

Nebraska Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired  
Public Meeting  
Saturday, February 02, 2019  
4600 Valley Rd., Center Dining Room  
Lincoln, NE  
and  
505 A Broadway, Suite 700  
Scottsbluff, 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 9:16 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; Mike Hansen, Designee of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska; Chad Bell, Alliance (attended via video conference); Becky Rieken, Executive Secretary, Dakota City.

Commission staff present: Carlos Serván, Executive Director; Carol Jenkins, Deputy Director; Kat Carroll, Business Manager III; Connie Daly, Lincoln District Supervisor; Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor; Greg DeWall, Center Supervisor; Angie Hoff, VR Counselor; Jan Brandt, Technology Specialist; Shane Buresh, Transition Coordinator; Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant.

Public Present: Barbara Epworth, Omaha; Jim Jirak, Omaha; Sandy Alvarado, Omaha; Kenda Slavin, Omaha; Glennie Wieland, Omaha; Chris Brennenfoerder, Lincoln; Barbara Loos, Lincoln; Brad Loos, Lincoln; Miguel Rocha, Scottsbluff; Ryan Osentowski, Omaha.

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 Newsline® and Radio Talking Book. The Notice was also sent to ACBN, NFBN, and the NCBVI List Serve.

## Approval of the November 3, 2018 public meeting minutes

Commissioner Hansen moved to approve the Minutes of the November 3, 2018 Commission Meeting. Commissioner Newman seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

## Focus Topic: The NBE Program

Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, presented on the Focus Topic.

The NBE Program is a part of the National Business Enterprise (NBE) Program under the federal Randolph-Sheppard Act. The Randolph-Sheppard Act was established in 1936 to provide employment opportunities to help legally blind individuals across the Nation obtain employment. The intent of the Randolph-Sheppard Act was to help decrease the high unemployment rate among blind individuals by providing employment opportunities. The Randolph-Sheppard Act allows a State Licensing Agency (SLA) to establish small businesses for vending opportunities for blind individuals in which priority is given for Federal buildings across the Nation.

In Nebraska, NCBVI is the SLA for the NBE Program. Each small business may be comprised of anything from a few vending machines to a large cafeteria. In Nebraska, NCBVI is currently working on getting the Offutt Air Force Base dining hall cafeteria up and running as well as the vending machine contract for 26 Offutt Air Force Base breakrooms for the summer of 2019. NCBVI has an over-the-counter food service facility at the Lincoln State Office Building that is operated like a mini-cafeteria as well as having food catered in for the Lincoln Department of Transportation (DOT) building. Due to an HVAC renovation project in the Nebraska State Capitol, NCBVI temporarily has a Hy-Vee catering contract for the Nebraska State Capitol cafeteria through November of 2019 when the project is estimated to be completed.

Many States have a "Small Randolph-Sheppard Act," which includes a priority for state and local government buildings. In Nebraska, Senator Wishart introduced LB 220 on January 14, 2019, which, if passed, will more closely mirror the Federal Randolph Sheppard Act. The passage of this bill will not require NCBVI to bid for contracts because the bill will give priority to blind vendors for federal, state, and local government buildings.

Currently, NCBVI has vending facilities in most of the larger state buildings such as the Lincoln State Office Building, the Lincoln 501 Building, the Nebraska State Capitol, the Lincoln Executive Building, the Lincoln Health and Human Services Building, the Nebraska State Labs Building, Lincoln Department of Administrative Services Building, some Nebraska Department of Transportation Buildings, some

Lincoln Corrections Buildings, the Nebraska State Penitentiary, and the Omaha State Office Building just to name a few.

NCBVI also has vending sites at the Omaha National Parks Building, the Omaha Homeland Security Building, the Zorensky Federal Building, the Omaha Federal Court House, the Denney Federal Building, the Omaha Military Process Building, the Omaha Social Security Administration, Douglas County Civic Center, the Craft State Office Building, the North Platte Federal Building, Adam Middle School, the Progress Rail Repair Building, the Nebraska Historical Society, the Nebraska History Museum, the Lincoln Joint Forces, the Grand Island Immigration Building, the Grand Island Agriculture Building, the Lincoln Immigration Building, America's Trucking Buildings, Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Building, the Norfolk Regional Center, the Rest Areas along I-80, several Post Offices statewide, and more.

NCBVI currently has 14 licensed vendors operating 90 vending sites, as listed above, with two additional vendors in training in order to obtain their Nebraska license, which will officially allow the vendors to operate vending sites. NCBVI has two sub-contractor agreements in place to operate some Posts Offices statewide as well as the Grand Island area vending sites due to no current licensed vendor wanting to operate the locations. NCBVI never wants to miss an opportunity to obtain additional vending sites. This means NCBVI will sub-contract out vending sites in order to continue to have vending program income coming in to NCBVI. This may be due to no current vendor wanting to operate the vending site or due to a lack of NCBVI funds to pay for new machines for a current vendor to operate the vending site. At this time due to budget constraints, NCBVI has no plans to expand the NBE Program, with the exception of the sites NCBVI has currently committed.

State and Federal funds are primarily used to support and operate the NBE Program. Below, is an approximate of the NBE budget, which may not reflect the exact figures to date:

NBE Program Expenses:

Salaries and Benefits:	\$171,000
Other Operating Expenses:	\$7,500
Retirement:	\$13,000
Rent:	\$3,500
Repairs:	\$30,000
Inventory/Supplies/Training:	\$57,000
Travel:	\$1,500
State and Personal Vehicles:	\$6,000
Equipment:	\$61,500
Total Expenditures:	\$350,000

Total Current NBE Set-Aside: \$54,000

Total Set-Aside Paid Last Year:	\$20,000 (Included Above)
Total Ashland Funds (Site Closed):	\$30,000 (Included Above)
Total Set-Aside After Outstanding Invoices:	\$45,500 (Ashland funds used for machine purchases)
Total Designated Ashland Funds Left:	\$8,000
Buffer for Vendor Retirement Match:	\$30,000
Total Undesignated Set-Aside Left:	\$7,500

To aid in cost containment for the budget, NCBVI is working on agreements with Coke, Pepsi, and Dr. Pepper to allow the use of their vending machines with the understanding that NCBVI licensed vendors will purchase product directly from the company. NCBVI is also working on service/repair contracts with external local vending companies for vending machine repairs on a statewide basis. Contracting with outside companies across Nebraska will reduce the cost of mileage, travel time, and such for vending machine repairs and will allow for more efficient and timely repairs for vendors. As a part of the process for repairs, NCBVI is developing a Repair and Parts Request form in order to coordinate the process of vending machine repairs, ordering of parts, and such, which will allow NCBVI to more efficiently track and document authorizations and invoices for the budget.

NCBVI will be getting each district more involved in the NBE Program by contracting with Greater America, which is a vending machine distributor in Omaha; to train NBE licensed vendors as well as NCBVI staff on routine repairs and maintenance for vending machines at no cost to NCBVI. When vendors and NCBVI staff in each district have the knowledge and skills to complete routine repairs and maintenance, it will lessen repair costs for NCBVI.

NCBVI continues to provide training during the quarterly Blind Licensee Committee meetings to ensure upward mobility training opportunities for vendors. Moving forward, NCBVI will continue to work with the Blind Licensee Committee to update NBE Program forms, guidelines, and procedures to improve the NBE Program.

Commissioner Hansen asked how the Reduction in Force (RIF) would affect the Vending Program and how it would operate. Carol noted that she is currently supervising the NBE Program and Dave Robinson will be helping her with the business paperwork part of the program. As far as covering NBE statewide, Nancy Flearl is helping to work with Greater America to provide free training to our staff and vendors to do basic repairs and routine maintenance on the machines. This will in turn save the agency quite a bit of money. We are also working on a service agreement contracts with vending companies across the State of Nebraska to help fix machines that are more than just routine fixes. By doing this, we will reduce mileage costs and drive time which will also reduce NCBVI's expenditures.

Commissioner Hansen asked if our contracts with Pepsi, Coke and Dr. Pepper are new contracts or if they have been in existence for a while. Carol stated that previously, for the vendors who have been in the Program for a long time, the vendors took it upon themselves to work out those agreements with Pepsi, Coke and Dr. Pepper. Carol noted that she has begun to do these contracts from the agency's standpoint in order to formalize the process and have signed agreements. This will make it easier for coordination and tracking purposes.

Commissioner Hansen asked how many locations we are contracting out to private companies such as National Vending. These are locations that NCBVI has agreed to supply vending services to, but we are not able to supply a NBE Licensee to run the program at this time. Carol stated that she guesstimates that for National Vending it is between five and seven Post Offices throughout Nebraska and she is not sure the number of locations the other supplier has.

Commissioner Bell asked if NCBVI was going to begin phasing out our vending machines and not buy any more. This would eliminate NCBVI having to spend money on vending machines and maintenance. Carol stated that she is working with Chesterman, who owns all the Coke throughout the State of Nebraska, and it is in progress. However, if the vending site is large enough, Coke will want exclusive right to that location. Offutt is the first location we are trying this with and she will be trying it with the Interstate locations. This would mean that if Coke got the contract, we would only be able to sell coke products. We will see how this goes.

Commissioner Newman asked if NCBVI plans to grow the NBE Program. Carol noted that currently there are no plans to expand the NBE Program with the exception of the facilities that we already committed. We have committed to Offutt Air force Base, the Department of Corrections and the Department of Veteran's Affairs.

Director Serván noted that we will have the Department of Veteran's Affairs in Omaha and Lincoln. They will build the Lincoln location within two years, so this site will be coming in about two years.

Director Serván stated that NCBVI does not have money to purchase more vending machines; therefore, we will have subcontracts with Pepsi, Coke or Dr. Pepper. For the Federal buildings, we may contract with Universal Vending. For the State buildings, we should not have a problem if LB 220 passes. With LB 220 the State law would mirror the Federal law.

Commissioner Hansen asked if an exclusive contract with Coke, Pepsi or Dr. Pepper would save the agency money. Also, would the agency get the product at a lesser price if we used the product across the state?

