

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
Public Meeting, Saturday, November 7, 2015  
Omaha State Office Building, Room 226  
1313 Farnam on the Mall  
Omaha, NE

APPROVED MINUTES

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

Robert Newman, Vice Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and he welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Commissioners present: Julie Johnson, York; Jim Jirak, Omaha, Designee of the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska, Omaha; Becky Rieken, South Sioux City; and Robert Leslie Newman, Vice Chairperson, Omaha.

Commission staff present: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director; Carlos Serván, Deputy Director VR; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director, HR; Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor; Fritz Nuffer, VR Counselor, North Platte; Timothy Terrell, VR Tech, Omaha; and Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant, Lincoln.

Public Present: Dalton Werth, Nursing Student from Clarkson College of Nursing; Rebecca Mackey, Nursing Student from Clarkson College of Nursing; Ross Pollpeter, Vendor, Omaha; Bridget Pollpeter, Omaha; Barbara Epworth, Omaha; Mark Bulger, Omaha; Dan Bird, Omaha.

It was noted that public comments are always welcome regarding the agenda items or other topics. Dan Bird recorded the meeting and the recordings are available on the website.

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

## Approval of the August 1, 2015 public meeting minutes.

Commissioner Jirak moved to approve the Minutes of the August 1, 2015 Commission Meeting. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all Commissioners in attendance voted in favor of the motion.

## Focus Topic: Review of Staff Training for New Hires

Bob Deaton sent a Summary Report of staff training to the commissioners prior to today's meeting for their review. Bob noted that Staff training is a work in progress and the agency has been taking a closer look at staff training during the past year. NCBVI is trying to provide more structure and a means to work with new staff as partners so people have a better idea of what kinds of experiences and training the agency wants them to have. With this support they are better prepared to do the job at task.

There are still a number of things the agency is working on to supplement the Report that was provided to the commissioners. NCBVI is working with the Employee Development Center to make a number of videos accessible to blind users. We want all of our employees to have access to the videos that are available to all state employees. The videos cover issues such as diversity and harassment. Currently, the videos that are available are being converted into a format that will be more accessible. These videos will complement the staff training that is currently provided. Supervisors and the Technology Team are currently working on benchmark indicators. These would provide staff with standards which would enable them to provide the assistive technology needs our consumers.

Bob Deaton also provided to the commissioners a checklist that is used for VR and Orientation counselors and the VR technicians. Bob is working on getting checklists developed for other agency positions.

Bob Deaton noted that two newer staff members are attending today's meeting and they will talk briefly about their staff training experience.

Fritz Nuffer – Fritz began working in the North Platte District in June 2015. Fritz reported that he has found his staff training to be very helpful. His training has been on-going which he noted is helpful.

Commissioner Jirak asked Fritz why he was interested in working for NCBVI. Fritz noted that the past jobs that he has had were basically jobs wherein he sat behind a desk all day and did not have a lot of interaction with people, which is something that he started to miss. With his current job at NCBVI he has a lot of one on one with people and this is something that he really enjoys.

Executive Director Van Zandt asked Fritz to talk a little about the immersion (sleep shade) training. Fritz stated that he enjoyed the training, even though it was trying at times. Fritz noted that the Center staff was wonderful to work with and he enjoyed the opportunity to do some teaching towards the end of his Center training.

Commissioner Rieken asked Fritz how he felt about the four month immersion (sleep shade) training. Specifically, she asked if he felt it was beneficial. Fritz stated that the immersion (sleep shade) training gave him an opportunity to see what clients go through and it helped him to learn the alternatives and techniques for daily life tasks such as cooking and computer use. Fritz stated that he felt that the four month time frame of immersion (sleep shade) training was adequate.

Commissioner Johnson asked Fritz how the transition was from Center training to his work as a VR Counselor in North Platte. Specifically, what was helpful and what would have been helpful. Fritz stated that his supervisor, Sarah Stewart, worked with him almost every day for his first three weeks and she went with him to appointments. The other staff was also very helpful in the transition. Fritz stated that he also shadowed some North Platte District staff in order to observe how they did things. It was helpful to see how they approached certain things and to see their style of training.

Executive Director Van Zandt stated that the Leadership Team has been working on systematic staff training focusing on the time after Center training is completed.

Commissioner Jirak asked Fritz if he felt it was difficult to be away from his family during the four month immersion (sleep shade) training. Fritz stated that it was a little difficult for his wife, but she understood why he was doing the training and she was very supportive. Fritz noted that he drove home to North Platte on most weekends.

Executive Director Van Zandt noted that the training for the VR technicians is not the same as it is for the counselors as VR technicians are not required to do four months of immersion (sleep shade) training.

Tim Terrell, VR Technician in the Omaha office stated that he felt that his training went smooth and he is having a great experience. Although he did not have the opportunity to do the immersion (sleep shade) training at the Center for the Blind in Lincoln, Nancy Flearl, Monique Orrante and Bob Deaton have all taken time out of their schedules to help with his training. Tim noted that yesterday he had the opportunity to visit some other facilities and this gave him a better understanding of what we do as a whole and the changes that we make in other people's lives. Tim stated that his training has been a very rewarding experience.

Nancy Flearl noted that there are a lot of details in the VR technician's positions with all the bill paying and paperwork that goes into providing services to our consumers. A lot of Tim's first few months of training have been focused on these types of things. Yesterday, Tim did have the opportunity to visit Weigel Williamson Low Vision Clinic, Radio Talking Book, Workforce Development and Outlook Nebraska. Nancy noted that the VR Technician's training is on-going.

Commissioner Jirak asked Tim for his opinion on the facilities that he visited yesterday. Tim stated that his impression of these facilities was wonderful. While he was at the facilities they each took time and went over why the facility is important in the larger picture of the organization as a whole.

Commissioner Newman asked what type of training is provided to drivers. Bob Deaton stated that years ago they had a driver who assumed the role of driver/leader and he developed a training packet for drivers. This covered some dos and don'ts in working with blind counselors. Bob stated that NCBVI should probably revisit the training for drivers. Drivers are mostly located in Omaha and Lincoln at this time.

Executive Director Van Zandt noted that NCBVI drivers are on contract and they are not employees of the State.

Nancy Flearl noted that when they are looking to contract with a new driver they go over the job, our philosophy and how we work with consumers. They

also talk about the role that contract drivers play in providing services to consumers. It is noted that the needs for each client and each counselor is different. Drivers are requested to talk with the individuals they are driving and to ask them if they need assistance. Nancy noted that they demonstrate some of the aspects regarding cane travel to drivers and they talk about sighted guide.

Robert Newman reported being driven by an Omaha office driver when he participated in some agency trainings. Robert noted that generally too many directions are being given. Robert is thinking that while the drivers are super nice, they do not quite get it in all situations. Director Van Zandt thanked Commissioner Newman for this information and she asked him if he has any recommendations on how to handle this. Commissioner Newman stated that he felt that some training should be provided to all of the drivers at the same time to begin with. This will ensure that all the drivers get the same basic information.

Commissioner Johnson asked whether there is always a counselor or teacher with them, whenever a driver is transporting a client. It was stated that sometimes the driver is only transporting the client, especially if taking the client to an appointment or interview.

Bob Deaton stated that he meets with new employees basically to see where they are and to find out what they are comfortable with. Bob stated that after he meets with the employee he writes a report and shares it with the immediate supervisor. This is done for one-year after the date of hire. The direct supervisor handles most of the day-to-day training of new staff. After one year, Bob and the supervisor continue to monitor the employee's growth. Staff is provided with a Professional Development Plan wherein each employee identifies their top three training priorities. The Plan is reviewed once per year. This will help set training priorities for the upcoming year.

#### Summary Report

Submitted to: NCBVI Board of Commissioners

Date: November 7, 2015

Prepared by: Bob Deaton

The purpose of new staff training is to prepare new employees for the job they will do. During the first week of employment, all newly hired personnel go through basic orientation in the office where they will be working. Basic

orientation includes setting up accounts for accessing the Personal Finance Center, email, and eForce; reviewing workplace policies; providing information about employee benefits; reviewing policies regarding state vehicles, proper maintenance of car logs, and procedures for use of Transportation Service Bureau Card for driving state cars; arranging for defensive driving course and parking permit (if applicable); reviewing documents found in "Resource Directory and General Information" found on the W drive; and learning about services and programs offered by NCBVI and the roles different personnel have within the agency. For some newly hired personnel, some aspects of basic orientation may be deferred until after training in the Center has been completed when this will be more relevant.

