

Nebraska Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired
Public Meeting
Saturday, February 01, 2020
4600 Valley Rd., Room 4A, Lincoln, NE

Minutes

Call to Order. Welcome and introductions. Announcement concerning public comment periods, meeting agendas, open meeting act, proof of publication, recordings, other logistics.

Mark Bulger, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The meeting began with introductions.

Commissioners present: Mark Bulger, Chairperson, Designee of the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska, Omaha; Robert Newman, Vice Chairperson, Omaha; Becky Rieken, Executive Secretary, Dakota City; Kimberly Sherbarth, Designee of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska, Kearney; Brent Heyen, Lincoln.

Commission staff present: Carlos Serván, Executive Director; Carol Jenkins, Deputy Director for Services; Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant; Kat Carroll, Deputy Director for Finance; Michelle Rogers, Accountant I; Greg DeWall, Center Supervisor; Connie Daly, Lincoln District Supervisor; Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor; Shane Buresh, Transition Coordinator.

Public Present: Brandon Peters, Lincoln; Barbara Epworth, Omaha; Jim Jirak, Omaha; Mike Flood, Lincoln; Dale Oviatt, Omaha; Chris Brennenfoerder, Lincoln; Kelly Coleman, Lincoln; Brad Loos, Lincoln; Barbara Loos, Lincoln; Maurice Peret, NFB Career Mentoring Program Presenter; Anil Lewis, NFB Career Mentoring Program Presenter.

It was noted that public comments are welcome during the scheduled Public Comment periods regarding the agenda items or other relevant issues. Kathy Stephens recorded the meeting and the recordings are available on the website.

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was available. The Act was available in both print and Braille format. The Notice of the Meeting was published in the Lincoln Journal Star, the State Government Calendar, NCBVI Website, NFB Newslines® and Radio Talking Book. The Notice was also sent to ACBN, NFBN, and the NCBVI List Serve.

Approval of the November 2, 2019 public meeting minutes

Commissioner Rieken moved to approve the Minutes of the November 2, 2019 Commission Meeting. Commissioner Newman seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Focus Topic: National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Career Mentoring Program

Prepared by: Maurice Peret, NOMCT
Coordinator of Career Mentoring Programs
200 East Wells Street, Baltimore, MD 21230

We would first like to thank the Board of Commissioners for inviting us to discuss the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Career Mentoring Program. It is our honor to join this dialogue and hopefully answer your questions.

As outlined in the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act signed into law by President Barack Obama in 2014, the NFB has collaborated with the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) since April 2018 to provide the following five required pre-employment transition services to Nebraskans who are blind or have low vision:

- Job exploration counseling;
- Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after-school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible;
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and
- Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

This partnership dates back to 2004 when we established the Excellence in Career Mentoring Program under a five-year model demonstration grant from the US Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to connect these young blind people with successful blind adults.

The successful momentum of our matrix mentoring model is attributed to a powerful philosophy, which emphasizes self-initiated advocacy and personal responsibility based upon these five elements of success:

- Coming not only intellectually but emotionally to accept that it is OK to be blind;
- Not just exposure but mastery of alternative skills of blindness;
- Coping gracefully and respectfully with the daily interactions that reveal public misperceptions about blindness;
- Blending in; rising up to or exceeding the same expectations of our sighted peers;

- Among the pentacle measures of personal independence as a blind individual is in the demonstrated ability to “give back”.

In addition to interactions with their mentors, Nebraska mentees also engage in monthly Zoom meetings to gauge how the mentoring relationships are going and to explore practical pre-ETS related ideas and activities.

We currently have 15 Nebraska mentees and have served 34 transition age youth across the state. Two of these mentees are in college, one of these completed Community college and is pursuing employment, and the balance are still enrolled in high school. Of these, I think three are currently employed in some capacity. We held three Career Quest weekend retreats with 20, 17, and 24 transition youth participants respectively. Quarterly retreats were held in Omaha and Lincoln with focused themes on career exploration, enrollment in postsecondary education and training opportunities, and work-based learning experiences resulting in nine participants subsequently deciding to become mentees in the program.

In the spring of 2019, a tour of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln was included as part of the weekend retreat focused on postsecondary enrollment. During the work-based learning retreat held in the fall of 2019, four work-based learning experiences were designed and implemented to serve as a conduit for interactive discussions and hands-on experiences, which included:

- residential and commercial facility management,
- Business Enterprise Program,
- tandem bicycle assembly and maintenance,
- auto repair.

Eight mentees participated in a multi-day NFB Career Quest event held in conjunction with annual conventions of the NFB in Orlando, FL and Las Vegas, NV. One former Nebraska mentee assumed the presidency of the Nebraska Association of Blind Students and is expected to participate in a national student leadership conference in the Washington, D.C. area in February 2020. We have involved 14 active mentors to date, not including additional program staff of blind role models. We are actively reaching out for more blind and low vision mentors. Kelly Coleman has been on boarded as Nebraska local coordinator.

We continue to work closely with NCBVI district managers and vocational rehabilitation counselors to improve channels of communication for program integrity, accountability, and to increase the potential for expanding opportunities for Nebraska’s blind and low vision youth.

Kelly Coleman, State Coordinator for the NFB Mentoring Program

Kelly noted that she did not have much to add to Maurice’s report except that they have had wonderful mentees and mentors. Everyone does a fantastic job of

making the program run. One mentee is in attendance at today's meeting, Brandon Peters. Brandon has been in the program for two years. Kelly noted that Brandon is one of the most hardworking mentees that she has ever worked with. Brandon will speak about what the program has done for him.

Brandon Peters

Brandon stated that he has been a mentee in the NFB Mentoring Program for two years. Brandon talked about how he became a part of the program. He stated that when he was first introduced to the program, he was a student at the NCBVI Center. At that time, Carol Jenkins told him about the program and she persuaded him to give it a chance. After being at a retreat and seeing how the program worked, he was persuaded that it would be beneficial for him to be part of a mentoring network. At the beginning, he had several mentors, Mark Bulger, Miguel Rocha and Mike Hansen. During this time, he received great assistance in his introduction to the difficulties of college. Brandon noted that the program has been helpful to him and he thanked Carol Jenkins and all the mentors of the program who have inspired him on his career path.

