 2021. West Palm Beach was suggested. Misty seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Agenda Items for October 2020, Fort Myers

1. Business Enterprise Program
2. Conklin Center Update
 - a. What are the plans?
 - b. Macro View and Timeline
 - c. DBS Position
3. Possible invitation to the Director of The Center for the Visually Impaired
4. Florida State Plan
5. Strategic Plan – Final Document
6. Client Satisfaction Survey
7. DBS use of virtual strategies moving forward
8. CRP use of virtual strategies moving forward
9. DA Report – specific discussion on how they are incorporating outreach to rural clients in their program.
10. CRP Report - specific discussion on how they are incorporating outreach to rural clients in their program.
11. Public Forum

The Council established a subcommittee to discuss promotional ideas that will advertising the public forum. Mikey, Denise, Misty and Paul will be on the committee. The meeting will be held in a few weeks.

Client Satisfaction Subcommittee Update

Mikey gave a brief overview of the formation of the subcommittee.

Selena read the two questions that were adopted by the subcommittee:

New 3b. Were you made aware of residential services offered by the Rehab Center in Daytona Beach? Yes or No

New 3c. Do you think you would have been interested participating in this residential program? Yes or No

Denise Valkema made a **motion** to accept the questions. Kim Carr seconded the motion. The Council had a discussion. The motion passed.

Client Satisfaction Survey Update, Quarters 1-3, 2019-2020

Minna Jia presented the results of the survey which covered quarters 1-3, 2019-2020. The report covered 5 areas of the survey: Major Findings, Survey Procedures, Survey Respondents, Results of Employee Services and Program Outcomes.

Minna will add the number 1-800-342-1828 to the introduction of the survey for any client who has a question regarding DBS.

Selena will send the two questions regarding the residential program, 3b and 3c, to Minna Jia. They were approved by the FRCB to be added to the survey.

Mikey thanked the FRCB for his 6 years of serving on the Council. Director Doyle expressed his appreciation for his service.

The business meeting adjourned.

Public Forum

Paul Edwards called the public forum to order at 4:00 p.m. He welcomed attendees and asked for introductions.

Council Members Present:

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

Council Staff

Selena Sickler

Former FRCB Members

Howard Bell, Jorge Hernandez

DBS Staff

Kelly James, Wayne Jennings, Pamela Ortiz, Sila Miller, Dan O'Connor, Lisa Wise, Ted Pobst,

The first speaker stated that she is very happy with the services she received from New Vision for Independence. She also stated her appreciation for the support groups especially during the pandemic.

The second speaker stated her appreciation of the services she has received from New Vision. She is also thankful for information received from DBS regarding paratransit services.

The third speaker spoke about the availability of services offered at Project Insight.

The fourth speaker stated her appreciation of services offered by New Vision.

The fifth speaker stated his appreciation of services from DBS and the CRP's. He stated the need for more information regarding DBS in local areas allowing for more collaboration and advocacy. Director Doyle welcomed the opportunity to collaborate.

The sixth consumer spoke about her experience at attending college in the field of paralegal studies.

The seventh consumer stated that this public forum is the most civilized he has experienced.

Paul recognized Mikey Wiseman and Denise Valkema for their service on the FRCB.

Paul commented on the success of DBS having 828 successful closures for the year despite the pandemic.

Director Doyle announced the virtual celebration by the State of Florida of the 30th Anniversary of the American with Disabilities Act.

Director Doyle announced that one of the updates to the DBS Strategic Plan is the goal of enrolling 100 consumers into apprenticeship programs by 2025. Another goal is to repurpose positions that would work with state agencies on

accessibility. Director Doyle stated that the State of Florida signed a statewide contract with Vispero that makes JAWS available to any DBS consumer.

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