

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Public Meeting, Saturday, August 4, 2012
Hampton Inn & Suites Conference Center
Scottsbluff, Nebraska
Approved Minutes

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

Julie Johnson, Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:09 a.m. and she welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Focus Topic for the meeting is NCBVI Personnel Procedures for hiring and promotions.

It was noted that public comments are always welcome regarding the agenda items. Dan Bird recorded the meeting and the recordings are available on the website. Lunch will be on your own.

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 Scottsbluff Star Herald, Lincoln Journal Star, the State Government Calendar, NCBVI Website, NFB Newslines® and Radio Talking Book. The Notice was also sent to ACB and NFB, the NCBVI List Serve and was posted in the Star Herald news section.

Reading of the agenda

Commissioner Hansen read the agenda items and introductions were made.

Commissioners Present: Mike Hansen, Designee of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska, Lincoln; Nancy Oltman, Hastings; Julie Johnson, Chairperson, York; Jim Jirak, Vice Chairperson, Designee of the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska, Omaha.

Commissioners Absent: Darrell Walla, Omaha.

NCBVI Staff Present: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director IL; Carlos Serván, Deputy Director VR; Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant.

Public Present: Dan Bird, NCBVI Driver and meeting recorder

Announcement of public comment protocol

Chairperson Johnson discussed the Public Comment Protocol which went into effect May 2011. The Protocol is available at the meetings in both braille and print.

Approve May 5 & June 18, 2012 minutes

Commissioner Oltman moved to approve the Minutes of the May 5 and June 18, 2012 Commission Board Meeting. Commissioner Jirak seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all were in favor of the motion.

Focus Topic: NCBVI Personnel Procedures for hiring and promotions

Executive Director Van Zandt presented the Focus Topic.

The Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired is a state agency that is within the Administrative Services Division of State Personnel; and therefore, abides by the Nebraska State Personnel Rules and Regulations.

NCBVI Hiring Practices

Hiring for a position within NCBVI is accomplished as a result of either a resignation of an employee, a termination of an employee, or the creation of a new position.

Job announcements, up to recently, have been posted either internally only, or internally and externally, simultaneously.

In the past, when a vacancy occurred and we were aware that a current employee, who was qualified for the position was interested, we would advertise the position internally only for a week. The few times we've utilized this method, it's resulted in a hire and greatly shortened the length of time it took to fill the position.

The posting of an internally only announcement was based on the presumption that everyone in the agency knew of the opening beforehand, which may or may not have been the case.

We've re-thought that and concluded that it would be presumptuous to believe that every employee was aware of the opening, so to make sure we don't miss any qualified, interested internal candidates, we will now advertise all openings internally only for a week, before posting it on the state website. Advertising internally means advertising within the NCBVI offices.

To advertise the job internally, the personnel officer logs into LINK, into the Recruitment and Selection Center and create a job requisition. Once the requisition is completed, it gets automatically forwarded to our Personnel Analyst at State Personnel.

Once the Personnel Analyst approves the requisition, it is forwarded to the Recruiter designated for our agency and is then instantly released to the state jobs website for a minimum of six working days.

It was noted that in general the same job description is used for all counselor positions. However, as the agency evolves and focuses on certain areas, language may be added to the job description. There also may be differences between districts as some offices may have more home teaching.

Once the job is posted to the state website, it is also sent out to various mail lists and consumer organizations.

All interested applicants are required to fill out an electronic application via the state website. At that point, State Personnel screens the applications for the minimum qualifications posted and forwards those applications that meet the minimum requirements to me electronically.

The applications are forwarded to NCBVI personnel officer and he saves them to a folder and forward electronic copies to the person or persons that make up the hiring team for that position.

Once all qualified applications have been forwarded to the hiring team, the team individually scores the applications, using a numerical scoring tool.

The scoring tool assigns point values to about a dozen or so criterion, such as five points for a Bachelor's degree; five points for a Master's Degree and various other point values for the remaining criterion.

The personnel officer keeps track of all of the scores of the hiring team on a spreadsheet and assists the hiring team in determining a numerical "cutoff", to determine the interview pool. The personnel officer also assists the hiring team, by pointing out large differences in scores on same individuals and suggests that the team look at that application again, so as to try to come closer to a somewhat similar score either way, so we know that the applicant got a fair scoring.

Once the interview pool has been established, someone from the hiring team will contact the applicants selected for an interview and arrange the interviews.

During the interview, the interview team has a list of questions that they pose to the candidates. The interview questions are often time scenarios designed to gain a better understanding of the candidate and how they may react to a specific situation.

Those interview questions are scored as well and each member of the interview team usually takes notes for later discussion. Interviews are usually, but not always, concluded with a tour of the Training Center. It was noted that each applicant needs to be treated the same throughout the process.

Sometimes, and in most cases, one candidate will "stand out" and will be selected for hire, but sometimes, the team will recall some candidates for a second interview.

Once the team agrees on a candidate, a member of the team will offer the position to the candidate and they begin their immersion training.