Mark Bulger

Chairperson Bulger stated that he would like to take credit for all the success that Brandon has had, but that would not be true because Brandon is a very capable person. Chairperson Bulger stated that he appreciates the work that went into developing the NFB Career Mentoring Program and he stated that he feels that NFB has done a good job. Chairperson Bulger noted that he still talks to Brandon once in a while, but he knows that if Brandon needs something he is capable enough to ask. Chairperson Bulger noted that he is an ACB person and he is working with the NFB which he feels is a good thing because he believes that there is a time when we all need to invest in our next generation of blind people. The NFB Mentoring is about equipping our youth to be successful and he applauded NCBVI for partnering with the NFB Mentoring Program. NCBVI has limited resources as an agency and this is one area that we can partner with the NFB and provide a much-needed service.

Robert Newman

Vice Chair Newman stated that he had a question for Brandon Peters. It was noted that Brandon had left the meeting due to a prior commitment. Vice Chair Newman noted that he was once sighted and went blind. Once he became blind he went to the School for the Blind and he had a unique environment where he was around other blind kids. When he finished the School for the Blind and he was amongst other blind people who were adults, he noticed how they lived their lives. Vice Chair Newman stated that he would have liked to have heard from Brandon about what he has learned by what he has observed from other successful blind people.

Kelly Coleman

Kelly stated that she could answer part of Vice Chair Newman's question based on what she has heard from other mentees. Kelly noted that she spoke to one mentee last night who stated that the mentors do apply to her as she has learned that it is okay to be blind and there are successful people who are blind. She mentioned that she logically understood this, but after being around other blind people who are successful it really hit home for her that she would be able to be a successful blind person.

Mark Bulger

Chairperson Bulger stated that he has learned that blind youth are all different and have different needs. The thing about Brandon is that he is a resourceful person and he knows that not one person has all the answers so he has a network of individuals he contacts to get information.

Maurice Peret

Maurice talked about the different roles that mentors play. The NFB Mentoring Program uses a matrix model. Rather than just pairing a mentor with a mentee, they match a mentee with two or three mentors. Each mentor may play a different role. A mentor may work with emotional issues, technical assistance and/or encouragement.

Maurice stated that he hopes that the NFB Mentoring Program is providing its mentees with a competitive edge. People are at different stages of adjustment and different levels of vision. We live in a society that is based on vision as a measure of success. The Mentoring Program likes to challenge this and turn it around like an hourglass. The gold standard is that being blind or low vision is normal and to master the alternative techniques so that it increases one's ability to problem solve.

Anil Lewis

Anil expressed his appreciation to NCBVI and all the commissioners for their support. Anil noted that Nebraska already has a great program for young people and he appreciates the opportunity to partnership to enhance the mentoring program.

Carlos Serván

Director Serván noted that in 2004 NCBVI was a young Commission. One of the arguments against becoming a Commission was the State would not give us extra funds in order to match our federal grant. Therefore, we were looking for ways to partner with different entities so we could find that extra money. They were only looking in Nebraska. As Anil stated, Nebraska is well known in the nation because our staff members are very dedicated and they believe in blind people. Nebraska cares about blind people and we are happy when blind people are successful. In general, NCBVI had an informal type of mentoring. In 2004 Director Serván stated he received a call from the NFB asking if we would be interested in partnering with them to run a Mentoring Program. Director Serván

noted that he did not want to add extra duties to staff members, but if NFB was going to give NCBVI the money, NCBVI could match the funds to satisfy the feds. This way our budget was not reduced for the next year. This was the first time that NCBVI put together a formal mentoring program and we discovered how productive the program was. Later, NCBVI received a transition grant for five years and then that money went away. With the lack of reallocation and social security funds for NCBVI and the mandate to expend 15% of our budget on Pre-ETS, we needed to do some new things and reassign some staff duties.

One of the interpretations on the federal level is that we need to spend the 15% on transition. Transportation and room and board cannot be counted into the 15%. However, these things are needed to run the program. Eventually, we spoke to NFB and the federal program does allow NCBVI to subcontract. The subcontractor will charge a flat fee per mentee. NCBVI plans to continue to partnership with organizations for mentoring opportunities.

Maurice Peret noted that they are signing up mentees for their next Mentoring Retreat which is March 6-8, 2020. The Fall retreat will be held November 6-8, 2020.

Old Business

Report from the Executive Director

I. Administration

I went to Utah on November 16, 2019 to provide training to blind Spanish consumers about vocational rehabilitation services, the capability of the blind, and their rights through the VR process. I attended several meetings of the State Steering Committee for the Olm Stead Plan. This committee is made of all state agencies that serve people with disabilities. This plan was submitted to the Governor for his approval and publication in December.

I had a meeting with representatives from DAS, OCIO, and UNL to talk about strengthening the Technology Clause. Mike Hansen is part of this working group and Chris Boone is contracting with us to draft the new language. We should be bringing a final draft to the State ADA Task Force for input, then have a public hearing and have the final document in a few months.

I also attended several meetings with the WIOA partners in the last couple of months to work on the combined State Plan. In addition, we wrote NCBVI's portion of the Combined state Plan for public hearing. The Public Hearing for the Combined State Plan will be on February 10 from 2:00-3:00 PM at the VR General offices across the State.

We do not have any clients on the wait list and we should be off Order of Selection by the end of March.

RSA will monitor NCBVI the week of March 30, 2020. We have an NCBVI Monitoring team who has been working on gathering and updating policies and procedures, as well as sending to RSA relevant contracts and MOUs for upcoming RSA Monitoring for their visit during the week of March 30. The team members are Carol Jenkins, Kat Carroll, Julie Buren, Kathy Stephens, and Carlos Serván. Kat worked very hard on writing internal control policies that we did not have; Carol and Julie work on revising the VR manual, the Pre-ETS policy and all policies regarding client services; Kathy Stephens collected all the Memoranda of Understanding our agency has with other entities across the state.

On January 15, I attended the stakeholders' for NCECBVI. This is a group of administrators and consumers who work on the education of blind students.

We are working on putting together a celebration open house of the 20th anniversary of the creation of the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. We are planning to have this on July 31, a Friday after the Commission Board meeting.

During the last year, we increased the number of clients being served for OIB as a result of efforts made to serve this population better; including the Statewide OIB conference and the additional funds from the State. In FY 2018 we had 154 clients on OIB. In FY 2019 we had 262 clients. This is an increase of over 100 clients. Furthermore, we also increased the number of clients being served for Pre-ETS from 120 in FY 2018 to 147 in FY 2019; and for Supported Employment we had an increase from 75 in FY 2018 to 81 in FY 2019. These are the areas RSA is putting emphasis on.

