

Nebraska Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired
Commission Board Meeting
May 11, 2019

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.

Mark Bulger, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The meeting was held at the Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired (NCECBVI) in Nebraska City. The meeting began with introductions.

Commissioners present: Mark Bulger, Chairperson, Designee of the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska, Omaha; Robert Newman, Vice Chairperson, Omaha; Mike Hansen, Designee of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska; Becky Rieken, Executive Secretary, Dakota City.

Commissioners absent: Chad Bell, Alliance.

Commission staff present: Carlos Serván, Executive Director; Carol Jenkins, Deputy Director; Kat Carroll, Business Manager III; Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor; Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant.

Public present: Sally Schreiner, Administrator, Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired.

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

Approval of the February 2, 2019 public meeting minutes.

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

Focus Topic - Talk and tour of NCECBVI

A True PartnershipGroundbreaking Collaborations
Sally Schreiner, NCECBVI Administrator

Sally provided some background information. She stated that their current plan and mission has been in place for about 20 years. They greatly broadened the scope about 20 years ago to include outreach services. NCECBVI was a State accredited school and now it is considered a special education level three program for the school piece. There are a lot of programs and services that go on at the facility. They provide

services throughout the state of Nebraska as well as services to children and teachers at the school. NCECBVI is much more of a revolving door today. Now this is just one program of many that they do. NCECBVI serves approximately 800 students in the Resource Center. This is a federal program run by the American Printing House for the Blind.

Sally Schreiner gave a tour of NCECBVI. During the tour we saw the following rooms:

Sensory Room

Bowling Alley

Resource Center

Wellness Room

Gym

Reception Area

Dorm (She Shed and Man Cave)

Laundry Room

Dining Room

After the tour, Sally talked about some of the partnership things that NCBVI and NCECBVI have been doing.

- Quarterly Joint Meetings – NCBVI and NCECBVI Leadership Teams take turns meeting at each other's offices to learn more about services, eligibility and order of selection of services, share concerns and brainstorm strategies to improve collaborative efforts. Sally noted that this is ground breaking for NCBVI and NCECBVI to be doing some of these projects together.
- NCBVI Staff on NCECBVI Campus
 - Counselors attended 14 IEP/MDT meetings (staff from the Norfolk, Kearney, Scottsbluff, and Lincoln offices).
 - Quarterly = Observed students in class and provided Pre-ETS services and shadowed community-based work sites.
 - Attended the Career Challenge with our staff and students at Peru State College.
 - NCBVI staff attended our statewide conference on the expanded core curriculum.
- NCECBVI students and staff at the Commission
 - Students and staff toured the NCBVI Training Center in Lincoln.
 - Students attended the NCBVI technology training opportunities.
 - Jointly toured the Nebraska State Capitol and the vendor restaurant business there.
 - NCECBVI Transition Work Group (TVIs from around the state) held their meeting at NCBVI and toured the training center and heard a presentation from HHS/DD Services.
- Adult Service Agency Linkages
 - NCECBVI and NCBVI staff have worked together to effectively plan and implement individual student transitions from school into the adult world.
 - Visit, meet with and tour a variety of service providers and their programs and facilities such as Region V in Auburn, David City and others.

Encouraged and assisted in setting up community based work sites with these adult service providers for our students.

Assisted with training adult service provider staff members on blindness basics and sharing instructional strategies that have been successful with our students to carry over into their transitions.

Summer Work Experience Program – jointly securing job sites in students' home communities, finding school or adult service provider staff to serve as job coaches and implement effective employment training opportunities.

- Collaborative Projects

Leslie Wagner and Shane Buresh provided a presentation at the NDE Nebraska Transition Conference "Are Your Students Work Ready".

NCBVI staff toured DD service provider locations in the state where NCECBVI students are working to start their transition into adult services.

NCBVI and NCECBVI staff both serve on the Omaha Metro Transition Advisory group where monthly lunch meetings with guest speakers and collaborative planning are held.

NCECBVI Sizzlin' Summer Camp for 20+ students will be joint funded this year and NCBVI staff will be on campus to assist with Pre-ETS services.

There are approximately 60 Teachers for the Visually Impaired (TVI's) across the state of Nebraska. The Commissioners thanked Sally for her presentation and noted that they appreciate everything that NCECBVI does for blind children in Nebraska.

Break

A break was taken at approximately 10:15 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 10:25 a.m.

Report from the Executive Director

Director Serván reported that the collaboration that NCBVI has with NCECBVI has been very productive. They have learned that they have so much to offer each other and they are moving forward and working together in various areas.

I. Client Statistics October 1, 2018 through March 31, 2019 – FFY 2019

A. For Older Blind/Independent Living services

There were 100 active clients at the beginning of the fiscal year. One hundred eighty-two clients were added, making for a total of 282 clients. Of these, 71 clients closed successful, 22 clients closed unsuccessful. One hundred eighty-nine clients remain in active status. Total number of OIB applicants and clients served in all statuses at the end of the period was 285.

B. Independent Living under 55

Since the beginning of the fiscal year, there were 25 applicants along with two carried over from the previous fiscal year. Twenty-five applicants were accepted for service with two remaining at the end of the quarter. A total of 61 clients are currently in active status. Of these, 18 clients closed successful with three referred to VR services. Seven closed unsuccessful, three due to other reasons and four due to withdrawn. Thirty-six remain in active status. Total of thirty-eight clients at the end of the period. Total number of IL applicants and clients in all statuses served at the end of the period was 63.

