

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
PUBLIC MEETING
Saturday, August 13, 2005
Grand Island, Nebraska

Approved MINUTES

Call to Order and Introductions: Barbara Loos, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:15 AM, welcomed everyone, and read through the agenda. She stated that the agenda items and timeframes would remain the same but exact times would be adjusted due to the late start.

Commissioners Present: Barbara Loos, Lincoln; Bob Burns, Omaha; Dorothy Westin-Yockey, South Sioux City; Nancy Oltman, Hastings; Bill Orester, Lincoln.

Commission Staff in Attendance from Lincoln: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director; Val Peery, Administrative Assistant; Hubert Paulson, Recorder; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director of Independent Living; Carlos Serván, Deputy Director of Voc Rehab; Bill Brown, Business Manager; Fatos Floyd, Nebraska Center for the Blind Supervisor; and Connie Daly, Lincoln District Supervisor. Staff from Omaha: Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor and Robert Newman, Rehabilitation Counselor. Staff from North Platte: Candy Laursen, North Platte District Supervisor.

Members of the Public Present: Fritz Yockey, South Sioux City; Roy Holey, Lincoln; Mary Johnson, Lincoln; Judy Beck, Grand Island; Howard Simons, Grand Island; Izola Sargent, Grand Island; Ardyce Earl, Grand Island; Sibby Lebeau, Grand Island and Dave Johnson, Gibbon. Loos welcomed everyone.

Announcement Concerning Public Comments And Tapes of Meetings: Loos called everyone's attention to the times noted on the agenda for Public Comment. Loos stated that meetings are taped and available upon request by calling any NCBVI office.

Lunch Arrangements and Other Logistics: Van Zandt stated that pizza would be delivered at noon and Peery had brought salad and dressings.

Approval of Minutes of the May 21, 2005 Meeting: Loos stated that several items were missing from the materials list, including anniversary letters for Bob Deaton and Josie Rodriguez. She apologized for not congratulating them and requested that the minutes be modified prior to being moved to approved status. Burns moved minutes with modifications be adopted and approved. Orestor seconded to approve the May 21, 2005 minutes. The vote was unanimous. Loos stated that the minutes, once corrected, should be moved from draft to approved status.

Oltman moved to approve the minutes of the June 13, 2005, conference call meeting. Orestor seconded. The vote carried unanimously.

Focus Topic:

VR Services, with emphasis on job success and current placement opportunities: Carlos Serván, NCBVI Deputy Director, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, listed job titles and hourly dollar amounts of approximately 50 clients placed within the last year. Positions and hourly rates ranged from \$5.15 per hour for a greeter position to \$23 per hour for a plant manager. Serván stated that \$15.40 was the average salary per hour and mentioned that clients with training and/or transition services receive better positions.

Serván stated that there are chances of advancement in many positions but many senior and/or disabled individuals do not want to work full-time but only a set amount of hours per week. Serván asked Judy Beck and Roy Hopley to speak about how services impacted their lives. Each one did so. Loos thanked Serván for sending materials and stated that the Board appreciated receiving them ahead of time. Loos also thanked Beck and Hopley for sharing their experiences. Oltman stated that both should be commended for wanting a better life and said that we need to find more ways of helping seniors.

Public Comment: There was discussion concerning the value of blind people helping each other learn skills, the effects of health and other conditions on some people's decisions to work part-time, the importance of one's attitude and philosophy about blindness in finding and keeping jobs, the RSA Standards and Indicators, the difficulties in dealing with statistics, and a suggestion to discuss goals with students both before and after Nebraska Center for the Blind training to assess training-related changes. Concerning the last item, Floyd stated that she would put together a proposal.

Break: The Board took a 10-minute break.

Report from the Chairman:

Loos stated that she attended the Deaf-Blind Proclamation at the Capitol on June 16, 2005. Loos stated that, although there were several people there, there were no interpreters.

Loos stated that on July 14, 2005, she was the keynote speaker at an event with Worknet.

Loos reported that she was unable to attend the Alumni picnic on July 16, 2005 and also missed the WAGES banquet because she didn't know about it in time.

Loos stated that the Board appreciates receiving the Center articles and the Community Project descriptions.

Loos reported that the Executive Director's evaluation has been completed and Van Zandt has been rehired. Loos welcomed Van Zandt to a new year.

Loos stated that she has been very concerned about the layoff situation. She stated that the Board had received some correspondence and continues to encourage people to keep doing a good job. Loos stated that it is the Board's intention to keep trying to be part of the solution and to continue working to make things better.

Loos stated that she appreciated the letter Van Zandt sent to Senator Pederson and hopes the information can be used to get funding for special programs or services.

Loos stated that she is interested in suggestions or feedback concerning the Mentoring and In-service training grants.

Loos appreciated receiving the revised staff listing with the email changes and also noticed the website change.

Loos also appreciated receiving Van Zandt's 2006 goals and her letter to Spellings regarding the RSA situation in process. She stated that she is looking at monitoring suggestions and hopes rehab continues.

Loos congratulated Deaton on his receipt of the VIPS Commitment to Excellence Award.

Loos reported that the evidentiary hearing concerning the Offutt situation was cancelled. She was pleased about that but sorry and disappointed that a vending opportunity at Offutt is not a possibility for the Commission at this time.

Loos stated that she enjoys receiving the anniversary letters that Van Zandt sends and apologized for neglecting to mention receiving Deaton's and Rodriguez's letters at the last meeting because of not having transferred data from one computer to another. Since the last meeting, the Board has received letters regarding Roe, Peery, Rauterkus, Juarez, Hoff, Robinson, Poff, Wurtz, Carlow, Hussein, and Hill.

Loos reported that it is a tribute to our staff that there is such longevity. The Board appreciates all that our staff members do.

Loos congratulated Betty Buresh for being selected Employee of the Year and enjoyed the nomination letters concerning Robinson and Poff.

Loos expressed the Board's pleasure in the Lt. Governor's visit to the Nebraska Center for the Blind and all are glad that he has agreed to the review of his website for accessibility with the assistance of the Center students.

Loos mentioned Jesse's efforts with regard to the project for blind children in Nicaragua and how she is glad to be invited to participate in such events.

Loos congratulated Van Zandt on the AFB Board of Trustees' support of her becoming a new member, to be confirmed in October.

Loos stated that the Board appreciates all that Jirak has done on our website. It is exciting that, with the subscriber from Hong Kong, we are now worldwide.

Public Comment: No additional comments were made.

Report from the Executive Director:

Van Zandt stated that she appreciated everyone's coming and thanked them for their efforts.

Van Zandt reported that she received a call from the Lt. Governor indicating that Governor Heineman had received a letter of concern so she discussed the issues and then forwarded the Lt. Governor a copy of the letter she had sent to Senator Pederson. There has been no correspondence since then.

Van Zandt reported that we served 781 Voc Rehab clients with 71 successful closures since October 1, 2004 and served 758 Independent Living clients with 213 successful closures during the same timeframe. The Center served 126 full-time clients from 1996 through August 2005 with 71 individuals placed in competitive employment; 17 placed as homemakers and 28 students. This equates to 89.8% competitive employment; 22.2% students and only 8% not working who completed Center training.

Van Zandt reported that Jennifer Miller has been on maternity leave and will be returning to work on Monday, August 15, 2005. She reported that the Center staff has done a great job managing while Miller has been on leave and also during the six weeks that Floyd was on vacation.

Van Zandt stated that effective September 30, 2005, 6 positions, with one being a vacant position, will be eliminated through layoffs. She is working with each office and district to ensure services and coverage continue as smoothly as possible. She stated that four individuals still have their voluntary furloughs in place.

Van Zandt stated that very soon Laursen would be celebrating her 29th year with the Commission and Brown, five years.

Van Zandt stated that she spoke with the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind regarding Braille on vending machines and ways to make the machines more accessible.

Van Zandt stated that the Vendors Committee discussed their bylaws at their last meeting. A task force has been assigned to bring them up to date. Vendors are working to mark vending machines with Braille and Braille labelers are being made available to all vendors. Van Zandt reported that there may be some new sites soon. The new Federal Immigrations agencies will be opening soon in both Lincoln and Omaha. There is a possibility for a new site in Grand Island due to Simons' initiative and his great networking.

Van Zandt reported that she went to the alumni picnic on July 16, 2005. Their website, www.ncbviocaa.org, is now up and running. Clients and staff who attended the Center can join as Associate Members, clients who attended can pay \$10 to become Active Members and others interested can become Friends of the Alumni Association. You can easily register online and will receive confirmation.

Van Zandt reported that the Mentoring Project has begun. Serván will lead the project with one contact person in each district. She stated that we have received the funds (\$34,500) for the project and have received permission from Governor Heineman to spend the money.

Van Zandt stated that the Basic In-service Training Proposal was submitted June 13, 2005. Then the deadline was extended, so the Quality In-service Training Proposal was submitted July 20, 2005. The grants' start date is October 1, 2005 so she believes we will be informed soon if we were selected to receive funding.

Van Zandt stated that we are in the process of setting up all staff with new email addresses and on the state server. The networking cost for this is \$7 per user per month, which is less than the original price quoted. There are still some problems with the setup so it is taking more of the tech staff's time than originally planned.