Kat continues redesigning agency business units to simplify and eliminate unnecessary complications.

II. Human Resources

Nancy Flearl and Larry Mackey were recognized by the Governor for the Excellence in Leadership Award. This award is given to those who performed additional duties besides their regular jobs.

We offered the position for Home Management instructor for the Center to Nicole Gothier who will start her training at the Center on February 10. We also offered the Orientation Counselor position to Julie Gubbels for the Norfolk area and she will start working for us on February 5 and will start her training at the Center on February 10.

As you know, Nancy Coffman is now our technology instructor at the Center. We now have full staffing at our Nebraska Center for the Blind. The positions for the technology specialist for the Lincoln and for the North Platte District is being advertised. Kim Schnitzer, a VR counselor from Omaha, announced that she will be leaving the agency to continue her practicum hours needed for her license in Mental Health. Her last day is February 14. Larry Oleson is also helping staff on technology issues.

Deanna Jesse and Jan Brandt retired January 31, after more than 30 years of employment with SVI/NCBVI. Deanna's position has been reclassified to a VR counselor and interviews for this position will be on Monday February 3. Erin Brandyberry will now be the OIB coordinator as well as the North Platte District Supervisor. Cheryl Livingston announced that she will be retiring on March 31, after 21 years working for us. Her position will be reclassified to an Accounting Clerk II and will work under the Business Office.

We will have our State Staff Meeting on April 6-8, 2020 in Grand Island.

The third week of April, our field staff will get training on placing clients with multiple disabilities and or supported employment cases.

III. Field Services:

The three districts continue to have group home teaching sessions for people who are older blind and also Pre-ETS students. Field staff also continue to network participating in a number of professional events having a booth to share our literature explaining our services. Lincoln is having financial literacy training included in their group teaching once per month.

In spite of being short of staff, our counselors also continue to place clients on a variety of jobs.

This quarter we had an NFB Career Mentoring program with 24 Pre-ETS students. The theme focused on work-based learning experiences which included: Presentations and Discussion on Professional Conduct and Workplace Protocol; Effective Informational Interview; Networking as a Job Search Skill; Presentation on Postsecondary Preparation, Placement Examinations, Training, etc.

More schools are embracing counselor's coming into the school to meet and work on vocational counseling and technology. Lincoln staff continue to meet with the transition team from NCECBVI and this partnership continues to grow. We are purchasing accessible software and hardware for students to do physics and chemistry. Doctor Supalo, the blind person who invented this equipment, will provide training to both NCBVI and NCECBVI staff as well as any vision teachers who want to participate.

We will hold a college workshop in Lincoln, which will take place in March. We are contracting with Sky's the Limit Communications. This workshop will focus on hands on experiences in note taking skills, cane travel in college, technology use in college and much more.

Six Pre-ETS students from NCECBVI attended a group session hosted at the Center apartments. This involved a collaborative cooking experience between them and the current Center clients. Lincoln and Center staff worked on this training. We continue to have meetings between the NCECBVI administration team and NCBVI management, supervisors and staff who work with transition to collaborate on enhancing the education of blind students in Nebraska.

Our staff continues to meet with businesses and attend networking events and placement focus meetings across the state. Counselors also continue to have job clubs for clients.

IV. Training Center

The Center has nine students and two are senior blind clients. No staff trainees for now, but starting February 10 we will have two and as we hire Kearney and Lincoln staff, we might have up to five.

A couple of state senators toured the Center and confessed that they did not know the impact NCBVI has for blind people in Nebraska.

The Department of Labor continues sending a staff to help our Center students on their work skills and resume writing.

V. Nebraska Business Enterprise

We started to provide full cafeteria service at the USSTRATCOM cafeteria, Deterrence Diner, during the first week of November. Ninety-eight percent of USSTRATCOM staff finished moving to their building by the end of December. Therefore, this month we are seeing a real test of what to expect for the rest of the calendar year. We continue to receive positive feedback from employees at USSTRATCOM and it has been very rewarding. Sales for the last three weeks are averaging \$5,500 per day. The sales on the vending machines for the 26 break rooms are also increasing.

As you know, we submitted a bid back in October 2019 for 12 vending locations across the state under the Department of Correctional Services. The first week of December 2019, we were awarded the contract for the 12 locations we proposed. Dave Robinson and Carol Jenkins worked very diligently on putting together an excellent proposal. Carol Jenkins is currently working with blind vendors and sub-contractors to take over the sites on March 1, 2020.

Coordinating all of this is very demanding, but will create opportunity for a few new vendors and also increase income for several vendors. In the past, it was difficult to attract blind vendors to the program because it did not offer enough income. We also could not get new sites because we did not have vendors who quality. Therefore, the program could not grow. However, we are looking for good vending opportunities and when there is not a qualified vendor available, we will subcontract until we find a vendor who we can train and take over the site.

Carol worked with Coca-Cola on negotiations for new soda machines along I-80 at all of the rest areas. The completion for this innovative project was during the first week of November 2019.

Carol has also been working with Nebraska Risk Management to obtain a group general liability insurance policy for the NBE program. This insurance policy took effect October 1, 2019, which has lessened the cost of insurance for vendors by an average of 45%. Furthermore, Carol is still working with Nebraska Risk Management to include our vendors under NCBVI's current Worker's Compensation policy, which will also be used for the Department of Corrections contract as well as the current State Building Division contract, helping our vendors to save money.

The NBE Licensee Committee has passed the proposed amendments to the NBE Operator Agreement. Carol has submitted the NBE Operator Agreement to RSA and it was approved.

NCBVI has begun contract negotiations with the Nebraska Department of Transportation to lessen the cost of utilities blind vendors pay for interstate rest areas along I-80. Carol and I met with the Deputy Director and the contracts supervisor from the Department of Transportation, to make them understand that according to State Law, our blind vendors should not pay rent. Therefore, only utilities should be paid. This meeting was productive, and a new contract should be coming reflecting lower payments from our vendors on I-80.

We are in the process of hiring a NBE Coordinator.

Chairperson Bulger noted that Director Serván made a comment in his report that NCBVI was not going to be expanding the NBE program. Commissioner Bulger asked Director Serván to explain what this means.