C. Vocational Rehabilitation

Three hundred thirty-six clients were in active status at the beginning of the year. Ninety-three clients were accepted for services, totaling 429 clients in active status during the fiscal year. Of these, 15 clients were closed as successful. Thirty-four clients were closed as unsuccessful after an IPE was developed. Three hundred seventy remain in active status. There is a total of 380 clients.

Total number of VR clients in all statuses served at the end of the period 451.

We are in Order of Selection since March 30, with all categories closed. There are ten clients on the wait list.

D. We had clients get jobs as:

NBE Vendor, Laundry and Dry-Cleaning Worker, Educational/Guidance/School and Vocational Counselor, Residential Advisor, Customer Service Representative, Business Operation Specialist, Sales Representative, Physical Therapist, Elementary School Teacher (2), Court Reporter, Financial Specialist, Skincare Specialist, Community Health Worker, and Teacher Assistant.

II. Administration

I worked with consumer leaders and met with senators from the Appropriations Committee to educate them on the need to increase NCBVI's budget. I also met with other senators to educate them about passing LB-220 and LB-123. I testified in front of the Appropriations Committee, the Health and Human Services Committee and the Government and Military Committee. The Appropriations Committee recommended to fully support our request, including the increase of the portion of salaries and benefits that the Federal Government does not cover. LB-220 is now at the Consent Calendar and waiting to be discussed on the floor. LB-123 is not scheduled to be on the floor yet.

I also conducted the public meeting about OOS on March 12. Some of the other events/meetings I attended were the WIOA Partners meetings, ADA Task Force meetings, NCSAB spring conference, OAB meeting in Omaha, and the ACBN State Convention among others.

At the NCSAB spring conference, RSA reported that referrals went down all over the country. In addition, individuals refusing further services and those unable to locate went up significantly in the last eight years. Furthermore, program income or Social

Security reimbursement has been reduced 38 million dollars due to staff focusing on Pre-Ets and SGA level for blind individuals now being \$2,040.

We started the implementation of Order of Selection (OOS) on March 30. We had meetings with CAP and RSA respectively to make sure that we were following all the procedures for OOS before it was implemented.

The amendment for our Rules is still pending. They are still at the Governor's office for their final approval. If LB220 passes, we will have to amend that section of the Rule.

We are having some savings on cutting land lines, state vehicles, office space, software licenses, etc. Several quarterly federal reports were submitted and they were all on time. Kat has been planning for conversion of our phone system from Windstream to Allo for the new phone system.

Kat has been working on redesigning financial reports to simplify data entry, ensure better accuracy, and provide the right level of detail for a variety of users.

Kat evaluated the need for and number of annual licenses for all software products. As a result, we eliminated 17 licenses for AWARE at an annual cost of \$1,500 each for next fiscal year's contract. Similar savings will be realized from our Microsoft Office licenses for the next fiscal year.

We have been doing a great deal of sending items to surplus as a result of the Lincoln office move and the Kearney office being closed. Other offices will have items for surplus as they close.

We are down-sizing our fleet of vehicles.

Human Resources

We had to lay off 12 employees which was hard for all of us. As a result, we needed to rearrange positions and reassign duties, all within their 40 hours of work.

Dave Robinson took most of Don's and Jan's duties for NBE. Supervisors, Shane Buresh and Deanna Jesse are carrying a case load. Deanna Jesse will go to part-time (30 hours per week) starting May 27. We hired a new person for the Business Office, Michelle Rogers. Michelle and Kat are taking some of the technology manager duties regarding purchasing of staff technology, inventory, and dealing with the OCIO.

At the Center, we combined Technology and Braille into one class, as this is what several Training Centers are moving toward doing. Greg DeWall is covering different areas as needed. Cindy went back to teach Home Management and is still coordinating special needs counseling. However, Cindy is going through cancer treatment and has been on sick leave. The Lincoln District is helping to cover Center duties.

Elaine Kavulak retired on March 29, 2019. Adrienne Moody was hired as an Orientation Counselor for Omaha and already started her sixteen-week Center training.

Kat Carroll and Greg DeWall attended the first and second sessions of the NRLI leadership seminar. NRLI has given Kat and Greg scholarship for the third and fourth sessions as a result of our partnership with them for the past several years.

As a result of his participation in the training by The National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (NRTC), Tim Jefferson was asked to attend the annual State of the Science Conference, in Arlington, Virginia on February 28 and March 1, 2019. NRTC provided the funding for him to attend the conference. At the State Staff meeting the first week of April, Tim shared how this training impacted him and how he approaches placement services and working with businesses.

At the State Staff meeting, all staff got training on Order of Selection. We also talked about moving forward, supporting each other, and being innovative on what we do. The Kearney office was closed on March 30, the Scottsbluff, North Platte, and Norfolk offices will be close by June 30. Staff in those offices will be working from home. The Omaha NCBVI office will reduce space and we are still waiting for the date. In the Lincoln offices, Administration moved to the west end of the first floor; the Lincoln District moved to the middle of the building; and the Center Training is on the east side of the building.

III. Field Services:

We had a State-wide Older Blind Conference in Kearney on May 8, 9 and 10 with 120 individuals participating. The Lincoln District has scheduled Group Home Teachings every month for the upcoming year. One will be on Older Blind and another one will be on Pre-Ets. Every Friday, several staff are in Nebraska City providing some training to our clients at NCECBVI.