Van Zandt stated that both Lt. Governor Sheehy and Carl Augusto, the AFB President/CEO toured the Center this past quarter. Van Zandt reported that Governor Heineman is scheduled to tour the Center on Friday, September 2, 2005.

Van Zandt reported that she spoke at the Nebraska Association of the Blind Convention in Nebraska City on Friday, August 12, 2005. Flearl and Shankland also conducted workshops there.

Van Zandt stated that we are working with Friends of the Commission for funding for special programs and for funding for Project Independence.

Van Zandt reported that the ACB of Nebraska taxi and voucher transportation programs have been cited for national recognition. The commission will be receiving acknowledgment for providing funds to help expand the program to other parts of Nebraska.

Public Comment: There was discussion concerning the Mentoring Project, job opportunities with the Federal Government, Braille on vending machines, and the Board's receipt of the document regarding complaint procedures under the ADA.

Old Business:

Rule Update: Van Zandt stated that we have received the print versions of Chapter 4 and that they have been distributed to all staff members. Each person was asked to sign a form indicating that he/she received a copy. It is available electronically, in Braille format, and is also on the website.

Budget Update: Van Zandt stated that we have applied for re-appropriations from other states but have not asked for more than we can match. We should know by mid-September. We have been implementing cost saving efforts. In February, she issued changes to manage the current year and has also implemented strategies for long-term efforts. We have been tracking figures and staff have been doing a good job and are seeing significant savings in all areas. She reported that services are staying where they need to be and that we are still providing what is necessary without complaints. Westin-Yockey asked if it was a good time to ask the Governor for money, since state revenues are up. Van Zandt stated that it might be and we are considering a deficit budget request.

Burns asked about the full fiscal impact of layoffs. Brown stated that it is approximately \$250,000 - \$300,000. Burns then asked about Federal older blind funding. Van Zandt stated that the increase in the older blind program will occur after the Rehab and Workforce Act are finalized and no one knows how long that will take. There was discussion of options for the use of such funds. Westin-Yockey asked if we will have a balanced budget. Brown stated that it will be very close, but believes it is possible.

Discussion emphasized the fact that people are definitely having to do things differently.

Lunch break: The Board took a half-hour break at 12:05 pm for lunch and reconvened at 12:35 pm.

Website Update (including minutes files and SRC Movie Posting): After some email correspondence initiated by Jirak, it was decided that Peery will send files related to minutes as she had before the decision made at the May meeting, since the new way was very cumbersome for posting, requiring much more time and effort on the part of the webmaster.

The recommendation from Scott Standifer, which Van Zandt had forwarded to the Board concerning posting of the SRC movies, was discussed. The Board agreed that a text version of the information would be sufficient for posting. Van Zandt will see that it is done.

Loos expressed her appreciation for Jirak's work with the changes concerning the website. She reminded everyone that the new website address is: <http://www.ncbvi.ne.gov/>.

Status of Rehab Update: Van Zandt stated that this topic was covered earlier and there was nothing new to add.

Friends of the Commission Update: Van Zandt reported that they are working on their by-laws. Van Zandt stated that the Commission had requested that Friends purchase a complete set of Kernel Books in Braille.

One Friends Board member provided a personal donation for the books and the Commission has received them. Van Zandt reported that there is now an automated donation payment system in place for people who would like to have money taken out of their account for Friends. Application forms are available. There was discussion concerning the logistics of this process, the possibility of having links on NCBVI or the Alumni Associations sites about Friends, and the need for Friends to see that it complies with Federal requirements. Orester agreed to meet with Friends President, Mike Floyd, soon to discuss the compliance situation.

NIS Update: Van Zandt stated that there was no new information to report.

NFB-Newsline(r) Update: Loos reported that she had not received a report.

Status of Taped Public Meeting Educational Materials: Loos reported that she has not yet reviewed the tapes, but will do so and forward them to Westin-Yockey.

Offutt Update: Van Zandt reported receiving the Order of Dismissal of the Evidentiary Hearing scheduled for July 11, 2005, and received the final letter from the hearing officer on July 21, 2005.

Status of Braille on Vending Machines: Loos stated that this topic was discussed earlier.

Public Comment: No comments.

New Business:

State Plan: Van Zandt stated that approval was discussed at the last meeting and there was nothing new to report.

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Pursuant to the Rehabilitation Act Requirements of Section 101(a)(15): Van Zandt read this portion of the Rehab Act and stated that the key component is that the assessment is required every three years. Although we do not do a systematic assessment every three years, ongoing input is obtained from people throughout the state through public meetings, public forums and during speaking engagements at various organizations. Van Zandt stated that this information is then incorporated into current activities and new plans. She stated that this is how we've been writing the plan and that it has been approved by RSA each time. Van Zandt asked for guidance from the Board. Options were discussed, including the possibility of seeking out a blind graduate student in statistics to develop an assessment tool as a thesis. Burns asked about cost. Van Zandt stated that it varies but thought it was approximately \$3,000 ten years ago, so thought it would probably be much more today. The Board agreed that nothing that would be costly in either money or staff time would be appropriate just now, but thanked Van Zandt for raising the issue for consideration.

Accommodation for Interpreters for Deaf-Blind: There was considerable discussion on the subject, both concerning interpreters for the Deaf-Blind Week proclamation ceremony, and for other situations. Loos stated that, at this year's ceremony, the representative from the Governor's Office said that our request came too late this year, but if we contacted them at the first of the year, accommodation might be possible. Cheryl Poff volunteered to send a request first thing next year. The Board's consensus was to wait to hear what response she receives. If it is negative, the Board will try to rectify the matter.

Loos asked about consideration for interpreters at Board meetings. Van Zandt stated that we would make sure that language regarding accommodations is in every future public notice we post.

Staff Survey Results: Oltman reported that, although there was a drop in the number of responses this year, with only 18 vs the 24 or so received last year, the input was very good. Oltman stated that she appreciated staff making comments that explain their choices. She stated that she enjoyed compiling the results and would like next year's goal to be that every staff member participate and answer all the questions. Oltman thanked those who completed the survey and stated that the comments were very helpful to the Board. There was discussion concerning sharing the numerical responses with all staff, since many of the questions relate to Van Zandt's performance. Loos agreed to discuss this with Robinson, Personnel Officer. Van Zandt requested that the Board reach a consensus so that if Robinson had no objections, the results could be sent soon rather than waiting until after the next meeting. The Board agreed with this plan.

List of NCBVI Board Operational Motions: Loos thanked Burns for sending the motions. Van Zandt stated that she had not received them. Burns agreed to send them to her. He stated that he had only sent four. They pertained to the Executive Director notifying the Board regarding grievances, materials updates, concerns regarding minutes, and one procedural motion concerning the way the board handles the Executive Director's evaluation. After some discussion concerning ongoing compilation of such motions, a motion was made by Orestor and seconded by Oltman and Westin-Yockey that the Executive Session Secretary keep track of all motions. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

New Commissioners Packet: Van Zandt stated that we could begin developing an electronic packet and, once the new Board members are in place, they could choose their preferred format (disk, Braille, etc.).

Per Diem and Expenses for meetings other than quarterly Board Meetings: Orestor stated that reimbursements are provided by the State and the Law does not specify how many meetings. Loos stated that concerns included spending an entire day traveling across the state, missing a day of work, and feeling embarrassed or apologetic about requesting reimbursement. Burns made a motion that Commissioners who wish to attend a non-Commission Board meeting function and receive a per diem, consult with the other commissioners to reach a majority consensus. Commissioners would also be required to submit a report on the attended function to the Board at its next meeting. Westin-Yockey seconded. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Brainstorming Ways to Educate Public Officials about and involve them with NCBVI: Loos stated that Commissioners had decided at the last meeting to discuss this item through emails between meetings and bring results. Since no messages have been exchanged, Loos requested that everyone commit to doing this during the next three months and she will put it on the next agenda if there is material circulated to discuss. There was consensus to proceed accordingly.

Elections: Burns nominated Loos for Chairman. Orestor and Westin-Yockey seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Burns nominated Orestor for Vice Chairman and Oltman seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Oltman nominated Burns for Executive Session Secretary and Orestor seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Focus Topic for Next Meeting: After some discussion, Van Zandt recommended that focus topics be decided for the next two meetings. It was determined by consensus that November's topic would be Unserved and Underserved Populations and the following focus topic would be New Staff Training.

Public Comment: Discussion centered on acoustics during meetings, both for in-person communication and for quality of tapes. Orestor stated that he has a portable public address system and he will bring it to the next meeting.

Announcement of Location of November 19, 2005, meeting and consideration of 2006 meeting dates and locations: The November 19, 2005 meeting will be held in Lincoln, Nebraska, in room 500, Carveth Building.