Director Serván stated that when he stated that NBE was not going to look for additional locations he meant, no new sites that are in addition to what they were currently working on. We have been working with the Department of Corrections for the last four years to get vending at their site. The Veterans Administration building is the same thing. We already have a commitment and an agreement with the Veterans Administration in Omaha and Lincoln.

Chairperson Bulger asked how things were going with only having two physical offices. Director Serván stated that logistically speaking, everything is now in place and staff are getting used to working from home. Carol Jenkins noted that she has been informed that staff are liking it way more than they ever thought they would.

Chairperson Newman stated that he had a couple of people ask him if the Governor's office ever consults NCBVI about who to appoint as a commissioner. Director Serván stated that the Governor's office usually sends us a letter stating who applied to be a commissioner and when their office will make a recommendation.

Chairperson Newman noted that he was also asked if NCBVI would ever want to have a business person, a doctor, or someone who is not blind or does not have any knowledge about blindness to be a commissioner.

Director Serván noted that according to the law at least three commissioners need to be blind and all of them need to have experience or knowledge about services for rehabilitation for the blind. Director Serván noted that if he knew that a person who was an applicant to be a commissioner did not meet these qualifications he would bring it to the Governor's attention.

Addendum for the minutes, reflecting the follow-up.

Good afternoon Commission Board:

During the last Commission Board meeting on Saturday, February 1, Commissioner Newman asked me a question regarding the process of the appointment of the Commissioners. I provided the general information. However, I was not prepared to give a complete response when Commissioner Newman asked me if the Commission or the Executive Director of the agency has any influence on the appointment of the Board members. My answer was based on what I know my observation and interpretation is. I want to make sure that the Board, the public, and any future applicant to the Commission Board has a perspective from the Governor's office as well. Therefore, earlier today, February 3, I contacted the Governor's office to put an inquiry about Commissioner Newman's question, more specifically whether or not the Commission or the Executive Director has any influence on the appointment of Board members.

I was told that the Governor's office sends the list of candidates to the agency Directors, so they can provide any information that the Governor might need before he makes his decision, as he only knows what is in paper. For instance, our Commission needs to have at least three blind consumers on the Board. Therefore, the Governor would like for me to confirm, if possible, if the applicants are blind or not. The other situation the Governor would want information on is if

the applicant is a family member of one of the Commission employees, which is not allowed by law either. She also mentioned that for other Boards, where certification might be required, the Director might know if the applicants were not certified on the area the application states. I also mentioned that the law that created the Commission requires for Board members to be familiar with rehabilitation services for the blind and; if this would be an area the Governor would expect the Executive Director to confirm. The Governor's office confirmed that this is the kind of information they would want me to provide. In other words, I should let the Governor's office know if I think a candidate does not have the experience they mention regarding vocational rehabilitation services for the blind.

She concluded by stating that agency directors, nor herself, have influence over the Governor. He just wants information so he can make his final decision.

That was the extent of the conversation.

Best regards,
Carlos R. Serván, J.D.
Executive Director

(LB 352) Sec. 4. 71-8604.

(1) The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired is created. The *governing board of the commission shall* consist of five members appointed by the Governor with the approval of a majority of the members of the Legislature. All board members shall have reasonable knowledge or experience in issues related to blindness which may include, but is not limited to, reasonable knowledge or experience acquired through membership in consumer organizations of the blind. No board member or his or her immediate family shall be a current employee of the commission. At least three board members shall be blind persons: One member shall be a member or designee of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska; one member shall be a member or designee of the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska; and one member may be a member of another consumer organization of the blind.

Break

A break was taken at 10:38 a.m.
The meeting resumed at 11:00 a.m.

Public Comment

Brad Loos – Brad asked if there is a possibility that the VA Hospital in Lincoln could get a hot food cafeteria. Currently they just have vending machines.

Director Serván noted that the building decides what they want to have at their facility. If they want a hot food cafeteria at their location they need to let us know.

However, it would not hurt to contact them to see if they are thinking about adding hot food service to their building. Director Serván noted that NCBVI will follow-up on this issue.

Jim Jirak – Jim asked what each commissioner has been doing since the last Commission meeting, which was November 2, 2019. Jim stated that Commissioner Heyen and Commissioner Scherbarth are excused from this question since they were just appointed to the Board in January.

Commissioner Rieken reported that she has been teaching students non-visual skills and self-advocacy. She had a meeting in Nebraska City where she had the opportunity to meet with a blind mentor. One of her students is considering a career in auto mechanics; so she met with the mentor, who is an auto mechanic and owns his own shop, to learn about alternative techniques that he uses. Commissioner Rieken will exchange contact information of these two individuals once her student is ready to take the next step.

Chairperson Bulger reported that the ACBN convention will be held on Saturday, April 18, 2020 in Omaha. The theme this year will be Older Blind. Chairperson Bulger noted that he serves as the President of the Omaha Association for the Blind. He participated in a Ski for Life adventure in South Dakota. He also serves on a Transportation Committee in Omaha.

Vice Chair Newman reported that he will be a speaker at the ACBN conference. He will present on leisure type activities. He also participated in the Ski for Life adventure in South Dakota. He is also doing NFB related activities as he is the president of the senior division. Vice Chair Newman also reported that the Friends of the Commission is working on a grant application for monies for Project Independence.

Brent Heyen reported that he has been appointed to the NCBVI Board of Commissioners. He noted that he is honored to be a member of the Board of Commissioners.

Kimberly Scherbarth reported that she has also been appointed to the NCBVI Board of Commissioners. As a NFB member she is coordinating their NFB Bell Academy for the Summer. This will be held at the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

Newsline® Update

NFB-Newsline Quarterly Report for October – December

Kimberly Scherbarth,

NFB--NEWSLINE of Nebraska Outreach Coordinator

This is the report from October 2019 through December 2019. As you may recall, I changed the format of the quarterly report for November. After that

report, Mike Hansen suggested moving the statistics from a Microsoft Word table, into an Excel spreadsheet. He set up an example with the data that was provided through the previous quarters. On sheet 2019, I listed this past quarter's data using in that format. I will now be sending a quarter that does not include the month immediately preceding the month of the Board of Commissioners meeting. For example, this quarter includes October, November, and December. (and not January). The reason for the change is the previous month's data is not available until the first of the following month (i.e. January's data is not available until February 1). So, at our next meeting the report will include, January, February, and March 2020.