After the first week of employment, the specifics of new staff training varies in accordance with the nature and responsibilities of the positions filled. I will begin this summary with a focus on the more common aspects of new staff training.

The mission of NCBVI is:  
Empowering blind individuals,  
Promoting opportunities, and  
Building belief in the blind

To achieve this mission, all employees must have a positive understanding of blindness that is fundamentally different from the prevailing societal attitudes shaping what the general public believes about who blind people are and what we can do. Because relatively few people have had experience with blind people before they come to work for NCBVI, it is assumed that their understanding of blindness is based on what they think they know, and that needs to change.

The Nebraska Training Center for the Blind was established in 1974 (called the Orientation Center for the Blind then) in Lincoln. The Center provided the perfect vehicle, not only for comprehensive training in the alternative skills of blindness to blind consumers; it also provided the means for training of new employees.

In the beginning, training in the Center was three months long, and new staff trainees were expected to learn the skills of blindness alongside Center students. Training was lengthened in 2007 when the passage of LB 445 created the Certification of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors of the Blind

(CVRCB) as an alternative professional standard in lieu of a graduate degree as required of vocational rehabilitation counselors in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act. This legislation awarded CVRCB certification to individuals completing 600 hours of training in the Center.

LB 445 further defined the content of training as follows:

450 hours of training in the alternative skills of blindness including travel using a white cane, braille, communications (keyboarding and use of access technologies), shop, and home management and activities of daily living.

80 hours participation in philosophy sessions and seminars exploring various aspects about blindness including prevailing societal attitudes, attitudinal barriers and discrimination, the importance of positive self-esteem and self-confidence, the nature of independence, and self-advocacy.

30 hours of review of articles and materials covering the philosophical foundations of VR counseling, the importance of informed choice and high expectations, and laws and regulations affecting the blind.

20 hours focused on case management and service delivery (i.e., documentation and paperwork requirements).

20 hours focused on HR requirements (i.e., review of workplace policies, insurance benefits, defensive driving, employee assistance program).

Introducing trainees to practices and information regarding future job duties and responsibilities such as casework management and service delivery while they are still in the Center has not proven effective, and this part of new staff training now takes place after the completion of Center training. Also, activities related to review of workplace policies, insurance benefits, employee assistance program, and arrangements for participation in a defensive driving course takes place during the first week of employment before they start training in the Center.

Not all new employees go through training in the Center. While it is important for Vocational Rehabilitation Technicians, Administrative Assistants, and Business Office personnel to have a positive understanding of blindness, the nature of their involvement with blind consumers and the jobs they fill do not require the same level of comprehensive training in the Center. A different approach is used with training new staff members filling these positions, and more will be said about this later. Otherwise, all new employees hired to fill positions as VR and OC counselors, technology specialists, supervisors and program managers, and administrative personnel go through fifteen weeks of

training in the Center. This part of the summary will focus on training in the Center as required for CVRCB certification.

Training was designed not so much to teach sighted people how to be blind as to promote an appreciation and awareness of what blind people can do given the proper training and resources. In fact, it has been our experience that new staff members who are blind need to examine and assess their own personal beliefs about blindness as well, being subject to the same influences and prevailing attitudes as sighted people are.

Students graduating from the Center can be said to have successfully completed their training if they:

Demonstrate a set of blindness skills needed for success

Have a set of problem-solving skills needed to deal with difficulties due to blindness in everyday life

Develop a positive overall understanding of blindness and self-confidence in who they are as blind people.

The primary mode of instruction practiced in the Center is structured discovery, and this is the approach used to teach staff trainees the alternative skills of blindness as they participate in classes alongside other Center students. As trainees gain confidence in the skills they are learning, they are expected to instruct other students using the structured discovery approach, again while under sleepshades if they have functional sight.

Staff trainees also meet in one hour and a half philosophical sessions once a week with another staff person, most often with the Deputy Director of HR/Staff Development to review various issues related to blindness. The primary purpose of these sessions is to examine the personal beliefs trainees may have about blindness as it relates to themselves and others and the work they will do after Center training. Relevant articles promoting a more positive understanding of blindness are also assigned to facilitate philosophical discussions. A list of more frequently used articles can be found in the "Resource Directory and General Information" found on the W drive, and a listing of the contents is attached to this summary.

Successful graduates of the Center are able to use their training to move on and accomplish longer-range personal vocational and independent living goals. New staff members engaging in training do not, of course, develop the same level of skill or have the opportunity to apply the skills of blindness to

everyday life situations to the same degree Center students do. Students are typically in the Center for nine or more months, and new staff members are only there for fifteen weeks, but they are in long enough to have more than an intellectual understanding of what the Center has to offer. They know the skills of blindness work at a gut level, and that knowledge will help them as they work with blind consumers.

We believe new staff trainees will develop a more positive understanding of blindness and have higher expectations about the capabilities of blind people. As they near completion of Center training, much of the stereotypical thinking trainees had about blindness when they first started working for NCBVI is discarded, resulting ultimately in a world-class service delivery system and high-quality employment and independent living service outcomes for more blind consumers.

After the completion of training, it is important to prepare new staff members for the roles they will fill as rehabilitation professionals for the blind. It means having an intimate understanding of what blind people need for success.

A New VR Counselor and Orientation Counselor Training Checklist is attached to this summary report outlining basic activities, information, resources, and training events to occur following training in the Center. The new counselor and the immediate supervisor use this checklist to structure and guide training during the first year of employment in the field. The Deputy Director of HR/Staff Development meets with the new counselor every three months until the first anniversary date to monitor staff training and note training areas needing attention or more support.

A New VR Tech Training Checklist is also attached. As noted above, VR techs do not go through training in the Center. VR Techs may, however, receive some limited training in the alternative skills of blindness while under sleepshades as they assist NCBVI personnel with special programs and activities. While VR Techs are not as involved with clients as other NCBVI personnel, it is important that they project a positive understanding of blindness. Sleepshades training is still the best tool we have for doing this. As with VR Counselors and Orientation Counselors, the VR Techs and immediate supervisor work together to structure training events to occur throughout the first year of employment. The Deputy Director of HR/Staff Development monitors staff training every three months up to the first anniversary date.

The structuring of training events to occur after training in the Center is a recent development stemming from the reorganization of agency priorities and personnel responsibilities. As a result of this process, it became clear that more needed to be done to prepare new employees with the skills and resources needed to do their jobs. While NCBVI did an excellent job of laying a solid basis for a philosophical understanding of blindness as exemplified by training, it was felt that more attention needed to be given to training in the field. Much of the post-Center training described here is new, only put into practice since last fall.

Checklists for other positions such as Administrative Assistants, Technology Specialists, and NBE personnel need to and will be developed.

Staff training, of course, does not end with the first year of employment. Continuing education is an important part of professional growth. Professional Development Plans for VR and Orientation Counselors, Technology Specialists, and VR Techs listing various training areas available are attached to this summary report. The new employee identifies the three training areas most needed for professional growth, and the Deputy Director reviews the plan with the employee to discuss ways training priorities can be met. The plan is reviewed every year thereafter.

### Public Comment

Ross Pollpeter – Ross stated that he has witnessed the comments that Commissioner Newman made regarding drivers as well. While the drivers are great, sometimes they tend to be over helpful. Ross suggested that the supervisor of that District could evaluate the drivers from time to time. Commissioner Johnson noted that she really likes the idea of supervisors getting feedback on drivers. Executive Director Van Zandt added that the level of assistance that drivers provide should depend on the skill level of individual they are driving for. Executive Director Van Zandt also pointed out that drivers for NCBVI work under a contract; they are not employees of NCBVI.

Regarding the immersion (sleep shade) training for staff, Ross asked if staff is required to use a cane after work hours and on the weekends. Ross was informed that staff is not required to use a cane afterhours and on weekends when they are in training. This would not be possible because if this was a

requirement it would be considered work time and then over-time would need to be paid. Carlos stated that we do encourage staff to use their cane on the weekends to practice their skills, but it is not required.

Ross asked if it has been considered that when VR Counselors and Orientation Counselors transferred from the Center training to their on the job training they learn on the job for the first two weeks under sleep shades. It was reported that this has not been a requirement for staff. However, when counselors are out in the field working with consumers they will often put on a sleep shade when they are teaching travel skills and other activities. They also occasionally conduct some refresher training on different skills. Executive Director Van Zandt noted that during the four months of immersion (sleep shade) training staff does not become fully competent in non-visual skills as this takes much longer. Therefore, to have staff use blindness skills when they are trying to learn their new job could be counterproductive.

### Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Jirak noted that he had nothing to report at this time.

Commissioner Johnson reported that she visited the Nebraska Center for the Blind in Lincoln on October 9 and she shadowed a client and a staff trainee from Oklahoma. During this visit, she attended the classes and observed the changes in the classes. Commissioner Johnson noted that there is a very focused and productive setting in the Center. Commissioner Johnson also reported that she attended the National Federation of the Blind State Convention in Norfolk.

Commissioner Rieken reported that she attended part of the National Federation of the Blind State Convention in Norfolk. Commissioner Rieken noted that she is an ESU (Educational Service Unit) teacher in Wakefield and she had a student attend the Convention. Commissioner Rieken also reported that she took the Unified English Braille (UEB) Braille test and she is now certified.

Vice Chair Newman reported that he also visited the Nebraska Center for the Blind in Lincoln and shadowed a couple of clients. Vice Chair Newman also reported that he attended the National Federation of the Blind State Convention in Norfolk.

Report from the Executive Director  
November 7, 2015

Activities and efforts since August 2015:

This year several members of the NCBVI Team were honored for years of service.

10 Years Kathy Brown-Hollins

15 Years Dave Robinson and Amy Buresh

20 Years Jeff Altman

30 Years Kathy Stephens

40 Years Bill Brown

My activities this quarter included the following:

Weekly meetings with Leadership Team on many issues

Continued attending WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act)

Core Partners Meetings with Nebraska Department of Labor, Education/Voc Rehab, Unemployment, and Adult Education colleagues

Presented to a statewide WIOA event with representatives from many community entities in attendance

Worked on the State Plan to be included with the WIOA Combined Plan for Nebraska

Attended newly appointed Nebraska Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Board

Assisted with and attended Friends of the Commission quarterly meeting.

Officers have been elected for 2016: Robert Newman, President; Christine Boone, V.P. and Secretary; Dan Hurlburt, Treasurer. The group will be considering new projects next year; they welcome new members.

Attended Mayor's Multicultural Advisory Committee for Lincoln/Lancaster County

Continued work on the Request for Proposals (RFP) process for case management system.

Lincoln offices location updates – we are working with Building Division to explore possibilities at the Valley Road location. We rejected bids from other entities.

Kearney office update – we have signed a lease for new space just a few blocks west of our current location. We move in January 1, 2016, after the space is remodeled.

Attended Quarterly Nebraska Business Enterprises Meeting and the annual retreat

Held conference call discussions with Dr. Edward Bell, Louisiana Tech, about the field of rehabilitation teaching; especially implications for University programs

Reviewed and approved the new logo for NCBVI

Attended meetings called by Disability Rights Nebraska concerning two main issues: efforts to encourage State of Nebraska to hire an ADA Specialist and the lack of accessibility in many state electronic systems (this included meetings with several state Senators)

Visited the Ho`opono Center for the Blind in Hawaii on behalf of the National Blindness Professionals Certification Board

Worked on Position Description Questionnaires for the Business Manager and Administrative Assistant I in Lincoln

Worked with Bill Brown and others for end of fiscal year budgetary details

Met with Radio Talking Book Inc. Director about ways we can collaborate

Attended the WE Fit Wellness training which emphasized employment goals

Worked with Leadership Team, Abilities Fund, and state Procurement officers to continue the contract for clients considering self-employment goals

Met with VR Director, budget office, and transition specialist and our similar team to plan for WIOA requirements related to Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

Attended the retirement reception for Disability Rights Nebraska's Director

Met with Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) regional representative, other NCBVI people, and a rep from Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing regarding the needs of people with dual sensory loss in Nebraska; HKNC will follow up with some possible collaborative projects, especially about support service providers (SSP) and training for interpreters

Attended Supervisors Meetings

Provided information and consultation to other states regarding training, strengths of dedicated services for the blind both separate from and as part of combined vocational rehabilitation agencies

Met with Administrative Services, Risk Management (insurance) and our attorney to consider requirements in NBE vending facilities, and the nature of blind vending operators as licensees rather than sub-contractors

Accepted White Cane Day Proclamation from Governor Ricketts

Worked with Admin Assistant III to submit federal reports

Presented about blindness and the agency at Statewide Adult Education conference

Attended Transition Advisory Council meeting with Transition Specialist Shane Buresh

Attended Recognition Ceremony for Kathy Stephens, 30 years, and Bill Brown, 40 years in employment with State of Nebraska  
Attended Governor's Awards Ceremony for Employee of the Year Kathy Brown-Hollins and Manager of the Year Wes Majerus  
Continued as Treasurer for National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (my work in this role ends December 31, 2015)  
Explored regulations related to providing training for staff from other state agencies in our Center; we have determined that we will no longer be able to provide such training. Other states will be able to send staff to observe our Center training at no cost  
Attended and held a public forum at the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska State Convention, held in Norfolk

### Field Services

During Federal Fiscal Year 2015 (October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015), we served 619 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients in all statuses. Fifty four (54) were closed having achieved their employment goals. Fifty two (52) were closed without achieving employment (refusing further services, transfers to another agency, unable to locate, disability too significant to benefit from VR, and other).

In the Independent Living (IL) track, 625 clients were served, in all statuses. Three hundred forty two (342) were closed successfully, with Four (4) transferring to VR services; Forty nine (49) were closed without achieving their goals (withdrew, moved, deceased, and other reasons).

### Bob Deaton

2015 PILBO grant application submitted to the Enrichment Foundation.  
Re-administration of the test for UEB certification took place on October 14 and 17; four NCBVI staff members and two others took the test.  
Work on the State Plan as part of WIOA Core Partners.

### Nebraska Center for the Blind by Carol Jenkins

Dates: 8/2/2015-11/7/2015

2 New Clients

1 New Staff Trainee for 6 weeks

3 Staff Trainees from Missouri, 4 Staff from Virginia, and 1 Staff Trainee from Oklahoma

25 Bryan Nursing Students

2 Three Day Stays

2 Students had Mini Meals

Tours: Christian Records, Department of Labor Commissioner, Executive Director of Radio Talking Book, 6 UNL Students, Lincoln One Stop Staff, and 6 Clients

Activities: Ski for Lite Presentation, Ice Cream Social, Salt Dogs Baseball Game, Picnic with Grilling and Lawn Games at Antelope Park, Star Tran Open House, Arbor Day Farms, White Cane Proclamation Ceremony, Pumpkin Carving, Halloween Soup Luncheon, and NFBN State Convention. Center Supervisor completed NRLI (National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute) in October, continues to speak to all NCBVI districts on Center changes and updates, began Leadership Lincoln Executive Series in September, and assisted in planning the College Workshop that was held in August.

Center Staff Attended: a Freedom Scientific Presentation, Bed Bug Workshop, We Fit Training, Funding and Budget Training with Bill Brown, ADA Training, participated in Winnerfest, and one staff is on the Star Tran Planning Committee.

Announcements: The Center Survey is now running live in Survey Monkey! The Center is still in the process of hiring a new communications instructor. Second interviews are being scheduled at this time.

The Center got approval from the NCBVI leadership team to add the "Client Services Counselor" position in the Center.

One student got 2<sup>nd</sup> place and one student got 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the Lancaster County Fair.

### Field Services by District

#### Lincoln District by Connie Daly

10/20/2015

Shane Buresh accepted a position as Transition Coordinator. We have decided not to fill his position as our caseloads are low. Larry Mackey has shifted into the Orientation Counselor position. Larry Mackey's caseload was split between Amy Buresh, Eric Buckwalter and me. Stephanie Wagle's hours were increased from 25 to 30 hours a week on a temporary basis. She will assist with providing services to some of the children on our caseloads as well as support staff at the front desk.

We had several clients attend the College Workshop that was presented in Kearney in August.

Most of our team and several clients participated in We Fit Wellness. This workshop was aimed at providing information about staying fit physically and how this helps you in your career success.

Many of our team will be attending the NDE Transition workshop taking place in Kearney October 27<sup>th</sup>.

We had one client start the center. We had two clients come for 3-day stays. We helped people maintain jobs as a Customer Service Representative, Braille Transcriptionist, Mental Health Therapist and Warehouse Clerk. We had people find jobs as a Banquet and Set-Up Person, Lube Technician, Personal Care Aid, Counselor, Assembler and Food Cooking Machine Operator.