When the NCBVI has a vacancy, management looks at the Personal Services Limitation (PSL). This is the maximum amount we can spend on salaries which is dictated by appropriation. The Executive Director and Deputy Directors also look at the number of referrals and the work load in the area to see if the position needs to be refilled. Consultation is also done with the District Supervisors.

This past year NCBVI created two new positions (the Technology Specialist Supervisor and the part-time counselor position in the Center). In order to create a new position, it must first be approved by the Budget Office and then by State Personnel.

Commissioner Hansen inquired about the procedure used for employees who are laid off.

It was noted that the State of Nebraska has a Re-Employment Program. The terms and conditions of the Program have been applied to permanent employees covered by the Classified System Personnel Rules and Regulations. The laid-off employee is responsible for initiating contact with AS State Personnel Recruitment Unit, of their intent to enroll in the Program. The employee has 30 days within the identified lay-off date to meet the following requirements:

If a Program member fails to respond to contacts initiated by AS State Personnel, they will be removed from the Program. The individual will be sent a certified letter informing them of their removal.

The laid off employee shall be removed from the Program upon accepting either a full time or part-time permanent position within state government. Should the laid-off employee decline an offer for a position, they shall be removed from the Program. If a laid-off employee is offered a position, they shall notify the hiring agency of their decision within three calendar days.

If a laid-off employee accepts a position and does not complete the required original probationary period, they will be allowed to re-enroll in the Program one time. The individual must inform AS-Personnel of their intent to re-enroll. They must do so within 30 calendar days of their last day of employment, and submit a new employment application. If the employee declines a permanent position after re-enrolling in the program, the employee is no longer eligible for the Program and will be removed.

When filling a position externally, priority consideration is to be given to the employee(s) enrolled in the Program. Program Members are eligible for priority consideration when the position is at the same or a lower minimum rate of pay (hiring rate for Rules-covered) than the employee's prior

position, and it has been determined they meet the minimum requirements of the position. AS State Personnel Division and the hiring agency shall have the responsibility of evaluating and determining if the Member meets the minimum qualifications for a position. The minimum qualification review will be based on the Education/Experience Requirements section the hiring agency provided on the Job Order form. A conscientious effort will be made by AS State Personnel, to determine whether a Program Member is eligible for priority consideration before the position vacancy is listed externally. It is recommended that a general informational interview with the Program member take place. This is an opportunity to inform him/her, in detail of the work to be performed, supervisor, work hours, schedule, etc. At the Agency Head's discretion, the employee may be required to serve an original probationary period. If more than one laid-off employee in the Re-Employment Program is eligible for priority consideration, those qualified shall participate in the agency's interview process, and the candidate with the highest score shall be offered the position. Agencies may contact the laid-off employee's previous employing agency to gather documented employment information; however, this information cannot be used to dispute the eligibility for priority consideration.

Chairperson Johnson inquired as to if the Center staff completed their Personnel Description Questionnaire (PDQ). Director Van Zandt reported that they are still working on it. The Center staff is each putting their own thought into the PDQ, but it will be submitted as a group. Center staff has been informed that if they need time away from teaching in order to work on it, they should inform management and it will be arranged. Employees may request a review of their classification at any time, provided that the position has not been reviewed and/or a classification decision letter issued by the Classification and Compensation Unit, DAS-State Personnel Division, in the previous six months. Requests may be made by completing a PDQ and submitting it, along with a request to the immediate supervisor for review. The request shall contain a specific explanation of how and when the position's duties and responsibilities have changed, the reasons why the current job classification does not match these job duties and responsibilities and a statement of the existing classification sought with the reasons why the requested job classification does match the position's duties and responsibilities. An employee may withdraw their request for reclassification at any time.

Agency heads may also request a review of the classification of any position in their agency at any time. Requests are made by submitting a current PDQ along with a letter requesting review to the Classification and Compensation Unit, DAS-State Personnel Division. No position may be classified or reclassified without written authorization of the Classification and Compensation Unit, DAS-State Personnel Division.

Director Van Zandt discussed promotions at NCBVI. Van Zandt management will identify the location of a position and it announced ahead of time. The Program Manager position was filled in Lincoln. The person needs to connect with all three districts and the Office of the CIO. This is how the position was posted and how it evolved.

The North Platte District Office supervisor was posted as being required to work out of the North Platte office. The initial intent of picking this office as the home office was that it is located in the middle of the district. The strongest candidate to the position, Sarah Stewart, did not bring in location at the start of the interview process. Sarah interviewed for the position based on the job, her skills and her ideas about leadership; not based upon location. Sarah was the strongest candidate. Sarah then provided to management some rationale as to why it made a lot of sense for her to be located in Kearney. Basically, Sarah convinced management to have the position located in Kearney.

Chairperson Johnson asked for a review on where staff positions are located. Director Van Zandt provided this information. Van Zandt noted that when management looks at staffing, they look at referrals and caseloads.

