

MINUTES OF MEETING
GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD
Wednesday, September 14, 2022
1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education & Hotel
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Conference ID: 569 690 910#

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Faye Perdue (Vice Chair)
Sandy Adams (Secretary)
Louise Hill
Jane McCall
Suzanne Dooley
Craig Camuso
Johnathan Taylor (Virtually)
Vincent Martin (Virtually)
GVRA Executive Director Chris Wells (Non-Member)

Introduction

GVRS Board Vice Chair Faye Perdue welcomed everyone in attendance. The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m.

Vice Chair Perdue, let Secretary Sandy Adams give an introduction of the newest Board member Jane McCall.

Approval of Agenda

The board unanimously approved the agenda for the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the July 13th, 2022, meeting was unanimously approved. Mrs. Dooley motioned to approve, and Mrs. Adams seconded.

GVRA Staff Updates/Reports:

Executive Director Report – Executive Director Chris Wells

GVRA Executive Director Chris Wells updated the GVRS Board on the Employee of the Month Awards for August, September, and Georgia Industries for the Blind Employee of the Year.

- Employee of the Month, August 2022: Sakinah Jackson, VR, Savannah, GA
- Employee of the Month, September 2022: Linda Belt, VR, Canton, GA
- Georgia Industries for the Blind Employee of the Year: Peter Salmon

Executive Director Chris Wells discussed and gave an overview of the FY 2023 Program Based Budget and agency expenditures:

Program Name	FY 2022 Expenditures	FY 2023 Current Budget			
		State General	Federal	Other Funds	Total
Business Enterprises Program	\$2,478,921	\$314,025	\$2,443,269		\$2,757,294
Departmental Administration	8,384,068	2,140,310	7,846,048	\$304,597	10,290,955
Disability Adjudication Services	68,316,719		70,300,638		70,300,638
Georgia Industries for the Blind	4,453,983			4,669,691	4,669,691
Vocational Rehabilitation	75,531,450	22,631,463	73,950,659	5,063,038	101,645,160
Total	\$159,165,140	\$25,085,798	\$154,540,614	\$10,037,326	\$189,663,738

Program Highlights -- Deputy Executive Director of Programs Bethany Whetzel

Director of Programs Bethany Whetzel, gave an Executive Report on the agency's program highlights:

Client Services:

- As of this week, 35 Counselors, 18 Pre-Employment Specialists and 15 Office Assistance have been selected and are being processed for hire.
- David McConnell is the new District Manager for District 5, effective September 1, 2022.
- Since July 1, 2022, 257 clients have been closed successfully

Disability Adjudication Services (DAS):

- DAS has met its total workload goal for FFY22 by processing 92,539 cases as of September 2, 2022
- DAS has hired 37 staff members FFY-to-Date (since October 1, 2021)
- New Adjudicator Basic Training Class of approximately 20 is expected to start on September 16, 2022

Vocational Rehabilitation Services Report- Blind and Low Vision Coordinator, Shirley Robinson

Mrs. Robinson presented the Vocational Rehab Services report that discussed:

Technical Assistance

- Consult on cases with counselors, managers, policy, and Assistive Work Technology
- Regularly staff cases with counselors
- Collaborating with Employment Coordinator on Job Fair
- Collaborating with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Coordinator, Strategic Initiatives Coordinator, and community partners on Deaf/Blind Taskforce
- Collaborate with GAB to deliver transition/VR services

Provider Relations

- Work closely with provider management and providers
- Recruiting new providers
- Consult on current providers
- Identify the need for providers within the districts
- Conduct onboarding presentation for provider

Collaboration with Stakeholders (Representative with state and national groups)

- GCB
- NFB of GA
- Conducted Presentation with counselors at GCB and NFB of GA State Conferences
- Collaborating with GCB and NFB of GA Presidents to develop Virtual Job Club
- Board member of the Blind Rehabilitation Professionals Division of the NFB
- Employment Committee Chair for NCSAB
- COP, NCSAB national conferences, NFB national conference
- Georgia Vision Educators Statewide Committee
- Tools For Life
- Grants and Contracts
- GARRS
- Project Independence

Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Report- Director of BEP, Teresa Eggleston

Director Eggleston, discussed an overview of (BEP) how its:

BEP is the State Licensing Agency (SLA) designated by the Randolph Sheppard Act (RSA) to provide economic entrepreneurial opportunities.