#### Omaha District Highlights November 2015 by Nancy Flearl

We have had staff and clients attend the WE FIT training in Lincoln in September. Staff attended the Transition Conference in Kearney in October.

We had three people placed in production jobs, one nurse, one usher. We have three people doing paid work experiences that will hopefully lead to employment opportunities.

We have been touching base with our Project Search Partners. We have one student participating in the Children's Hospital Project Search. In the first 5 weeks their entire department wants to keep the student. He is respectful, professional, organized and a good problem solver. They emphasized that the student has a tremendous work ethic. The other feedback is what a wonderful role model for parents that have a child with a disability.

Kim, Tim, Ashley and Kathy are spending a lot of time in the field developing work experience opportunities for our transition students.

Tim and Kim are co-locating at Heartland Workforce Solutions; Tim on Tuesday's and Kim on Thursday's.

Hand and Hand was coordinated by Cheryl and it was a joint event with the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. It was an activity to raise awareness of deafness and deaf-blindness. Eight individuals participated in this event.

Kathy Brown Hollins and Kelly Coleman will be shadowing the VR transition counselors to get an idea of how they are working with students, and the frequency of the visits. Also, they will make contacts with schools to see if we can also do this during school hours. They will start with Papillion school district the week of October 19<sup>th</sup>.

Tim Jefferson attended the Annual Conference for African Americans held here in Omaha. He made some wonderful connections with businesses interested in partnering with us.

We are excited to honor Kathy Brown Hollins as employee of the year.

Cheryl has been taking on more VR clients with dual sensory loss and multiple disabilities. She has a long history of working with individuals with physical disabilities from her time with the League of Human Dignity. Our flow of referrals that are older blind are not steady enough to utilize all her skills.

We have met with a number of school districts in our district to share the changes with WIOA. The result is their interest in earlier referral and better preparation for that transition from school to work or post-secondary education. A common theme is that schools want information and dates for all our programs and services to share with families and students.

Kathy and Kelly have planned our Teens Adventures in Blindness schedule. Though they did the training, Elaine has been of support in working alongside them during these sessions. The focus is all on pre-vocational and vocational skills. Last year Dr. Karen Wolfe presented a Pre-Employment Workshop (PEP) for our district staff. Similarly she has a transition component and we are implementing this with our teens. They will meet monthly as a group and have individual sessions with VR counselors as well.

We will be holding our next pre-employment workshop the week of November 30<sup>th</sup>.

Elaine has a couple of students that are working and she has been working with them on the job site on equipment and alternatives. They are doing great!

We have several staff attending the NFBN State convention the weekend of October 30<sup>th</sup>. Two of which are new staff members, Kim Schnitzer and Tim Terrell.

Monique has continued to work with training Tim Terrell and we are incorporating more training with Dave and Connie Carlow, to look at bill paying, file management and how she tracks client supply. They will both be shadowing other VR Tech staff. With the turnover I needed them both this first year to focus on the day to day operation of the job.

Larry continues to keep us updated on the changes with technology, tech team and increasing number of hours working with youth in transition on technology skills.

Kathy Brown-Hollins celebrated her 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with us and we are excited that she will be honored at the end of the month as Employee of the Year!

We have been approached about partnering with NFB Omaha Chapter in providing a non-visual training in June of 2016. I am not sure what they are all thinking but look forward to learning more about their thoughts. More details to follow.

Ashley is working with Metro Area Placement Professionals and will be helping with a speed networking event for employers to learn about our services. We hope to hold a similar event for employers to learn about our clients ready for employment.

As always it is an awesome experience to work with this amazing team!

#### North Platte District by Sarah Stewart

As I write my last commissioner's report, I want to be sure to thank NCBVI commissioners, staff, and consumers for all your support these past few years. I've enjoyed working with everyone and have appreciated the opportunities I've had to learn and grow in my work here. I wish you all the best.

North Platte District has had another busy and productive quarter. Fall always brings lots of work with school starting up again; Tuition authorizations, IEP's and with the new WIOA emphasis on transition, we're

focusing more than ever on establishing relationships with the schools and reaching out to youth.

Staff had the opportunity to present and assist with the College Workshop held August 7-9th in Kearney. The Committee and NABS students did a phenomenal job planning and conducting the workshop. Six participants from the North Platte District attended and we got very positive feedback that the workshop was engaging and helpful. Kudos to all involved with that.

The Kearney office joined the Kearney Chamber of Commerce so we've had opportunities to participate in networking events such as ribbon cuttings and events like "Career Exploration Day" where we had a booth and talked to transition aged students about what we do and what a career in our field involves. Many of the more rural school districts participated in this event and there were schools there from Sargent all the way over to near York.

Staff from each office also participated in WIOA focus group meetings held throughout the state to discuss the anticipated changes and how we can better partner with other agencies to meet the expectations. We are all still learning how it will affect the work we do but it's exciting to have the chance to have a more positive impact on the youth we serve.

We are in the process of hiring for the North Platte District Supervisor position. There were no internal applicants but we did have several individuals apply externally. So, whoever is chosen will need to complete their 600 hours of training and then will likely begin in the field by spring. We will also be opening the position for an Orientation Counselor in the North Platte office to serve North Platte and some of the Scottsbluff office area and increase our efforts and better serve more transition students in those areas. This will also alleviate some of the issues we've had with trying to serve large caseloads from these rural offices.

There was one client who met their vocational goal and was closed successfully as a cashier at Hy-Vee. There are four clients in employment status this quarter that will be closed successfully next quarter.

#### Quarterly Report on Transition Activities by Shane Buresh

Upon assuming the Transition Specialist position on September 8<sup>th</sup>, I began an effort to try and establish relationships with as many stakeholders in the

area of transition for blind youth as I could identify and/or arrange meetings with by this writing. During this time frame, I have either been part of or arranged solo meetings with individuals from: VR (met with Director Schultz and others from both agencies), NCECBVI (met with Sally Giittinger and others), Dr. Gary Meers, and Dr. Matt Maurer, various blindness training center youth coordinators, the United States Association of Blind Athletes, LPS vision teaching team and several training providers for possible upcoming workshops. Several of these meetings were quite productive, especially, my interactions with my VR counterpart Brigid Griffin. I have also co-presented at the Eastern Nebraska Transition Council and setup a booth there for parents.

I have made efforts to interact with and make myself available to the staff state wide whenever possible, something I hope to do more of as time moves along. I attended a job fair in Kearney with staff from the Kearney office, attended district meetings in both Lincoln and Omaha and attended a meeting of the technology team, where we discussed exciting joint efforts.

In and amongst all of this relationship building, I, along with a committee from each of the districts, began the planning of the fall Winnerfest which will be occurring on November 5<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup>. It is entitled "Discovering Me" and is designed to strengthen students "soft skills" and deepen their examination of their own skills and talents along with learning how to work in team or social situations.

Last but certainly not least, I wrote and released a Memorandum on Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) requirements in WIOA. The purpose of this memo was to provide a framework for thought by staff members on how they can begin to address the mandates listed in WIOA for their clients and to bring clarity to the agencies position of contemporary implementation of WIOA. Highlights included, discouraging the use of the word PETS but instead spelling out this acronym, the description of age and eligibility requirements for PETS students, the listing of the 5 WIOA requirements (with examples for implementation) and the listing of the 9 authorized activities.

Over this next quarter, my hope is to further my connection with teachers of the visually impaired by travelling throughout the state and visiting ESU and other school districts with Commission staff from those areas. In addition, I plan to participate in youth activities in each of our districts and make myself available to attend any appointments with youth with staff to serve as a

resource, if they seek my input. I further hope to continue efforts with the tech team and USABA to create innovative new programs in technology instruction and athletic activity for blind youth.

In the near term, I along with other Commission staff will be attending the NDE Transition workshop in Kearney and Dr. Pearl and I will attend a meeting of the Transition Advisory/Practitioners Committee the previous day. I will also be briefly addressing the NFBN state convention as part of the agency forum. As mentioned above, during the same weekend of the Commission Board meeting we will be conducting the 2015 fall Winnerfest program.