If you look at the sheet titled 2019 you will see a totals column. I will NOT include totals in the 2020 sheet. Many of the statistics do not need to be totaled, but rather, compared to the previous months. You will also notice that there is a lot more information that I will be listing, and in a slightly different order. What I am listing comes directly from the NFB Newslines, sponsor page. I hope that the additional information is helpful and informative.

In October, I provided a demonstration of NFB NEWSLINE, with Alexa at the NFB of Nebraska's State Convention. During January, information about the Washington Seminar was added to NFB NEWSLINE. There have been ongoing issues with the Lincoln Journal Star. Some articles only list the title and writer, but do not have any content. I have contacted NEWSLINE in regard to these issues and am hoping to hear of a resolution.

In November, I took NFB NEWSLINE pamphlets to the Hastings Public Library, when I went to read a braille book to a group of children
In December, I took NFB NEWSLINE flyers to area businesses in Kearney.

**NFB Newsline
Nebraska Statistics 2019**

Usage	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Year To Date
Number of Subscribers:	2,034	2,037	2,043	2,043	2,043	2,045	2,046	2,047	2,047	2,053	2,052	2,053	2,053
New Subscribers:		3	6	0	0	2	1	1	0	3	2	1	19
Total Content Accesses:								4,164	4,179	4,586	4,031	4,356	21,316
Content Access Frequency (Minutes):								10.72	10.34	9.73	10.72	10.25	51.76
Telephone Calls:			965	954		886	802	865	830	823	860	889	7,874
Average Call Length (Minutes):								13.77	13.47	14.47	14.4	10.72	66.83
Total Call Minutes:								11,911	11,176	11,910	12,384	9,532	56,913
Online Web Sessions: NFB Newsline® Mobile Sessions:			1,518			981	1,038	1,095	1,366	1,075	1,271	1,346	9,690
NFB NEwsline® Alexa Sessions: In Your Pocket Deliveries:		436	506	555	555	451	553	541	388	424	364	291	5,064
E-mail Deliveries:		1	2	13	13		8	3	8	30	34	10	122
Total Online Accesses:				2,602		2,032	1,490	1,065	1,436	1,512	1,185	1,517	12,839
								253	286	353	264	234	1,390
								2,957	3,484	3,394	3,118	3,398	16,351

Nebraska Newspaper Accesses:	3,074	3,066	3,445	3,247	3,312	16,144
Local Weather/Emergency Alerts:	144	388	133	180	173	1,018
National Newspaper Accesses:	653	562	639	477	502	2,833
TV Listings:	445	443	383	459	487	2,217

Client Assistance Program (CAP) Complaints or issues
Report by Jerry Bryan, CAP Director

A client of Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) contacted the Client Assistance Program (CAP) because she was denied post-secondary educational services. After speaking with NCBVI, it was noted the client had received supports in the past for tuition assistance to attend the University of Colorado in Denver and several other Universities in Nebraska. At some point in the process, the client stopped all communications with NCBVI for almost a year. NCBVI staff was able to re-establish communication with the client; however, she re-located to Virginia and is currently a resident of the state with no intentions of moving back to Nebraska. After more discussion, it was discovered the client needed more help with career counseling and employment instead of post-secondary supports. CAP and NCBVI suggested she apply for VR services in Virginia as this would be the most appropriate agency to serve the client's needs for employment. NCBVI also agreed to continue to provide career-counseling supports to the client via teleconference once month until the client is eligible for services in Virginia. It appears the client's issues and concerns have been addressed and resolved.

The Client Assistance Program is also currently working on two separate cases to resolve concerns with the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI). These cases are still pending, as CAP has not yet reached resolutions with the clients.

Attended the NCBVI Supervisor Meetings.

Director Serván reported that one of the CAP cases has now been resolved. The case involved many issues. Everything was documented and the case was resolved.

New Business

2020 Combined State Plan Status Report

Director Serván reported that the law states that the State agency needs to have a recommendation or input from the State Rehabilitation Council, which NCBVI does not have because NCBVI is an independent consumer-controlled agency. Since it is governed by a Board of consumers, there is no State Rehabilitation Council.

The Nebraska Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor and the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired have released a draft of the Combined State Plan in compliance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

On January 30, 2020, the Nebraska Combined State Plan was posted for public comment.

NCBVI does not have many changes. The two main changes are the standard they are looking at, as they are looking at the combined report from VR and NCBVI and other WIOA partners. The other main change is that NCBVI will be going off Order of Selection.

A Public Hearing will be held on February 10, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. CST at the Nebraska VR, 3901 North 27 Street, Lincoln, Nebraska. This hearing will be broadcasted simultaneously at Nebraska VR locations across the state through interactive video conferencing.

Director Serván stated that while it is not necessary, it would be good to have some commissioners present. Director Serván noted that Nancy Flearl, Connie Daly and Kathy Stephens will attend.

Finish setting meeting topics for 2020; getting input from new commissioners

Saturday, May 2, 2020; Holiday Inn, Kearney. Focus Topic: There will be no Focus Topic as the commissioners will discuss the Executive Director's Evaluation.

Friday, July 31, 2020; Lincoln. Focus Topic: NCBVI 20th Anniversary Celebration.

Saturday, November 7, 2020; Omaha. Focus Topic: Tentative – Science Project.

Discuss & Act on Commissioner's Retreat

Chairperson Bulger reported that four years ago NCBVI had two new commissioners come on board and the current commissioners felt that it would be a good idea to have a Commissioner retreat. This would include training for the new commissioners and go over such items as the history of NCBVI, Commissioner job duties, the role of the Commissioners, and their communications between meetings. NCBVI's former Chairperson Mike Hansen did a good job in putting together an agenda for the Commissioner retreat.

After discussion, it was decided to have a one-day Commissioner orientation meeting on Saturday, March 28, 2020 from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the NCBVI offices. This meeting will not be a closed session, but it will be open to the public and former NCBVI Commissioners will be invited to attend.

Public Comment

Mike Hansen – Mike noted that the Public Meeting law does allow a committee to be formed. Chairperson Bulger thanked Mike for this reminder.

Brad Loos – Brad noted that he feels it is important to have Commissioner Orientation meetings in a public setting because NCBVI is setting a precedent of how new commissioner orientations take place.