The Lincoln District has been involved in planning the EmployLNK job fair. One of our clients was hired at the Fall Job Fair and we recognized her employer, Hy-Vee. The client, supervisor, store director and HR director all came. They were very pleased to be recognized by the group.

Lincoln district approached the Chamber of Commerce about providing training to their HR group. It was originally scheduled for March 5. They decided to expand the series and work with the Omaha Chamber of Commerce to develop a similar training. We are now scheduled for June 25.

Our staff helped on the planning committee for the Project Search State Job Fair annual event which took place on April 30, and the Friends of the Commission helped on getting some food for the conference.

All district continues to work more on Pre-Ets group.

Omaha Staff have done several presentations focusing on our older blind services and conference to: Senior Centers, Senior Companions and Foster Grandparents programs, Family Readiness Center at AFB, and the Omaha Association of the Blind. Nancy did a short presentation to the NFB Senior Division on NCBVI older blind services and gave an update on the Older Blind Conference in April.

We are able to get into several school districts to meet during the day to provide skill training for technology and vocational counseling.

Kelly Coleman attended the Transition conference network with Vision teachers and special education staff from across the state.

Each district continues to work more with public schools and parents to be able to expend more time with Pre-Ets. Field staff continues to network with different public and private entities across the state, as well as being part of the WIOA local Board.

The Deputy Director, Supervisors, and Shane continue meeting with NCECBVI. We have been invited by NCECBVI to join a new transition advisory committee with many third-party agencies. Through the efforts of several Lincoln staff, we continue to provide a series of monthly group trainings at NCECBVI with their in-house Pre-Ets clients. The NCECBVI transition Specialist and Shane Buresh did a presentation at the statewide transition conference in February. In addition, in early April, we hosted a transition advisory group made up of teachers of the visually impaired and coordinated by Leslie Wagner. They toured our Center and learned about Order of Selection and stayed for the remainder of their meeting. We jointly learned about DD services. During the first weekend of April, we held the spring NFB Career Mentoring Retreat, which was focused on college exploration and preparation, 17 mentees attended.

Carlos reported that he signed the NFB Mentoring contract for the upcoming year last week. The contract is very much the same except that we are increasing the amount of the contract to include a mentoring coordinator. The mentoring coordinator will be funded by the program. We will be using Pre-Ets funds for this contract.

We will have an abbreviated (half program) of Project Independence running from July 28th through July 30.

IV. Training Center:

We currently have eight students and one staff member in training. The Center has had several tours, including students from public schools, parents and teachers. Center students participated in cleaning the Children's Museum. This is a bi-annual activity the museum does, to allow for children with immune deficiencies to come and play at the Children's Museum without concern of catching an illness.

Mark Bulger, the President of the ACB of Nebraska, visited the students during lunch. Mark discussed the mission of the ACB and talked to students about the ACB of Nebraska annual convention. Barbara Loos and Christine Boone spoke with the students about the purpose of the Friends of the Commission and how they support NCBVI. Wednesdays are now being spent at the apartments doing techniques of daily living and seminar. This allows students to have more experiences and learning opportunities in their living environments. It also creates more opportunity to have travel lessons downtown.

V. Nebraska Business Enterprise

Unassigned Funds Update

NCBVI worked with the Blind Licensee Committee to change the use of unassigned funds. Unassigned funds are extra funds sent to active vendor retirement accounts. Due to NCBVI's budget deficit, NCBVI worked with the Blind Licensee Committee to get the use of unassigned funds changed to be able to be used for maintenance and replacement of equipment, purchase of new equipment, and management services. The results of the vote to all NBE Licensees was passed in favor of the change on April 22, 2019. The change will take effect this current quarter.

Vending Sites Update:

We have been working on negotiating a permit for the VA in Lincoln, which is a result of the Arbitration we filed in 2017 for the VA clinic in Omaha.

The Department of Corrections has informed NCBVI that an RFP is close to being ready to post. NCBVI intends on submitting a bid when the RFP is posted.

We are still in contract negotiations with the Nebraska State Building Division. Carol Jenkins, is still attempting to obtain a group insurance policy for the NBE program working with the Nebraska Risk Management to lessen the cost of insurance for vendors. This is the portion of the contract still being negotiated with the State Building Division. Once a contract has been fully executed, Carol will set up a training for relevant NCBVI staff, NBE Staff, and licensees who will be responsible for carrying out the contract.

The NCBVI Executive Director has been diligently working on the Offutt cafeteria details to move the project forward to a completion. Carol has been working on the permit negotiations for the Offutt vending machines. The Offutt cafeteria and vending machines will need to be operational by July 1, 2019. Carol has been negotiating exclusive agreements with Coca-Cola and either Host Coffee or Canteen Kitchen for all required vending machines for Offutt.

Carol has also negotiated with the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) to allow Coca-Cola to put in bottled soda machines along I-80.

There are 23 licensees in Nebraska with 16 currently operating vending sites. Some building staff are complaining that some vendors are not coming often enough to stock machines. We have been working with the vendors to get these issues resolved.

Carol Jenkins and Nancy Flearl have developed and implemented Service Repair contracts with companies statewide to repair vending machines in a more cost-effective and timely manner. Nancy Flearl has been working with Greater America to provide free training to our NBE vendors and some agency staff on routine repairs and basic maintenance of machines. This training has begun and is estimated to be completed in the next few months.

Carol Jenkins, Nancy Flearl and Sandy Alvarado, NBE Licensee, are working together to create an NBE Handbook for Licensees as well as an NBE Handbook for NCBVI staff. This is still a work in progress.