Chairperson Johnson mentioned that it seems to be frequently mentioned in the staff survey that staff would like more options for promotions. It was noted that the NCBVI office positions are pretty parallel and there are not a lot of options for promotions. The management positions do not become vacant very often. The counselor positions are all at the same pay level. The vocational rehab tech positions do have the opportunity for promotion to a counselor position as positions become available. It was also noted that many staff may not understand the personnel process. A staff assistant I position cannot automatically be promoted to a staff assistant II at the request of management. The employee would need to complete a PDQ and have State Personnel conduct a desk audit of their position to

see if it qualifies for a promotion. Commission Jirak suggested that staff be informed of the process at the next state staff meeting.

This concluded the Focus Topic.

Public Comment

Commissioner Hansen suggested that the Commission change how it decides where the quarterly meetings are held. Commissioner Hansen added that the Commission needs to continue to be flexible and have meetings at various locations around the state in order to accommodate people the way we do today. He suggested that NCBVI come up with a way to identify where the communities are that have active consumers and hold meetings there. This would hopefully eliminate making trips across the state for a meeting and having no public show up. Commissioner Hansen asked for suggestions that the Board could take under consideration for planning locations of Board Meetings.

Bob Deaton suggested that the Commissioners take a look at the more active consumers out there and go to the home communities of where the active consumers are.

Chairperson Johnson stated that the Commission Board does not necessarily know where the active consumers are located. Bob Deaton stated that the ACB and NFB commissioner representatives could contact consumers throughout the state to inquire about their interest in having the Commission Board holding a meeting in their community. Commissioner Hansen noted that he does feel it is important for the Commission Board to travel to Western Nebraska.

It was agreed that Commissioner Jirak and Commissioner Hansen would talk to consumers before the November 3 meeting to find out what communities would like to host a NCBVI Commission Board meeting. This will aid in the scheduling of the NCBVI Commission Board meetings for 2013.

Commissioner Jirak suggested that starting in 2013 to avoid home football game traffic concerns, the November and February Commission meetings be flipped. That is, the November meeting held in Omaha and the February meeting held in Lincoln. All commissioners agreed.

Break

A break was taken at 10:35 a.m. The meeting resumed at 10:50 a.m.

Report from the Chair

Chairperson Johnson reported that the Board held a conference call meeting on June 18 to discuss and approve the State Plan 2013. Chairperson Johnson also noted that she reviewed all the Personnel Policy documents for today's Focus Topic.

Commissioner Oltman reported that she had the opportunity to visit, by phone, three separate individuals in her area that were interested in different things that blind people do. One thing was sewing and one was blind people in general. Commissioner Oltman attended the National NFB Convention in Dallas, Texas. It was noted that Travelocity and Southwest Airlines are updating their websites for accessibility. Also, new technology is coming out for a Talking TV. This will assist in programming the TV with the remote among other things.

Commissioner Jirak reported that he attended the National ACB Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. He was elected to the Low Vision Special Interest Affiliate. Commissioner Jirak noted that he missed the June 18 conference call meeting because his father passed away.

Commissioner Hansen reported that he has been busy working with Commissioner Oltman in updating the NCBVI Commissioner packet.

Report from the Executive Director

Director Van Zandt verbally gave highlights of her report and she thanked the Commissioners for their time. The entire report of the Executive Director is pasted here.

We are pleased to announce that Cheryl Poff, Orientation Counselor in Omaha, will be honored this fall by Governor Heineman. She will receive the honor of receiving the Governor's Employee of the Year award for NCBVI.

We continue to work on follow-up with the RSA Monitoring Review Corrective Action Plan and the submitted State Plan. RSA is requiring modifications to the State Plan, which we are working on. One issue relates to the Statewide Needs Assessment process. We may need to contract with Mississippi State University for a study during the next fiscal year.

Nancy Flearl, Omaha Supervisor has been appointed to the Tri-County Workforce Investment Board. To decide how best to participate, Flearl and I met with the Heartland Workforce Director and Fiscal Manager in Omaha. We toured the new location which is under construction and discussed co-locating one or two of our counselors there a day or two each week.

We are working on details for a Cost Allocation Plan, which will fulfill aspects of the monitoring and the audit reviews, for equitable distribution of our indirect costs to the different grants.

Preparation for our Biennium Budget Proposal is in process. Draft narrative for the plan was due August 3 and was completed. This level is preliminary and is based on the previous plan. Some of this stage is building spreadsheets of our total staffing, with individualized data for each employee and area. Then we work on projecting the federal funding and state request. As we develop and expand, we will send the draft to the Board for consideration and input, although there is not a lot of flexibility with the process.

I have spent half days with ten staff members in the North Platte, Lincoln and Omaha offices. Also, I observed a one hour new employee orientation done by Dave Robinson. I've been attending some meetings and client staffings in the Center, but will still want to spend time with individual Center Counselors.