Carol noted that the vendors have to pay for the product directly. This is a part of the vendors business. When we use Coke, Pepsi or Dr. Pepper machines, they fix the machines themselves. We are not allowed to work on them. In this respect, it does save the agency some money. Part of the struggles in working with Coke or Pepsi is if the site is not big enough to make it worthwhile, they are not even willing to have those discussions.

Commissioner Hansen asked if it would be possible for the vendors to collectively bargain to use one company and get a better price for the product. Carol noted that this is a conversation that the SLA and the licensee committee could have. Carol also noted that consumers are very passionate about their snacks and beverages. For example, the State Capitol had all Pepsi machines and we received many complaints about not having a Coke machine. In order to make money, the vendors need to keep their customers happy.

Commissioner Hansen noted that NCBVI is the State Licensing Authority. The Randolph-Sheppard Program requires a State Licensing Authority because they are the ones verifying that a licensee is qualified to participate. Therefore, someone could not be an independent licensee and not go through the State Licensing Authority. The State Licensing Authority helps facilitate such things as the set-aside funds, paperwork, etc.

### A Day in the Life of a Randolph Sheppard Vendor

Sandy Alvarado - Licensed Vendor since January 2009

I will change this to a typical week as a blind vendor with a route. During most weeks, I will be shopping at my local Sam's Club for supplies or a grocery store that may have good soda sales. I may place orders with distributors such as Pepsi, Coke, Dr. Pepper or Vistar. If I have items I can pick up at the distribution center I arrange the time to be there. I will meet delivery trucks just to save myself and my driver/reader time.

Now we can go through a typical day. I start at my indoor storage unit at a U-HAUL facility to put together the products I will need for the locations I planned to service that day. I have six Post Office stations, a Military Processing Center and Social Security in Omaha. I try to service two or three at a time. I use very large storage totes to place product in to help make transporting them easier. I have a cart that I have to take to transport the totes and sodas in and out of my units. I have tried to customize the totes inside to help minimize how much product I have to bring. If you keep the machines full enough, you will not need to bring a ton of things each week. I typically have three to four totes. I have one that I dubbed the "chip" tote, one the "snacks" tote, a "candy" tote and one for danishes and cookies. I have both bottled and canned beverages. Majority is 20 oz. bottles and they weigh 30 lbs. per case of 24. You have to be very strong to

throw those around every day. You need good packing and stacking skills so you do not have things falling off your cart, not that I have ever had that happen.

We have a van in which we carry all the products around. You will use those packing skills to load it without everything going everywhere. When preparing the totes I think about what locations we will be servicing that day and plan what I will need to take as far as what they really like or what sodas they will most likely need. After a few months taking care of a location you do notice a pattern if you track it in some manner. I have a pretty good memory but still send myself notes for what to definitely remember for the next visit.

Some days it feels like all we do is drive from place to place. We are loaded and ready to start the day. We arrive and load up our cart with the totes and if I already know I need one case of soda for sure I take that in as well. Some locations are secured so we need to show our GSA badges and, if needed, go through scanners. Once arriving at the machines, I ask my reader/driver if there are any notes or messages on the digital readouts on the machines. If someone has left a note concerning a refund, I take care of that on my way out the building. My helper works on the snack machine to check expiration dates and fill the machine while I work on the sodas. I am usually done faster so I help locate items to hand to them when I finish. I wipe down the machines at least once a month with a cleaning wipe and a dusting cloth for the tops. I keep track of what seems to be selling faster and what seems to take a while. I always ask the customers I encounter if they have any requests for items that I can put in the machines and gage if they seem to be happy with the choices currently offered.

Well that is the servicing portion but not all of my day. I use an Apple iPhone because of its ease of usability with voice over built in. On said phone, I have several apps that I use such as Seeing AI, KNFB reader, local grocery store apps, email, and messages calendar. Once home I get on my laptop and log the locations and mileage for the day for my reports each month. If I had done any shopping or picked up product, I place the receipts in a small shoebox sized tote to keep them clean until I copy them. I am always looking for new product so I will check out Sam's app and see if there is anything new or the store apps to see what they may have.

Andrea Chizek - Chizek Vending

My name is Andrea Chizek, I am originally from a small town in central Nebraska. I came to Lincoln in 2010 to go through the Center and I loved it here I decided to stay. I was struggling to find a job and my counselor suggested the vending program to me. I thought it was interesting and it sounded very neat.

Prior to moving forward as a Randolph Shepard Vendor, I spend time with Victor Ireland to have a greater understanding of what this job would entail. He was a wonderful mentor to me.

I decided that I would like to join the vending business and I started Chizek Vending on February 13, 2017. I operate 27 vending machines. These machines are located at Cornhusker State Industry, Nebraska State Penitentiary, Cert Building, Nebraska Department of Transportation and the Health Lab. I also have catering daily at the Nebraska Department of Transportation.

I am on-site with my various locations most days and when not there, I always have paperwork to organize in order to complete my profit and loss reports in a timely manner.

For employees, I had a person that assisted with the catering, but they are no longer with me. I handle all this on my own. I do have a reader/driver to assist with travel to and from my various sites and for shopping.

When my reader is not available, I use I.D. Mate for checking information regarding products. I have a scanner for recording receipts for product purchased. I use a computer with JAWS for completing all the necessary paperwork.

I am the secretary of the Blind Licensee Committee. This gives me greater insights into the program. It also helps me develop relationships with other vendors in the program.

I see that attending training at the Nebraska Center of the Blind as what made such a difference in my life. Also having a job I enjoy is important. I work hard at every location I have. I have built relationships with people in the various facilities. I continue to learn and grow my business.

Atty Svendsen

Hello fellow travelers. I am Atty Svendsen a blind vendor, and this is my tale.

You may think, oh, vendor, that person who supplies you with that delicious treat at just the right time, and just the right place. That's what I thought too.

I was misinformed! Vendors are heroes on a quest! To complete their missions they must have certain abilities.

They must have strength to heft and heave, drag and scoot, push and pull, carry and lug a myriad of things in arms, carts, cars, dollies and boxes upon boxes, to

quench the thirst and quell the hunger of the good citizens who dwell within the city.

They must have dexterity so they can catch puffy bags of chips in mid-air. Stop an exploding soda can before it does too much sticky damage, Slip nimble fingers into the dark crevices of the machines to fish-out a stray dime or stomp a foot down on a bouncing quarter.

They must have constitution, for they will be weathering frigid winds, blazing heat, pouring rain, driving sleet, piles of snow, slippery ice and tornados to deliver the city their mid-morning power bar.

They must be highly intelligent to create formulas, calculate figures, guard the treasurer, pay the piper, and keep the light bulbs changed. To perform these magical tasks I have an assistant as a reader/driver. I have an iPhone, laptop with JAWS and I use an Orbit, which is a portable notetaker with a Braille display. These tools aid me with monthly inventory numbers, reports and meter readings

They must have charisma to cajole ruffled citizens when an especially hungry machine eats their dollar or their favorite chips have left the building. They must negotiate and be respectful to the hierarchy and be extra nice to the guys with guns. With verbal skills they frugally haggle with the merchants in the huge markets and finesse their way through the many citizens who have never encountered a snack-elf in person before.

Finally, they must use wisdom to understand when it is time to change the choice, bin the trash and learn from the past. They must hone their intuition, trust themselves and know when to ask for help.

Master level vendors teach and never stop learning. Qui docet Discit "He who teaches, learns. Being wise is knowing when to rest, restore, refresh, and then, how to get up and find the path again."

As I and my trusty white cane see more, negotiate the buildings, people, machines and city, I shall share my quests, mishaps, companions, discoveries, and technology to those who wish to learn as well.

You're welcome to come along for the ride.

Need some trail mix?

A beverage with that?

Better take some along, just in case cause I'm about to tell you about my buildings.

Federal courthouse:

The guards are friendly, the building manager is fair and helpful and the patrons, they love their cheese, diet coke and nuts. They are patient when they lose money and hopeful when I introduce new items.

In addition, not one of them knows how to wipe out a microwave.

City County:

Ever been caught in a hungry mob, come on down to the city county building around noon and you will find out. People everywhere, money falling into the machines like wishes and everyone elbowing everyone else aside to use the highly coveted microwaves. Fortunately, I do not have to clean those.

Pop vanishes like frost in July and I can sling 132 twelve packs of soda and that will not even cover them for a week. I had to remove the 20 ounce bottles from that building because who can sling 100 of those in a week? Not this small woman!

The Douglas county courthouse side is a little like being in a bus station only with briefcases and worried citizens. Sometimes people are getting married, divorced or arrested. Tots are roaming with adults so I put kid-friendly items in the machines for the children to pester their parents about. It works.

The storage in the city county building is not adequate but they make up for it by eating all the sandwiches before they expire and everyone is very friendly. Well, except for the diet pepsi drinkers, they get mad when it runs dry.

I have a storage unit aside from my buildings where I stage from and juggle hundreds of dollars of munchable items. Sometimes the stacks of boxes are taller than me. My assistant and I can put \$900 of snacks in a Chevy Malibu, which takes talent!

Zorinsky:

With fifteen machines, it has the most in one place. There are over a thousand people who like their snacks, so I go on the weekends when the building is mostly empty. Hauling a cart of 40 twelve packs, another one with stacks of chip boxes, candy totes and cupcakes is a lot easier when no one is home. Besides, when a can explodes and the foam flies, and it will, it is easier not to have ten people tracking through it before I can clean it up. On the fourth floor no one eats much, eighth floor must have snickers, six must have jerky and rice crispy treats and floor two, wants Heath bars and sugar doughnuts. One, well, they will eat everything but peanut butter snickers. Knowing the appetites of the floors pays the bills.

In Zorinsky they inspect the machines and you pass or fail. It is a tight ship. Maybe I will introduce seaweed snacks to them, smiling.

The Post Office Annex:

Two machines there and one of them is cold food and the other has basic soda. Not a hard place to be, folks are friendly, grateful and pinch their pennies. I do not really make much money but I make happiness for them, so it feels rewarding.

Until December, I had Homeland and National Parks as well. Having so many buildings was over-whelming for me, so I put Homeland and Parks up for bid. I had to hire so many different people to do so many different things that I was frazzled and paying out all my profit.