Dale Oviatt – Dale stated that he does not always have a desire to come to NCBVI Commission meetings, but the Board can eliminate the whole issue of abiding by public meeting laws by having the meetings in an open session. Dale asked if the commissioners discussed items so confidential that they could not have a public meeting.

Mike Hansen – Mike noted that there is one thing that made the meeting confidential and that was some experiences that commissioners had which they would not feel comfortable speaking about in an open meeting. However, the vast majority of the meeting is not confidential. Mike stated that the majority of the meeting could be in an open session and they could go into executive session if they needed to speak about anything confidential.

Chairperson Bulger recommended that the Commission Board take a vote on this topic.

Vice Chair Newman moved to have the Commissioner Orientation meeting in an open session. This will take place at NCBVI in Lincoln on Saturday March 28, from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Commissioner Heyen seconded the motion.

All commissioners present voted in favor of the motion.

Typical Final Announcements

The next NCBVI Commission Board meeting is scheduled for Saturday, May 2, 2020 at the Holiday Inn in Kearney. The Executive Director annual evaluation will be discussed. .

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the May 2, 2020 Commission Board meeting, please email it to the NCBVI Commission Board at ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant
NCBVI

Mark Bulger, Chairperson
NCBVI Board of Commissioners

Lincoln District Activity Report – Connie Daly

Cheryl Livingston has announced that she is retiring at the end of March. She will be very difficult to replace. She has worked with our agency for 21 years. She is frequently the first person clients of the agency have contact with. We will miss her professional and calm demeanor. Her commitment as always been to provide the best services to blind Nebraskans.

Shelley Ritter started as a Case Aide at the front desk on October 28th. Nancy Coffman has transferred to the Center and is teaching technology. Nancy will be dearly missed in the Lincoln District. The Center is benefitting from our loss. We will hire a replacement for Nancy's position. We are able to hire a full time person for the Norfolk area with the additional funds to provide services to older blind. We interviewed last week. We are setting up a tour of the Center for top candidates.

Larry Mackey received an Excellence in Leadership award from NCBVI. He received recognition from the governor. He received the award for all the work he has done to support NBE. He has also been very creative in serving the older blind.

We have had several group teachings for older blind. We have two older blind individuals in the Center at this time. We have had several groups for Pre-ETS clients. We are using curriculum developed by Junior Achievement to teach financial literacy. We are teaching one financial literacy lesson each month. This month we will also prepare lunch. We have had six to eight teenagers join us on Saturday.

We were awarded the Corrections contract for vending. Three of the vendors are Lincoln clients so we are working with NBE to get everything in place and provide training to the vendors.

We assisted two people with finding employment in food services. We have placed one person as a Barista. We helped one person maintain their position as an Interviewer and one as a Statistical Clerk.

Transition Coordinator Activities:

This quarter we had a NFB Career Mentoring program with 24 Pre-ETS students. The theme this session focused on work based learning experiences. Attendees both prepared for and participated in some volunteer experiences around Omaha. Students and their mentors broke into groups and performed one of three jobs. They worked with a blind bike repairman and cleaning and preparing tandem bicycles for riding, worked with a blind mechanic to change the breaks on a pick-up truck, or assisted a local non-profit blindness organization with cleaning and preparing a public space in an apartment setting for all to enjoy. Additional

highlights included: Presentations and Discussion on Professional Conduct and Workplace Protocol; Discussions about Educational/Training Requirements, Degree, Certification, Licenses; completion of a small Group Project on The Anatomy of an Effective Informational Interview; Discussion of networking as a Job Search Skill; Presentation on Postsecondary Preparation, Placement Examinations, Training, etc.; and the customary, Continuation of refining and presenting their latest version of their elevator speeches.

The next retreat is scheduled for the first full weekend in March and is slated to focus on job readiness skills from many different angles.

In addition, March will also usher in a college preparatory based workshop for Pre-ETS and non-traditional students presented by David DeNotaris and his colleagues from Sky's The Limit Communications. This workshop will take place at the Graduate Hotel and will give hands on experiences for the participants in note taking skills, cane travel in college, technology use in college and much more.

In other ongoing efforts, both on a local district and statewide basis, we continue to provide opportunities internally for Pre-ETS students in-group settings. Some districts are conducting monthly lessons, while all three districts are having one or more sessions on a per-semester basis.

In addition, we continue to strengthen our collaboration with NCECBVI. Several Lincoln staff continue to provide group trainings and job site support with any appropriate Pre-ETS students even if they are from other districts. This quarter specifically six of these students attended a group session hosted at the Center apartments, which involved a collaborative cooking experience between them and the current Center clients. This session also included a movie theater business tour as well.

Carlos Servan continues to participate on the stakeholders group for NCECBVI and recently attended a meeting of this group. Finally, we do continue to hold meetings between the NCECBVI administration team and NCBVI management, supervisors and staff who work with transition. Several unforeseen health circumstances postponed the sessions this past quarter but we have one scheduled soon in February.

Omaha District Activity Report – Nancy Flearl

The quarter started off with Nancy Flearl being selected for the Excellence in Leadership award. NCBVI can give out up to two Excellence in Leadership Awards per year. Counselors continue to do great work in the schools and partnering with teachers. Kim has been working on a TDL class with TVI's from Bellevue Public schools where the first meeting was held on January 9. These

meetings will be bi-weekly where laundry, cooking, cleaning skills, and such will be addressed. Kim is also working in conjunction with TVI's from Bellevue and Papillion LA vista schools to facilitate a meeting with Beth Jordan from HKNC. Kim continues to attend IEP meetings at Papillion and Bellevue public schools.

Kathy attends IEP meetings as well as continues to network with TVI's so they can contact her directly for new referrals, which includes having initial meetings at the schools in order to learn more about NCBVI services. Adrienne meets with a student at Gretna public schools to work on job readiness skills along with the Para to reinforce skills while the student works at the job site as well as prepares for the next work assignment. Adrienne is also working with an art teacher at Madonna School to incorporate tactile art in a classroom for a student and their classmates.