The meeting schedule for 2006 is as follows:

February 4, 2006, Omaha

May 6, 2006, Lincoln

August 5, 2006, North Platte

November 18, 2006, Lincoln

As the Board was preparing to adjourn, Westin-Yockey asked for the floor to announce that her grandson, Matt Westin, is being recruited by the University of Nebraska wrestling team! All expressed congratulatory sentiments.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Val Peery, Administrative Assistant

Barbara Loos, Chairman

NCBVI Board of Commissioners

VR Program

The Vocational Rehabilitation program has a goal of assisting blind individuals in becoming fully integrated, productive members of society. In rehabilitating such individuals, the Commission provides training and placement in quality jobs that are appropriate to each individual's capabilities, abilities, potentials, and informed choice.

The basic support budget is as follows:

- Operations (Most of which are spent on direct services by our staff) \$2,476,639
- Aids \$603,073
- Transition \$275,000

In order to explain how NCBVI VR services works today, I would like to give you a summary of how services were provided before. Then I will get to the most current way of how we provide VR services. I believe that the services we provide today have evolved a great deal since the agency's inception. The recollections below came from a number of staff who experienced all those changes.

Phase I – The Mid 60s

From the mid sixties until the mid seventies, the agency's general philosophy was "Let's help these poor blind people to have a less dependent life, not necessarily an independent one". The agency was processing 200+ closures per year and a very large percentage of them were monocular and/or sight restoration cases. For instance, it was not uncommon to find a closed out person with a goal of truck driver.

Our clients got signed up for talking books services, but the agency did not provide much training. Services were provided using the medical model; that is trying to fix clients' sight. When they were transition age students, they were referred to the school for the blind but did not receive visits from our counselors. The mentality back then was also to help the blind on getting the first available job; quick, low entry level.

There was no vocational counseling, nor testing; nor of any joint interaction. Most students were going off to massage school. The agency did pay for tuition, fees and books for post secondary education. It also purchased 4 track recorders and Sony 101 reel-to-reel recorders and radio/TV band receivers. However, students did not have much choice; goals were limited.

During this first time period, there was only one special program that the agency had going for clients. It was a traveling team of orientation counselors that would go out every 2 weeks to a remote community and set up a group-teaching, in a local facility, such as the basement of a local church. The training caravan would not come back around for follow-up; yet some of those clients were still getting some instruction by local area office Orientation Counselors. Yet, there were very few Orientation Counselors back then; one or two from each district, Lincoln, Omaha and North Platte which included one from the Scottsbluff office. Yet again, that traveling caravan team mostly came from the Lincoln office and so there must have been three or four of them; they'd hook up with the OC from whatever district they were operating in.

Back then many staff did not have college degrees or training on blindness techniques.

The agency would use collapsible short canes, no sleep shades, and no structured discovery. The Nebraska Center for the Blind did not exist; it was just a work shop. People would do just manual work and there were no high expectations or skills of blindness training.

Blind people were not expected to travel much, except those who were “superior” and could get around on their own. This was critical because if we did not have training, independent blind people, you could not expect much from them on looking for jobs or even thinking that they could work. In addition, counselors did not have the high expectations and beliefs, limiting opportunities for clients.

Phase II - Mid 70s:

Doctor James Nyman came to Nebraska in 1974. The agency philosophy took a dramatic change to one of high expectations. During this phase, the agency began to develop the philosophy that “with proper training and opportunity, blind people can be competitive”. That the “main problem for blind people was not blindness itself, but the misconception that the public has toward the blind.” The agency then developed the necessary staff through new hires and travel to nearby agencies with good philosophy/programs to study how they were operating. All staff meetings were designed to challenge staff's thinking about the capability of the blind and understand the misconceptions.

In 1974 the Nebraska Center for the Blind was created in which not only clients got training, but it was also used to train staff. The agency in this phase always made it a point to hire blind staff where possible; especially for teaching travel. The Structured Discovery method was introduced to our training, which called for higher expectations, thus clients graduating from the center were more independent. Also the idea was that if we provided good training, clients should be able to find their own jobs.

Philosophy during the first part of Dr. Nyman's tenure was of the highest emphasis. This new thinking was like a social revolution and it started to prove that it was more effective. Today Nebraska is recognized for such fundamental belief which is applied at all levels of services.

The agency works very hard on public education regarding the capabilities of the blind. We used to have in our staff a PR person and did many public presentations and write articles. Today, our staff in the different offices provide this public education in their own communities.

Later in the 70s, the agency recognized the potential of the new technology coming into existence within the world and it began to implement a major focus on technology as a tool used by the blind to increase employment and life options. Previously, only old school blindness equipment was being sought after. A technology specialist was hired and trained. New technology was purchased or borrowed for the agency to test its merits.

It is important to note, that the purchase of technology for clients was always a very conservative one. Meaning, we rarely purchased high dollar items; seldom would a computer or Braille display be purchased. Note takers like the Braille 'n' Speak would be an okay item, but not one with a display; it took a major sell job to get us to buy a BrailleLite. Scanners were also a rare item for us to provide. All purchases not only for clients, but also for staff and even for our work-place were tightly controlled; the administration wanted the money to be stretched; to get the biggest bang for the buck. Additionally, the agency did not believe in seeking grants to start new projects; didn't think it would be easy to get additional grants to keep doing something you started by means of a grant.

Kids programs were started in the early 80s. The first one was in Omaha and it was called ET or Extra Training. The program lasted 2 weeks and staff worked it 24/7; there wasn't a union to regulate what hours staff worked

“Round-Tuit” came about in the 80's when the agency realized we could better provide certain types of career and vocational counseling info and/or services in a large group setting over a 2 or 3 day time period. Some of this included panels of employers and employed blind, and all the peer interaction that came with this type of setting. We also tried weekly job clubs, but they really didn't last. In addition, we sponsored technology fairs to correspond with the gatherings of participants for the “Round-Tuit” and college workshops. College workshops also started in the 90s as part of “Round-Tuit”. Again, a way to get to a larger group and to take advantage of all the things that can be staged in a workshop atmosphere.

WAGES (Work And Gain Experience in the Summer) was created for adolescents in high school in the mid 90s as a result of acknowledging that one of the main disadvantages blind people had, was the lack of job experience in their teens. The main focus was job experience and some seminars on blindness issues.

Phase III - Late 90s to present

In 1998, Dr. Van Zandt came aboard as the director and in the year 2000 we became an independent Commission. Technology needs continue to increase and placement took a new focus by supporting more our clients and staff as well as building relationships with employers.

In the 1998 amendments of the rehab ac, new language was added which caused some changes in how we operate. A number of these are:

Informed Choice, where consumers demanded to be in charge of their future. Part of this provision is that clients could choose if they want a counselor from the agency or get their own; choose the type of vendor or service provider, among other options. This also put the focus on choosing any jobs, including high quality employment. Many clients thought that the informed choice provisions meant that we could buy them any equipment and pay for any service; when in effect it meant to be able to have all the usefull information about a service or equipment in order to determine what is better for them according to what is available. Some counselors were confused also, but after some training and meetings with clients the informed choice policy is moving smoodly.

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), rather than Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan (IWRP) with emphasis on employment. This meant that we needed to find different ways to work with the older blind population as home-makers.

Competitive employment was also added. The idea is to get people making more money and full time jobs. The standards and indicators came out as a result of these provisions.

The Commission not only successfully achieved levels required by RSA Standards and indicators, but also is among the states which have higher results.

(See attached standards and indicators.)

As a result of emphasis on placement, many of the home-maker cases have been transferred to Older Blind services.

This is a gray area due to the fact that many people consider themselves as home-makers and therefore can be considered under VR. However, we need to start looking at the definition of home-maker in the general public. That is: a.) a person who is supported by somebody else, b.) a person who provides care to somebody else, and c.) a person who stays home. Because we don't have enough resources under OIB services to provide equipment, provide long term training in their homes, training in the Nebraska Center for the Blind, etc, we were forced to provide these services under VR track. However, RSA's last monitoring review was concentrated on quality employment and the reasons for the numbers of home-makers. As you can see, we are faced with a challenge of continuing to provide quality services under IL/OIB and for VR clients.

Another change in the '98 amendments was to stream-line paperwork. We only try to report on what the Federal Government requires. Less paperwork now comes to Lincoln. This is because supervisors now have more latitude in making decisions and documenting services. One of the '98 amendments changes was that of "presumptive eligibility". In other words, all SSI recipients and/or SSDI beneficiaries are presumed to be eligible for services. (attached is the section on presumed eligibility from the '98 amendments)

One of the situations we faced doing paperwork was the matching situation with the Low Vision clinic. To be able to capture Federal matching funds, the Low Vision clinic referrals had to be at least on application status. Thus, paperwork increased significantly in the last three years; demanding more time from our counselors in their offices rather than working directly with clients. This has to be done to be able to count all of the referrals from the low vision clinic as applicants, so we could get the federal match. After September 30, we will not need to use the low vision clinic referrals to get the federal match and significant reduction of paperwork is expected.

Deaf-Blind services have been expanded since the agency got a 5-year grant from the Helen Keller foundation. Prior to this, a non-deaf-blind specialist person was assigned to be a resource to other counselors, but it really didn't work well. The deputy director for VR services does not supervise the deaf-blind program, however works very closely with those who are VR clients and have hearing loss in addition to their blindness. This population was forgotten and we are now doing a great job with them. This also mean more resources put into this. That is, one more staff person, more expensive equipment, on occasions needing to purchase hearing aids, needing to send them to the Helen Keller national training center, need for job coaches, etc. We are proud to provide these services, but have to be mindful of the fiscal impact as well.