Ever tried hauling twelve 24 cases of 20-ounce bottles across town, loading them onto a cart, then into the car, unloading from the car onto a cart, wheeling in the cart, then loading the machines, when it is zero degrees, maybe raining, or 95 on a summers day? Weather matters. Did you know that in a matter of minutes a \$30 package of candy bars can turn into chocolate soup in August?

National Parks was an interesting building with difficult management. Sometimes there are people who do not mesh well. It was better we parted ways and maintained mutual respect rather than continuing with useless discourse. In other words the building manager did not like what I put in the cold food machine and I did not like putting in what she wanted, because it never would sell. Picture this, a food truck every day and a cold food machine filled with sandwiches just sitting in there expiring. I am sure the next vender will figure out something else. A snack-elf has to know when to pass the flag.

With my four buildings and a trusty, strong, smart, machine savvy assistant, things are manageable and the magic is back.

Well, there is one more beast I must vanquish, Profit and Loss Reports. I cannot say that too loudly, Jan might hear me. Flimsy receipts, they hide, tear, fade, and some are as long as scrolls. And don't get me started on numbers. Oh yes, I like to see them adding up in the bank, but taxes, who invented those? Numbers point fingers. You did not know numbers could do that. However, I am determined to balance my brain and my paperwork. This is a learning process with many details to learn. However, as mentioned, I am determined to prevail. Once I do that, I shall be happy as a clam. Hmmm, clams, maybe I'll put those with the seaweed snacks. Let's see how those fly; they wanted healthy.

May your snacks go with you!

## **Business**

### **Report from the Executive Director**

- I. Client Statistics October 1, 2018 through December 30, 2018 – FFY 2019

A. For Older Blind/Independent Living services

At the beginning of the fiscal year, 54 individuals applied for services. Of these, 53 applicants were accepted for services; one applicant was not accepted for services, reason being withdrawn. There were no applicants remaining at the end of the period.

There were 100 active clients on hand at the beginning of the fiscal year. Fifty-three clients were added to active status since the beginning of the fiscal year, making for a total of 153 clients altogether in active status during the fiscal year. Of these, 36 clients closed successful, 8 clients closed unsuccessful with two deaths, one institutionalized, one moved, two withdrawn and two closed for other reasons. One hundred and nine clients remain in active status at the end of the period. Total number of OIB applicants and clients served in all statuses at the end of the period was 154.

B. Independent Living under 55

Since the beginning of the fiscal year, there were 12 applicants along with two carried over from the previous fiscal year. Twelve applicants were accepted for service with two remaining at the end of the quarter. Along with the 36 carried over from the previous fiscal year, a total of 48 clients are currently in active status. Of these, four clients closed successful and three closed unsuccessful, two due to other reasons and one due to withdrawn. Forty-one remain in active status. Along with the two remaining applicants for a total of forty-three clients at the end of the period. Total number of IL applicants and clients in all statuses served at the end of the period was 50.

C. Vocational Rehabilitation

Since the beginning of the fiscal year, there were 37 applicants for services. Along with 18 on hand at the beginning of the fiscal year, there is a total of 55 applicants. Of these, 35 applicants were accepted for services; 10 applicants were not accepted for services: three had no disabling condition, one for health/medical, two were no longer interested in receiving services, two were unable to locate or contact, and two do not require VR services. Ten applicants remain at the end of the period.

Three hundred thirty-six clients were in active status at the beginning of the year. Thirty-five clients were accepted for services since the beginning of the fiscal year, totaling 371 clients in active status during the fiscal year. Of these, six clients were closed as successful. Twenty clients were closed as unsuccessful after an IPE was developed. The reasons for closure are: seven were no longer interested in services, one does not require VR services, one has a disability too significant to benefit from VR, two for health/medical reasons, three were unable to be located, one transferred to another agency, one for long term extended services not available, and four for all other reasons. Five clients were closed as unsuccessful before an IPE was developed for the following reasons: two were unable to be

located, one for long term extended services not available and two for all other reasons. Three hundred forty remain in active status. Including the 10 applicants, there are a total of three hundred fifty clients. Total number of VR clients served in Active Statuses was 371. Total number of VR clients in all statuses served at the end of the period was 391. From October 2018 – December 2018 we had clients get jobs as: Physical Therapist, Elementary School Teacher, Court Reporter, Skincare Specialist, Community Health Worker, and Teacher Assistant.

## II. Administration

Senator Crawford introduced LB123, a bill that will exempt the Commission from having to scan and up-load all our contracts into the State system. HHSS and VR General already have an exemption for this for client's services, which has confidential information. If this bill passes, it will save a great deal of time for us. In addition, Senator Wishart introduced LB220, the bill to strengthen the NBE law in Nebraska by changing provisions regarding vending facility programs in state buildings for blind vendors.

Some of the events/meetings I attended were the WIOA Partners meetings, ADA Task Force, CSAVR and NCSAB fall conference, meeting with Commissioners Mark Bulger and Mike Hansen to go over our budget situation, and meeting with the director of VR general and Executive Director of Nebraska Independent Living to talk about sharing resources under Expansion and Innovation.

The State canceled the contract to build Fuzion, which means that we need to continue having separate software programs to run our business.

Do to the ongoing budget deficit; we have been working more on balancing the budget and looking at all aspects including reducing office space and closing offices. We decided to cut the subscriptions for CSAVR, NFBEI, and the Newline papers for Kearney and Norfolk. We cut Open Book licenses back from 15 to 5, cut TypeAbility licenses back from 15 to 10, cut Duxbury licenses back from 10 to 5; and the monthly rates for cell phones have been reduced and the cost of hot spots has been cut in half.

We also started the process for implementation of Order of Selection. We had meetings with CAP and RSA respectively to make sure that we are following all the procedures for Order of Selection. The notice for the public meeting was sent out on January 15 and the meeting will take place on February 13, so Order of Selection can be implemented on March 1. We will need an official word from the Board stating that you are aware of our financial situation and getting into Order of Selection is inevitable and thus, support it. The Client Assistance Program (CAP) already sent a letter of support for the implementation of Order of Selection. We had some correspondence with RSA, and they are asking for more financial detail, including forecasting our budget with and without Order of

Selection, before they approve it. We need to write more policies on Fee Schedules to put more restriction on client expenses.

The 2018 Annual Report was completed and sent to the Governor and the senators. It is on file with the Unicameral. The amendment for our rules is still pending. The Secretary of State already looked at them, and the Attorney General Office gave their stamp of approval. Now is at the Governor's office for its final approval. If LB220 passes, we will have to amend that section of the rule. We also completed and sent all the annual reports required by RSA.

### Human Resources

Erin Brandyberry returned from maternity leave the second week of December. Tim returned to work on November 26, after several weeks of sick leave. Elaine Kavulak will retire on March 29, 2019. Sarah Martin is no longer with us, and do to the budget restraints, we decided that we are not rehiring for that position. In addition, we will lay off a number of staff members; all areas will be affected. We will have to make a lot of changes on how we run the agency and how we provide services in the future.

### Training:

Kat Carroll and Greg DeWall attended the first session of the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute (NRLI) seminar in December. NRLI is giving Kat and Greg a scholarship for the second session. We will evaluate the continuation of their attendance to complete the third and four session as we check our financial situation.

Adrienne completed the following trainings: procurement full scope and certification, disabilities in the Media, and was a keynote speaker for disability week at UNK. Fritz attended a training through the job driven technical center.

As a result of his participation in the training by The National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (NRTC), Tim Jefferson was asked to attend the annual State of the Science Conference, in Arlington, Virginia on February 28 and March 1, 2019. He will share how this training impacted him and how he approaches placement services and working with business. NRTC will be providing the funding for him to attend the entire conference.

We will have our State Staff meeting on April 2 and 3 in Lincoln, at 4600 Valley Road, next to our offices in the first floor.

### III. Field Services:

The Lincoln District has scheduled Group Home Teachings every month for the upcoming year. One will be focused on Older Blind and another one will be focused on Pre-ETS. Every Friday, several staff are in Nebraska City providing

some training to our clients at NCECBVI. This has really helped our relationship with the school.

Lincoln had one person get a job as a result of their attendance at a job fair. The Lincoln District has approached the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce about putting together a workshop on how to hire the disabled. We are partnering with the General VR agency to put the workshop on. It will be held on March 5, 2019.

The Omaha District has started doing more group teachings for pre-ET students and older blind. Each district is working more with public schools and parents to be able to spend more time with Pre-ETS.

Kim has continued to hold the Omaha's Job Club and is now starting to split her time for this meeting at Heartland Workforce Solution. There are often employers there providing for opportunities to work on interviewing skills, etc. They have Career Exploration Networking Tours (CENTS) tours for various industries. These tours are comprised of a group touring three businesses in a particular industry, learning of all the jobs available, meeting human resource and hiring supervisors. They have lunch and then have on-site interviews. They are attending job fairs either monthly or every other month based on where they are and what employers are attending.

Our staff is also involved with Project Search and being part of the planning committee for the State Job Fair Conference in Lincoln this April.

Our field staff continues to network with different public and private entities across the state, as well as being part of the WIOA local Board meetings.

We continue meeting with NCECBVI and we held our second of four meetings scheduled for this year during this quarter. We have been invited by NCECBVI to join a new transition advisory committee with many third-party agencies. Through the efforts of several Lincoln staff, we continue to provide a series of monthly group trainings at NCECBVI with their in-house Pre-ETS clients. The NCECBVI transition Specialist and Shane Buresh will also be presenting a joint session at the statewide transition conference in February. In November, Shane presented at several UNL teacher prep classes with a number of future vision and special education instructors.

NFB Mentoring program had a retreat during the first weekend of November where attendees conducted debates about what accommodations to utilize at work and school; heard from a panel of employed blind Nebraskans; played a game of "To Tell the Truth" to try and discover the jobs of other blind persons; traveled non-visually to lunch in the Old Market; watched and discussed the documentary "Do You Dream in Color", which is about four blind teen-agers coming of age; conducted mock job interviews; constructed and presented

elevator speeches; and more. Three new mentees have now joined bringing the total to fourteen

#### IV. Training Center:

The Center is nearly full, with nine students. At this time, there are no students who need one-on-one attention. Eight representatives from the Nebraska Partner Council toured the center. We had three tours with agency consumers, seven representatives from DHHS, and twelve Union College Students.

