

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Public Conference Call Meeting, Monday, June 18, 2012 to Discuss the
2013 NCBVI State Plan

Approved Minutes

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

Julie Johnson, Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and she welcomed everyone to the meeting.

It was noted that public comments are always welcome regarding the agenda items. The meeting will be recorded and available on the website.

The Nebraska Open Meeting Act was available via the website. The Notice of the Meeting was published in the Lincoln Journal Star, the State Government Calendar, NCBVI Website, NFB Newslines®, and Radio Talking Book. Notice was also emailed to NCBVI List Serve, ACB-N President and NFB-N President.

Commissioners Present: Mike Hansen, Designee of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska, Lincoln; Nancy Oltman, Hastings; Julie Johnson, Chairperson, York.

Commissioners Absent: Jim Jirak, Omaha, Vice Chairperson, Designee of the American Council of the Blind; Darrel Walla, Omaha.

With three commissioners present, there was a quorum.

NCBVI Staff Present: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director; Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant.

Public Present: Paulette Monthei, ACB-N President

Discussion on 2013 Draft State Plan

Executive Director Van Zandt gave a brief overview of the State Plan and revisions made from last year. Van Zandt stated that she has been updating parts of the State Plan by incorporating the Program Technology Manager and the changes related to that, the new supervisor position in the North Platte District and supervisory changes related to that. Van Zandt noted that parts were also updated on Transition as it related to the RSA monitoring and some of the things that they wanted us to be looking at.

NCBVI has been conducting training for staff on Motivational Interviewing counseling approach. This is recognized by RSA as an Emerging Practice. Van Zandt added information about this to the State Plan.

Van Zandt reported that last week she and Paulette had a phone conference and she gave suggestions related to recruitment which she did incorporate into the State Plan. For recruitment, NCBVI has never posted our job openings with the Universities that offer Masters in Voc Rehab because they are not in our state. When we looked at Nebraska's salary levels compared to others in the country, ours are not as high as most so we generally thought there was no point. However, Van Zandt stated that she does feel it would be a good idea to try and set up accounts with some of the Universities. Van Zandt noted that Paulette Monthei mentioned that she would send her contact information for the Universities. Once this is received, we will check with the Universities to see what is involved to set up an account with the Placement office of the University. Once this is done, we would begin posting our vacant positions there as well.

Van Zandt stated that as she was going through the State Plan there were certain attachments that were required, but as she read through the entire document there would be some things from the previous few years that were not updated because they had not been required. Van Zandt went through the entire document and made updates to ensure that everything is up to date.

Van Zandt noted that this was her overview and asked if anyone had questions.

Commissioner Hansen noted that while he was reading through the documents a couple of things came to mind. In the State Strategies Attachment 4.11.d.doc, there is a section that talks about during FY 2012

NCBVI has become an active member of the Tri-County Workforce Investment Board located in Omaha. It spoke of NCBVI's involvement with other Boards of the same nature around the state. Commissioner Hansen noted that specifically with the Tri-County Workforce Investment Board, it states that "we are likely to take the participation to a higher level by co-locating one or more counselors at the Workforce Center. It noted that the Tri County Workforce Investment Board is located in an empowerment zone and serves many individuals from underserved minority populations. We expect to be more effective in the identification of, and serving individuals that previously not reached."

Commissioner Hansen noted that when he attended the State Board meeting last year, NCBVI brought in Jodi Pharr who was a speaker who talked about not being isolated in your office but going out and strategically positioning yourself where you are going to be more accessible to the population that you are trying to serve.

Commissioner Hansen stated that he does not believe there is a location where a high level of blind people that NCBVI does not already know about. Therefore, he is not sure how co-locating would increase the number of individuals that we serve. Commissioner Hansen inquired about additional thought that has gone into the discussions.

Director Van Zandt noted that it is true, she does not think there is any place where there is a high concentration of blind people that we have not reached. However, there are definitely concentrations of minority groups in Omaha that we have not reached well. Van Zandt noted that with the RSA Monitoring they called to our attention that NCBVI needed to be on the Board in Tri County. Nancy Flearl had been on the Youth Council, but not the Board itself. RSA saw this as being out of compliance. NCBVI began the process of getting Nancy Flearl appointed on to the Board itself. The Tri County Board stated that if NCBVI is a required partner, we should be more involved. The Tri County Board is currently building a new place in Ames Plaza. On May 31, she and Nancy Flearl met with the WIB people and saw the new construction site which seems to be at a very good location. Van Zandt added that it seems to be a good idea for NCBVI to co-locate and put a VR Counselor or two in that location for one or two days a week.

Commissioner Hansen noted that he thinks this would be a very good Focus Topic for a future Commission Board meeting.

Paulette Monthei asked if she could speak at this time. P. Monthei noted that this is becoming more of a trend to join some of the Workforce Development Offices with the vocational system. This is becoming very effective with states that have implemented the order of selection where individuals with most serious disabilities are served first. This is becoming beneficial to general VR services. Financially, sharing office space is a cost saving measure. We are seeing more of this as it streamlines services for clients with multiple disabilities.

Commissioner Hansen stated that he has a procedural question as it relates to Public Forums and putting the State Plan together. It is outlined in the State Plan that NCBVI holds Public Forums to solicit opinions and comments from consumers regarding the services currently being provided and the needs of consumers that are not being addressed in order that they can be folded into the State Plan. Commissioner Hansen stated that he is not familiar with any type of open Public Forum that has occurred specifically for the State Plan over the last calendar year.

Director Van Zandt reported that years ago they would bundle up the draft State Plan and hold Forums and make public announcements everywhere, but that very few attended, or the few who did would not be there to talk about the State Plan but they would be there to talk about a specific problem they had. Van Zandt noted that the Forums were a whole lot of work and we really never heard from people.

Van Zandt reported that her process, since she has been the Director starting in 1998, has been to go to ACB and NFB state conventions, the Nebraska Association of the Blind, other entities; she does the Public Forums with joint agencies, attends JAM in western Nebraska, etc. She does not specifically carry the State Plan and ask what people think about it, but she does remind people to check out the NCBVI website and let us know what you think. Van Zandt noted that issues raised are always noted and looked at.

Commissioner Hansen suggested that Van Zandt revise the State Plan and make it clearer as to what happens in the development in the State Plan. As it is currently written, it is somewhat misleading.

Executive Van Zandt noted that this is a good perception and she will write it differently; as she just described it.

Public Comment

Paulette Monthei noted that Director Van Zandt already addressed most of the issues she was going to raise. The only other item she has relates to Professional Development, 4.11(e) Report of Progress. They had discussed the number of students who were transitioning to work versus transitioning to college. Paulette was interested in seeing some numbers on how many went on to employment and how many went on to secondary education.

Director Van Zandt stated that she does think this is a good idea, but she could not get those numbers in time to write them in before submitting this year. She could write something in the Plan that says we are going to be looking at this and look into our database to see what we can find out about the numbers. We will evaluate the numbers and study trends in this area for students who will be attending post -secondary education and those continuing onto the general workforce.

The commissioners agreed that Van Zandt should write this into the State Plan.

Act on 2013 Draft State Plan

Commissioner Oltman moved to adopt the 2013 Draft State Plan. Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all voted in favor of the motion.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m. Central Time.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the August 4, 2012 Commission Board meeting, please email it to the NCBVI Commission Board at ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant
NCBVI

Julie Johnson, Chairperson
NCBVI