Kelly attends IEP meeting for students at Bennington, OPS, Millard, and other public schools. Kelly meets monthly with a student and the TVI on Jaws Lessons at Millard public schools as well as provided information and resources for third graders learning about Louis Braille and blindness. Kelly has also collaborated with a TVI, O&M, Preschool Teacher, Para, and parents at Blair Public Schools. Tim continues to meet monthly with OPS students and attends IEP meetings. Kim and Kelly attend Metro Area Transition Group meetings where Kim will be working with Dr. Mary Spilane from Bellevue public schools, Leslie Wagner from NCECBVI, and Allison Kelberlau in order to make future student assessment days more accessible for visually impaired students.

Some schools are embracing counselor's coming into the school to meet and work on vocational counseling or technology. However, counselors are still meeting with students individually as well as in groups. Group teaching sessions are planned for when students are out of school or have early dismissal. Tabs and Jr. Tabs had activities decorating cookies over the holidays, learned how to manage money and the importance of budgeting, and decorated pumpkins non-visually to practice skills.

The Older Blind Mini Home Teaching groups meet monthly and are scheduled for the 3rd Wednesday of each month. Unfortunately, due to weather, the January older blind group teaching had to be canceled.

Kim continues to facilitate Job Club bi-weekly. Kim and other VR counselors are in the community at job fairs and other employment related activities. Tim attends meetings at HWS to build employer relationships and maintain knowledge and access to resources and training opportunities for consumers. Tim has also been building a partnership with Nebraska total care in order to make their systems accessible to screen readers to increase their applicant pool.

Kathy has been working with Nebraska Medicine on employment opportunities for consumers as well as Pizza Ranch, Blue Door Salon, and Catholic Health

Initiatives. Kelly has been working with Planet Fitness doing job development to increase employment opportunities. Counselors continue to work with the blind licensees at Offutt AFB as well as continue to network with employers and community resources on behalf of consumers.

Larry has taken on more supportive roles in updating agency software and equipment for agency staff. He and the tech committee work to support their districts, the Center and Administration.

The National Able Network representative Shane Donovan joined staff for the December staff meeting to discuss services and how to work together to best meet the needs of consumers. Counselors are also working on a partnership with Fontanelle Forest to provide an opportunity for Pre-ETS students to do a summer employment program focusing on Inclusion and diversity in the workplace. This program is in the development stage and more information is to come.

A consumer got a part-time job at Good Will as well as a part-time job at a Fremont gas station through a partnership with the Autism Center of Nebraska. Consumers also got jobs at the City of Omaha, the Pizza Ranch, the Monarch Investment and Management Group, UNMC, and one consumer became self-employed as a caregiver.

North Platte District Activity Report – Erin Brandyberry

Networking:

Fritz held an NCBVI booth at ESU 16's Parent Agency Night, and he continues to attend interagency meetings for North Platte. Angie networked with Ophthalmology staff at Oregon Trail Eye Clinic and Optometrists at Scottsbluff Vision about NCBVI services. Angie also met with staff at the Cirrus house in Scottsbluff on working with individuals who have vision loss. Angie also led the Vision Loss peer group in Scottsbluff, which resulted in two new referrals. Cristal continues to participate in monthly meetings for Project Search in Grand Island, Hastings, and Kearney; she also participates in the monthly EmployKRNY meetings. Jan, Cristal, and Angie have each done a significant amount of networking with school professionals where there are potential and current clients. Fritz and Deanna did a presentation at the Kearney VIPS group. Deanna also participated in the Aging Coalition meeting. Erin started attending monthly regional phone calls for OIB program managers, as well as monthly phone calls through OIB-TAC for OIB program managers to stay alert of best practices and to continue growing our OIB program. Erin participates in monthly EmployNP meetings. Erin participated in the Greater Nebraska Workforce Development Board meeting in January.

Projects:

Jan assisted the NBE program with improving the accessibility of the Profit and Loss statement that vendors complete monthly. Erin worked on the 7OB report for the 2019 fiscal year, and participated in several phone calls regarding the implementation of a new 7OB report. We held one Pre-ETS group teaching in North Platte where we had two staff from Mid Plains Community College speak to students regarding self-advocacy, post-secondary career opportunities, as well as one staff member sharing his own experiences as a blind professional and the need for vocational and alternatives training early on in his career.

Training:

Cristal attended a FEAT (Family Employment Awareness Training) in November where she was also able to network with many school professionals. Erin, Cristal, and Angie attended a Webinar titled “Engaging out of School and other Opportunity Youth in VR services”. Fritz attended a training titled “Problems of Unemployment among Social Security Disability.” Erin attended a training in January with Fred Schroeder, held at NCBVI.

Client Outcomes:

Cristal arranged and participated in post-secondary tours with clients at UNO, the CCC mechanics program, and the CCC culinary program. Cristal had a client complete a 3 day stay at the center who started center training in January. Erin had a client complete a 3 day stay in January. Angie had an OIB client complete Center training in December. Cristal arranged a work-based learning experience for her client a Brookstone Gardens. Cristal had a client gain employment as a nurse at Good Samaritan Hospital. Erin had a client gain employment at the National Federation of the Blind as the Social Media Coordinator. Fritz and Erin worked with a client and the NCBVI administration on the approval of a business plan for his self-employment farm and ranch which will have an incredibly positive impact on the client’s life.

Retirements and what’s ahead for the North Platte District:

After a combined 61+ years of service to NCBVI, both Jan Brandt and Deanna Jesse have found that it is time for their retirements. Their knowledge, expertise, and work in the field and for the agency overall is truly irreplaceable. We will truly miss them and the service they provided to blind and visually impaired Nebraskans.

Moving forward, we identified how important it is to continue growing our OIB services in the Western half of the state, so to continue providing quality services in that area without a gap in service Fritz Nuffer has elected to serve a primarily OIB caseload and will cover the areas that the North Platte and Kearney offices historically covered. We are in the process of hiring a Vocational Rehab Counselor to serve the areas of North Platte and Kearney in addition to what Erin and Cristal can provide. We are also hiring a new Rehab Technology Specialist who will serve the entire North Platte district.

Below, I have a note from each Jan and Deanna about their time spent at NCBVI:

From Deanna Jesse: When I started 31+ years ago I had no idea this would become my career. I have had many opportunities to grow as a person and a counselor. Whether working one on one with blind and visually impaired Nebraskans or organizing conferences, I found skills within myself that seemed to help me and the mission of the agency. The work NCBVI does is so important to helping people with vision loss and the public know that blindness should not stop people from pursuing their dreams and being equal contributors to our communities.