Three Union College students observed classes at different times. Center students participated in the ringing of the bells, for the Salvation Army. This took place at the Gateway Mall. Students took turns ringing bells while their fellow students did some holiday shopping. In January, the students enjoyed a movie and snacks at the theatre.

The Department of Labor continues to come every month and they have discussed interviewing techniques. In addition, they have assigned homework for the students, such as researching potential employers of interest for each candidate.

The Center's travel instructor, Jeff Altman, has begun attending the Star-Tran monthly meetings. Instructors are regularly working on projects to improve their classes and participate in webinars to gain knowledge in working with students with multiple disabilities. Cindy, the Center's client services counselor, has been working diligently to get students connected with comparable benefits. This allows students to get better connected with community resources, such as SNAP benefits, as well as help shave costs for NCBVI. Matt Hackert, the Center's Communication instructor, is pursuing his Rehabilitation Teaching Certification. This will strengthen Matt's teaching abilities, as well as add to the credentials Center instructors possess.

In December, three students graduated. Of these students, two of them are signed up for and attending college classes in Lincoln.

#### V. Nebraska Business Enterprise

Unassigned funds are extra funds sent to active vendor retirement accounts. Due to NCBVI's budget deficit, NCBVI will be working with the Blind Licensee Committee to get the use of unassigned funds changed to be able to be used for maintenance and replacement of equipment, purchase of new equipment, and management services.

In regard to a vending sites update, Carol Jenkins continues to work on finalizing the contract with the Nebraska State Building Division. Once a contract has been fully executed, Carol Jenkins will set up a training for relevant NCBVI staff and licensees who will be responsible for carrying out the contract.

We are still waiting for the RFP from the Department of Corrections for us to bid on.

On the area of developing new sites, I have been working diligently to negotiate the cafeteria details to move the project forward and we had a contract signed in November 2018. In addition, Carol Jenkins has initiated discussions regarding the permit/contract for the vending machines for the 26 breakrooms at USSTRATCOM's new building We will be contracting with Coca Cola to use their machines.

John Schmitt, our VR counselor, worked with a blind vendor to find an opportunity with Norfolk Regional Center vending facility. Carol Jenkins worked on negotiations and is in the final stages of completing the contract for our vendor to start operating on February 4, 2019.

The NBE Program has two potential licensees in training working to earn their Nebraska license.

The categories of complaints that have come in to Carol Jenkins this quarter have been: Machines being less than 50% full, vendors not coming often enough to stock machines, and having expired products. Carol Jenkins discussed these complaints at the Blind Licensee Committee meeting on December 7, 2018 as well as gave a reminder that NCBVI has all of the contracts with the various owners of facilities. The licensees are representing themselves, other licensees, other blind consumers, and NCBVI statewide.

Carol Jenkins continues to work with Forsyth Insurance to try to obtain a group insurance policy for the NBE active vendors. The goal is to try to obtain a group policy that can provide the necessary coverage, but at the same time have each NBE active vendor pay less money for coverage.

Carol Jenkins is working with the Blind Licensee Committee to update the NBE Program Profit and Loss allowable deductions list to reflect the current needs of the vendors as well as NCBVI. Carol is also working with staff and NBE Licensees to create a NBE Handbook for Licensees as well as a NBE Handbook for NCBVI Staff.

Looking ahead, due to the budget deficit, NCBVI has no plans to expand the NBE Program at this time. However, NCBVI will continue to work on previously agreed two projects.

## Budget and Biennium Update

The NCBVI Leadership Team met with Chairperson Bulger and Commissioner Hansen last November to go over the budget situation. They also met with Employee Relations and the President of the Union as well as their attorney to talk about NCBVI's Reduction in Force (RIF) plan. They also had several conference calls with RSA to talk about Order of Selection.

Director Serván reported that when he became the NCBVI Interim Director and subsequently the Executive Director, one of the first meetings he went to was a National training meeting in Omaha. RSA was present at this meeting and they announced that we were not going to get match reallocation because it was decided that the money was going to go to the states who were affected by the hurricane. Since this time, we have been looking closer and closer at the budget. At first, we looked mostly at cutting spending in Operations. We did cut a lot of spending, but it was not enough. By the end of the last quarter, we realized that we made about all the cuts we could to Operations. We then started to look at the office space that we rent, and cutting in this area was still not going to be enough. We then started looking into our largest expenses, staff members and clients. Director Serván stated that he did not want to look at Order of Selection but he thought if we looked at Order of Selection, perhaps we would not have to reduce our staffing. Staff members were aware of what the situation with the budget was. We talked about the budget every month at the supervisors meetings and the supervisors went back to their Districts and informed staff of the budget situation.

NCBVI is in this budget situation because we were relying too much on reallocation and social security reimbursement. At one point, we were carrying about 2.5 million dollars. In 2017, NCBVI spent around \$500,000 on the AWARE system. This was the same year that we did not get much reallocation money. In past years, we had received about \$800,000 and that year we received about \$85,000. For a small agency like NCBVI, this is a lot of money. The following year, we requested \$900,000 and we only received \$400,000. Carryover funds keep going down. Then we look at Social Security Reimbursement Income. In past years, we were receiving \$600,000 to \$800,000. As we looked at numbers, it looked like this year we would receive around \$185,000. Our overall expenditures for this fiscal year is about 5.9 Million dollars and our state and federal grant is only 4.3 Million dollars. Therefore, we are talking about a 1.6 Million dollar deficit that we need to cut. The areas we can cut are operations, staff and client services. As we talked to staff members, we asked them to give us ideas on where to cut money. However, there is only so much that we can reduce from operations so now we must look at staff members and client services.

Director Serván noted that for the last 15 years he kept hearing across the nation how the economy was doing and how state agencies were laying off staff and cutting services. At that time, NCBVI was not having to do this because of the reallocation funds and social security reimbursements we were receiving. Director Serván stated that he spoke to General VR in Lincoln and informed them that we were going to be laying off about 20% of our staff. General VR informed him that in looking at their staffing freeze, they have lost about 25% of their staff. General VR has been in Order of Selection for more than a year already. In spite of the situation, NCBVI is doing a good job. Director Serván noted that he did speak with other state agencies to see if there were other ways that NCBVI could deal with this situation and they stated that they have also had to go through staff layoffs and Order of Selection. Currently, there are approximately 43 agencies in Order of Selection out of about 70 agencies.

Another thing that affects the agencies budget is the mandate of spending 15% of our budget on pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS). NCBVI use to spend around \$80,000 on transition, which is mainly WAGES and Winnerfest. Now, we have to spend \$450,000 on transition. This takes money away from other services. Another problem with this is that there are many restrictions on what agencies can count for Pre-ETS services. We cannot count room and board, transportation, tuition and job coaching to name a few. State directors have been complaining about this for the past four years. The Assistant Secretary for Education is aware of this. Last week, President Trump sent his nomination of Mark Schultz for RSA Commissioner. Mark is a former state director so he is very aware of what this situation is. Director Serván noted that last week he received an email from the President of NCSAB saying that the Assistant Secretary is saying that he is still working on this and that we will be receiving more information on Pre-ETS. In the meantime, we are stuck with the regulations as they are.

Commissioner Newman reported that a few years ago the Board was told by the State auditors that they need to pay more attention to NCBVI's budget. At that time, they started to get more budget reports from the agency. Commissioner Newman asked how the commissioners could better help in the future.

Commissioner Hansen noted that back in November 2018, Director Serván did report to the commissioners that NCBVI was having financial trouble and budget issues. Commissioner Hansen stated that he believes that the commissioners did not realize the depth of the problem. Commissioner Hansen stated that some of the financial reports that Bill Brown began sending them because of the auditor recommendation were information overload because it was a low level of information. The commissioners needed budget information that was at a higher summary level in order to reasonably watch things. Commissioner Hansen noted that the Board is currently working with Kat Carroll to get budget reports that the commissioners can easily understand. Commissioner Hansen asked what the commissioners could do to help support the agency better.

Director Serván stated that he knew that the NCBVI finances were not in good shape and he reiterated this at almost every meeting he has had with staff and consumers. Director Serván noted that his message might not have been strong enough because he did not have exact numbers. He had received the same budget information from Bill Brown that the commissioners had received. Bill used to give all the budget numbers to him and the Board by December or January. Director Serván noted that when he reported to the commissioners last November he knew that NCBVI still needed to make some more cuts, but at that time he did not think that NCBVI would get into Order of Selection. After this time, Kat Carroll got him all the budget numbers that he had requested so he could start projecting for the future. This is when they realized that they could not make any more cuts in operations and they would need to look at other areas. At this time, he communicated this to the Board and had meetings with the supervisors. The supervisors in turn communicated this to their staff.

As far as how the commissioners can get more involved, Commissioner Hansen already communicated with Kat Carroll and she will be providing the Board some budget reports that are easy to digest. Kat is paying close attention to the budget numbers and she will provide the information that is needed. Director Serván stated that he thinks that it is good that the commissioners look at the budget numbers and ask questions. Director Serván noted that the commissioners are welcome to call Kat Carroll directly with budget questions if they wish, or they can call him.

Director Serván noted that it would be great if the commissioners can come to the NCBVI Budget Hearing to testify. The Unicameral has been making budget cuts for several years, so when he talks to senators about getting additional money for NCBVI, they suggest asking for additional funding for senior blind. The NCBVI Budget Hearing is scheduled for March 7, 2019. NCBVI is requesting \$540,000; and hopefully, we can get most of that money. If this happens, we hope to rehire some of the staff that we are laying off. Moving forward, if staff members or consumers contact the Board they should provide information. Director Serván stated that he wants to remain transparent. Director Serván added that he is open to ideas. Director Serván added that NCBVI does not want to lay off staff, but at this time we do not have a choice, just like we don't have a choice about Order of Selection.