I did attend the National Federation of the Blind annual convention in Dallas Texas. This is the first year since 1998 that I did not attend the conferences of both ACB and NFB. The only exception was in 2000 when we became a Commission on July 1. The amount of work required to establish all the administrative, budget, personnel, etc. functions prevented me from attending either convention. Over the next few years, I plan to alternate attendance if funding is tight.

We have begun a formal facilitation process for Center Staff, to focus the team on continued success in our services. They will work on climate, communication, decision making, generating ideas, etc. Also, I have sat in on Motivational Interviewing training sessions with both the Center and, separately, the Lincoln Office Counselors. The two teams have used different trainers, so it's been good to observe both. Omaha staff are also having continued M.I. training, but I've not observed these sessions (they are using the same trainer as the Lincoln Office).

Our two new supervisors, Sarah Stewart (North Platte District) and Wes Majerus (Technology Manager) will be attending training for first time supervisors and another program called 'Emergenetics' which is also related to building a team, working with people's strengths, etc.

We have been exploring ways that other agencies for the blind manage the lack of adequate funding, especially for older blind (OIB) and independent living (IL) clients. We have decided to implement a strategy used by Iowa, among others. All referrals, regardless of age, will be opened in the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). We have always encouraged employment goals, at all ages, but now will also open the new referrals in VR. In that referral status, the person is informed about all the services we provide and encouraged to explore their personal interests and goals. If they opt to apply for services in IL, including OIB, they will be closed from referral and opened in the IL track. If they decide to stay will VR, they'll be moved from referral to active VR. We do not spend funds on referral status in either VR or IL, but the counselor time, driving, vehicle, overhead, etc., will be covered by VR funds.

We are also coming up with other strategies to maximize counselor time and opportunities for IL and OIB clients. Some of the activities are described in reports below.

I spoke at the Living the Full Life Conference in Kearney. It was well attended and valuable for many, primarily older, blind Nebraskans. I was involved with the hiring process for North Platte District Supervisor and Center Part Time Counselor. We decided that Sarah Stewart will come back on board as NP Supervisor. Since she had full training only a few years ago, had been gone about a year, and has kept her State Certification as Voc Rehab Counselor for the Blind (CVRCB), her Center

training would be one week of refresher training. It seemed to be a productive week for her and allowed her to get into the job more quickly.

Nebraska Center for the Blind

Staffing: Alex Castillo completed Center training and is now working as Apartment Resource Counselor. Jane McGee was hired to fill the part time position; she started training July 16, but resigned August 3rd.

Total Full-time Clients Served between 1996 through July, 2012: 202

Competitive Employment: 115

Homemakers: 23

Students: 46

Results:

Of the clients that finished training and schooling;

88.5 percent are employed (competitive employment and homemaker)

74 percent of the clients are competitively employed

12 percent are homemakers

22.7 percent are students from the total number

9.1 percent are not working (less than last quarter 9.6%)

Center Activities

Senior blind conference

Grilling activity

ACB and NFB national conventions – some clients and some counselors attended both.

Descriptive movie activity

Salt Dog Baseball game

Fishing activity

We expanded the size of the Client Lounge and are working on renovating the space to be more up to date and congenial for breaks or other times.

Lincoln District Activity Report by Connie Daly

I started supervising the Norfolk office on June 1st. This balances out the responsibilities among supervisors. All of the rehabilitation counselors have joined a networking group. Larry Mackey joined LIBA (Lincoln Independent Business Association), Amy Buresh joined a Women's Business Network, Conchita joined the Human Services Federation, John

Schmitt will join the Rotary club and I will continue with the Chamber of Commerce. We hope that with an increased presence in the business community more people will get jobs in a shorter period of time. We also plan to use the placement plans that are in eforce with each client.

We have learned that we need to cut the time that we spend with people in IL and OIB. We are going to try group referrals. When someone is referred to us, they will be sent a letter about coming to a meeting to learn about services. If a person can't make it to the office, we will go visit them in their homes. We will provide information that we typically provide one on one to a group. We have had one in Fremont. We will have one in Shickley and one in Lincoln this month. We will also limit the number of teaching sessions that we can have with people in those statuses. We will pass out the instructional DVDs that we made as well as provide information about the Hadley School for the Blind.

We are starting remodeling this month. We will make the conference room and computer labs larger. We will also include some accessibility features in the kitchen. We will have a counter that a wheelchair can fit under.

We helped people retain jobs as a driver, maintenance man, receptionist, artist, and teacher. We also helped 4 people at Apogee retain their jobs. We had people find work as a receptionist, janitor, machine operator, corporate trainer and emergency medical technician.

Omaha District Update August 2012 by Nancy Flearl

As always it has been a busy time. We have had transition students participating in WAGES; we have had three students working in the community.

We have had 8 people to start employment since the last meeting. Their jobs have been in customer service, packaging, machine operator, computer programmer, office worker, Randolph Sheppard vendor.