Most of the referrals come from doctors and other state agencies. Often we start providing services right away. We used to be able to spend money before a WRP or an IPE was developed. A couple of years ago during a monitoring visit, we were told by RSA employees that we could not spend any money on clients until they have an IPE. This includes staff time providing training. This changed the way we operate because we wanted to start providing services right away. That is, blindness skills and positive attitude. So now we open a case as soon as possible and we can change the vocational goal later if needed.

Some of the services that may be provided are: training in the skills of blindness, blindness information to family and friends, vocational education, counseling and guidance, job training, job development, job placement and assistive technology services.

Technology

Computer access equipment enables individuals who are blind or visually impaired to acquire skills necessary to compete effectively in vocational training and employment. As technology started to drive the means of communication, NCBVI began to gradually add staff for this area. In the eighties the agency hired a program specialist (for adaptive equipment and accessible software) to do evaluation with some clients and few employers. We would only consider purchasing technology for clients whose vocational goal was in a computer-related field. As jobs increased the use of technology, we also added a technology person in Omaha and then in North Platte. We now not only have to deal with training more clients in this area and trying to help more employers on making their system accessible; but also deal with more expensive equipment. According to some studies, by the year 2010, 70% of the jobs in America will require the use of computers. New software is constantly being upgraded and employers want to be on top of communication in order to be competitive. Therefore, accessibility for the blind is becoming more and more crucial. (I am attaching a speech, which analyzed this issue in more detail, given at the NCSAB conference last April by Curtis Chong, director of technology and field service for the Iowa Department for the Blind.)

We are constantly looking for ways to educate businesses, employers, public schools and clients about this issue. The demand is greater, more money is needed; however the funds are being restricted.

The Commission's Technology Program is the heart of computer training for blind consumers in Nebraska. This program employs three full-time Technology Specialists, located in Omaha, Lincoln and North Platte. They provide training and consultation to blind consumers and employers across the state. Every year, approximately 370 evaluations are completed. Additionally, approximately 80 computer systems are designed, configured, and delivered to consumers. Due to limited resources, technology services are provided to consumers via telephone and e-mail as well.

Consultations were also provided to a number of employers across the state. Some of them are: the Nebraska Health and Human Services System, Nebraska Department of Corrections, Lincoln, Lancaster County, University of Nebraska-Omaha, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Nebraska-Kearney, Southeast Community College, Hamilton College, Marriott Hotel Reservations, US Info, the Hyatt Hotel in Omaha, United Parcel Service, Red Cross, Nebraska Department of Revenue, Cabela's, Workforce Investment System, Nebraska Department of Labor, and the Lincoln Public Schools, among others.

Our technology specialists also worked very diligently on assuring that the new Nebraska Information System (NIS) is fully accessible to blind employees and potential blind applicants who qualify for state jobs. They also worked to ensure that the new E-Government initiative would be as accessible for blind consumers in general. Another service provided by the technology program, is the capability to provide loaner equipment to consumers and employers. Furthermore, the Commission's technology specialists are constantly researching in order to keep up with changes in technology and to have it available to consumers and employers.

One of the struggles we are also facing is the cost of equipment for staff; but more than that, the cost of equipment for clients. As an agency, we want to provide the services necessary for a consumer to be employable. Most clients don't have money to buy their technology. If they don't have the equipment, they cannot use the equipment competitively. In other words, the expenditures on technology have increased immensely but our budget has not. Additionally, much of the software and equipment gets old after two or three years; sometimes they break, or need different software, etc. We debate who should be responsible for such expenditures. Yes, the client should, but if they don't have the money, should we? These are situations that we face on all the time. Attached are our technology guidelines which were developed after several months and with the input of the whole NCBVI staff, including CAP.

During fiscal year 2004, 861 Nebraskans received services in all statuses; of which 55 consumers were competitively employed in a variety of jobs.

SERVICES TO CLIENTS WITH MULTI DISABILITIES

Another new challenge that we are facing is advances in medicine and science. This means that more and more people are surviving life threatening health issues and consequently have multiple disabilities. The Commission has a memorandum of understanding with the general voc rehab agency that address which of the agencies will serve consumers with multiple disabilities. The understanding is that the Commission will serve all individuals who have blindness regardless of any other disability, (Attached is a copy of the MOU with the general voc rehab agency). Our counselors are experts on blindness, but constantly have to face clients with other disabilities and yet keep the high expectations. This year our staff worked with 224 multi-disabled individuals who also happen to be blind. This is one of the most time consuming factors in the work we do because there are other entities involved and we have to educate them as well. We take this as a great opportunity to disseminate our beliefs about blindness. On the other hand we are demanded to spend more time and money with these consumers.

PLACEMENT DEVELOPMENTS:

In 1998, the Commission also started to put more emphases on placement development by training our staff and providing more tools to both clients and staff. We are constantly building relationship with employers.

Before '98, the last word was that the employer has to purchase the technology for the new blind employee. In spite of all the laws and regulations, employers always found ways to get around that and avoided the responsibility to buy such equipment. Therefore, the Commission started to buy technology whenever necessary for the client to be employed. In the past we saw situations in which clients lost the chance to be employed because no technology was available. Today, in most of our placements we purchase the technology. Once we developed a trust relationship with employers, that is, when they have already employed other blind people, then they are willing to buy the technology to be used.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors for the Commission work diligently with employers to educate them about the potential of the blind by providing Power Point presentations, informing them about reasonable accommodations that will not be expensive and will not lower their productivity. In addition, each district has also developed their own system to do job development. A data-base of employers who hire blind people is updated on ongoing basis.

Consumers have been placed in a variety of jobs, including engineers, assembly workers, lawyers, clerical workers, telephone operators, administrators, human services professionals, teachers, farmers, case workers, counselors, and small business owners, among others.

As part of the placement efforts, the entire staff continues to receive training on job development and job placement that enables them to provide better services to our consumers. Our staff also gets ongoing training on multi-handicapped issues, as individuals in this population continue to increase. The Commission emphasizes quality competitive employment, not just the first available job, but full-time jobs that will provide consumers good wages, benefits and the potential for upward mobility. When we need staff to be present on a placement situation, everything else is dropped.

We get the counselor and technology specialist to make it happen. We tell employers that we will be there as a resource and we try our best.

We used to have "Round-Tuit", a three-day summer program that provided blind and visually impaired job seekers practical information and guidance regarding what it takes to obtain and hold a job. Consumers were taught self-advocacy, interview skills, how to create a resume, and are informed about disability disclosures, civil right issues, social security work incentives, work ethics, ADA information, and other pertinent information. Due to limited resources, now each district provides this training in their own geographic location.

TRANSITION PROGRAM

Our transition services developed more when we got a grant five years ago. As a result of this grant, we were able to pay for the four transition staff salaries, WAGES, WINNER-FEST, College Workshop, and around \$50,000 for equipment. Keeping this going after September 30 will now be a test. One of the ways to help, we hope, will be by working with the mentoring program which is still being shaped.

The Transition Program is a special project funded by a federal grant through RSA. Employment experiences are too often not available for blind and visually impaired students and young adults as they grow up. The Transition Program is focused on creating and supporting these opportunities across the state. Three Transition Counselors and one Transition Coordinator work with students between the ages of 14 and 26 years of age. They work to develop positive relationships with schools, families, and employers in their communities.

Work opportunities and other special programs for transition students are designed to provide real life work experiences, job skills, and a work history, all of which contribute significantly to eventual success in the workplace as adults.

This past summer, the WAGES (Work And Gain Experience in the Summer) Program, held in Lincoln, Nebraska, provided work experiences for 8 students. During the first week of the program, students received intensive cane travel instruction in order to become familiar with the UNL campus where they were housed. They were then able to travel to and from work independently each day. Throughout the program, students increased their self-esteem by participating in weekly seminars involving discussions regarding blindness issues. They were exposed to adult blind role models who hold competitive jobs. These role models shared their work experiences and answered the students' questions. The transition staff were in constant contact with the employers during the duration of the program to insure the success of the students in the work place. The staff also worked to educate employers, encouraging them to raise their expectations of individuals who are blind. The WAGES Program was a partnership with Lincoln Action Program, which paid most of the salaries of the students working in Lincoln.

The jobs students held included: office work at the Ombudsman's Office, childcare work at University Childcare, Lancaster Health Department, Youth Program worker at Calvert Recreation Center and work at Belmont Recreation Center, a pet care assistant at Legacy Stables and Kennel, a micro-filmer at Lancaster County Records Management, an office worker at NCBVI, two workers at Bryan LGH Distribution, a staff assistant with the Hispanic Immersion Program, a warehouse worker at The Food Bank of Lincoln, an office worker at the Assistive Technology Partnership, and a receptionist at the Help Desk in the City County Building.

The Opportunity Knocks Program is a type of "on the job training" (OJT) for transition age students who are about to finish their center training.

The last two or three months of their training, they work part time and come to the center part time. This is also possible due to the grant budget. Placements included a pet shop worker, a computer technician, a lab assistant, a warehouse worker and an office worker.