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

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Ongoing Business

Newsline® Update - Bryan Baldwin, Outreach Coordinator

Greetings!

As some of you know, this has been a crazy quarter for me. I had some medical issues that are now being taken care of and all is going well. I also applied for a cane travel instructor position at the Colorado Center for the Blind and was offered the job. This was the right fit for me, especially to keeping my health up. So, in taking this job I had to retire from my positions in Nebraska. This is my final report as Outreach Coordinator. I have entrusted Newsline to Kimberly Scherbarth who is well known to the commission and I believe will be a magnificent fit for Newsline Outreach Coordinator. We are in the midst of transferring everything to her and showing her the ins and outs of it. With that being said let's get to the numbers.

In February we show 3 new subscribers, and people were viewing our content roughly every 5 minutes on average. Our Mobile sessions were at their average of 436. We had one Alexa session, but seeing as this is a new feature, I feel these numbers will grow as more people find out about it, and more people get Amazon Echos.

March saw 6 new subscribers as well as 506 mobile sessions, still hanging out in the average zone. We did have 2 Alexa sessions in March. We also saw 1518 web sessions in March. The calls are still in the average range at 965 with content being viewed every 6 minutes.

In April more people started using Alexa with 13 sessions and our Mobile sessions up to 555. Our In Your Pocket deliveries were at 2602 which is at the average and our calls were at their average of 954.

Our numbers seem to still be doing well, and it seems like more people are finding different ways of accessing NFB Newsline. I feel that with the connections that Kimberly has that Newsline should have no problems being as great as ever. I appreciate the opportunity I have been given and thank you all. It saddens me to leave a place I got to call home for a short time but am glad I'm still so close.

Thank you all and happy meeting!

Client Assistance Program (CAP) Complaints or issues

Quarterly Highlights from the Client Assistance Program

Related to IPE development/implementation: Selection of training services, including postsecondary education: Client contacted CAP as she felt she was denied maintenance services (rent, medical, tools for work and transportation) per agreement on her IPE. **Outcome:** After reviewing case notes and speaking with Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) Supervisors it was determined progress was being made in the client's case. Several maintenance items requested by the client were provided or in the process of being provided by NCBVI when CAP became involved. Client was upset because she was denied rent supports. Client was hoping NCBVI would pay rent in the city where she would be attending her post-secondary education. NCBVI indicated this was never part of the clients Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) nor had any staff promised this service would be provided. As indicated by NCBVI, her request for maintenance supports (rent) is not an appropriate situation for these services, which CAP supports this decision. Client ended all contact with NCBVI and requested her VR case to be closed. **CAP determines NCBVI agency position/decision was appropriate for the individual.**

Attended the NCBVI Supervisor Meetings.

Attended the Public Meeting State Plan Amendment for Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) Services – Order of Selection.

New Business

Discuss and Act on the approval of the Executive Director's time certification

Commissioner Hansen moved to continue with the current method being used for the Director to submit her Personnel Activity Report to the Board of Commissioners. The Director submits his/her Personnel Activity Report via email to the entire Board for their review. It is an automatic approval unless a question or concern is raised by a Commission Board member.

Commissioner Newman seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken and all voted in favor of the motion.

Discuss & Act on the Approval of Employee in-state and out-of-state Travel

State law requires all travel of staff of state agencies to be pre-approved. This includes travel in-state and out-of-state. Currently for out-of-state travel all staff must complete a form that says where they are going, why they are going there, the cost, how it will be funded, etc. and this must be pre-approved by their immediate supervisor and by the executive director. This is done by all staff for out-of-state travel.

Supervisors manage in-state travel by getting itineraries from staff and reviewing them on an on-going basis. However, staff is not required to check with their supervisor every morning to get an okay for in-state travel as this would not be manageable. Discussion was held with Administrative Services to determine how the agency could

comply with the law regarding in-state travel. Administrative Services recommended that each year the Board of Commissioners would have a motion to pre-approve travel that is related to the purpose of the staff person's position.

Commissioner Hansen moved:

The Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired Board of Commissioners approves all employee in-state business travel and/or out-of-state business travel within 60 miles of the border of Nebraska in any adjoining state, which relates directly to the provision of services to a client, i.e. employer visit, medical appointment, service referral, employment interview, etc. All other out-of-state business travel is approved if granted approval by the Executive Director of the agency. This motion is in effect until the next meeting of the Board of Commissioners after April 1, 2020.

Commissioner Rieken seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Discuss and act upon the setting of an extra face-to-face meeting to balance out the requirements for meeting types during the year

In order to have two commissioners attend the November 2019 Commission Board meeting via video conference an additional face-to-face meeting needs to be scheduled per the Open Meeting Act. After discussion, it was decided that Commissioners Hansen, Newman and Bulger will attend the NBE Blind Licensee Committee meeting on Thursday, May 16, 2019.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Typical Final Announcements

The next NCBVI Commission Board meeting will be Saturday, August 3, 2019 in Lincoln, Nebraska. The Focus Topic will be Friends of the Commission. The Commission Board elections will also be held.

Commissioner Hansen acknowledged the great things that Dr. Nyman did for the agency, Nebraska Services for the Visually Impaired, and as a former Executive Director of the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Executive Session: starting with a brief pre-Commissioners meeting, prior to conducting Director Annual Evaluation.

Commissioner Hansen moved to go into Executive Session at 11:40 a.m. to conduct the annual evaluation of the Executive Director.