I attended the retirement party for Donna Hultman the Supervisor of the Vision Program at OPS. It was on July 12th. Donna has had a long career with OPS and I let her know how much we valued our working relationship. Though retiring from OPS she will remain in the field and start a new position in August with NCECBVI doing outreach.

We have struggled with finding drivers and are in the process of hiring 2 new people. Yeah!

We have been meeting with Kate Speck with UNL doing further MI (Motivational Interviewing) training. We will start some coaching sessions in the near future.

We are working to build referrals they are down in both VR and IL. We are trying to do presentations at the state meeting of Occupational Therapist (OT). Eye doctors across the state have hired OT to do low vision training with their patients.

With me going on the full Work Force board here in Omaha, Chad will replace me on the Youth Council. As a part of that time I have been on some sub-committees. We have been working as a part of a sub-committee with HRAM (Human Resource Association of the Midlands) a great way to network with HR directors. Chad will be working with this as he will be going on to the Youth Council. The next meeting is July 31st at 7:30 a.m.

We are hoping to start co-locating at the department of labor new workforce center in August. Allowing us to be in the community and make our services more visible. Employers will rotate in to do interviewing and hiring. Also locating with be organizations servicing the other ethnicities that tend to be underserved populations and will be able a potential referral source and/or way to learn more about the cultures and allow us to maximize the success of the programs we develop with consumers. Monica Tripp will be located at the 58th and Ames Street site.

We have been doing outreach with the small business administration, midland business journal, Chamber.

It is my first report as not including Norfolk activity. Connie Carlow is celebrating 30 years with our agency!

Staff are working hard and supporting each other in what they do and sharing their expertise. Kathy having a nursing background and helping with a job placement/retention case regarding nursing. Kelly supporting a placement of a transition student with multiple disabilities. Carol and Monica working on the College Workshop and Employment Conference,

other staff supporting the transition related services. It is an honor to work with such a dedicated team.

The OCs are busy with the TABS groups and working hand and hand with VR for placement experiences. Kathy assisting with her nursing background. Kelly assisting with a transition student on the job as he starts a customer service position at a local grocery store.

We seem to be identifying more and more individuals with a dual sensory loss and Carol, Cheryl and Elaine have worked closely in providing quality services to this population.

Other Field Services

Fifteen youth attended Project Independence this past week. It was held at Camp Calvin Crest, Fremont. We had used this camp years ago, but it was not accessible. Then it was updated, but always full. We were able to get in this year and were very pleased with the experience there!

“Living the Full Life” spring conference was held at the Holiday Inn in Kearney from May 15-17; approximately 155 attended the conference (including consumers, drivers, presenters, vendors, and staff members).

Sarah Stewart began her employment with NCBVI on June 4 as Supervisor of the North Platte district office.

Stewart and Cristal Grado, VR Counselor in Kearney, attended an Employment Conference in Kansas City MO.

NBE – Nebraska Business Enterprises

We bid on and were awarded the Field House Coffee Shop/Juice Bar and vending at Offutt Air Force Base. This will be a good opportunity for an individual vendor. We also hope it will help us in the future if any further food service or vending facilities become available on the base.

The Vendors Committee met at the Army Guard Camp Dining Facility, which is operated by a NBE Vendor. We toured, ate dinner and had the meeting. It was good for the other vendors to see the possibilities and for the operator to showcase his facility.

We met with upper management at Department of Roads to discuss the contract between Roads and NCBVI for vending at rest areas on I-80. The original agreement is very old and needs to be reviewed and updated. We also talked about the new State law giving NBE priority in State buildings. It is possible that when opportunities open in Roads' buildings, we may be able to bid and operate those facilities.

Business Office

Bill Brown

- CAP Cost Allocation Plan working with multiple levels of staff, agencies, and consultants
- CAP Corrective Action Plans for Monitoring and Single Audit
- New coding to set up Cost Allocation Needs and 2013 Grants. Also set up coding to capture SSA funds with grant they are coded to.
- State Budget Legwork
- Allocate State Fiscal Year appropriation to SFY 2013 expenses
- eForce Financial. This is not going as fast as I had hoped. Many other priorities
- Reallotment Planning
- Closing of State Fiscal year 2012
- IT Issues and Planning
- Pay Agency Bills
- Program Income long term Plans

Kathy Stephens – Administrative Assistant

Got all old computer equipment and old microwaves sent off to Destroy and Recycle. Worked with Don Ward to haul remaining of surplus items to State Surplus. Items on 4th floor and Vending machines, etc. State Surplus had been full but they had an auction on July 14.

Working on inventory – bar code scanning.

Registered five individuals to attend Project Search in Austin, TX from July 24-27.

Continuous updating to NCBVI Website.

Old Business

Budget Update

Director Van Zandt reported that we are at the point of the year where all State Voc Rehab agencies can request additional funds or turn back what they have not used. There are states that cannot fully match the federal grant so they have to turn back any funds they cannot match. This means that extra funds are available for states that have the match to request. This reallocation request is due August 15, 2012. NCBVI will be requesting for VR Basic Support \$384,355, for Independent Living \$50,000 and for Older Blind \$225,000. NCBVI is able to request this amount because of the State support of our senior blind initiatives. NCBVI will find out by the end of September if we have been awarded any of this funding.