The College Workshop is a program designed to provide transition students with the skills and information needed to participate fully in the academic experience and employment search. We started this set of conferences as a result of modifying "Round-Tuit" and the need for college students to master blindness issues. This year's workshop, as well as the last four, was funded out of the transition grant and we had 56 participants last year. The keynote speaker was the Commissioner of the US Rehabilitation Services Administration, Dr. Joanne Wilson. In addition, the Director of Field Operations for the Iowa Department for the Blind came and spoke about adaptive equipment. During the session, students engaged in a discussion on various topics including how to manage readers, dealing with science courses, the expectations from society, scholarships, effective ways to take independent notes, social skills, and workplace behaviors.

Another transition program is "Winnerfest" which is designed for blind teenagers from across the state to participate in these semi-annual retreats. We had 20 students participate during each of these two sessions. Activities were focused on the importance of mastering the skills of blindness, personal achievement, goal setting, communication and other life skills. One of the most important aspects of these sessions was that the participants were exposed to successful blind role models. This program was also funded from the transition grant. We plan to use funds from the mentoring grant to help finance most of this program for the next four years.

PI is a one-to-two week program designed for younger children, ages 7 to 15 where they are introduced to social skills and to work using blindness alternative techniques.

Even though the clients in this project are not under the VR caseload, we think that you would like to know how our counselors spend their time impacting the lives of blind youth. Last year, 11 blind and visually impaired youngsters also had an excellent opportunity to observe blind adults in their work environments, using alternative skills, and demonstrating success in the workplace. During PI, the parents were involved in a seminar in which issues regarding blindness were addressed.

Our transition staff also work with the Nebraska Transition Team for Students who are Blind, Deaf-Blind or Visually Impaired. This is a collaborative effort among the Commission for the Blind, the Department of Education, school districts, the Nebraska Center for Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired, the Nebraska Department of Education Deaf-Blind Project, consumer organizations and other entities. The primary purpose is to share information with each other, advise, seek to improve relations and services, and promote an understanding of the issues and critical needs of the students involved in the education and transition process. It has been a challenge to work in this area because of the differences in belief systems. For instance, when should blind children start reading Braille, using a long white cane, learning wood shop, participation in challenging activities, etc.

OTHER SERVICES

Our Counselors teach many VR clients, in their homes, the use of the Internet and emails. Assistive technology devices and various aids may be provided to help individuals become more self-sufficient, including a long white cane, Braille writing equipment, talking calculators, talking glucometers, Closed Circuit TVs (to read regular or large print), magnifiers, and Braille or talking watches.

Comprehensive outreach continues to provide information, consultation and training to other service providers, the general public, and agency staff. The Commission staff helps coordinate services among other providers such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs, offices of the Area Agencies on Aging, Independent Living Centers, and the Veterans' Administration.

Commission Staff provide ongoing referral services to consumers. There are also a variety of services available to consumers that the agency does not provide in a direct manner. Some of those services are:

Nebraska Visually Impaired Peer Support (VIPS) is an organization comprising a network of groups across the state which provide peer-to-peer counseling and support to visually impaired persons age 55 or over.

Radio Talking Book Network (RTBN) is a service that provides audio programming for blind and visually impaired Nebraskans. This programming is supplied by way of specialized radio receivers, or as an additional audio channel on newer TVs. Some of the programs include reading columns and/or articles from some of the papers of the state, and grocery ads from those papers

Nebraska Talking Book and Braille Services (TBBS) is the State Library Service for the Blind and Reading Impaired. Commission staff assist consumers in completing applications for Library services and teaching consumers how to use the services and the equipment.

Consumer organizations allow blind people to be exposed to other blind people in order to give them invigoration and encouragement, in addition to our services.

Our counselors continue to refer clients to these consumer organizations in the state; which include the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska and the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska. Long after the rehabilitation experience is over, mentoring will continue giving them that extra support. When a person becomes blind or even grows up blind, his or her first need is to associate with other blind people. The individual initially needs to know what is possible to do as a blind person. The family won't likely know, nor will his or her community. So first, blind people need to have exposure to other blind people, not just for the encouragement from those who have done remarkable things, but also to gain a new perspective on how societal attitudes about blindness play out.

To be able to evaluate the job we do in the field for the VR track, we continue to survey former clients about the quality of our services. Surveys used to be completed by regular mail six months after case closure. However, in order to get a better feedback from our VR clients, a more comprehensive survey instrument has been developed to be conducted over the phone and it was implemented in January 2005 (Attached is the survey questionnaire). Another form of feedback is via input from consumers received at public meetings and forums, which are held four times a year with the Board, and also at state conventions of consumer groups.

During supervisors' meetings, management meetings and state staff meetings, we take a close look at how to improve our services. As you read the above report, you can see the continuing challenges we face. However, we are determined to provide the best services we can under the current straggles and always look to build our budget. Our inspiration is the belief we have about the capability of the blind and the positive impact we continue to have in the life of the blind.

Webmaster Report

May 1-31, 2005

(Figures in parentheses refer to the 7-day period ending 01-Jun-2005 00:08).

Successful requests: 9,184 (1,581)

Average successful requests per day: 296 (225)

Successful requests for pages: 9,154 (1,576)

Average successful requests for pages per day: 295 (225)

Failed requests: 1,626 (306)

Redirected requests: 4 (1)

Distinct files requested: 221 (203)

Distinct hosts served: 1,199 (313)

Unwanted logfile entries: 859

Data transferred: 185.23 megabytes (28.77 megabytes)

Average data transferred per day: 5.98 megabytes (4.11 megabytes)

June 1-30, 2005

(Figures in parentheses refer to the 7-day period ending 01-Jul-2005 00:05).

Successful requests: 8,645 (1,995)

Average successful requests per day: 288 (284)

Successful requests for pages: 8,588 (1,942)

Average successful requests for pages per day: 286 (277)

Failed requests: 1,465 (450)

Redirected requests: 4 (1)

Distinct files requested: 251 (249)

Distinct hosts served: 1,099 (350)

Unwanted logfile entries: 1,102

Data transferred: 179.10 megabytes (42.72 megabytes)

Average data transferred per day: 5.97 megabytes (6.10 megabytes)

July 1-31, 2005

(Figures in parentheses refer to the 7-day period ending 01-Aug-2005 00:05).

Successful requests: 10,168 (2,094)

Average successful requests per day: 327 (299)

Successful requests for pages: 10,113 (2,088)

Average successful requests for pages per day: 326 (298)

Failed requests: 1,668 (416)

Redirected requests: 68 (63)

Distinct files requested: 225 (208)

Distinct hosts served: 1,152 (441)

Corrupt logfile lines: 1

Unwanted logfile entries: 2,422

Data transferred: 257.68 megabytes (59.21 megabytes)

Average data transferred per day: 8.31 megabytes (8.46 megabytes)

Including our first known international subscription, and including the removal of those staff not responding to the list serve post with their change of E-mail address, as directed by Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, we currently have 92 subscribed to the list serve.

Webmaster Report:

*On May 17, received correspondence from Pearl to generate to the list serve new postings to the Website. This practice is to remain in place until either consumers raise concern about the number of E-mails being generated, or until Dr. Van Zandt advises accordingly.

*On June 6, after uploading the May 21 draft minutes, sent E-mail to Pearl and commissioners expressing the length of time involved in posting the minutes to the site as requested during the May meeting. The Webmaster explained that the old method, though not as user friendly to folks with screen reading software, was not as time consuming as the new method. After exchanging E-mails, on June 11, it was decided to revert back to the previous method of posting minutes to the site.

*On June 13, received E-mail from Nebraska On Line advising of name change and of new URL. On June 14, as NCBVI has a link atop the home page to the state of Nebraska Website, added new link.

*On June 14, as per the request of Rod Armstrong from NOL to all Webmasters, attempted to fill out satisfaction survey on NOL's customer service. As the test is in an inaccessible format, requested NOL to send accessible format via Word if possible.

*On June 15, received the survey in Word. On June 16, completed survey and E-mailed back to NOL. The survey and answers are as follows:

Nebrask@ Online is now Nebraska.gov. We value your opinion and would like your comments regarding our service. Please complete the following survey in its entirety so that we may improve our service to you. Any information you supply will be kept confidential and will be used solely to improve the quality of service we offer to you.

Please select the option, which best describes your opinion about the following statements about Nebraska.gov (formally Nebrask@ Online).

(Strongly agree) <... < ... (Neutral) ... > ...> (Strongly Disagree)

Nebraska.gov understands my agency or division's needs.

X O O O O

Nebraska.gov posses the technical ability to address the needs of my agency or division.

X O O O O

Nebraska.gov follows through with commitments, project time lines and promises.

X O O O O

Nebraska.gov's employees are professional.

X O O O O

Nebraska.gov is responsive to my agency or division's needs.

X O O O O

Nebraska.gov provides a quality product

X O O O O

Nebraska.gov treats my agency or division with respect.

X O O O O

My experience working with Nebraska.gov has been positive.

X O O O O

Nebraska.gov has contributed in increasing my agency's or divisions overall efficiency.

Please rate your opinion of Nebraska.gov's (Nebrask@ Online's) technical support.