(Ref. Open Meeting Act; 84-1410. Closed session; (d) Evaluation of the job performance of a person when necessary to prevent needless injury to the reputation of a person and if such person has not requested a public meeting.)

Commissioner Rieken seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken and all Commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Hansen moved to come out of Executive Session at 1:40 p.m.
Commissioner Newman seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken and all Commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Act on the retention of the Executive Director and his salary

Commissioner Hansen moved to retain Carlos Serván as the Executive Director of NCBVI. Commissioner Rieken seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all voted in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Hansen moved to give the Executive Director a 2.3% raise effective July 1, 2019.

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

Chair Bulger asked the commissioners to submit to him in writing their comments regarding the executive director's performance for the past year. He will then share the comments with the entire Board and then forward them to Director Serván. The comments will be placed in the Executive Director's personnel file.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:42 p.m.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the August 3, 2019 Commission Board meeting, please email it to the NCBVI Commission Board at ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant
NCBVI

Mark Bulger, Chairperson
NCBVI Board of Commissioners

NCBVI Staff Reports

Lincoln District Activity Report – Connie Daly

This quarter has been a challenging one. We said goodbye to three of our colleagues in the Lincoln District. It was very tough but we provided as much support as we could to our coworkers and we continue to support one another. Shane Buresh is helping us out by taking a caseload in the Lincoln District. We have redistributed the caseloads. The Lincoln District office downsized and moved to the east end of the building. That's where all the action is. We like being closer to the Center and Center clients. The Norfolk office is in the process of closing and they will work from home. We have been working to surplus items and move out of that space.

We have been involved in planning the EmployLNK job fair. One of our clients was hired at the Fall Job Fair and we recognized her employer, Hy-Vee. The client, supervisor, store director and HR director all came. They were very pleased to be recognized by the group. We have been involved in planning the Project Search Job Fair. We arranged the keynote speaker and helped recruit businesses to be involved. Some of us will be volunteering that day. The Friends of the Commission provided a grant for this event.

We approached the Chamber of Commerce about providing training to their HR group. It was originally scheduled for March 5. They decided to expand the series and work with the Omaha Chamber of Commerce to develop a similar training. We are now scheduled for June 25.

We have had a couple of Pre-Ets training days. We call the group, "Being your own BOSS". BOSS stands for Basic Organizational Skills and Strategies. The training has been focused on technology.

We are working on a number of Work Based Learning Experiences for Pre-Ets student around our district. Several of our clients will also be attending WAGES. We have set up an internship with Strictly Business for a client of ours who is interested in Graphic Design.

Two clients got a job as customer service reps, one person got a job as a cashier and one person got a job as a food service worker. One person is in Information Technology and one is a cane travel instructor.

Charli Saltzman has been teaching Home Management in the Center due to a staff person being out on leave.

Omaha District Activity Report – Nancy Flearl

Older Blind: We worked the Vision Resource fair at Baxter Arena the weekend of April 5.

Omaha Staff have done several presentations focusing on our older blind services: Senior Centers, Senior Companions and Foster Grandparents programs, Family Readiness Center at Offutt AFB, Omaha Association of the Blind.

Staff have been working on meeting with consumers interested in attending the Older Blind Conference and getting them signed up and registered for the conference.

We have four consumers interested in the Center and they are working together in a group teaching session to prepare for this training. A couple of them are older individuals.

Nancy did a short presentation to the NFB Senior Division on NCBVI older blind services and gave an update on the Older Blind Conference in April.

Transition: We did a quarterly training with Omaha Public Schools-Vision Program. There were a lot of questions about Order of Selection and working with students in secondary educations. We discussed summer employment and the students we have transition goals with, and their strengths, interests, and potential barriers.

We have continued to do our group teachings for teenagers. We monitor the school calendars to capitalize on early out, conferences and spring breaks. We have had the opportunity to meet and work with independent living skills, post-secondary opportunities and finalizing some plans for summer work experiences. We have a number of students that will attend WAGES and a number that will do work based learning experiences here in the community. An interesting fact is that we have close to 31 public high schools within the Douglas, Sarpy, Cass, Saunders and Washington Counties. This does not include parochial schools. We do have some students that attend private, faith based or alternative high schools.

We are able to get into several school districts to meet during the day to provide skill training for technology and vocational counseling.

We are working the Project Search Job fair on April 30. We will work with the skills assessments and mock interviews. We have been working with the Project Search Business Advisory to make sure students have jobs as they complete the Project Search Program. We have a student that is completing his training at Children's hospital.

We continue to attend metro transition groups that allow us to continue to build relationships with the Special Education Directors across our territory.

Tim Jefferson attended Spring Fling in Nebraska City and Kelly Coleman attended the Transition conference. Both were an opportunity to gain valuable training and network with Vision teachers and special education staff from across the state.

Employment: We have had several clients that have self-employment goals that are ready to go into 90 day follow up (massage therapist and white cane business). Several consumers that we had opened as job jeopardy (billing and coding clerk, patient transportation clerk, dispatcher, receptionist & information clerk).

Others we help place in home health aide, para-professional, para-legal/legal assistant, database administrator, customer service representative.

Vending: Staff have been working closely with Carol on the recent changes in the Nebraska Business Enterprise Program. We are working as a team as we look at the new opportunities at Offutt AFB start getting off the ground.