The State budget is due September 15, 2012. NCBVI will be carrying approximately \$2.5 million in VR federal funds over into 2013. NCBVI will not be requesting any additional state funding to support the program, but will continue at the level we are at. Van Zandt noted that there is a potential for federal sequestering. This would limit the funding available to agencies. At this time, it is not known how this would impact NCBVI.

Director Van Zandt reported that next year's budget will include funding for improving eForce and the maintenance of eForce as well as upgrading staff computers.

NFB Newsline® Update

Nebraska NFB-Newsline®

July 22, 2012

Jamie K. Forbis, Outreach Coordinator

NFB-Newsline® has heated up this quarter! Not only is this report chocked full of sizzling stats it's loaded with updates on content and improvements! Below is a summary of these new features, enhancements and improvements to the system!

One of the new long awaited features is the NFB-Newsline® Mobile app. This is a free I OS App available from the Apple App Store for use on the iPhone, iPad and iPod devices. This breakthrough method will allow subscribers to easily view online and download their favorite publications and TV listings. NFB-Newsline® Mobile is easy to learn and simple to use.

All subscribers need to get started is their log-in information and the free app from the Apple App Store.

Another new feature added to NFB-Newsline® is the “My Newspaper” option. This option allows subscribers to create a newspaper using an a-la-carte fashion meaning that sections of different papers, magazines and the local channel can be selected and compiled into one area. This differs from the favorite’s option where the full papers are listed instead of one section from the Lincoln Journal Star and another section from the Kearney Hub. There is no limit to the number of sections that can be placed in the My Newspaper option. To set up this option access the subscribers control panel, located under option zero off the main menu. This feature is available on the phone, via the iPhone app and coming soon to Web News on Demand.

TV listings remain one of the more popular options of NFB-Newsline® and managing your favorite TV channels has just gotten a whole lot easier. For subscribers who have set up a list of channel favorites, there is now a short cut that allows you to remove your entire favorites list instead of performing a channel by channel deletion. Once in the TV Listings category, press option five to access your favorite channels list and press the pound sign followed by the 6 key to erase the previously defined favorites. This can also be done online under the Manage My Favorites option by navigating to the option of delete all TV favorites. This feature is helpful for subscribers who change service providers and need to set up a new list of channel favorites.

The NFB-Newsline® Team is always open to suggestions on how features and publications can be improved; here are a few examples of subscriber suggested changes that have been implemented. There is now no limit to the number of favorites that can be added over the telephone. To make changes to the telephone favorites list, select the subscribers control panel by pressing zero from the main menu. Also by request, more time has been allotted to enter the section desired before the menu options are repeated and 17 new punctuation characters have been added to the global search feature.

NFB-Newsline® has partnered with Readers Digest Association, INC. to offer its very popular monthly magazine to subscribers. The Addition of the Readers Digest will expand the already wide variety of

content offered. The Readers Digest is located under the General Interest category under option 7 from the main menu. In the last quarterly report it was noted that problems were still occurring with the Kearney Hub and the Grand Island Independent. These problems have been resolved and the papers are now back online and working well. As a side note for a lot of papers the obituary section is named the “unspecified” section. This occurs when the obituaries are pulled from another section of the paper and placed in its own section to make reading easier. This in no way lessens the importance of the content and we hope readers understand the reasoning’s behind the section name.

The following stats for May, June and part of July do not reflect content being accessed through the newest access method of NFB-Newsline® Mobile. A new stat category for NFB-Newsline® Mobile will be coming soon. In the meantime here are the stats for those subscribers who still prefer the touch tone method.

In May four new subscribers were added to NFB-Newsline® Nebraska. The total calls made to NFB-Newsline® were 1,038 with the average call lasting 14.42 minutes and 39.16 percent of those calls were made using the local number. With those calls 15,113 minutes of content were read with the state newspapers accessed 4,016 times, the TV listings 392 times and the local channel 158 times.

In June, 10 new subscribers were added to NFB-Newsline® Nebraska. The total calls made to NFB-Newsline® were 1,079 with the average call lasting 15.56 minutes and 37.27 percent of those calls were made using the local number. With those calls 16,785 minutes of content were read with the state newspapers accessed 3,660 times, the TV listings 462 times and the local channel 138 times.

So far in July 6 new subscribers were added to NFB-Newsline® Nebraska. The total calls made to NFB-Newsline® were 791 with the average call lasting 15.85 minutes and 44.59 percent of those calls were made using the local number. With those calls 12,537 minutes of content were read with the state newspapers accessed 2,346 times, the TV listings 269 times and the local channel 88 times. This makes for a total of 20 new subscribers added in the last quarter and out of the 1,580 subscribers 44,435 minutes or 741 hours between May 1st and June 22nd were spent reading content on NFB-Newsline®.