(Strongly agree) <... < ... (Neutral) ... > ...> (Strongly Disagree)

Nebraska.gov provides quality technical support.

Nebraska.gov has reduced the amount of customer calls to my agency or division.

Nebraska.gov resolves service problems/issues quickly.

Nebraska.gov resolves problems/issues to my complete satisfaction.

Comments: Nebraska Dot Gov is not necessarily to reduce calls to the commission for the blind as that is how the majority of our clients come to us, though we have seen an increase in hits on our site.

In the future, how likely are you to work with Nebraska.gov again?

XVery Likely]

How likely are you to recommend Nebraska.gov to another government agency or division?

XVery Likely]

Please use the space below to comment on your overall experience of working with Nebraska.gov.

I have always had good luck resolving service/technical issues when calling upon Nebraska Dot Gov. There may have been an instance or two where it took longer than I thought it should to have resolving a somewhat simplistic issue. However, I understand that matters need to be prioritized in order of importance and complexity. Nevertheless, the issues raised have always been dealt with professionally and as expediently as possible.

Note: You may wish to add adjustable font settings to the new look state web site for persons with low vision, or provide text instructions at the bottom of the home page for changing font settings and color schemes in Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator. *

Please provide background information about your agency or division (Optional).

Jurisdiction

- [State Government]

Your position:

XOther] (visually impaired volunteer Webmaster for the commission doing Web maintenance after hours and on weekends as staffing does not permit current staff to handle workload plus Web maintenance.

Thank you for your feedback! Your answers and recommendations will be used to help us improve our service.

*On June 15, received E-mail from the president of the Nebraska Webmasters group advising the branding standards for state agency Websites had been adopted and all agencies had 30 days to comply with choosing a logo from the list provided and 6 months to comply with linking to the state privacy, security and accessibility policy. This link must appear on each page of all state agencies sites.

*On June 15, sent E-mail to Nancy in Lincoln asking for clarification on how to proceed. Nancy advised to call her Friday or Monday for clarification and that Pearl should be consulted for the logo preference.

*On June 18, sent E-mail to Pearl asking for after hour's assistance with the logo and uploading to the site as the Webmaster is confused as to how to make this happen. The Webmaster explained that we had 30 days from June 15 to comply with the logo and 6 months to comply with the privacy, security and accessibility linkage.

On June 18, as Pearl's E-mail address, along with all staff, is changing, began the process of changing the E-mail address on all pages, except any archive posts posted to the list serve, where her E-mail address is present, along with all staff listed online. This project completed July 12.

*On June 18, also started the process of linking to the text only version of the state privacy, security and accessibility policy on all pages as part of the new branding standard required for all Nebraska sites. Then on June 27, after a flurry of E-mails between Pearl and myself to determine the brand of logo for all two hundred plus pages, Pearl contacted Nebraska Dot Gov to have them complete the process to bring us into compliance with the new WebPages standard. On June 28, received confirmation this task has been completed. However, given the fact these branding standards will need to appear on all newly created pages, due to the fact the program used by Nebraska Dot Gov is costly and lack of funding precludes the purchasing of the program, the Webmaster will E-mail all newly created links to Nebraska Dot Gov for them to brand accordingly.

*On June 18, began the process of re-assigning links so that when links are clicked on a given page, the previous page could be accessed in addition to the home page. This project completed July 12 on all two hundred plus pages.

*As there are several staff subscribed to the list serve, on June 27, sent Pearl E-mail requesting she forward to all staff advising if they are subscribed to follow the steps outlined in the E-mail to un-subscribe their old E-mail address and subscribe the new one.

*On June 28, Pearl advised she attempted to forward the E-mail but had technical issues, which precluded her from doing so.

*On June 29, sent each staff member, subscribed or not, the steps required to subscribe and un-subscribe themselves if appropriate.

*On June 29, as persons have the ability to refer for services online, sent Nebraska Dot Gov an E-mail asking when persons click the submit button on our refer for services link to whom the request is generated.

*On June 30, Nebraska Dot Gov advised these requests were sent to wbmaster@ncbvi.state.ne.us. As Pearl out of the office until July 11, given the fact E-mail addresses are changing, posed the question to Val to whom this is sent and asked whether this E-mail address is checked or a different needs to be specified.

*On June 30, as the Webmaster's enhanced Spam filtering service was discontinued, changed all Webmaster links found on NCBVI' S site back to the personal E-mail of the Webmaster.

*On July 11, forwarded E-mail to Pearl concerning the refer for services page and how the sending of these online submissions should be generated.

After a flurry of E-mail between Nebraska Dot Gov, Pearl and myself, on July 13, Pearl advised via E-mail Carlos was the recipient of these sends and sent correspondence to Nebraska Dot Gov to have this changed. The actual change of E-mail address for the online referral form was completed on July 22.

*On July 13, in reference to the June 28 and June 29 reported entries concerning staff that are signed up for list serve posts, Pearl suggested a list serve post to remind all subscribed the procedures needed to subscribe and un-subscribe. Prior to posting, posed the question whether a time specific date for staff should be imposed given the August 1 cut over on E-mail address changes and whether any staff member should be automatically un-subscribed given the complexness of tracking issues.

*On July 18, Pearl suggested that all staff subscribed should be given a deadline to comply or risk being removed. With this E-mail receipt, all staff currently subscribed to the list will be advised they will be removed at the end of business July 29 as the E-mail changes kick in August 1. Suggested that Pearl or Nancy forward to all staff the list serve post to ensure all staff members are aware of the deadline.

*On July 18, received E-mail from Pearl sent to Nebraska Dot Gov requesting, for consistency purposes, that NCBVI' S domain change from the current. state.ne.us to. ne.gov. The process will be completed shortly. As per my request in E-mail sent to both Pearl and Nebraska Dot Gov, as each and every link will need to be re-assigned to fit the new domain, requested this change take effect August 1. Also sent E-mail clarifying how the upload process should work given with each page as, if uploaded as changed, the links won't work.

*On July 19, Nebraska Dot Gov replied the upload process would not change. As this did not address the answer, re-phrased the question in hopes an answer would be provided to the original question.

*On July 19, received updated subscription instructions for posting to the list serve for subscribing and un-subscribing purposes. Posted to the list and, per Pearl's request, will remove any staff member not subscribing with their new E-mail address currently subscribed with their old. All staff was made aware of the guidelines for compliance by Pearl.

*On July 19, received concern from staff member that the subscription page was not accessible to folks using screen readers. The staff member suggested to have the un-subscription edit box labeled as clear as the subscription edit box.

*On July 20, forwarded the concern raised by the staff member to Nebraska Dot Gov for handling.

*On July 21, received clarification on the link re-assignment and uploading procedures. Requested Nebraska Dot Gov to activate the new URL and re-direct persons to the new until the links were manually updated to comply with the new address. Reminded Nebraska Dot Gov to change to whom the refer for services link is generated and provided Carlos' E-mail. Nebraska Dot Gov will let us know when this is completed, too.

*On July 21, Nebraska Dot Gov not only corrected the problem with the subscription page, but also E-mailed the new page properly labeled for uploading. After testing the edit fields to determine their recognizability, uploaded the new page and sent E-mail to staff member in question advising the problem was rectified.

*On July 22, received confirmation that the new web address, www.ncbvi.ne.gov, has been activated. Until such time as the link re-assignment takes place, both web addresses will work, with those accessing the site with the old addresses being re-directed to the new. Nebraska Dot Gov will be advised when to disconnect the old web address.

*On July 23, sent inquiry to Nebraska Dot Gov to determine whether E-mail addresses could be removed by domain so that all persons having the same domain name could be removed in one removal process. (Note: This inquiry is mainly for those staff members not responding to the E-mail requesting they re-subscribe using their new E-mail address.)

*On July 23, began the monumental task of manually re-assigning all links on the Website to work with the new web address. This task completed July 26.

*On July 23, while working through the links, discovered a “donate” button on the donate to the commission link. Sent E-mail to Nebraska Dot Gov to learn the identity of the recipient to determine whether this needs to be updated, too.

*On July 24, changed the web address on the header so it displays the new web address when posts are generated to the list serve.

*On July 25, received response from Nebraska Dot Gov concerning deleting by domain. As they were not sure of the answer to this question, they provided an online source to find the answer to the question. If the Webmaster cannot find the answer, will delete all staff not responding one-by-one.

*On July 25, Nebraska Dot Gov responded to the donate to the commission question by stating there was no donate button on the site. Sent apology E-mail for overlooking the obvious.

*On July 25, Nebraska Dot Gov advised the branding links to the header on the site were broken and didn't look, as they should. Nebraska Dot Gov asked how we wished to handle this. And on July 26, sent the following reply:

"Doug,

In answer to your question, Dan did the branding and, I assume yourself. I had to download some pages 3 and 4 times as a batch download didn't seem to cover all pages having the branding logo.

As for the question as can I do this myself if given the coding to do that, the answer is probably not as Pearl decided the template and program needed was too costly given the lack of funding in the budget. Is the link broken on all pages, or just the donate page? And is the fact we're using Word for Web maintenance the source of the problem, too?

Awaiting your reply."