It has been a tough few months. I am humbled at the dedication and passion of the NCBVI staff. Staff may struggle with the recent changes, but they pulled together to continue to creatively provide quality services to blind Nebraskans.

North Platte District Activity Report – Erin Brandyberry

This past quarter since the last Commissioner's meeting has been a very busy one for our agency. The North Platte district has been really great about adapting to many changes, having great communication, and trying to do what is best for the agency while still providing quality services to our clients. All staff have larger caseloads due to the reduction in staff and have more office responsibilities as well. The Kearney office closed earlier than originally anticipated, at the end of March, and the Kearney office has been telecommuting since. The Scottsbluff and North Platte offices will now close at the end of June and those staff will begin telecommuting at that time. Our awesome VR tech, Adrienne Moody, gained employment in the Omaha NCBVI office as an orientation counselor and started her Center training at the end of April.

Networking: Angie provided a vision loss in-service at the Scottsbluff Veteran's Home and a vision loss and fall prevention workshop in Scottsbluff. She provided O&M instruction to a client while in the hospital where she spoke with doctors and therapists, and received two additional referrals from them. She attended a business services integration meeting in Scottsbluff, and continues to attend monthly WIOA partner meetings in Scottsbluff. Cristal has done business outreach at Associated Staffing, Kearney Regional Hospital, and Bosselman's. She has been an active member of the Tri-Cities Services Providers group, attended the annual Agra-Abilities Advisory Board meeting as a board member, and provided a presentation to the Grand Island Service Provider group. Fritz did business outreach at Godfather's Pizza and the Opportunity Center General Store. He also had a booth at Project Connect in North Platte. Deanna has attended community connections in Kearney, Elder Issues group in Grand Island, Aging Coalition in Kearney, Project Connect meeting in Kearney; serves on the Senior Services Advisory Board in Kearney; provided an in-service at the Gold Beck Towers and Village Terrace both in Hastings. She also spoke to the NFB Senior Division about the OIB conference. Jan has started working with the OCIO for several agency technology needs. Erin attended monthly Employ North Platte meetings. Erin and Fritz gave presentations to approximately 125 Lincoln County employees on blindness/low vision awareness, advocacy, and training.

Projects: The OIB conference is the first full week of May, and Deanna and Erin are on the planning committee. All North Platte district staff are working the program and have 46 clients from the North Platte district signed up. Cristal has been working on setting up several community based work-based learning experiences for Pre-ETS clients who will not be attending WAGES. Angie has been working closely with a client on his preparation to begin work at Offutt.

Training: All staff attended the Order of Selection Public Meeting via video conference, and arranged for clients and community partners to participate as well. All staff attended the State Staff meeting in Lincoln. Jan participated in three Microsoft Accessibility Webinars and shared the information with NCBVI staff. Deanna attended a training on Aging with Passion and Purpose in Kearney. Angie, Cristal, Fritz and Erin attended trainings on Labor Market Information through the Department of Labor. Angie attended the Commission board meeting in February via video conference. Cristal attended the Transition Conference through the Department of Education in February. Erin and Fritz attended training on strategies for effective rural VR services delivery. Fritz also attended a training on voices for children in Nebraska.

Client Outcomes: Cristal has two clients who were accepted into Project Search for the next school year, five students signed up for WAGES, one client attending center training, and one client graduating nursing school. Erin has one client attending center training, one client gained employment at a factory, and one NBE client took on additional vending sites. Angie has a client who in May is starting to prepare the Offutt cafeteria to open in July. Angie also has two clients who started part-time jobs to maintain work experience while they are searching for full time jobs.

Center Activity Report – Greg DeWall

Currently: Eight Students

There have been two Staff Trainees. Michelle Rogers, the new Accountant I in the business office and the new OC in the Omaha office, Adrienne Moody, is currently undergoing training.

Three 3 Day Stays

One Student had a Mini Meal

There were no commencement meals

Tours: Six tours with agency consumers, one tour with 35 parents and children from Golden Plains, one tour with six teachers of blind students from across the state.

Observations: No observations this quarter.

Volunteer Activities: Center students participated in cleaning the Children's Museum. This is a bi-annual activity the museum does, to allow for children with immune deficiencies to come and play at the Children's Museum without concern of contracting illness.

Student Requested Activities: Center students voted and took it upon themselves to attend \$5 movie day at Edgewood Theatre. This included students planning the route and taking the bus.

Guest Speakers: Erica Sousak, from Department of Labor, has come to the Center monthly. She has discussed interviewing techniques. In addition, Erica has assigned home-work for the students. Home-work included researching potential employers of interest for each student. Mark Bulger, the President of the ACB of Nebraska, visited the students during lunch. Mark discussed the mission of the ACB and talked to

students about the ACB of Nebraska annual convention. Friends of the Commission also visited the students. Barbara Loos and Christine Boone spoke with the students about the purpose of the Friends of the Commission and how they support NCBVI.

Center Staff: Some staff continue to work with the Tech Committee and attend these meetings. The Center's travel instructor, Jeff Altman, continues to attend the Star-Tran monthly meetings. Instructors are regularly working on projects to improve their classes. With the reduction in staff, our Communications instructor has absorbed the duties of braille and technology. Sahar and I are still adjusting and finding out what system will work best for providing quality training to each student.