Commissioner Hansen reported that he had mentioned that previously they would receive financial reports that were very difficult to decipher. Essentially, they were receiving copies of the financial ledger, which is hard to understand without doing a lot of number crunching. The Board is currently working with Kat Carroll to develop a spreadsheet that they will be tracking on a monthly basis. This spreadsheet will help them track each of NCBVI's grants and funding sources. The Board will use this tool to help them forecast large expenditures and better track the flow of money.

Chairperson Bulger stated that he considers himself a numbers person, and he was a little shocked initially when he learned of the depth of the budget issues. He and Commissioner Hansen met with the Leadership Team when they realized the budget issues. It quickly became apparent that the reason we are in this situation is that NCBVI is not getting the money it used to get. Therefore, we are going to have to make some cuts.

Break – A break was taken at 10:55 a.m. The meeting resumed at 11:13 a.m.

Public Comment –

Jim Jirak – Jim stated that he would like to hear from each of the Board members about what they have been up to since the last Commission meeting.

Commissioner Hansen reported that in November, he and Chairperson Bulger met with the NCBVI Leadership Team to start some discussions about what is going on with the Commission's financial status. Since then, he has been working with Kat Carroll to improve the tools that the Board has to track the agency's finances.

Commissioner Hansen noted that he has been working as a mentor for the NCBVI Mentoring Program. He has three mentees and this is a bit overwhelming. He stays in touch with all of them. He is working to help plan the next mentoring activity, which will happen in early April. They will be meeting on UNL's campus to do some work on job skills. In December, he went to the Center graduation as one of his mentees was graduating.

Vice Chairperson Newman reported that he continues to pass on job opportunities that he receives via email. He attended the Omaha office Holiday potluck. He is a member of Friends of the Commission and they have been working to help with some testimony for the NCBVI Budget hearing. The Friends of the Commission is interested in everything that NCBVI does and they are going to see if there are services that Friends can help with.

Commissioner Bell reported that he has been busy with Commission related emails. He is also a para for a blind 5<sup>th</sup> grade student. On a personal level, they have a foreign exchange student from Austria staying with them.

Commissioner Rieken reported that she has a student who is in the mentor programs and she checks up with her often. She is planning to attend the Transition conference in Kearney, which will take place in a few weeks.

Chairperson Bulger reported that last week he took a bus across Nebraska with about 23 blind people. They went to Deadwood, South Dakota for Ski for Light.

He is the President of the Omaha Association for the Blind and they had a unique audio description outing. He serves as ACB State President and they are starting to work on their annual state convention, which will be held on Saturday, April 27. This will be a one-day conference in Omaha.

He has also been involved in the NFB mentoring program. After the November Board meeting he participated in Winnerfest and he got to see an exciting group of young people. He was assigned two mentees and he is looking forward to working with these young individuals. He follows the NBE vending program. Since the last meeting, there has been a lot of email correspondence regarding the budget. He attended the Vision Resource Coalition in Omaha. This group offers blind services and support.

Commissioner Bell asked if WIOA knows how bad the 15% required spending on Pre-ETS is affecting agencies and do they know how bad all the limitations are.

Commissioner Hansen stated that the person that has been tagged to be the new RSA Commissioner is Mark Schultz. Mark was the previous executive director of General VR; and therefore, he has first-hand experience. NCBVI already has a relationship with him.

Vice Chairperson Newman noted that one of the former directors of NCBVI, Dr. Nyman, is a member of Friends of the Commission. Dr. Nyman has indicated that he will be talking to Mark Schultz about these issues.

Jan Brant – Jan stated that she has a question and a comment. Jan asked about the meeting that NCBVI will have on March 7 with the Legislature where we will request \$540,000 for OIB funds. Jan asked if we get the funding, will we rehire some staff members.

Director Serván stated that if NCBVI receives \$540,000 in OIB funds we may request four to six staff members. This all depends on how much money we would receive.

Jan noted that she is one of the front line staff for NCBVI and she would like to make a comment about what has gone on this past week. Jan noted that she has always been very honored to work for the Commission and she has worked here for 29 years. Jan noted that the agency is now going through major issues and a lot of what we are up against is not knowing how they are going to do what they should be doing because they are not going to have a physical office. They are going to try to do the best that they can and she understands that it has been a very hard thing for Administration to do what it has had to do, but they want to be sure that they can continue to provide the best services despite the changes. Jan noted that staff is grieving the loss of their co-workers.

Director Serván stated that he can echo the grief and the pain and stated that it was very tough to be the person who had to make the final decisions. He tells folks that he does not usually show his emotions and some folks tell him that he looks like a poker face, but he is human and he does have emotions and that is why he is in the job he is in. He mentioned earlier that this is going to make us stronger and we will work together. NCBVI is not the first agency that has had to close offices. NCBVI needs to find ways to provide excellent services. Director Serván noted that he will be going to each District to strategize on how the agency can best move forward.

Commissioner Hansen stated that he appreciates the efforts of our staff and he sympathizes with the Leadership Team for having to make those difficult decisions. We will overcome all of this and it will make us stronger.

Kenda Slavin – Kenda asked what NCBVI offices will be closing. It was reported that the Scottsbluff office, North Platte office, Norfolk office and Kearney office will be closing. We will still have staff in those locations, but there will not be a physical office. Client services will not be affected.

Jim Jirak – Jim asked if NCBVI could disclose how it arrived at the decision to layoff the staff that was laid off.

It was noted that the agency could not release this information at this time.

### Impact of Order of Selection on Services

Order of Selection is a system or method for prioritizing the consumers a VR agency intends to serve. The Federal Government requires VR agencies to use an Order of Selection when a VR agency anticipates that they do not have enough money and/or staff to serve everyone who is eligible. In order for an agency to get into Order of Selection they need to justify that they don't have enough funds to provide services to clients. NCBVI will be implementing policies to make sure that we are only spending funds for services that are reasonable and necessary. Individuals who fall into the open categories can be served immediately. Those individuals who fall into the closed categories are put on a wait list and are served when there is capacity/availability.

There are three basic reasons why it is necessary for NCBVI to go into Order of Selection:

- Due in part to the implementation of WIOA in July 2014, 15% of our budget is now required to be reserved for providing Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

- Reallotment funds and Social Security Reimbursement funds have dramatically decreased causing NCBVI to fall into a budget deficit, which means NCBVI needs to cut expenditures to be able to operate within base grant limits.
- After a thorough fiscal review of our expenditures on case services for the current fiscal year and previous years, we anticipate we will not have enough funds to serve all of our vocational rehabilitation consumers.

NCBVI is currently spending approximately \$1 million on client services. We need to lower this to \$500,000. In order for this to happen, NCBVI needs to go into Order of Selection. Current clients will not be affected. Services will continue to be provided without restriction to all individuals who have begun to receive services under an IPE prior to the implementation date of the Order of Selection. All Consumers who have applied and been determined eligible are subject to Order of Selection.

The money that the agency has will support the clients we currently have. Every quarter we will evaluate the budget and the number of clients. NCBVI will open cases depending on the availability of money.

Deputy Director Carol Jenkins gave a detailed report on Order of Selection. Federal law and state regulations require that the individuals with the most significant disabilities be served first. NCBVI has three priority categories:

- Priority Category A: (Most significant disability)
  - Has a severe visual impairment, or combination of visual, physical or mental impairment that profoundly limits functional limitations in terms of an employment outcome in five or more of the following functional areas: mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, work skills, interpersonal skills or work tolerance;
  - Is expected to require at least four VR services for at least twelve months, and
  - Meets the definition contained in "List of physical or mental disabilities."
- Priority Category B: (Significant disability)
  - Has a severe visual impairment, or combination of visual, physical or mental impairment that seriously limits functional limitations in terms of an employment outcome in three or four of the following functional areas: mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, work skills, interpersonal skills or work tolerance;
  - Is expected to require at least three VR services for at least six months, and
  - Meets the definition contained in "List of physical or mental disabilities."
- Priority Category C: (All Other Eligible individuals with a disability)

- Does not meet the definition of Individual with a Most Significant Disability or the definition of Individual with a Significant Disability.

A person must be blind or visually impaired to receive services from NCBVI. Job retention consumers will be able to bypass Order of Selection. Job Retention is a consumer who is employed and who wants to continue in that same job and requires VR services to retain their position. A job retention case is not a person who is working and would like assistance in finding different work. If the eligible consumer originally intended to keep their position (and has an active IPE) but later decides they want a different job or loses their current job, they are subject to the waitlist, depending on their Priority for Services category.

VR services will continue to be provided without restriction to all Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) students who have begun to receive services under an IPE prior to the implementation date of the Order of Selection. In order for a transition age student to receive Pre-ETS services after Order of Selection, the student with a vision impairment must be determined "Potentially Eligible" to receive Pre-ETS services. Once a potentially eligible Pre-ETS student has received Pre-ETS services, the student can then apply for VR services for eligibility to be determined. If found eligible for VR services, the student with a disability can continue to receive Pre-ETS services while on the waitlist. If a student with a vision impairment does NOT receive Pre-ETS services under "Potentially Eligible" and applies for VR services and is found eligible, the student cannot receive Pre-ETS services while on the waitlist. No other VR services can be provided to a potentially eligible student with a vision impairment nor a waitlisted student until the student is removed from the waitlist.

Consumers who are on social security still need to be assessed and placed in a category. If that category is open, they will be served immediately. If that category is closed, they will be placed on the waiting list.

When a consumer is wait listed due to the category they are placed in, NCBVI must provide information and referral services to that individual. The best place a consumer can go to for resources and services is any Workforce Center. Workforce Centers provide job search classes, computer labs with accessible technology, and job clubs. At the time a consumer is placed on the waiting list, they will be provided with contact information for their local Workforce Center.

Consumers can contact the Client Assistance Program at any time they may wish.

A lunch break was taken at 12:05 p.m. The meeting resumed at 12:40 p.m.

Order of Selection (continued)

Staff will be receiving training on Order of Selection during the week of February 11, 2019. Carol Jenkins will be going to each office to train staff. Julie Buren will attend these trainings via conference call so she can train staff on the AWARE portion of Order of Selection.