*On July 26, received E-mail from Omaha staff member with a forward of the most recent post asking where the text of the message was as all that was received was a copy of the header.

*On July 26, sent E-mail notification to Nebraska Dot Gov that the links were re-assigned to match the new address of ncbvi.ne.gov and requested they put a change of address notice online re-directing users to the new and that this remain effective for thirty-days and that the old address of .state.ne.us/ be completely removed and the re-direction stop at that time. Requested confirmation when completed.

*On July 27, concerning the branding on the site, received the following from Nebraska Dot Gov:

“Jim:

It does look like using Word for the site maintenance is the culprit for breaking the branding code. Do you anticipate doing any site-wide updates in the near future? The reason I ask is, it will take us approximately two hours to fix the branding and if you use Word to update after we fix the branding, it will break again and we will have to invest another two hours fixing it. It could also be a version problem with Word, the latest version don't seem to cause as much trouble.

There are a number of free programs available off of the Web to do site maintenance. You can contact us for assistance in locating one or try searching Google for "free html editor."

We will try to get the branding fixed sometime this week, unless you

Plan to do site-wide changes. In that case we will hold off with the repairs until you have finished. Thanks.”

*On July 27, forwarded correspondence to Nebraska Dot Gov to hold off on fixing any branding issues until further notice. Then promptly sent Pearl, and "cc'd" Nancy, on all correspondences related to this issue for their feedback. Requested that if Pearl had questions concerning the content to call to clarify prior to contacting Nebraska Dot Gov. Further explained in my send that if Nebraska Dot Gov made changes then uploaded the changes to the site if downloaded to my PC in Word, or not downloaded at all and changes were made on my end then uploaded, the problem would represent itself.

*On July 27, received correspondence from Nebraska Dot Gov that the .state.ne.us site would be disconnected within thirty days and a permanent re-direct is put in place to .ne.gov address. Sent query as to a date when this would happen.

*On July 28, received two E-mails concerning the branding issue as raised by Nebraska Dot Gov. Nancy was of the opinion that Word should be discontinued for NCBVI' S site and a different program be used and, per an earlier conversation with Shawn and the Webmaster earlier in the week, Dreamweaver was suggested. Pearl also agreed that it was time to upgrade from Word to another program given the branding issues. Nancy, Shawn and the Webmaster will investigate Dreamweaver as well as other possible programs and make a determination based on cost, ease of use and accessibility in maintenance with the use of JAWS.

*On July 28, Nebraska Dot Gov advised a conversion date from .state.ne.us/ to .ne.gov of August 1. Sent them an E-mail advising to go ahead with the conversion and place a re-direct at the old address reminding visitors to the site of the new URL.

*On July 28, with the approval of Pearl, posted to the list the effective date for the move and provided new web address.

*On July 28, sent Omaha staff member E-mail about list serve post to Nebraska.gov asking for their opinion as to what could have happened to the text.

*On July 29, Shawn Djernes sent E-mail requesting all list serve posts be done in non-html format. Sent E-mail to Shawn advising that when list members subscribe, the default setting subscribed at is plain text E-mail receipts. Further explained that prior to the E-mail cutover, all staff members were receiving the messages sent to the list with no problems so far as the Webmaster knew. Suggested to Shawn that since the problem might be on the E-mail provider end for NCBVI that he contact Nebraska.gov for a workable solution. After this send, called Nebraska.gov to confirm whether list serve subscribers were automatically subscribed by mailman as receiving non-html sends. They advised that the default setting is plain text E-mail receipts and that how posts were received was on the end of the sender. Nebraska.gov recommended checking Outlook to ensure it was sent to generate plain text E-mails. The disadvantage to sending a plain text E-mail is the font settings cannot be enlarged for folks needing to read large print. With this information, left Shawn a voice mail of what was explained to me. Both he and I will check Outlook to determine how the E-mails are generated and determine the next step if things are being sent as they should.

*On July 29, received E-mail from Nebraska.gov, sent prior to my phone call, stating there were a number of reasons why some staff was not receiving the posts properly.

*On July 29, Shawn advised he might have figured out the reason for the problem. He requested, and was provided on August 2, the E-mail address from which list serve posts are generated to have this added to the system approved sender list as he believes NCBVI' S Spam filtering may be filtering out the messages.

*On August 1, Shawn assisted the Webmaster with setting Outlook Express to generate to the list serve non-html, or plain text messages, to see if this doesn't assist with solving the problem.

*On August 1, checked periodically to determine whether the commission Website had been moved from .state.ne.us/ to .ne.gov/

*On August 2, as the site still had not been moved, sent Nebraska.gov a follow-up E-mail to learn the approximate date for this to happen.

*On August 2, as per earlier E-mail posted to the list serve, removed all staff from the mailing list not subscribed with there new.

*On August 3, received two E-mails from Nebraska.gov concerning the update on the re-direct to .ne.gov. The first stated the matter would be corrected soon while the second E-mail advised, after further investigation, the re-direct was in place since August 1. However, instead of receiving a message advising of the new Web address, the re-direct was automatically re-directing visitors by default. Nebraska.gov advised an html reset could be done to advise of the new address then require visitors to click on the link to be re-directed.

*On August 4, sent E-mail requesting an html reset be done and to advise when complete. Further advised that if the html reset did not work, we would consider the matter resolved since the re-direct was doing the job, though not as we'd like.

*On August 4, received our first known international subscription and sent E-mail to Pearl, Val and the commission board making them aware of the subscription.

*On August 4, as we have been receiving several requests for subscriptions to the list serve, but the two step process not being complete, sent E-mail asking whether this functionality was working properly.

*On August 5, Nebraska.gov advised the issue of re-directing .state.ne.us/ to .ne.gov would be addressed following vacation.

*On August 9, Nebraska.gov advised the subscription page was working, as it should.

*On August 10, received scripting text for automatic re-direct to .ne.gov each time an Internet browser clicks on .state.ne.us/ and as unsure how to apply the text, called Nebraska.gov who provided instructions, though not very clear. The Webmaster then called Shawn Djernes' cellular in the evening that provided better step-by-step instructions. This process will be in place by August 17.

*On August 11, received a telephone call from Shawn, who requested a copy of the re-direct as sent by Nebraska.gov, be sent to him for his review in how to best handle the re-direct to the new link of .ne.gov. After reviewing the E-mail, Shawn advised this is not the best solution and the best way to handle the re-direct is with text re-directing to .ne.gov.

MATERIALS LIST FOR AUGUST 13, 2005 MEETING

05-23-05--VZ: Changing the Mandatory Furlough

05-24-05--VZ: Letter to Spellings (has follow-up)

05-24-05--VZ: FW: Hire.US (from National Technical Assistance Center for Asian Americans and Pacific

Islanders with Disabilities (NTAC-AAPI); has follow-up)

05-24-05--VZ: Budget Update (has follow-up)

05-24-05--VZ: Voluntary Furloughs

05-24-05--VZ: Interpreter for Governor's Proclamation

05-24-05--VZ: RE: Statewide Single Audit - Please Respond By May 26, 2005

05-24-05--Loos: NCBVI Survey -Important- (has follow-up)

05-24-05--Loos: Mission Statement and Job Description (has follow-up)

05-25-05--VZ: FW: [rehabnet] S. 1021 (The Senate Bill to reauthorize the WIA)

05-25-05--VZ: FW: IDEA Public Meetings Update

05-25-05--VZ: FW: Trainer Position (vacancy in general RCEP)

05-25-05--VZ: FW: July 1, 2005 Pay Increase Instructions

05-25-05--VZ: FY2006 State Plan

05-26-05--VZ: FW: [rehab] ABC To Provide Live Audio Web cast Of Rally To Save RSA Programs

05-26-05--VZ: FW: Telephone conference (has follow-up)

05-26-05--VZ: Per Diems (has follow-up)

05-26-05--Loos: Interpreters for Governor's Proclamation

05-27-05--VZ: FW: Leave Reporting for May 13, 2005 through May 27, 2005

05-27-05--VZ: FW: File Server (has follow-up)

05-27-05--VZ: Pay Increases for Rules Covered Staff

05-27-05--VZ: FW: RSA Monitoring Redesign Initiative

05-27-05--VZ: RE: Offutt Response (response to an inquiry from Dave Hunt; has follow-up)

05-27-05--Hunt: Bill Validator (to Terry Harris)

05-27-05--VZ: FW: Allen Harris -- NCSAB--Rally at Education

05-31-05--Mosier: MOU signed (Memoranda of Understanding with Institutions of Higher Education; has follow-up)

05-31-05--VZ: RE: Some thoughts from a client. (VZ and Alan Wheeler; has follow-up)

06-01-05--VZ: RE: Involuntary Furlough (to Dave Robinson)

06-03-05--VZ: FW: Read about the release of Helen Keller: Selected Writings in the June issue of AFB eNews

06-03-05--VZ: June 7 to 10 (concerning schedule; has follow-up)

06-03-05--VZ: My Schedule (has follow-up)

06-04-05--VZ: RE: Per Diems (response to Westin-Yockey)

06-04-05--VZ: Commitment to Excellence (concerning VIPS award to Deaton; has follow-up)

06-04-05--VZ: NBE Vendors Committee Bylaws (to Howard Simons)

06-06-05--Perry: Draft Minutes (has follow-up)

06-06-05--VZ: RE: Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week

06-06-05--VZ: FW: Letter to Mr. Tegtmeier (from Charles Lowe to Evidentiary Hearing Officer; has follow-up)

06-06-05--Husseini: Terry Heany's Article

06-06-05--VZ: Braille on machines (concerning State Office Bldg.)