#### Business Office - Bill Brown

Request for Proposals (RFP) for Client Data System

Work on Kearney Office space and Lease

Work on Lincoln Office Space and Lease

Program Management and Evaluation Conference

Work on Close out of Federal Fiscal Year, new grants, Reallotment and Carryover

Finance Information and discussion with Lincoln and Center Staff

WIOA Partner Mtg and WIOA services discussions

Pre-Employment Transition Services

Personnel allocation, PSL (Personal Services Limitation), and Management of Staff expense

#### Kathy Stephens – Administrative Assistant

Kathy and Wes met with State Surplus to discuss a way in which NCBVI fixed assets can be reassigned to clients for their use. From that meeting, we are to work directly with Dave McGuire and negotiate our best estimate of the value of the device in question. A picture of the item should be sent to Dave along with the proper Surplus Property Notification (SPN) paperwork.

Through the SPN, Surplus will take the item off of Fixed Assets and we will purchase it at the agreed upon value. The item will be purchased through Case Service Funds to fulfill the agency's duties as a vocational rehabilitation agency for the blind of Nebraska. These funds are used to purchase services and goods to allow the clients, public residents of the state of Nebraska who are blind and visually impaired, to achieve a goal set forth in their IPE. Kathy is to draft a memo regarding the new procedure.

Kathy has been making a lot of travel arrangements for staff and clients to attend various conferences and events.

Kathy attended the We Can We Fit Wellness training along with many other staff and clients. This was an educational and interactive training.

Also is working on entering driver contracts into Payroll and Finance Center (PFC) and screening applications for the Administrative Assistant III position.

### Technology Program Highlights by Wes Majerus August through October 2015

#### Accessibility

The most notable accessibility project this quarter was an invitation to take part in a consulting project with the Department of Administrative Services. We participated as an agency in an "Insight Process" for improving the existing systems around procurement, performance, and HR. I was invited to sit in on the meeting where systems were proposed to meet the needs that were found through that exercise. I am awaiting more information and a possible demo of a proposed system. I have also provided some consultation to Disability Rights Nebraska on accessibility of state systems, along with Dr. Van Zandt.

#### Operations

From an operations standpoint, there are a number of projects occurring. As was reported at the August board meeting, the Office of the CIO (OCIO) and State Purchasing asked that we go through an RFP process to procure our case management system. To that end, I have been working with Bill Brown and with OCIO employees who have expertise in drafting RFP's to develop our request. It should be noted that, as of this writing, the RFP is about to be sent to State Purchasing with a goal of having it available to bidders by November 1. We are still striving for a go-live of our new system in October of 2016; the deadlines will be quite tight. Although we are not guaranteed a certain system through this process, we have worked carefully to draft the RFP in such a way so as to include the requirements we would like to see in a data system. One major component of this will be a four-day demo for each of the top two vendors to allow us to ensure that these systems work with screen access technology.

The Lexmark Copier Project is complete. Although the machine was installed in July, it took some time for the State software reseller to provide us with the software necessary to create accessible PDF files. The system works well, and we will be training staff to ensure that they are aware of its use.

I continue to sit on committees. The Succession Planning Committee continues to meet regularly and hosted a consultant from the University of San Diego earlier this month to help the committee move forward. I am also still working with our Social Media Committee to keep our web site moving forward and to improve our Facebook and Twitter presences. A survey committee has also been working on updating the client satisfaction surveys and putting them into a format that will allow them to be filled electronically through Survey Monkey. The surveys have been developed and the project is now in the testing phase.

We have decided to provide iPads to staff members who request them. About nine have been requested so far. I have been working to get these purchased and to get them set up to work with staff members' iPhones as mobile hotspots. I have also worked with staff to ensure that they understand the ramifications of iPad use in the field, for example, that they will not replace a computer for accessing files. I am also working to find resources for purchasing computers as we have encountered difficulties with the vendor that we have worked with historically. The State has entered into new contracts with hardware vendors, so I will be examining these to see which will meet our needs.

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

### Budget Update

Executive Director Van Zandt reported that Congress and the President have given the Commission a budget at the federal level. NCBVI's funds are 80% federal and about 20% state. NCBVI has a lot of carryover funds. The agency can use our grants for a period of time after the grant year itself so with Social Security funds coming in along with smart money management, we are still using a lot of carryover funds from the previous fiscal year. NCBVI just received its grant award notice for about the first ten weeks of grant year 2016 in the amount of almost \$539,000. If this amount is based on what the full year amount will be it looks like we will be receiving about \$2.8

Million this year for our VR grant. This is an increase of approximately \$23,000. Our requirement to spend on Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) is about \$420,000. The Leadership Team has been doing a lot of looking at the different areas that the agency is spending funds on and what we can use for staff positions statewide. Overall, things are going well with the budget.

### NFB-Newsline® Update October 22, 2015

Jamie K. Forbis, Outreach Coordinator

Due to technical difficulties I was unable to submit a report for last quarter. So, this report will contain information from May 1, 2015 to September 30, 2015. During that time subscribers and staff of NFB-Newsline® have been busy! To keep this report short I won't provide a lot of in-depth detail, but can always answer questions about any of the items reported.

Since May; fourteen new publications have been added under a variety of categories. First under the Breaking News category the Apple Insider, Android Central, ABC News and CBS News were added. Next the National section saw the addition of The Hill, a publication from Washington D.C. and under the International Newspapers section the London's Daily Mail and Australia's Herald Sun were added. The newest magazines are The Atlantic, Talking Book Topics, The Braille Book Review, Diabetic Living and All Recipes. And finally the two new state newspapers are The Bozeman Daily Chronical out of Montana and the Texas Observer based in Austin Texas. This brings the grant total of publications on NFB-Newsline® to 428. A new channel was also recently created under option 1 from the main menu. It is The National NFB Channel which includes publications such as the Braille Monitor and Future Reflections.

The main stats for these two quarters have been combined with the months of most and least activity highlighted. On May 1<sup>st</sup> NFB-Newsline® Nebraska had 1,815 subscribers and added 35 over the last 5 months; bringing the current total number of subscribers to 1,852. Those subscribers read 72,658 minutes of content via the phone in five months with the highest month of reading in May and lowest in June. Newsline was accessed online, including the mobile app and Victor Reader Stream, 17,581 times with May as the lowest month and August the highest. All content was accessed 22,393 times over the last five months with May once again as the least month and August the highest.

Short, sweet and to the point; this concludes my report for the last two quarters. As always if you have any questions don't hesitate to contact me by phone, E-Mail or follow me on Twitter. Happy reading!

Commissioner Jirak noted that a question regarding subscriber numbers was asked via email. Specifically, NFB-Newsline® Nebraska added 35 subscribers over the last 5 months; bringing the current total number of subscribers to 1,852. It was asked that is there is a way to find out if a subscriber is still around and still calling in. After a predetermined length of time has passed, is the delinquent subscriber deleted from the state's total?

Commissioner Jirak noted that he asked the question of Ms. Forbis when he first became a commissioner suggesting that the numbers were slightly inflated. At that time, Ms. Forbis told him the only way she could get an exact count of subscribers would be to call each subscriber individually. If Ms. Forbis hears of the passing of a subscriber or if she is aware that a subscriber moved, she will either delete the subscriber or contact them to get their information transferred to the state where they now reside.

Commissioner Jirak noted that Ms. Forbis does an excellent job.

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

Victoria Rasmussen, Director

No CAP cases to report.

Other activities:

CAP is part of the Succession Planning Committee, Social Media Committee, Media Committee and the Survey Committee.

CAP will visit with supervisors at the next Supervisor's Meeting to talk about have Shari from the Hotline for Disability Services provide information and referral training to staff. How to use the Hotline website and find local resources.

CAP attended Lincoln and Omaha team meetings.

Vicki serves on the Survey Committee. They are currently working on the VR Survey and the committee will be testing the questions.

#### Nebraska Business Enterprises by Don Ward and Carlos Serván

Update on Department of Roads (DOR) ADA rest area project. DOR is updating all rest areas in the next year to make sidewalks and doorways ADA compliant. Each one will be closed for six weeks. The progress is slow and DOR is behind schedule at this point. They have completed Gretna and Platte River and are currently working on the two York rest areas.

NBE continues to grow and we are always looking for qualified new people for vending positions.

Howard Simons retired and Dave Johnson took over the two Grand Island Rest areas.

Marty Borges has taken over the two post offices in town.

As a continuation of meeting with Susan Gashel and the Nebraska Attorney General's office; Carlos and Pearl have met with DAS to talk about the Randolph-Sheppard program, and ways to improve our laws, here in Nebraska. One main topic being discussed, includes ways to remove or reduce rent currently being paid on state property. Some progress has been made on this and it appears that NBE will no longer have to pay rent on vending locations on state government property. At the federal level (Randolph-Sheppard) there is no rent paid on those locations.