The Public Meeting for Order of Selection is scheduled for Wednesday, February 13, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. The meeting will be held statewide in each office via video conference. The Lincoln location will be in the Lincoln District Conference Room. There is currently a document on the NCBVI website entitled "Frequently Asked Questions about Order of Selection."

RSA must give NCBVI approval before we can go into Order of Selection. After we receive approval, we can add Order of Selection to our Combined State Plan. Rules for Order of Selection are the same Countrywide. NCBVI Rule, Chapter 1, Section 9 covers Order of Selection.

### Public Comment

Barbara Loos – Barbara stated that she hopes that whatever we are doing as we go forward that we make sure that the spirit leads the letter of whatever it is that we are doing. Barbara stated that she needs to understand better some of the nuances of Order of Selection. In the past, NCBVI did not ever do Order of Selection and Barbara stated that she is sorry that we have to do it now. Barbara stated that blind people would fit Category 1 because of the fact that they do things differently. Functionally, to live in the world, blind people use other ways of doing things that the general public does. Barbara stated that she hopes we do not get caught up in definitions.

Carol Jenkins noted that NCBVI has a strong philosophy and we want to serve our clients to the best of our abilities. Carol noted that NCBVI's consumer base has changed over the years. Many of our clients now have secondary disabilities.

Jim Jirak – Jim asked if NCBVI can get off of Order of Selection if enough funding becomes available.

Carol Jenkins noted that it is easier to get off of Order of Selection than it is to get on it.

The commissioners thanked Director Serván and Deputy Director Jenkins for the information on Order of Selection.

### Newsline® Update

Commissioner Hansen reported that as a part of the budget reduction Kearney and Norfolk newspapers will be discontinued in Nebraska by the end of February.

Chairperson Bulger asked if NCBVI financially supports Newsline® and the Outreach Coordinator position. It was noted that NCBVI does not pay the Outreach Coordinator. The NFB compensates the Outreach Coordinator. NCBVI funds the Newsline® services.

Bryan Baldwin, Outreach Coordinator

Greetings!

During this most recent quarter, I have been away on contract teaching mobility in Birmingham, Al. This has limited any engagements I could have attended, but not the updates and answering questions. Now I am back for good and am looking at attending a seminar in May to speak about Newsline. I have also purchased an Amazon Echo Dot and am testing out Newsline using Alexa.

The last three months of 2018 saw seven new subscribers, this was also with some technical difficulties I was informed of by some counselors. I was contacted by a few people in regard to clients not hearing anything back about their application, to which I couldn't even find their name in the database. I had to enter the client's information myself, so our count of zero in December should be fixed with January's numbers. October saw an average of accessing Newsline content every 5.5 minutes. A large amount of that was online with 7,500 online visits. Our web sessions are above average with 1,589 sessions, and In Your Pocket deliveries were at 4,302. Eight hundred and sixty eight (868) calls were made.

In November, we kept about the same calls with 825 with an average of 45% calling the local number. We also saw the content access frequency stay the same with people accessing content every 5.7 minutes. The mobile app was used 448 times. In Your Pocket was at 3,718 deliveries, and 1,331 web sessions occurred.

December was where we saw our very first Alexa numbers with 13 accesses that month. I am proud to say I was one of those. October and November showed zero Alexa accesses, so I think it's a safe bet that a few people received Amazon Echos for Christmas. Our phone calls were also up at 925 calls. Our total content frequency was still looking good at people accessing the content every 6.6 minutes. Our total content accessed in December was 6,732.

NFB Newsline has also posted the 2019 Washington Seminar agenda and fact sheet for those attending this year's Washington Seminar. Newsline is also seeking out an NFB Newsline Program Assistant, as mentioned in an email sent out by Scott White in October. As spring gets closer, we should see more weekly

ads from many different stores as it will be time to shop for new clothes, start repairs and garden work outside, and have fun in the sun. And not too long after that we should see an agenda popping up for this year's NFB National Convention.

Thank you for your time. Have a great meeting!

#### Client Assistance Program (CAP) Complaints or issues

- By Jerry Bryan

There were two new cases to the Client Assistance Program relating to the NE Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) during this time. In both cases, the client wanted a lot of things from NCBVI that we are not able to (delete space) provide. NCBVI communicated to them that we are a vocational rehabilitation agency and that we do not necessarily provide everything that they may want at their home. In both cases, CAP ruled in favor of NCBVI.

Jerry Bryan also attended the NCBVI Supervisor Meetings.

#### Discussion concerning Executive Director attending national conferences

Chairperson Bulger asked Director Serván what national conferences he currently attends. Director Serván stated that the main one is the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) national conference. They have a Spring and Fall conference each year; one in April and one in November. Director Serván noted that he also attended the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Fall conference last year, as well as the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and the American Council of the Blind (ACB) national conventions. Director Serván noted that he requested that Chairperson Bulger put this item on the agenda so he could get the commissioners position on his attendance at these conferences. He did not want there to be any misconception from staff members and the public that in spite of all the budget cuts travel restrictions were made for staff, but not the director. This was not the message he wanted to send. Director Serván noted that as the executive director, he does learn from attending these conferences and they give him an opportunity to speak out.

Commissioner Hansen stated that he feels it is important for the director to attend the NCSAB conference as it gives him an opportunity to network with his peers and it is where he will find information about how other agencies are working through the same struggles that we may have at NCBVI. This is an important part of the executive director's job. Commissioner Hansen noted that he feels that it is also important for the director to attend the NFB and ACB national conferences. Commissioner Hansen asked Director Serván what his thoughts were regarding the consumer conventions.

Director Serván noted that for consumer conventions, he is a consumer himself and he has been going to national conventions since 1989. Most of the time he has paid on his own. Director Serván stated that he finds a lot of value from attending both conventions. When attending consumer conventions you get the consumer perspective, rather than just network with other executives. At consumer conventions, you also get to speak with experts in such areas as the Randolph-Sheppard Act. Director Serván stated that he attends these conventions because he learns a lot.

Chairperson Bulger stated that he appreciated that Director Serván attended the ACB National Convention last year. This gave him that chance to hear about some of the things that ACB is doing nationally. At consumer conventions, you get to see new technology, listen to presentations and interact with other consumers. Chairperson Bulger noted that he sees a lot of value in this.

Commissioner Bell stated that he feels it is important for the Director to go to the NCSAB Spring and Fall Conference and pass the information on to the commissioners. Commissioner Bell stated that since the commissioners are also consumers, he does not feel it is necessary for the director to attend the ACB and NFB national Conventions, especially with the budget the way it is.

Commissioner Bell moved to approve the NCBVI director to attend the NCSAB Spring and Fall Conferences using agency funding, but not the NFB and ACB national consumer conventions.

Commissioner Rieken seconded the motion.

Roll call

Yes: Rieken, Bell

No: Hansen, Newman, Bulger

Motion Failed

Chairperson Bulger stated that the director will still be allowed to attend the NCSAB Spring and Fall Conference and the national consumer conferences at the expense of NCBVI, at the director's discretion.

Chairperson Bulger asked Director Serván if there are any other conferences that he attends. Director Serván reported that in the Fall of 2018 he also attended the National CSAVR Conference. This conference coincides with the NCSAB conference in that it is held during the same week at the same location. Director Serván noted that NCBVI is cutting its budget, we are not subscribed to CSAVR this year.

Revisit Dates and locations for upcoming quarterly meetings

Chairperson Bulger noted that when the dates were set during the November meeting in Omaha the commissioners set dates and locations for the 2019 Commission Board meetings. Chairperson Bulger stated that he made a big error when setting the May 4 meeting in Nebraska City as May 4 is the date of his daughter's graduation from college. Chairperson Bulger noted that NCBVI has a Board of five people and no one is more important than the other. Chairperson Bulger stated that if the Board would consider rescheduling the May 4 meeting he would appreciate it, however he understands if the date is not changed.

Commissioner Hansen noted that the Board had previously discussed this matter via emails and they checked with NCECBVI in Nebraska City to see if they have any other Saturday's available in May to host the NCBVI Commission Board meeting. NCECBVI was available the next two Saturdays; May 11 and May 18. Commissioner Hansen noted that all commissioners had noted they were available for May 11 except Commissioner Bell. Commissioner Bell stated that his circumstances may change, but he cannot guarantee it.

Commissioner Hansen moved to change the date of the May Commission Board meeting to May 11.

Commissioner Newman seconded the motion.

Roll Call

Yes: Hansen, Rieken, Newman

No:

Abstain: Bell, Bulger

Motion Carried.

Chairperson Bulger stated that also to be discussed is future meeting locations. Currently, the August 3 meeting is scheduled to be in Scottsbluff. Commissioner Hansen noted that at first the Board voted to not go to Scottsbluff. However, due to where one of the Board members lives, the clients that we serve, and making sure that the Board is accessible across the State, this was re-evaluated. The Board then decided to have the August 4 Board meeting in Scottsbluff as it has been approximately eight years since the Board traveled to Scottsbluff. Commissioner Hansen noted that it is a much more expensive venture for the Board to travel to Scottsbluff when you consider the lodging and meal expenses. With the financial situation that NCBVI is currently in, Commissioner Hansen stated that he felt it was imperative that this issue was discussed. Commissioner Hansen pointed out that while there has not been a full Board meeting in Scottsbluff in about eight years, with video conferencing the Board is meeting in Scottsbluff. Today's meeting is officially in Lincoln and Scottsbluff. Every time Commissioner Bell attends the meeting by video conference from the Scottsbluff office, NCBVI is having a Board meeting in Scottsbluff. It was noted that 50 percent of the Commission Board meetings can be held via video conference.

Commissioner Bell moved to have the August 3, 2019 Commission Board meeting in Lincoln with remote sites to be determined.

Commissioner Rieken seconded the motion.

All commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

### Public Comment

Kenda Slavin – Kenda asked if anyone has heard about the World Group of Blind. She stated that she came across this as she was reading and she would like to know more about it at another time.

Kenda also noted that she reads many talking books and gets 20 magazines per month. The one news magazine that she gets is Newsweek and they have lost their funding for the audio recordings. Kenda asked if anyone knows why this happened.