Here is a summer tip from NFB-Newsline® to keep cool this summer. Grab a tall glass of freshly brewed ice tea, place yourself directly in front of the air conditioning vent, take a hold of your touch tone telephone, iPhone, Ipad, IPod, computer or digital book player and set back and relax as the news is provided to you free of charge through NFB-Newsline®. Awe... Now that's the way to keep cool this summer! Happy reading!

Client Assistance Program - (CAP) Complaints or Issues

There were no Client Assistance Program (CAP) complaints or issues to report.

Nebraska Business Enterprise (NBE) Update

Director Van Zandt reported that some exciting things have been happening with Nebraska Business Enterprise. NBE bid on and was granted the award for the Field House juice bar and vending at Offutt Air force Base. This should be a good opportunity for an individual vendor. Because of transportation to the area, there were no current vendors interested in the site, but there was an individual who has been in line to be a vendor is now in place at that site.

Carlos Serván noted that the Offutt Air Force Base vending has a good opportunity for growth. This is a challenge for the new vendor and NBE is offering much support.

One of the problems that NBE had in the past is that NBE was a totally separate program from the other programs within NCBVI. As NCBVI is doing things differently, the field counselors are now more involved and NBE is a part of the NCBVI team. In this instance, the field counselor is working hard with Don Ward to ensure that the client is successful. In the past, the client was referred to the NBE program and then the counselor did not participate much in helping the client as a vendor. Currently, everyone is working as a team.

The Vendors Committee had their Quarterly meeting in Ashland at the Guard Camp dining facility. Everyone had the opportunity to tour the

facility and have lunch. During the meeting the vendors decided to decrease the level of set aside from 13% to 12.5%.

Director Van Zandt and Carlos Serván met with the upper management of the Department of Roads. NCBVI has the contract with the Department of Roads for the rest area vending opportunities. The contract had not been renewed for quite some time so this was done. The Department of Roads is getting a new director due to the retirement of the previous director. During their meeting they discussed the new state priority and its requirements. They will be doing some research on exactly what the new priority means and they will be working together to develop a new contract for the interstate rest areas.

NBE has two new vending sites at the Hastings and Fremont Post Offices. Carlos Serván noted that NBE has fewer vendors than they had two years ago, but the current vendors are making more money. There were 19 vendors and there are currently 15 vendors.

Carlos Serván reported that last year the Vendors had a retreat and they will be having one again this year at the Marriott in Omaha September 7 – 9, 2012. Carlos will send the logistics of the retreat to the board of commissioners and the commissioners were invited to attend.

Public Comment

Carlos Serván inquired as to if the board of commissioners want to continue to have a separate report for NBE on the agenda. The commissioners stated that they do want to continue with this practice.

Carlos Serván reported that he has had much assistance from the field counselors and the NBE team to make the NBE program a good one.

Bob Deaton noted that years ago he did invite the commissioners to attend a program and he reiterated that this is an open invitation.

Lunch – A lunch break was taken at 12:00 noon. The meeting resumed at 12:40 p.m.

New Business

Discuss and Act on Pay Increase for Executive Director Given Enhanced Guidelines from State Personnel

For the May 5, 2012 NCBVI Commission Board meeting the commissioners asked for information regarding pay increases for staff as they were preparing for Executive Director Pearl Van Zandt's evaluation and increase recommendations.

At that time the only guidance available was what had been negotiated for staff covered by the state labor contract. Generally the amounts for contract staff and others is the same. It called for a 2% increase on July 1, and that is what staff governed by the contract will receive. Since that time additional information became available from State Personnel. A memo came out stating that on July 1, 2012, all state employees, including temporary staff, covered by the Classified Personnel System, **except** as identified below, will receive a 3% increase to their base pay. Pay ranges will be adjusted accordingly.

- **Agency Head and Non-Classified employee** pay increase amounts will be determined by the appropriate appointing authority.
- **Employees covered by the NAPE/AFSCME** contract will receive increases as directed by the provisions of their 2011-2013 labor agreement.
- **Employees covered by the Law Enforcement (SLEBC)** contract will receive increases as directed by the provisions of their 2011-2013 labor agreement.
- **Employees covered by the Teachers (SCATA)** contract will receive increases as directed by the provisions of their 2011-2013 labor agreement.

Given this information, Commissioner Oltman moved to give a 3% raise to the NCBVI Executive Director retroactive to July 1, 2012. Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Clarification of Procedures Surrounding Travel Arrangements for Clients Wishing Attendance at National Consumer Group Conventions

Commissioner Jirak noted for the record that there were three clients who came to the ACB National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky which he

feels was very good. However, there was some confusion in regard to a hotel room situation. One of the clients was under the impression that he was sharing a room with Jim Jirak, which was not the case. The rooming situation was eventually solved.