Center Supervisor: After one year, I feel I am settled in to my new position. As part of my requirements for being an NCBVI staff member, I attended the ACB of Nebraska Annual Convention. In March, I participated in the second workshop of the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute Seminar, at San Diego State. I will be attending the third NRLI seminar in June, located in Washington DC. I am regularly providing support and guidance to Center staff and students. My short term goals are to help staff and students adjust to the recent changes and reduction in staff. Some changes that have already been made are, bringing in resources from the community to speak with students every Wednesday. In addition, Wednesdays are now being spent at the apartments doing techniques of daily living and seminar. This allows students to have more experiences and learning opportunities in their living environments. It also creates more opportunity to have travel lessons downtown. So far, students have really enjoyed this change. There has been a positive response to having travel lessons downtown and welcoming guest speakers from the community into the apartments for community seminar.

The Center currently has eight students. There are no students who need one-on-one attention. This allows for students to be more evenly spread out in classes, and get the necessary attention from instructors. We are looking forward to celebrating the training completion of two students in May, and welcoming more students over the summer.

The total number of students attending the Center doesn't include staff trainees because they don't stay in the Center Apartments. We have ten Center apartments so ten students can attend the Center regardless of how many staff trainees we have. Nebraska consumers always have priority when attending the Center when it comes to consumers from other states.

Transition Activity Report – Shane Buresh

Since the last quarterly commission board meeting, we have held the Spring NFB Career Mentoring Retreat, begun to plan for our summer offerings and have engaged in several outreach activities, which will all be briefly highlighted below. In the latter part of February, four staff members including myself, attended a state-wide Transition conference put on by NDE. There were more than 200 teachers, para's, VR, NCBVI, NCECBVI and other professionals present. Over the course of the two days, each of us attended a ranging mixture of breakout sessions. We hosted a joint session with NCECBVI on the first afternoon, which addressed how the expanded core curriculum

skill areas for the blind can be leveraged to build increased soft skills for students who are working at work based learning job sites. Leslie Wagner, Transition Specialist from NCECBVI and I jointly presented this workshop which was entitled “Ending Hard Times with Soft Skills”. This workshop was attended by around 20 individuals and we fielded quite a few questions regarding the projects we have collaborated on in the past two summers.

Speaking of collaboration, we continue to hold meetings with NCECBVI administration and will have had two such meetings by the time of your meeting on May 11. These are beginning to blossom into opportunities, such as, collaboration on their Sizzling Summer camp. In addition, in early April, we hosted a transition advisory group made up of teachers of the visually impaired and coordinated by Leslie Wagner, they toured our center and learned about order of selection and stayed for the remainder of their meeting and we jointly learned about DD services.

In March I once again attended the meeting of the advisory committee at UNL for the grant given to both the teachers of deaf and blind preparation programs by the OSEP office entitled the Mid-Plains Professional Upgrade Partnership – Sensory Disabilities, which is designed to recruit and train educators. This Advisory Board will meet annually until the project’s completion in 2021 to review progress, evaluate program data, and provide suggestions.

During the first weekend of April, we held the spring NFB Career Mentoring Retreat, which was based around several of the Pre-ETS required areas but most notably the weekend was focused on college exploration and preparation. There were 17 Pre-ETS individuals who are mentees in the program or NCBVI clients who attended. Highlights included, a speaker from Education Quest, A dorm snack cooking and social activity, a walking tour of UNL, eating lunch on campus in a cafeteria, presentation by the UNL students with disabilities coordinator, interactive panel with blind college students, activities in skill development in public speaking and written communication and much more.

During this quarter much energy has also been spent on future summer based programming. There is of course WAGES which will be held on May 31 through July 12. The program is once again being coordinated by me as opposed to a SOS temporary. The program will kick off with part one of a workshop during the first weekend presented by The International School of Protocol based on Social integration. Later on in the program there will be a second part. These weekends are designed to increase the students’ knowledge in how to integrate into workplace or college culture and how to participate actively socially and appropriately to build a more fulfilled life. Plans are to also hold a second session of this four day training toward the end of summer to allow non-WAGES students to receive the same skill set. This year 17 student’s will be working jobs and gaining knowledge about how to live in a college and urban setting.

Beyond WAGES, this summer we will continue our collaboration with NCECBVI and other TVI’s, as we conduct many more of the OJE work opportunities in the home communities of several of our Pre-ETs client who both do and do not attend NCECBVI.

Last and certainly not least, in addition, we will be holding an abbreviated (half program) of Project Independence running from July 28th through July 30.

Until my next report know that we are very actively engaged in a summer of possibilities for the blind youth of Nebraska.

Nebraska Business Enterprise Activity Report – Carol Jenkins

Legislation Update

Senator Wishart introduced LB 220, on January 14, 2019. The Health and Human Services Committee hearing for LB 220 was on February 27, 2019. Carlos Servan, NCBVI Executive Director, Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, one blind vendor, one center student, and an ACB representative testified in support for this bill. Six blind vendors submitted letters in support. The interim Executive Director of the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) submitted a letter of opposition. Senator Wishart will be looking into what the issues that DAS has with LB 220 in order to alleviate any concerns moving forward. Senator Wishart intends to make LB 220 a priority bill.

Unassigned Funds Update

NCBVI worked with the Blind Licensee Committee to change the use of unassigned funds. Unassigned funds are extra funds sent to active vendor retirement accounts. Due to NCBVI's budget deficit, NCBVI worked with the Blind Licensee Committee to get the use of unassigned funds changed to be able to be used for maintenance and replacement of equipment, purchase of new equipment, and management services. The results of the vote to all NBE Licensees was passed in favor of the change on April 22, 2019. The change will take effect this current quarter.