Chairperson Hansen stated that Scott Schultz who is the Director for the Library of Talking Book and Braille Services should be able to answer this question. Commissioner Hansen stated that he does know that they evaluate the books and magazines that are recorded locally and nationally. If some magazines are getting a low readership they might stop recording those and move to a different one to best meet the desires of the greatest number of people. Commissioner Hansen suggested that Kenda contract Scott Schultz for a more specific answer.

### Typical Final Announcements

Carol Jenkins noted that there will be a Statewide Older Blind conference May 7 through 9 at the Fairfield Inn in Kearney. Individuals who attend need to be a client of NCBVI and they must be age 55 and older. If anyone wants specific details, they should contact their counselor or one of the District supervisors. Additional information will be coming.

Director Serván stated that he does not want people to wonder why NCBVI is having a Statewide Older Blind conference when the agency is struggling financially. Director Serván noted that the Older Blind budget is separate from the VR money and because we were focusing a lot on Pre-ETS and other issues there is some money left for Older Blind. This is why we are putting on this state conference; to make sure that this money stays in Nebraska to serve older blind.

### Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the May 11, 2019 Commission Board meeting, please email it to the NCBVI Commission Board at [ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov](mailto:ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov).

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant  
NCBVI

Mark Bulger, Chairperson  
NCBVI Board of Commissioners

## NCBVI Staff Reports

### Lincoln District Activity Report – Connie Daly

We had two clients graduate from the Center last month. We had another client start the Center and we are using OIB funding to cover some of the costs. He has a job goal.

We have scheduled Group Home Teachings every month for the upcoming year. We will have one that is focused on Older Blind and another that is focused on Pre-ETS. Every Friday, several staff are in Nebraska City providing some training to our clients at NCECBVI. This has really helped our relationship with the school.

We finished the last session of the job class. We had one person get a job because of their attendance at a job fair.

We have approached the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce about putting together a workshop on how to hire the disabled. We are partnering with the General VR agency. We will have the workshop on March 5, 2019. They will invite their contacts and they will host it.

We had clients get jobs at Subway and Hy-Vee.

### Omaha District Activity Report – Nancy Flearl

Between now and our Board meeting Elaine Kavulak will retire. We will have an open house for Elaine on her last day, March 29 from 2:00 p.m. -4:00 p.m. at the Omaha State Office Building. More details to follow.

As many of you know Tim Terrell was injured and on sick leave for several months. I am happy to report he returned to work on November 26.

Tim Jefferson was part of the staff who participated in the training by The National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (NRTC). There were quarterly surveys sent to staff to follow up on our work on placement activities and employer engagement. Tim was asked to attend the annual conference, State of the Science Conference, in Arlington, Virginia on February 28 and March 1, 2019. He will share how this training impacted how he approaches placement services and working with business. He has also reached out for feedback from all the districts to share during his presentation.

NRTC will be providing the funding for him to attend the entire conference and he will have the opportunity to attend many great breakout sessions on employment.

We have started doing more group teachings for Pre-ETS students and older blind. Kathy and Kelly have taken a lead on the scheduling and skills to be addressed.

Summer is around the corner and we are working with students and families to identify who will be attending WAGES or choosing to work in their home community.

VR Counselors are reaching out to guidance counselors about student's schedules and where they might be able to meet during the day with students at school. In an effort to continue to build relationships with schools, we have a counselor that is the point of contact and students from that school are assigned to their caseload and will be the consistent person for meetings for Individual Plans for Employment.

We have planned the Parent Network topics and will be reaching out to staff on how we can have greater parent participation. We have found conference calls have become popular.

We also have College Chat. Juniors and seniors in high school chat with college students about various topics that relate to successful academic performance. These are also conference calls facilitated by Tim Jefferson, with the Omaha team supporting him.

Larry Oleson has been doing training with various Vision Teachers with Bellevue Public Schools on Google docs and JAWS. He provided training to Teachers of the Visually Impaired with Omaha Public School in November on current braille displays and notetakers. He did a follow up on handheld video magnifiers and options for distance viewing.

Kim has continued to hold our Job Club and is now starting to split our time for this meeting at Heartland Workforce Solution. There are often employers there providing for opportunities to work on interviewing skills, etc. They have Career Exploration Networking Tours (CENTS) tours for various industries. These tours are comprised of a group touring three businesses in a particular industry, learning of all the jobs available, meeting human resource and hiring supervisors. They have lunch and then have on-site interviews. They are attending job fairs either monthly or every other month based on where they are and what employers are attending. Kim is also on the committee planning the Older Blind Conference this spring.

Larry Roos from Lincoln has been helping us with some of our older blind referrals. He also assisted Kim with our Job Club as they attended a large Job Fair. Kudos to him and we appreciate Connie Daly for sharing his expertise.

We have managed to hire one new driver. This has certainly been a challenge. People want guaranteed hours and benefits. We start the process and then they find other opportunities. Thanks for Monique for all her work on recruiting and training our new drivers.

Kathy Brown Hollins has been attending the Business Advisory Committee for Project Search. They are in the process of planning the annual Project Search job fair that will be held in Lincoln this April.

Kim has been attending the meeting with the Vision Resource Coalition as they plan the Vision Resource Fair on April 6 and 7 at Baxter Arena.

As always, we are continuously working with our placement activities. Tim Jefferson is scheduling a time with the local contact for the Department of Labor to learn of apprenticeship opportunities. Hopefully they can attend our next office meeting in February.

Lastly, it is always an honor to work with such a wonderful team here in Omaha and with NCBVI as a whole.

#### North Platte District Activity Report – Erin Brandyberry

I returned from maternity at the beginning of December, and I would like to give a big shout out to the great work my district completed, and a special thank you to Carol, Connie, and Nancy who covered a large number of my duties in my absence. We have a really great team here at NCBVI!

**Networking:** Cristal was an active member at Kearney WIN meetings, the Kearney area providers group, Grand Island Project Search, and did business outreach with Chief Industries. Angie presented to staff and teachers at Western Nebraska Community College about our services, met with SPED teacher at Alliance High School to go over technology options, provided in-service training to local Cirrus House staff in preparation for a blind resident's arrival, met with staff from Independence Rising to go over our services and theirs, and met with VR staff to discuss partnering and Pre-ETS services. Deanna was active in community connections in Kearney, elder issues in Grand Island, senior services advisory board in Kearney, the project connect committee, Kearney aging coalition, and presented an in-service at an assisting living facility in Grand Island. Deanna and Diann have worked with Agri-Ability. Diann and Fritz have attended interagency meetings in North Platte and Lexington. Jan has provided technology consultation services to Alliance High School, North Platte High

School, Central Valley Public Schools, and Central Community College in Hastings.

**Projects:** I am assisting with coordinating the OIB conference that will be held in May in Kearney, and assisting with creating documents for staff to use in Order of Selection. Deanna completed the 7OB report and has started as the program chair for the OIB conference. Jan has been working with a student to learn to use a braille display with a Kindle Fire and whenever possible, she has been providing technology training using JAWS tandem to cut travel costs. Angie continues to work with the WIOA Partners Board and the Tri-City Active Living Council.

**Training:** Adrienne completed the following trainings: procurement full scope and certification, disabilities in the Media, and a keynote speaker for disability week at UNK. Fritz attended a training through the job driven technical center.

**Client Outcomes:** Fritz had a client reach her self-employment goal as a massage therapist and assisted another client with getting job experience at a general store. Angie provided job coaching and support for a client to start job at local restaurant. Deanna had one client attend a center tour. Diann had a client gain employment as a cook at a senior center, and has several clients interested in center training.

#### Center Activity Report – Greg DeWall

Currently: 9 Students

Currently: no new Staff Trainees

1 Three Day Stay

1 Student had a Mini Meal

1 Student had a Commencement Meal

Tours: 8 Representatives from the Partner Council, 3 tours with agency consumers, 7 representatives from DHHS, 12 Union College Students.

Observations: 3 Union College students observed classes at different times. This included observing Home-Management, shop, and travel.

Volunteer Activities: Center students participated in the ringing of the bells, for the Salvation Army. This took place at the Gateway Mall. Students took turns ringing bells while their fellow students did some holiday shopping.

Student Requested Activities: Center students voted and took it upon themselves to create seasonal decorations and participate in holiday festivities. In January, the students enjoyed a movie and snacks at the theatre.

Guest Speakers: Erica Sousak and Amber Ward, from Department of Labor, have come monthly. They have discussed interviewing techniques. In addition, Erica has assigned homework for the students. Homework included researching potential employers of interest for each student.

Center Staff: Some Staff continue to work with the Tech Committee and attend these meetings. The Center's travel instructor, Jeff Altman, has begun attending the Star-Tran monthly meetings. Instructors are regularly working on projects to improve their classes, and participate in webinars to gain knowledge in working with students with multiple disabilities. Cindy, the Center's client services counselor, has been working diligently to get students connected with comparable benefits. This allows students to get better connected with community resources, such as SNAP benefits, as well as help shave costs for NCBVI. Matt Hackert, the Center's Communication instructor, is pursuing his Rehabilitation Teaching Certification. This will strengthen Matt's teaching abilities, as well as add to the credentials Center instructors possess.

Center Supervisor: After nine months, he feels he is settled in to his new position. In December, Greg participated in the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute Seminar, at San Diego State. Greg will be attending the second NRLI seminar in March. He is regularly providing support and guidance to Center staff and students. Greg's short term goals are to make a great training Center even better by adjusting the schedules of students and staff, in efforts to maximize learning for students and efficiency in the Center. With "Order of Selection" on the horizon for NCBVI, Greg is also focusing on how the Center will properly and effectively make this adjustment.

Additional Notes: In December, three students graduated. Of these students, two of them are signed up and attending college classes in Lincoln.

The Center is nearly full, with nine students. There are no students who need one-on-one attention. This allows for students to be more evenly spread out in classes, and get the necessary attention from instructors.

The total number of students attending the Center does not include staff trainees because they do not stay in the Center Apartments. We have ten Center apartments so ten 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.