Immigration in Lincoln is underway with breakroom remodels. We moved our machines into storage for the duration. Expected completion is February 2016.

We recently removed our microwave sandwich machine from the Grand Island Rest area at DOR request.

In September we held our annual NBE retreat in Lincoln. It was a success this year due to Sandy Alvarado's hard work and the training sessions went very well. In conjunction with the retreat we held our NBE quarterly committee meeting. At this point we will not be planning an NBE retreat for next year. Instead of the retreat we will plan more localized trainings throughout the year.

We closed the vending site at the Social Security Administration in Omaha due to low sales.

Carlos Serván added that it is a real priority to get the State law to mirror the Randolph-Sheppard federal law. In short, NBE has priority and the state is to give us the right of refusal. If there is a building available for vending machines, they are to ask NCBVI executive director if we are interested in running the vending site. We then have the right to say yes or no. For cafeterias, after they put the RFP out, we will get priority if the prices are the

same. There are a few buildings that currently have open contracts with other businesses, and the excuse for not giving NBE these sites is that the contract has not ended. Carlos reported that he met with Felix Davidson, Assistant Chief of Staff for the Governor's office, and he presented the problem to him. The reason he did this is because by talking to the Director of Administrative Services and their attorney, they told us that they want to support us, but the law is not that clear. If we want to change the law, it is best to get the support from the Governor. The Governor's office asked Carlos to put together a document that includes data about how many vending locations are in Nebraska that could be run by blind people and how many blind people could be off benefits by working at these vending locations. Carlos stated that he will be working on this over the next several weeks.

### New Business

#### Discuss 2017 State Plan

Executive Director Van Zandt stated that normally the State VR Agency is required to have their State Plan for the upcoming federal year approved and to the federal agency by July 1. However, for this year, RSA said that State VR Agencies did not need to do a new State Plan because there were so many changes with WIOA and the regulations were not out yet. Therefore, State Agencies continued to operate under their 2015 State Plans for 2016. During this time we became more involved with the WIOA Core Partners and the work with the State Department of Labor. The WIOA legislation now requires states to submit a unified state plan and encourages a combined state plan. VR's State Plan must be a part of the Workforce Plan, Department of Education, Unemployment and all those parts have to be in one Plan. Therefore, we had to get our State Plan to the Department of Labor by November 6, 2015. This is a 36 page document that was sent to the Commission Board yesterday for their review. At this point the document is a draft and Executive Director encouraged comments from the Board and others via email and/or phone call. The State Plan will be posted on the NCBVI Website after it is finalized.

#### Discuss and act on Commission Board Central Computer File Storage

The commissioners have requested to have a means for the five Board members to exchange files among themselves and NCBVI staff. Currently, the commissioners have all the information they need to serve as a commissioner stored on a thumb drive.

Wes Majerus checked into this and he was informed that the Linoma FTP (file transfer protocol) server could be used at a cost of \$75 per month for our group account. This covers the service and access to requested shares and accounts. The agency W drive can be used to host our files which can be interfaced with Linoma SFTP (secure file transfer protocol). Existing AD accounts can be used as well for the Linoma accounts. What was requested is capable in the service of the Linoma SFTP.

The commissioners discussed that they would like two levels of access to the W: drive to be established. One with a new folder created specifically for the Board that is not available to other readers except perhaps the executive director and the administrative assistant to the director. The second, to give them access to other folders on the W: drive as may be appropriate.

Commissioner Johnson moved that that NCBVI should proceed with establishing the FTP service for NCBVI Board members. Commissioner Jirak seconded the motion. All commissioners in attendance voted in favor of the motion.

#### Proposal of Commission Board Training Retreat Early 2016

It was noted that in March 2014 the commissioners held a training retreat in Nebraska City. It was felt by the commissioners that this training retreat was beneficial and they discussed having another training retreat in 2016 given the fact that two new commission board members will be coming on board in 2016.

Commissioner Jirak noted that initially he had some concerns about holding a Commissioner Training Retreat in 2014. However, the day that he was there, he understood the value and the benefit of the training retreat. Commissioner Jirak stated that he thinks it could be beneficial for the commissioners to have another training retreat in 2016. Commissioner Jirak noted that during the training retreat he had to leave early because of a medical condition.

Commissioner Newman stated that he feels that a training retreat would be beneficial for new commissioners coming on board and for the commissioners who have been around for a while.

Commissioner Johnson stated that she felt that the 2014 commissioner training retreat was valuable. At this training retreat the commissioners talked

about the history of the Commission, they reviewed the commissioner job description and they talked about their role as a commissioner among other things. Commissioner Johnson added that she feels that a commissioner training retreat is exceptionally valuable when there are new commissioners coming on board.

Commissioner Rieken stated that she too felt that the commissioner training retreat was very valuable. It was a good opportunity for the board members to collaborate and bring ideas to the table. Also, as a new commissioner, it was nice to get to know more about the Commission and the other commissioners.

The commissioners agreed to have a commissioner training retreat in 2016. This item will be discussed in more detail when the two new commissioners are on board.

#### Public Comment

Mark Bulger – Mark noted that he has been coming to the NCBVI Commission Board meetings for over eight years and he has watched two commissioners for eight years. Mark thanked Commissioner Jirak and Commissioner Johnson for their excellent service serving the blind of Nebraska.

Second, regarding the commissioner training retreat, he feels that anytime you can introduce training it is great. In having a training retreat it is important to make sure that everything is in compliance with open meeting laws. It is also important that the agenda is available so the commissioners can accomplish what they set out to and that the commissioners share a common vision of serving the blind of Nebraska to the best of their abilities. The commissioners also need to realize that part of their role is to support the executive director and the different entities that they represent. Mark stated that he would be in favor of holding a commissioner training retreat in 2016.

Executive Director congratulated Mark Bulger on his recent appointment to become a NCBVI Commissioner effective January 1, 2016.

Bob Deaton – Bob stated that he just wanted to point out that the agenda is in Unified English Braille.

Ross Pollpeter – Ross stated that as a member of the Nebraska Business Enterprise Program, he wants to announce that the next Licensee meeting is Saturday, December 5, 2015 at the NCBVI office in Lincoln. Ross invited the commissioners and everyone in attendance to attend the meeting.

### Final Announcements

Executive Director Van Zandt thanked Commissioner Johnson and Commissioner Jirak for their eight years of service as a NCBVI Commissioner. A special decorated cookie was presented to Commissioner Johnson and Commissioner Jirak in appreciation for their service.

Commissioner Johnson thanked the Commission for the cookie. She stated that the eight years has gone by fast and she enjoyed serving as a Commission Board member.

Commissioner Jirak stated that it is hard for him to believe that eight years have gone by. He stated that he enjoyed serving as a commissioner as he made some friends and got some things accomplished.

The next meeting of the NCBVI Board of Commissioners will be on February 6, 2015 in Lincoln, Nebraska. The Focus Topic will be decided at a later time so input can be received from the new Commission Board members.

### Adjourn

Commissioner Jirak moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:52 a.m. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. All commissioners in attendance voted in favor of the motion.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the February 6, 2016 Commission Board meeting, please email it to the NCBVI Commission Board at [ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov](mailto:ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov).

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant  
NCBVI

Robert Newman, Vice Chairperson  
NCBVI Board of Commissioners

Attachments:

New VR and Orientation Counselor Training Checklist

New VR Tech Training Checklist

Professional Development Plan - Administrative Professionals - blank form

Professional Development Plan - Technology Specialist - blank form

Professional Development Plan - VR and Orientation Counselor - blank form

Resource Directory and General Information - Table of Contents

New VR Counselor and Orientation Counselor Training Checklist:

This checklist is to be used with new staff members hired as vocational rehabilitation counselors and orientation counselors.

Prior to First Day: Set up email access.

First day:

Meet with HR personnel, review workplace practices, discuss structured discovery learning and the purpose of training, meet with Staff of District Office, provide keys to building and office, arrange for parking permit

First week:

New employees will spend the first week in the district where they will be working following Center training, shadow Counselors, Discuss roles and responsibilities of each staff person in the office, review services offered to blind consumers.

Second week through first four months:

Begin training in the Center; training continues until 600 hours of training under sleepshades has been completed, if applicable. Towards the end of Center training, new staff members will have the opportunity to teach the alternative skills of blindness while under sleepshades. Graduates of Center training will have earned the title of Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor of the Blind (CVRCB).