Commissioner Jirak inquired as to what the procedure is for clients who want to attend a consumer convention. Director Van Zandt stated that first the client must make a request to their counselor to attend the training. If the training fits the clients Individualized Plan for Employment the counselor will work with the client to plan for their attendance. The counselor or the vocational rehab tech will generate a purchase order. Kathy Stephens will most often make the lodging, airfare and registration reservations.

Kathy Stephens reported that she cannot do any travel arrangements of any kind for any staff or clients until she has a signed purchase order. This aids in ensuring that the paperwork gets completed in a timely manner in order that the bills can be paid. The purchase order will indicate what the agency is paying for. Kathy will then communicate with the counselor and ask them what specific arrangements she is to make for the client. Sometimes a client will make their own arrangements for hotel, registration or travel. Kathy will then proceed with making the arrangements that the counselor has asked her to make. This helps ensure that there will be no duplication. Carlos Serván noted that the counselor usually signs the purchase order, but the vocational rehab tech usually prepares it.

Commissioner Jirak asked what the miscommunication was in this circumstance. Bob Deaton stated that the way he understands it, in this event the counselor asked the vocational rehab tech to complete the purchase order. Sometimes when the vocational rehab tech prepares the purchase order, they will also make the reservations. This is where the breakdown in communication may have been. The counselor had indicated to Kathy not to do any room reservations because that was taken care of. It was thought that the vocational rehab tech was doing the room reservations.

Director Van Zandt noted that the NCBVI has an agency State Purchasing Card (VISA) that allows for airline and hotel charges. This card is assigned to Kathy and only she can use it. If these reservations are to be made via the State Purchasing Card, then Kathy must do it. There are times that

staff make their own reservations and then asked to be reimbursed. Commissioner Johnson stated that she understands where the confusion could come in as there are a lot of variables.

Commissioner Hansen realizes that there are many possible glitches that can arise when traveling. A traveler should always be calm, cool and collected and work through any problems that may occur. However, there are clients who are not as experienced at travel as others. Also, they may not be in a position to completely resolve the situation being that they are not the Purchasing Card holder, etc. Commissioner Hansen suggested that when NCBVI sends a client to a convention or training, they should have a point of contact in the event that issues arise. It was noted that a staff person or a commissioner may not always be at the event that the client is attending. It was the consensus that clients should have a point of contact when traveling. Director Van Zandt and Deputy Directors Carlos Serván and Bob Deaton were asked to develop guidelines to follow in this regard.

Election of Board Positions

Commissioner Hansen moved to elect Commissioner Johnson as Chairperson.

Commissioner Oltman seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all were in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Hansen moved to elect Commissioner Jirak as Vice Chairperson. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all were in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Oltman moved to elect Commissioner Hansen as Executive Secretary. Commissioner Jirak seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners were in favor of the motion.

Chairperson Johnson suggested having a board position assigned to take care of staff courtesy correspondence. A decision was not made as to if this practice will be continued. It was confirmed that the Executive Secretary will keep track of the NCBVI Commission Board motions that were made and carried.

The commissioners were congratulated on their appointments.

Public Comment

Commissioner Hansen noted the following which was in the virtual suggestion box.

I am assisting with Project Independence this year at Camp Calvin Crest. The clients are having a great time as they move from one activity to another over the camp grounds. Later this week they will also have lunch and free time at the Amazing Pizza Machine. My suggestion is that the Commission purchase t-shirts that they could wear over their clothing to identify them as part of our group in case they get separated in these large venues. Some of the other youth organizations like the Boys and Girls Club and Girls Inc. do this to easily identify their youth. You would think that we could use the canes to identify our youth but of course not all of them use canes.

Bob Deaton noted that t-shirts were purchased by NCBVI for the participants; however they did not arrive in time for Project Independence. The t-shirts will be distributed once they arrive.

Commissioner Hansen suggested that comments that are sent to the virtual suggestion box be forwarded back to staff in order to confirm that the Commission Board received the suggestion. It was decided that each comment should be dealt with individually based on the content.

Executive Session Follow-up on Personnel Matters from May 5 Meeting

Commissioner Jirak moved to go into Executive Session at 1:37 p.m. to discuss personnel matters and for the prevention of needless injury to the reputation of an individual. Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Jirak moved to come out of Executive Session at 2:05 p.m. Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Announcement of Next Meeting

November 3 in Lincoln – Focus Topic: RSA reporting.

Final Announcements

Commissioner Jirak requested his expenses paid to attend the 2012 State NFB Convention in October 2012 at Kearney. Commissioner Jirak noted that if this would conflict with a Nebraska Football game he may not attend.

Commissioner Hansen moved to approve the request to pay the expenses for Commissioner Jirak's attendance at the NFB State Convention. Commissioner Oltman seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all were in favor of the motion with the exception of Commissioner Jirak who abstained.

Adjourn

Commissioner Jirak moved to adjourn the August 4, 2012 Commission Board meeting at 2:15 p.m. Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the November 3, 2012 Commission Board meeting, please email it to the NCBVI Commission Board at ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant
NCBVI

Julie Johnson, Chairperson
NCBVI Board of Commissioners