From Jan Brandt: A little over 30 years ago, I began an adventure, which led to a career for me with SVI (now NCBVI.) I have learned more from working as a secretary, Orientation Counselor and Technology Specialist than I ever did in a college classroom. So many wonderful people have enriched my life – staff, students, commissioners and all those random people I ran into at conventions. A heartfelt “Thank You!” to all of you for this journey.

Center Activity Report – Greg DeWall

Currently: 9 Students

7 students are VR

2 Students are Older Blind

There are currently no staff trainees

5 Three Day Stays

All the students participated in the Friends and Family Thanksgiving Feast.

There were no commencement meals

Tours: Five tours with agency consumers, two tours with State Senators offices.

Observations: No observations this quarter.

Volunteer Activities: Students of the Center participated in the ringing of the bell, for the Salvation Army.

Student Requested Activities: A group of the female students participated in a free financial literacy workshop for women.

Guest Speakers: Jazmine Smith , from Department of Labor, has come monthly. She has discussed resume writing techniques. For the next activity, multiple guests from Department of Labor will participate in order to give each of the students' one-on-one attention. Representatives from the Radio Talking Book Service visited the apartments to discuss their program. Students learned about the Radio Talking Book program and are looking forward to having the apartments equipped with the receivers to listen to the service.

Center Staff: The Center is happy to report we have divided the communications class. As of the first of the year, we have gone back to having a separate Braille class and computer class. Nancy Coffman, who recently transferred from the Lincoln district, has assumed the responsibilities of the technology instruction. Charli Saltzman, who recently completed her staff training, is our full time Braille class instructor. Center staff and students are enthusiastic about this change and are looking forward to quicker progress in both areas of instruction for students.

Center Supervisor: I am still eager to hire a new Home-Management instructor. Interviews have been going on with some regularity. However, we have yet to find the person who will fit the role and be the right addition to the Center team. Meanwhile, I am looking forward to working closely with the new Braille and Technology instructors in developing updated curriculums for their classes. As the Commission continues to distance ourselves from the financial crisis, and the budget is stabilized, I am excited to be able to involve Center students and staff in more activities and training opportunities.

Additional Notes: This is the second quarter we have opened the apartments and the Center to Older Blind individuals in Nebraska. As of now, we have 2 OIB students participating in training and making significant progress. In regards to the apartments, we recently upgraded five mattress sets, for the students comfort.

The Center currently has 9 students. There are no students who need one-on-one attention. This allows students to be more evenly spread out in classes, and get the necessary attention from instructors. We are looking forward to our apartments and training center being full in February, as we welcome an addition OIB student.

The total number of students attending the Center does not include staff trainees because they do not stay in the Center Apartments. We have 10 Center Apartments and so 10 students can attend the Center regardless of how many staff trainees we have. Nebraska consumers always have priority when attending the Center when it comes to consumers from other states.

Nebraska Business Enterprise Activity Report – Carol Jenkins

Vending Sites Update

Nebraska Department of Corrections

The Nebraska Department of Corrections has awarded NCBVI the bid for the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the 12 vending locations across Nebraska that NCBVI submitted a bid for. Carol Jenkins is currently working with blind vendors and sub-contractors to take over the sites on March 1, 2020.

Nebraska State Building Division

NCBVI is still in contract negotiations with the Nebraska State Building Division. Carol has been working with Nebraska Risk Management to obtain a group general liability insurance policy along with a Worker's Compensation policy for the NBE program. The NBE group general liability insurance policy took effect October 1, 2019, which lessened the cost of insurance for vendors. However, the Worker's Compensation policy has yet to be finalized for the contract. Once the contract has been fully executed, Carol will set up a training for relevant NCBVI staff, NBE Staff, and licensees who will be responsible for carrying out the contract.

Licensees Update

Vending Site Complaints

The categories of complaints that have come in to NCBVI this quarter have been as follows: vendors not coming often enough to stock machines, having expired products in machines, and not having vending sites clean and orderly. This is a reminder that NCBVI has all of the contracts with the various owners of facilities, and licensees are representing themselves, other licensees, other blind consumers, and NCBVI statewide.

Additional Notes

Policies and Procedures

Carol is still working with Nebraska Risk Management to include our vendors under NCBVI's current Worker's Compensation policy, which will be needed for the Department of Corrections contract as well as the current State Building Division contract still being negotiated. This policy will also be a benefit to our vendors as well as lessen costs for vendors.

The NBE Licensee Committee has passed the proposed amendments to the NBE Operator Agreement. Carol has submitted the NBE Operator Agreement to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) for approval.

NCBVI has begun contract negotiations with the Nebraska Department of Transportation to lessen the cost of utilities blind vendors pay for interstate rest areas along I-80.

Looking Ahead

NCBVI has no plans to do any major expansions for the NBE Program at this time. However, NCBVI will continue to work on previously agreed to projects for the NBE Program.

Business Office Activity Report – Kat Carroll

This past quarter, I have worked on the following projects:

- Worked on gathering and updating policies and procedures for upcoming RSA Monitoring.
- Worked on writing policies and procedures that were requested by RSA that the Agency didn't have, including Internal Controls policy.
- Worked on updating Cost Allocation Plan.
- Looking for additional ways to save the agency money without harming client services.
- Continued working on the reorganization of Business Office, continuing training the new Accountant I (Michelle Rogers), and Accounting Clerk I (Brandy Harper). Continue planning for how to maximize efficiency and internal controls with only Michelle, Brandy and I involved. This is a major challenge and still a work in progress.
- Attended the Regional CSAVR meeting in Kansas City in October.
- Worked with Julie to redesign object codes in both E1 and AWARE to align.
- Work on procurement of vending equipment for Corrections.
- Worked on cell phone boosters to improve reception within the headquarters building.
- Continue work on redesigning financial reports to simplify data entry, ensure better accuracy, and provide the right level of detail for a variety of users.

Kathy Stephens –

2019 Annual Report was completed and sent to the Governor and the senators. It is on file with the Unicameral.

We finished the surplus of the old vending machines that were located in the rest areas along the interstate.

NCBVI will have a State Staff Meeting on April 6-8, 2020 in Grand Island. I will be working on the logistics such as hotel arrangements for all staff and commissioners who will be attending.

Worked on updating the NCBVI Website.

I made arrangements for several staff to attend the NBE Sagebrush conference in Las Vegas.

Administration has been preparing for the upcoming RSA monitoring.