Has created financial independence for the blind citizens of Georgia since 1944.

Blind Vendors manage vending routes, coffee shops, snack bars, smoothie bars, micro-markets, cafés, and military dining service facilities, as well as the interstate roadsides and Welcome Centers.

She later discussed the growth of clients referred and accepted into the Business Enterprise Program from Vocational Rehabilitation Services and are trained to become a Licensed Blind Vendors.

Currently we have over 190 vending facilities

104 vending facilities (standalone)

63 attachments

23 full service

Currently have 52 License Blind Vendors

Georgia Industry for The Blind (GIB) Report- Interim Director, Teresa Eggleston

Interim Director Eggleston gave an overview and update of GIB progress for 2022.

Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB) was authorized in 1937 with the passage of House Bill 114 to provide jobs in manufacturing, packaging and services for individuals who are blind. Manufactured products include pillows, safety vests, classification folders, cloth reusable facemasks, and first aid bags.

GIB operates in three manufacturing facilities located in Bainbridge, Griffin, and Robins Air Force Base.

GIB is affiliated with National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and acquires federal contracts under the Ability One Program.

The Ability One Program requires that GIB maintain a 75% blind ration in the direct labor category.

Number of Employees: 53 full time and 5 temp employees

Director Eggleston also highlighted the contract that GIB has with Rustic Outdoor Products. GIB is the manufacturing partner for Rustic Outdoors. Rustic Outdoors is in negotiations with a major retail outlet to sell their products nationwide and partnership with GIB was a major selling point.

Georgia Academy for the Blind (GAB)- Dr. Cindy Gibson, School-level Superintendent and Alicia M. Jackson, Principal of Transition

Once Vice Chairman Perdue introduced Dr. Gibson of the Georgia Academy for the Blind. Dr. Gibson discussed the essential questions pertaining to what GAB offers, the transitional opportunities, work-based learning, and Project SEARCH at Atrium.

Essential Questions:

What does “success” look like?

2. What is transition?

Transition begins the moment a child is born.

While there are many transitions in life, one of the most pivotal is the launch from high school to post-secondary endeavors.

3. What can GAB offer GVRA?

A 100%/100% partnership for workforce development and quality of life for students with VI.

What does GAB need from GVRA?

Personnel

Guidance

Community

Transitional Opportunities at GAB

“Work experience as a teenager will be one of the common denominators for all successful people in the future.”

- Daily integration of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)
- Ready for the World
- Work-Based Learning
- Project SEARCH: The pinnacle launching pad!

Work-Based Learning (WBL)

- A transitional job-skills training program which lends instruction to developing employability skills.
- Successful participation in WBL can lead to students acquiring skills for employment beyond high school.
- GAB proudly salutes 10 graduates who are on a job path beyond high school after completing job skills training.
- GAB’s WBL community partners include Goodwill, Macon Outreach, Kroger, Marriott Courtyard, Magnolia Manor, Papa Johns and GIMC.

Project SEARCH at Atrium

- GAB's Pinnacle Transition Program: Cohort VI!
- 1-Year Internship for graduating seniors
- Interns work towards post-graduation competitive employment opportunities.
- A focus on transferable work and life skills
- All areas of the ECC are covered.
- Interns must meet eligibility requirements for GVRA.

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Report- SRC Chairman, Juliet Hardeman

Chairman Hardeman announced the next SRC meeting for October 26th, with the location TBD.

New/Old Business –

- Next meeting Nov. 9th, 2022, 1:00 PM

Public Comment/Adjournment- None

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 P.M.