06-06-05--Jirak: Posting Minutes to Website (has follow-up)

06-07-05--Peery: [rehab] Department of Education Party? (concerning interaction with Secretary Spellings)

06-07-05--Husseini: Shaun's Community Project

06-08-05--Hunt: .What to do After the Rally (concerning Secretary Spellings and RSA)

06-09-05--VZ: Revisions (concerning the budget)

06-10-05--VZ: Leave Reporting for May 27, 2005 through June 10, 2005

06-10-05--Oltman: survey results (feedback from NCBVI staff survey; has follow-up)

06-13-05--Husseini: Shaun's Article

06-13-05--Peery: Juarez anniversary letter

06-13-05--Oltman: survey results amended

06-14-05--Oltman: Fw: Commission Board resolution

06-18-05--Servan: Fw: [Cohort2] Remarks at May 26 Rally (has follow-up)

06-20-05--VZ: FW: Universal Design in Downtown Lincoln

06-21-05--VZ: NCBVI Employee of the Year (Betty Buresh; has follow-up)

06-21-05--VZ: Reasonable Accommodations (concerning no interpreters for Deaf-Blind Week Proclamation Ceremony; has follow-up)

06-21-05--VZ: FW: RSA Report Language (update from NCSAB)

06-22-05--VZ: RE: Lieutenant Governor's New Site

06-22-05--VZ: FW: Lieutenant Governor's New Site (forwarding to Wheeler and Hussein for review and comment)

06-22-05--VZ: FW: Nebraska CVBI State Plan for Fiscal Year 2006 (letter of approval; has follow-up)

06-22-05--VZ: Layoff Plan

06-22-05--VZ: Anniversary Letter (Val Peery)

06-22-05--Loos: Re: Next Meeting (reply to Nyman, concerning Friends of the Commission)

06-23-05--VZ: Website Accessibility (Wheeler response concerning Sheehy site)

06-23-05--VZ: FW: U.S. Blind Horseshoe Pitchers Assoc.

06-23-05--Sheehy: Re: Website Accessibility

06-24-05--VZ: FW: Employee of the year (nomination for Dave Robinson)

06-24-05--VZ: Center Alumni Picnic and Website

06-24-05--VZ: Vending at Offutt

06-24-05--VZ: FW: Leave Reporting for June 10, 2005 through June 24, 2005

06-25-05--Loos: Executive Director's Evaluation (to Department of Personnel)

06-26-05--Loos: Re: Resolution on Executive Director's Compensation (has follow-up)

06-27-05--VZ: FW: you are important! (nomination of Cheryl Poff for Employee of the Year; has follow-up)

06-27-05--VZ: Radio Talking Book (has follow-up)

06-27-05--VZ: Letter from NCBVI (to John Fullerton, RTB)

06-27-05--VZ: FW: Letter from NCBVI (Fullerton's forward to RTB Board)

06-27-05--VZ: Budget Decisions and Cuts (has follow-up)

06-27-05--VZ: State Law relating to reading services

06-27-05--VZ: FW: Required action report and mou's attached (concerning RSA)

06-28-05--Servan: Mentoring program in Nebraska (has follow-up)

06-29-05--VZ: FW: NCBVI Section 107 Progress Report

06-29-05--VZ: FW: NIMAS Proposed Regulations to be Issued in Federal Register(concerning National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard)

06-29-05--VZ: FW: Helen Keller would have turned 125 this month (article about Helen Keller)

06-29-05--Brown: FW: ACB and NFB Conventions (forward from Pearl concerning her attendance at Conventions)

07-01-05--Loos: Congratulations, Betty! (to Betty Buresh; has follow-up)

07-01-05--Burns: Going on vacation

07-11-05--Nyman: Friends minutes and notice

07-11-05--VZ: FW: Leave Reporting for June 24, 2005 through July 8, 2005

07-11-05--VZ: Happy Anniversary (to Angie Hoff)

07-12-05--Rauterkus: regarding layoffs (has follow-up)

07-12-05--VZ: American Foundation for the Blind (concerning visit from Carl Augusto)

07-12-05--VZ: AFB Follow-up (concerning willingness to serve on the AFB Board of Directors)

07-12-05--Nyman: Minutes and meeting (has follow-up)

07-13-05--VZ: NCBVI Layoffs (has follow-up)

07-13-05--VZ: Official Notice Dismissing the Evidentiary Hearing (has follow-up)

07-13-05--VZ: Contracted Services (concerning status of contracts NCBVI has supported)

07-13-05--VZ: In-Service Training (status of grant)

07-16-05--VZ: Letter to Senator Pederson (responding to questions; has follow-up)

07-18-05--VZ: Anniversary Letter to Dave (to Dave Robinson)

07-18-05--VZ: In-Service Training Grant (concerning opportunity to resubmit; has follow-up)

07-18-05--VZ: Agenda Item (concerning comprehensive statewide needs assessment; has follow-up)

07-19-05: Inviting Governor Heineman again (has follow-up)

07-19-05--VZ: Mentoring Grant (letter to Governor)

07-19-05--VZ: Happy Anniversary Cheryl! (to Cheryl Poff; has follow-up)

07-19-05--VZ: FW: RSA Restructuring Plan (from John Hager)

07-19-05--VZ: New Email Address

07-19-05--VZ: FW: [rehabnet] Senate Appropriations Report

07-20-05--VZ: Happy Anniversary Jean (to Jean Wurtz)

07-20-05--Hunt: Response to N. S. O. B. Contract

07-20-05--VZ: Grant update and my schedule (has follow-up)

07-20-05--VZ: FW: Closure of RSA Regional Offices (letter from Brian Sigman, NCSAB, to Hager and Spellings)

07-25-05--Peery: Public Notice for Next Commissioner Meeting (has follow-up)

07-25-05--VZ: Fwd: FW: Leave Reporting for July 8, 2005 through July 22, 2005

07-26-05--Jesse: Project (concerning blind children in Nicaragua)

07-26-05--VZ: Happy Anniversary (to Connie Carlow)

07-26-05--Loos: Agenda (request for items)

07-26-05--VZ: Vacation (has follow-up)

07-27-05--VZ: Test

07-27-05--VZ: Budget Items (concerning mentoring money and request for funds returned by other states from RSA; has follow-up)

07-27-05--VZ: RE: College Days Seminar (to Mary Susan Orester)

07-28-05--VZ: Fwd: FW: SRC Movies (has follow-up)

07-30-05--Loos: Fw: HAVE A BLAST! 2005 College Workshop! (from Amy Buresh)

07-30-05--Loos: Draft Agenda (has follow-up)

08-01-05--VZ: Happy Anniversary Dan (to Dan Hill)

08-1-05--VZ: FW: Happy Anniversary Sahar! (to Sahar Husseini)

08-1-05--Peery: Board of Commissioner's Meeting Agenda - August 13,2005 (has follow-up)

08-01-05--Burns: NCBVI board passed motions (has follow-up)

08-04-05--Jirak: Exciting News!!! (subscription to listserv from Hong Kong; has follow-up)

08-05-05--Peery: Revised Staff Listings (has follow-up)

08-05-05--Servan: documents for commission meeting (has follow-up)

08-08-05--VZ: Leave Report

08-09-05--Hunt: Price List and Other Items

08-10-05--Hunt: Re: Vending Machines in the NSOB

08-10-05--VZ: 2006 Goals (has follow-up)

08-10-05--VZ: American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) Board of Trustees (official support of her membership; has follow-up)

08-10-05--VZ: FW: NRA's Washington Wire: The Closing of RSA's Regional Offices and More (has follow-up)

08-10-05--VZ: RSA Monitoring Process (has follow-up)

08-10-05--VZ: Happy Anniversary Nancy! (to Nancy Coffman)

08-10-05--VZ: Happy Anniversary Carlos! (to Carlos Servan)

08-10-05--VZ: Resilience Training (has follow-up)

08-11-05--Jirak: Webmaster Report (has follow-up)

08-11-05--VZ: Resilience Agenda Corrected

08-11-05--VZ: FW: [rehabnet] DVR Director Recruitment (from the state of Washington)

08-11-05--Jirak: Revised - Webmaster Report (has follow-up)

08-11-05--Servan: 2 more attachments for the VR report (has follow-up)

08-11-05--VZ: Center Report

08-11-05--Loos: MISSION STATEMENT OF THE NCBVI BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS (has follow-up)

08-11-05--Loos: Mission Statement ...

08-12-05--VZ: Board Mission Statement and Job Description (has follow-up)

08-12-05--VZ: FW: A question from Cheryl (concerning interpreters and invitation to upcoming event; has follow-up)

08-12-05--VZ: FW: ABC Memo - ADA Complaint Procedures