The use of assistive technology is introduced while the new employee is in Center training; the Technology Guidelines are reviewed and discussed with the Technology Program Manager.

First week following Center training:

Begin working in designated office, set up eForce access, arrange for defensive driving course (if applicable) and parking permit, review policies regarding state vehicles and maintenance of car logs, learn how to use TSB Card for driving state cars

Review contents of "Resource Directory and General Information" located on the W drive.

Review the resource guide specific to the district the employee is working in.

Arrange EFORCE and VR and IL paperwork training with administrative assistant III person in Lincoln.

Arrange basic business practices training with Dave Robinson and Bill Brown.

Discuss how first contacts with new referrals are handled, shadow counselors as first contacts are made, review new referral checklist.

Discuss information and referral services, review application process for accessing services for blind and visually impaired individuals offered by other agencies and organizations (i.e., Radio Talking Book (RTB), Talking Book and Braille Services (TBBS), Braille Bibles International, subsidized taxi coupon programs, and so on).

Discuss Low Vision versus Non-Visual Techniques and the role of NCBVI counselors as they work with clients interested in exploring low vision aids and devices.

Discuss how NCBVI works with dog guide users and how NCBVI can help blind consumers investigate the use of a dog guide as an alternative to using a white cane.

Discuss services to older blind individuals and the unique challenges involved.

Discuss services to deaf-blind consumers; discuss the distinct roles of interpreters, interveners, and support service providers; tour the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (NCDHH); review the process for contracting sign-language interpreters through NCDHH; review the process for obtaining assistive technology for the deaf-blind through the I Can Connect deaf-blind equipment distribution program coordinated by the Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP).

Review the distinction between Client Supply and Discretionary Supply

First month following Center training:

Continue shadowing counselors and other NCBVI staff members as they work with clients in various situations (i.e., individual counseling, alternative skills training, training in the use of assistive technology, participation in IEP meetings, and so on).

Tour a work site managed by a Randolph-Sheppard vendor; review the application process for becoming a Randolph-Sheppard vendor and the role of the VR counselor in preparing a client for the Randolph-Sheppard program.

Review supported employment as a service outcome distinct from competitive employment; review the milestone model used for providing supported employment services to individuals with significant secondary disabilities; review how NCBVI works in partnership with supported employment service providers and agencies such as the Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Division of Behavioral Health on behalf of mutual clients; tour a supported employment work Site.

Review training for consumers with a focus on career exploration, job readiness, job seeking, and job maintenance skills.

Sit in on a low vision evaluation.

Discuss how pre-employment transition services (PETS) are provided to students and youth in transition from high school; review "Opening Doors" brochure and discuss how NCBVI works with local school systems; attend an IEP team meeting with an experienced counselor; review the special programs for blind children and youth (i.e., Project Independence (PI),

Winnerfest, Work And Gain Experience in the Summer (WAGES), College Workshop); tour Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind and Visually Impaired.

Learn how to demonstrate the use of TBBS Equipment.

Learn how to access and navigate Newsline.

Begin alternative skills of blindness training for blind consumers, if applicable.

Learn the procedure for using P Card.

Complete defensive Driving course, if relevant.

First 2 months:

Meet with counselors and staff members working in other offices and districts.

Shadow staff members conducting in-services for human services workers and eye care professionals; shadow staff members conducting presentations for the general public.

Shadow staff members making employer contacts.

Complete review of "Pathways to independence" video

First Three Months:

Attend NCBVI Board of Commissioners meeting.

Attend an IEP meeting.

Review Social Security and Medicare-Medicaid benefits for the blind and how employment affects benefits.

Make an employer contact.

Participate in training in counseling techniques (i.e., motivational interviewing)

## First Six Months:

Conduct in-services for human services workers and eye care professionals; conduct presentations for the general public.

Represent NCBVI at IEP team meetings.

Register for NFBN and ACBN state conventions.

Complete training in the use of basic assistive technology (i.e., JAWS, ZoomText, victor stream, keyboarding, and so on).

## First Year:

Independently perform all essential job duties and responsibilities expected of someone in this position.

Attend State Staff Meetings.

Attend one national consumer convention after attending ACBN and NFBN consumer state conventions.

Work special programs (i.e., PI, Winnerfest, WAGES, College Workshop, Home Teaching +, group teaching programs, and so on).

Participate in continuing education programs and training events.

## New VR Tech Training:

Prior to First Day: Setup email and EFORCE access, set up account with Office Depot.

First Day: Meet with HR & Staff of District Office.

Building Access, Key to office, Parking Permit

First Week: Job shadow counselors, discuss roles and responsibilities of each staff person. Gather their contact information, review phone system, common resource list.

## First Month:

Introduce Sleep Shades and work with Braille, Cane Travel, Tasks of Daily Living, Typing Talking Teacher (How many hours should we have?).

Philosophical discussions on Using a Blindfold, Long White Cane, Structure Discovery, and Use of a Dog Guide versus Long White Cane. Discussion on Why a Commission? Client choice and what drives the IPE.  
Discussion on Low Vision versus Non-Visual Techniques.

Low Vision and Low Vision Providers

Schedule training of EFORCE Administrative Assistant III in Lincoln

Schedule time to shadow other VR Tech

Tour of Center and TBBS/learn how to demonstrate TBBS Equipment

Work with NEWSLINE

Meet with Administrative Assistant III on EFORCE

Paperwork Training IL/VR

Resources for ordering supplies for office, staff, clients

Procedure for use of State Purchasing Card

First Two Months:

Meet with VR Tech from another office

Management of Client Supply

Car logs and management of TSB Fleet of Cars

Defensive Driving if Relevant

TSB Card for driving state cars

Complete Pathways to Independence video

Continue blindfold training

Meet with Dave & Bill regarding business office practices

First Three Months:

Meet with the Board of Commissioners

Attend a Board of Commissioner's meeting

Participate in a Public Relations Event

Work with JAWS after completing Typing Taking Teacher

Tour of Vending Site

Tour of RTBN

Tour of Outlook Nebraska or ENVISION

Discuss Social Security

Discuss other employment options - Workforce Centers

Participate In vocational counseling classes

Discussion on employment and accommodations

First Six Months:

Complete sleep shade training,

Complete training in technology of JAWS, Zoomtext, booksense/victor stream.

First year:

Attend State Staff Meetings, ACBN and NFBN State Conventions, work Project Independence, Winnerfest, and WAGES.

Professional Development Plan  
Administrative Professionals

Employee Name:

Review Date:

Employee Comments (optional):

Select three items from the list below indicating your preference for in-service training during the coming year. Number selections from 1 through 3 with 1 being your first choice:

	eForce - paperwork training		Operation of office equipment
	Business practices - paperwork training		Software applications
	NCBVI services and programs		Diseases of the eye
	Disabilities other than blindness		Working with consumers with cultural and diverse backgrounds
	Attitudinal and Environmental barriers to people with disabilities		Time management
	Leadership training		Assistive technology
	Communications		Alternative skills of blindness
	Information and referral resources		Other (please specify)

Reviewer comments:

Reviewer:

Professional Development Plan  
Technology Specialist

Employee Name:

Review Date:

Date of next re-certification (if applicable):

Number of continuing education units (CEUs) earned since date of CVRCB certification or last review:

List training activities attended since CVRCB certification or last review and number of CEUs earned at each event:

Employee Comments (optional):

Select three items from the list below indicating your preference for in-service training during the coming year. Number selections from 1 through 3 with 1 being your first choice:

	Foundations of rehabilitation counseling		Assistive technology
	Group counseling theory		Diseases of the eye
	Rehabilitation counseling techniques		Working with Consumers with Multi-cultural and diverse backgrounds
	Disabilities other than blindness		Alternative skills of blindness
	IPE development		Job seeking skills
	Attitudinal and environmental barriers to people with disabilities		Informed choice
	Career exploration		Communications
	Job development/job placement		Paperwork training
	Social Security/benefits planning		Time management
	Leadership training		Other (Please specify)

Reviewer comments:

Reviewer:

Professional Development Plan  
VR and Orientation Counselors

Employee Name:

Review Date:

Date of next re-certification (if applicable):

Number of continuing education units (CEUs) earned since date of CVRCB certification or last professional development plan review:

List training activities attended since CVRCB certification or last review and number of CEUs earned at each event:

Employee Comments (optional):

Select three items from the list below indicating your preference for in-service training during the coming year. Number selections from 1 through 3 with 1 being your first choice:

Foundations of rehabilitation counseling	Human growth and development
Group counseling theory	Family counseling theory
Rehabilitation counseling techniques	Diseases of the eye
Physical disabilities other than blindness	Family, gender, and multi-cultural issues
IPE development	Informed choice
Attitudinal and environmental barriers to people with disabilities	Alternative skills of blindness
Career exploration	Job seeking skills
Job development/job placement	Supported employment/Job Coaching
Assistive Technology	Communications
Leadership training	Social Security/benefits planning
Time management	Paperwork training
Rehabilitation legislation or laws affecting persons with disabilities	Rehabilitation research methods and/or program evaluation
Other: Please specify:	

Reviewer comments:

Reviewer:

## Resource Directory and General Information

Alternative Skills of Blindness  
Braille Instructional Guidelines  
Computer Instructional Guidelines  
Home Management Instructional Guidelines  
Shop Instructional Guidelines  
Travel Instructional Guidelines

Business Office:  
Federal Reporting  
NCBVI Financials – the Basics

Center:  
Center Supported from the Top and All Around by Dr. Pearl Van Zandt  
NCBVI Client Training Portfolio  
Proper Training and the orientation Center Philosophy

Client Assistance Program:  
CAP-Hot Line Brochure

Counseling:  
Setting High Expectations for the Blind: A Duty for Rehabilitation  
Professionals by James Omgig  
The Helping Relationship by Bob Deaton  
Deaf-Blindness:  
Causes of Combined Vision and Hearing Loss  
Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youth and Adults  
HKNC National Deaf-Blind Registry  
I Can Connect -- Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program  
Interpreters, Interveners, and Support Service Providers: Definition

Diseases of the eye:  
Albinism  
Diabetes mellitus  
Diabetic retinopathy  
Glaucoma  
Leading causes of blindness  
Macular degeneration  
Optic Nerve Atrophy

Retinitis pigmentosa  
Retinopathy of Prematurity  
Stargardt's Disease  
Usher Syndrome

Employee Benefits:

Deer Oaks - Employee Assistance Program  
Options Guide to Employee Benefits and Wellness Programs

Guide Dogs:

Addressing Consumer Interest in Guide Dogs in the Field  
Center policy  
Mobility Options for the Blind by Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Jeff Altman, and Bob Deaton

**History:**

25 Years of Training in the Orientation Center by Fatos Floyd  
**History of Efforts to Establish a National Service Delivery Program for Older Persons Who are Blind and Visually Impaired by Priscilla Rogers**  
Recollections - Joe Balderson  
RSVI Advisory Committee: A Historical and Administrative Perspective by Dr. James Nyman  
The History of the Blind in Nebraska by Dr. James Nyman  
(Selected comments from interviews with Don Misfeldt (an original SVI employee) & Mike Adams  
Summary of the History of the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind by James Omvig  
Timeline - Nebraska

Job Placement:

Abilities Fund  
NCBVI Employment Services  
Stressing the Employment Outcome by Robert Newman

Low-Vision Services:

List of Low-Vision Providers, Organizations, and Resources in Nebraska  
Low-Vision Services and Technology  
Memorandum to the Nebraska Board of Optometry by Dr. Pearl Van Zandt  
NCBVI Low Vision Services  
Optometrists - Low Vision Providers

Weigel Williamson Center for Visual Rehabilitation  
When the Sleepshades Aren't On by Jeff Altman

NCBVI:  
2014 Annual Report to the Governor  
NCBVI Board of Commissioners

Nebraska Business Enterprises:  
New Vendor Start Up Procedures  
Randolph-Sheppard Act

New Referrals:  
Bibles International  
Discretionary Supply  
National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped  
New Referral Packet  
NFB-Newsline for the Blind  
Radio Talking Book Service  
Resource List - Lincoln  
Resource List - North Platte  
Resource List - Omaha

Older Blind Services:

History of Efforts to Establish a National Service Delivery Program for Older  
People Who are Blind or Visually Impaired by Priscilla Rogers  
Losing Vision in Your Later Years: The Older Visually Impaired Person by Dr.  
Pearl Van Zandt

Other Agencies and Organizations:

American Council of the Blind  
American Foundation for the Blind  
American Printing House for the Blind  
Assistive Technology Partnership  
Bookshare

Hadley School for the Blind

Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youth and Adults

Learning Ally

National Federation of the Blind

National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Impaired

Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind and Visually Impaired

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

Partnerships - Summary Report

Philosophical Readings

Bob's Articles:

Blindness: Competing on Terms of Equality by Kenneth Jernigan

Blindness: Handicap or Characteristic? by Kenneth Jernigan

The Day After Civil Rights by Kenneth Jernigan

A definition of Blindness by Kenneth Jernigan

Let the Wing of the Butterfly Flap by Mark Maurer

Life-Changing Events by Bob Deaton

The Nature of Independence by Kenneth Jernigan

Within the Grace of God by Jacobus tenBroek

Carlos's Articles:

A Dark Day for Rehabilitation by Fredric Schroeder

A Declaration of Equality by Fredric Schroeder

A Man of Confidence by Fredric Schroeder

Bureaucracy and the Individual: The Plan for Rehabilitation in the Twenty-first Century by Fredric Schroeder

Changing Patterns in the Rehabilitation System: Meeting the Needs of the Blind and Otherwise Disabled by Fredric Schroeder

Client or Consumer: Re-defining Responsibility by Fredric Schroeder

Empowerment Through Personal Conviction: The Foundation of Effective Residential Training Programs for the Blind by Joanne Wilson

Empowerment, Partnership, and High Expectations: Just Words, or the Foundation of Effective Rehabilitation? by Fredric Schroeder  
Fundamental versus Incremental Change by Fredric Schroeder  
The Future of Rehabilitation by Joanne Wilson  
The Future of Specialized Services for the Blind by Kenneth Jernigan  
Literacy, Learning, and Enlightenment by Fredric Schroeder  
Preparing for Emerging Challenges and Partnerships  
Philosophical Underpinnings of Effective Rehabilitation by Fredric Schroeder  
Politics and Rehabilitation - Serving the Agency, Serving the Public by Fredric Schroeder  
Problems of Placement and Responsibility - Mainstreaming Revisited by Fredric Schroeder  
Research and the Organized Blind Movement by Fredric Schroeder  
Response Regarding Certification of Centers  
Shifting Balances in the Blindness Field by Kenneth Jernigan  
Universal Access by Fredric Schroeder

#### Wes's Articles:

A Beginner's Guide to Access Technology  
Adaptive Notetaker Device Purchase Policy  
Appropriate Use of the Electronic Notetaker in School  
Expectations for Accessing College Textbooks and Materials

#### Other Articles:

Blindness: A Left-Handed Dissertation by Kenneth Jernigan  
Blindness: Concepts and Misconceptions by Kenneth Jernigan  
Blindness: Is History Against Us? By Kenneth Jernigan  
Blindness: Is Literature Against Us? By Kenneth Jernigan  
Blindness: Is the Public Against Us? By Kenneth Jernigan  
People with Disabilities: The Orphan Minority by Fredric Schroeder  
Please Don't Throw the Nickel by Kenneth Jernigan  
The Visible Difference by Kenneth Jernigan

#### Rules and Regulations:

2015-2017 Nebraska Association of Public Employees (NAPE) Labor Contract  
NCBVI Rule - Chapter 1: Cost Containment  
NCBVI Rule - Chapter 2: Review of Vocational Rehabilitation Determinations  
NCBVI Rule - Chapter 3: Nebraska Business Enterprises  
NCBVI Rule - Chapter 4: Workplace Policies

## State of Nebraska Personnel Rules and Regulations

### Structured Discovery:

Some Basic Approaches in Structured Discovery by Jeff Altman

Structured Discovery in the Classroom by Edward Bell

Structured Discovery Learning: What It Is and Why It Works by Ruby Ryles

### Technology:

A Beginner's Guide to Access Technology

Adaptive Notetaker Device Purchase Policy

Appropriate Use of the Electronic Notetaker in School

Expectations for Accessing College Textbooks and Materials

Technology Guidelines

### Transition:

Opening Doors - A Transition Guide

Special Programs

### Vendors:

American Printing for the Blind

Eschenbach

Freedom Scientific

HumanWare

Independent Living Aids

LL&S

Magnification Resources

MaxiAids

NanoPac

National Federation of the Blind - Independence Market

Weigel Williamson Center for Visual Rehabilitation

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act:

WIOA - The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (as amended 2014)