Vending Sites Update:

Department of Corrections

The Department of Corrections has informed NCBVI that an RFP is close to being ready to post. NCBVI intends on submitting a bid for the RFP for the Department of Corrections and is just waiting on the RFP to be posted.

Nebraska State Building Division

NCBVI is still in contract negotiations with the Nebraska State Building Division. Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, is still attempting to obtain a group insurance policy for the NBE program in order to lessen the cost of insurance for vendors. This is the portion of the contract still being negotiated with the State Building Division. Once a contract has been fully executed, Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, will set up a training for relevant NCBVI staff, NBE Staff, and licensees who will be responsible for carrying out the contract.

Offutt

Carlos Servan, NCBVI Executive Director, has been diligently working on the Offutt cafeteria details to move the project forward to a completion, Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, has been working on the permit negotiations for the Offutt vending machines. The Offutt cafeteria and vending machines will need to be operational by July

1, 2019. Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, has been negotiating exclusive agreements with Coca-Cola and either Host Coffee or Canteen Kitchen for all required vending machines for Offutt.

Other Potential Vending Site Expansions

Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, is working on negotiating a permit for the VA in Lincoln, which is a part of the VA permit in Omaha that was signed in 2018.

Licensees Update

Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, has worked with NCBVI District Supervisors to up-date the Nebraska Licensee list. This has been completed as of April 5, 2019. There are 23 licensees in Nebraska with 16 currently operating vending sites.

Vending Site Complaints

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

Additional Notes:

DOT Contract Amendment

Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, has negotiated with the Nebraska Department of Transportation (DOT) to allow Coca-Cola to put in bottled soda machines along I-80. Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, will be negotiating a timeline for this to occur. NCBVI will be working with Coca-Cola to get the Offutt permits up and running prior to July 1, 2019 before working on the interstate. DOT was very unwilling to allow vending machines to be placed inside rest areas.

Nebraska Risk Management

Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, has begun working with the new Nebraska Risk Management Director on obtaining a group insurance policy for the NBE Program to lower the cost of general liability insurance for individual vendors.

NBE Service Repair Contracts

Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, and Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor, have developed and implemented service repair contracts with companies statewide to repair vending machines in a more cost-effective and timely manner.

NBE Vendor and NCBVI Staff Training

Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor, has been working with Greater America to provide free training to our NBE vendors and some agency staff on routine repairs and basic maintenance of machines. This training has begun and is estimated to be completed in the next few months.

Profit and Loss Form

Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, and Dave Robinson, agency staff, have been working on updating the NBE Profit and Loss Form in order to streamline reporting for all vendors. This will take effect for the May 2019 Profit and Loss reports.

NBE Handbook

Carol Jenkins, NCBVI Deputy Director, Nancy Flearl, NCBVI Omaha District Supervisor, and Sandy Alvarado, NBE Licensee, are working together to create a NBE Handbook for Licensees as well as an NBE Handbook for NCBVI Staff. This is still a work in progress.

Looking Ahead

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

Business Office Activity Report – Kat Carroll

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

- Looking for additional ways to save the agency money without harming client services
- Implemented the Reduction in Force policy by laying off 12 employees
- Work with State Building Division on cancellation of office leases, with the Kearney office closing 3/31/19, nearly every employee in the Lincoln office moving, and planning for the closing of the Norfolk and Scottsbluff offices by 6/30/19. Work on reducing the size of the space in the Omaha office. Work on getting a date for closing the North Platte office.
- Additional savings realized from laid off staff include cell phones and/or land lines, state vehicles, office space, software licenses, etc.
- Work with Telecommuting policy and getting everything set up for staff to work from home offices.
- Major reorganization of Business Office, including hiring a new Accountant I (Michelle Rogers), transitioning from having Dave, Stephanie and Michelle spending most of their time and Monique and Tim spending much of their time on business office to planning for how to maximize efficiency and internal controls with only Michelle and me involved. This is a major challenge and still a work in progress.
- Attended the second week of NRLI Training in March.
- Work on redesigning agency Business Units to simplify and eliminate unnecessary complications.
- Federal Mid-year SF 425 reports due May 1st were submitted on March 19th.
- Inactivate over 4,000 prior year Business Units that hadn't been closed since the inception of E1 in 2003.
- Work with procurement and installation planning for USSTRATCOM cafeteria equipment, get approval from Federal and State authorities, and execute contracts.
- Order of Selection implemented.

- Planning for conversion of our phone system from Windstream to Allo for the new phone system. Eliminated land lines that weren't being used or weren't necessary anymore.
- Began work on redesigning financial reports to simplify data entry, ensure better accuracy, and provide the right level of detail for a variety of users.
- Evaluate the need for and number of annual licenses for all software products. Eliminated 17 licenses for AWARE at an annual cost of \$1,500 each for next fiscal year's contract. Similar savings will be realized from our Microsoft Office licenses for next fiscal year.

Kathy Stephens –

I continue to work on the scanning of fixed assets for the year-end inventory.

I worked on the NCBVI Lincoln office move along with others. I worked with Nebraskaland Moving and Surplus Property to surplus many items as a result of the Lincoln office move. We have also surplused many items from our Kearney office. Other offices will have items for surplus as they close.

I worked on staff travel arrangements and registrations for several different conventions, conferences and trainings coming up.

Working with TSB to turn in some state vehicles and turn in and replace others. We are down-sizing our fleet of vehicles.

The Lincoln Food Bank drive was held April 8 through April 19, 2019.