#### Transition Activity Report – Shane Buresh

As the Board of Commissioners was last meeting on November 3, 2018, 20 Pre-ETS youth (nine mentees from the NFB Career Mentoring Program and eleven additional clients) were wrapping up a very successful retreat. As you likely

know already, this retreat filled in the position in the calendar where Winnerfest would traditionally be and it was a collaborative effort with The NFB. Attendees conducted debates about what accommodations to utilize at work and school; heard from a panel of employed blind Nebraskans; played a game of "To Tell the Truth" to try and discover the jobs of other blind persons; traveled non-visually to lunch in the Old Market; watched and discussed the documentary "Do You Dream in Color", which is about four blind teen-agers coming of age; conducted mock job interviews; constructed and presented elevator speeches; and more.

Speaking of the NFB Career Mentoring Program, it continued to grow at a slow but steady pace this quarter. The retreat energized significant mentee growth, as one returning and three new mentees have now joined bringing the total to fourteen. Another retreat is scheduled during the next quarter in early April with a projected focus on college preparation. The intent is to spend time on and around a college campus, likely UNL and not only concentrate on blindness specific considerations for blind students, but also to work on how to integrate into a college environment. The hope is that while we will be staying at a nearby hotel the working sessions during the retreat will all be on UNL's campus. I look forward to bringing the update of this exciting retreat in the next report.

As always, the continuation of creating, building and strengthening relationships within the transition and/or blindness fields progressed this quarter. Staff continue to participate in several regional and statewide-based transition leadership advisory groups. We continue meeting with NCECBVI and we held our second of four meetings scheduled for this year during this quarter. These meetings have already sparked areas for collaboration and has led to affective discussions such as how we can share documentation of effort and better track progress, create logical and mutual goals and cut down on duplication. In addition, we have been invited by NCECBVI to join a new transition advisory committee with many third party agencies. Through the efforts of several Lincoln staff, we continue to provide a series of monthly group trainings at NCECBVI with their in-house Pre-ETS clients. The NCECBVI transition Specialist and I will also once again be presenting a joint session at the statewide transition conference in February. In November, I presented at several UNL teacher prep classes with a number of future vision and special education instructors in attendance.

Even though we are now in the midst of snow and cold, it will not be long before spring and summer and the flurry of activity for transition will be upon us. WAGES will be happening again and will be incorporating a program by the Blind and Socially Savvy team for the attendees and other Pre-ETS clients on several of the weekends during the program.

As you can see, there is much to look forward to and I am excited to be able to be present for all of the learning and growth that is about to take place for our

youth and to bring back the future report of their successes to you in the upcoming quarters.

## Technology Program Activity Report – Nancy Burdine

### **Windows 10 Rollout**

- We have 6 computers left to be moved.

### **License Distribution / Renewals**

- Cut OpenBook licenses back from 15 to 5.
  - Determined where licenses will reside.
- Cut TypeAbility licences back from 15 to 10.
  - Determined where licenses will reside.
- Cut Duxbury licenses back from 10 to 5.
  - Determined where licenses will reside.

### **Active Directory / Network**

- Continue to work on cleaning up our network presence.
  - Deleting users and workstations that are no longer here.
  - Cleaning up user groups and permissions.

### **Surplus**

- Rebuilding and repurposing computers than can be salvaged.
- Scrubbing or removing HD's on computers that will be surplussed.

### **Cellular Phone Plans**

- Monthly rates have been reduced and the cost of hot spots has been cut in half.
- Evaluating the need for cell phone vs desk phone on a person by person basis.

### **Desk Phones**

- Working with OCIO to prepare for the rollout of the new phone system. Desk phones will be IP Phones that run off the data network already in place.
- Our bandwidth will be evaluated to see if we will need more.
- OCIO will be sending forms to be completed that will confirm our current and future needs.

### **Physical Location**

- Preliminary measures are being taken to ensure we will be ready for the Admin staff to move from 3<sup>rd</sup> floor to 1<sup>st</sup> floor in the Lincoln location. As well as the 'shuffle' of staff currently on 1<sup>st</sup> floor.

## Nebraska Business Enterprise Activity Report – Carol Jenkins

### **Legislation Update**

Carlos Servan, NCBVI Executive Director, has been meeting with senators and working diligently to have a senator introduce an NBE bill to amend the wording to mirror the Federal Randolph Sheppard bill. Senator Wishart introduced LB 220 on January 14, 2019 to accomplish this. Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, has emailed out the information regarding LB 220 to all NBE licensees. Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, will communicate information for the bill, and any licensee assistance necessary to promote the bill. The proposed changes are listed below:

#### **Legislative Bill Revisions**

Administer and operate a vending facility program in the state, in its capacity as the designated licensing agency pursuant to the federal Randolph-Sheppard Act, as the act existed on January 1, 2019,

Added was “as the act existed on January 1, 2019,”

Before it stated “as amended,”

The above was added in two places.

This was added,

If a blind person is selected to operate vending facilities in such building or on such property, he or she shall do so on a rent-free basis.

This was deleted,

This priority shall only be given if the product price in the bid submitted is comparable in price to the product price in the other bids submitted for similar products sold in similar buildings or on similar property and all other components of the bid for a contract, except for any rent paid to the state, are found to be reasonably equivalent to the other bidders.

### **Unassigned Funds Update**

NCBVI will be working with the Blind Licensee Committee to change the use of unassigned funds. Currently, unassigned funds are extra funds sent to active vendor retirement accounts. Due to NCBVI’s budget deficit, NCBVI will be working with the Blind Licensee Committee to get the use of unassigned funds changed to be able to be used for maintenance and replacement of equipment, purchase of new equipment, and management services.

### **Vending Sites Update**

### Nebraska State Building Division

NCBVI is still in contract negotiations with the Nebraska State Building Division. Once a contract has been fully executed, Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, will set up a training for relevant NCBVI staff, NBE Staff, and licensees who will be responsible for carrying out the contract.

### Nebraska State Capitol

A contract was developed with Hy-Vee Catering to offer lunch services at the State Capitol while the Nebraska State Capitol goes through the 10-year HVAC renovation project. The renovation project, which covers the area of the cafeteria, is anticipated to last for approximately 18 months until November of 2019 when the Nebraska State Capitol cafeteria will be reopened for business.

### Department of Corrections

NCBVI continues to wait for the Department of Corrections to put out a Request for Proposal (RFP) for bids. NCBVI will need to bid in the spring of 2019 in order to retain current machine locations as well as to expand into other locations with the Department of Corrections. NCBVI still intends on submitting a bid for the RFP for the Department of Corrections because of work and negotiations that occurred previously.

### Offutt

Carlos Servan, NCBVI Executive Director, has been working diligently to negotiate the cafeteria details to move the project forward, Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, has initiated discussions regarding the permit/contract for the Offutt breakroom vending machines. The vending machine permit/contract negotiations are in the very beginning stages.

### Norfolk Regional Center

Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, is in the final stages of completing the contract for NCBVI to take over the operation of the Norfolk Regional Center vending facility on February 4, 2019. Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, is working with NCBVI staff to make the transition as smooth as possible.

### Licensees Update

The NBE Program has two potential licensees in training working to earn their Nebraska license.

### Staff Update

The NBE Manager is no longer with NCBVI. Due to the budget deficit, NCBVI has no plans to re-hire for the position.

### Vending Site Complaints

The categories of complaints that have come in to Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, this quarter have been as follows: Machines being less than 50% full, vendors not coming often enough to stock machines, and having expired

products. Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director discussed these complaints at the Blind Licensee Committee meeting on December 7, 2018 as well as gave 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**

#### **Forsyth Insurance**

Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, continues to work with Forsyth Insurance to try to obtain a group insurance policy for the NBE active vendors. The goal is to try to obtain a group policy that can provide the necessary coverage but at the same time have each NBE active vendor pay less money for coverage.

#### **NBE Program Profit and Loss Allowable Deductions List**

Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, is working with the Blind Licensee Committee to update the NBE Program Profit and Loss allowable deductions list to reflect the current needs of the vendors as well as NCBVI.

#### **NBE Handbook**

Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, is working together with NCBVI staff and NBE Licensees to create a NBE Handbook for NBE Licensees as well as a NBE Handbook for NCBVI Staff.

#### **Looking Ahead**

Due to the budget deficit, NCBVI has no plans to expand 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:

- Looking for ways to save the agency money without harming client services
- Work with State HR and Personnel on Reduction in Force policy
- Work with State Building Division on cancellation of office leases
- Implement budget savings in cell phones, landlines, state vehicles, office space, memberships/subscriptions, trainings, etc.
- Work on reorganization of Business Office, including writing job description, PDQ, and planning for how to maximize efficiency and internal controls with less people involved
- 2018/19 Budget update
- Attended the first week of NRLI Training in December
- Continue to work with VRTs on how to code agency bills correctly
- Federal Fiscal Year End
- Set up all new accounts for new Federal and State Fiscal Years

- Federal reports for Federal Fiscal Year End, including seven SF-425 reports, RSA 15, 7-OB, RSA 2, Revise prior year RSA 15
- Prior Approval for STRATCOM equipment purchases
- Work with Procurement on STRATCOM equipment purchases approval
- Order of Selection
- Meet with State Records Management Division
- Meet with State of Nebraska Centrex staff on new phone system
- Work on new reports for the Commissioners to keep them better informed of finances for the agency.

Dave Robinson -

Sarah Martin started with the agency on October 29, 2018 and was terminated during her original probation on January 7, 2019.

State Personnel – Benefits department announced on January 10, 2019, the continuation of the Wellness Plan with Incentive option for one more plan year. This choice of insurance plans is very popular with state employees and we thought last year was the last year of the plan, so those of us that have had it for many years are glad that it will be available for at least one more plan year.

Kathy Stephens –

2017 Annual Report was completed and sent to the Governor and the senators. It is on file with the Unicameral.

We are working on surplusizing some non-working technology items and some vending machines.

The amended NCBVI Rules and Regulations have been sent to the Governor's Policy Research Office for review. The Attorney General's Office has already given them his stamp of approval.

NCBVI will have a State Staff Meeting on April 2 and 3, 2019 in Lincoln.