South Carolina Commission for the Blind
1430 Confederate Avenue
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Meeting Minutes
October 26, 2021

Notifications of all regular, called, or special meetings are compliant with the FOIA requirements, Section 90-4-80.

Call to Order

Chairperson Johnson called the meeting to order at 11:00 am. The meeting was conducted via Zoom Meeting software.

Present

Dr. Judy Johnson, Chairperson
Peter Smith, Vice Chairperson
Mary Sonksen, Secretary
Susan John
Cathy Olker
Darline Graham, Commissioner

Adoption of Agenda

Mary Sonksen made a motion to accept the October 26, 2021 Agenda. It was seconded by Susan John. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None

Approval of Minutes

Susan John made a motion to approve the September 28, 2021 minutes. It was seconded by Cathy Olker. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously. A question was asked regarding the data for new hires in the Human Resources report. It was clarified that the data was for the previous month.

Finance Report

Matt Daugherty reported:

Budget for the period ending September 30, 2021.

* The agency utilized 26% of the state fiscal year budget.
* Administration utilized 24% of its budget.
* Rehabilitation Services utilized 16% of its budget.
* Training Center utilized 23% of its budget.
* Transition utilized 48% of its budget.
* Business Enterprise Program (BEP) utilized 36% of its budget.
* Prevention of Blindness utilized 13% of its budget.
* Older Blind utilized 26% of its budget.
* Children’s Services utilized 27% of its budget.
* Pre-ETS utilized 103% of the required 15% for the 2021 grant.

Human Resources Report

Luis Mendoza reported:

* There was one separation (not listed on the report: this is an HR position) and two new hires for the month of September. A nursing assistant and a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC).
* Four VRC positions remained opened:
	+ The Conway VRC position was advertised. An additional VRC position was added to Conway.
	+ The Charleston VRC started September 2, 2021.
	+ The Deaf-Blind Coordinator was advertised, the interview process has been completed, and a selection made.
	+ The Greenwood VRC position was pending relocation to the Oconee/Pickens area.
* The Training Coordinator, Orientation and Mobility Instructor and lead position, and Vocational Instructor remained open.
* The Braille Instructor position is in the background check process.
* The Region IV Director was selected but declined the offer. The position would be reposted to interview additional candidates.

Commissioner’s Report

Darline Graham reported:

* On September 21, the Commissioner attended the virtual State Workforce Development Board Meeting. Dan Ellzey, Executive Director, Department of Employment and Workforce, gave an update on South Carolina’s employment situation. Other presentations included Rural Development Activity, presented by Daniel Young of the SC Department of Commerce, and Best Practices, shared by a local Workforce Development Board and presented by Johnnie-Lynn Crosby, SC Works Upstate/Greenville. Several discussions mentioned hosting virtual job fairs, working with Adult Education to offer incentives for GED completions, and how the state would focus on soft skills training moving forward.
* On October 31, Commissioner Graham and several Senior Managers met with Senator Alexander, Chair of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, to explain the provisos that the agency was seeking approval for as part of the 2022-23 budget request. The first proviso would permit the agency to establish a deferred maintenance account with the SC Treasurer’s Office, allowing the agency to carry funds from year-to-year until needed for capital projects and other repairs. The second proviso would allow the agency to move dollars allocated to a bathroom remodel project that was cancelled to other capital improvement projects. The third proviso would allow the agency to utilize federal reallotment funds should they become available and should the agency need them.
* The Executive Budget Hearing was held on October 21.
	+ In addition to the provisos, the agency requested funds for the Prevention of Blindness and the Children’s Services programs. The additional funds would allow the agency to provide greater coverage of the state, address rising cost of services, and provide a broader range of assistance.
	+ This is the beginning of the budget process. In December or January, the agency will have the Senate Budget Hearing followed by the House Budget Hearing.
	+ As part of the budget presentation SCCB included two success stories regarding Children’s and Prevention services. The stories will be posted to the Intranet and website.
* The Commissioner and several staff members attended the National Federation of the Bind’s (NFB) 60th Anniversary Recognition and celebration luncheon where they learned about the NFB’s future plans for training. We continue to partner with them to better serve individuals who are blind or visually impaired.
* Several staff worked together to develop and deliver training to the Business Enterprise Program Selection Committee that focused on new forms and procedures for bidding, interviewing, and selecting new blind licensed vendors to fill new or vacant vending stands. This new process was approved with the active participation of the elected Committee of Blind Vendors. In addition, a meeting was held with the Committee regarding a new process for the selection of a temporary vendor to operate a vacant stand (due to an emergency situation) until a permanent vendor could be selected.
	+ The agency is also reviewing larger federal contracts to ensure they are operating in compliance and that customer service is being delivered at the highest level possible.
* The Commissioner and several staff continue to meet monthly with consumers in the Training Center. Most consumers had positive things to say about their training and the instructors. The training provides the skills needed for independence and employment and helps build their confidence.
	+ There are currently 14 consumers participating in training. Eight are residential students and six are day students. An additional residential consumer is scheduled to begin training next week.
	+ Four consumers began the Building Readiness for Individualized Development of Gainful Employment (BRIDGE) training on October 11.
	+ Three consumers were identified to begin training to become a Blind Licensed Vendor (BLV).
		- BLV training was recently changed to incorporate a national Randolph-Sheppard curriculum consisting of a series of online training modules.
* The agency was collaborating with other Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act core partner agencies to edit and update the Combined State Plan. Review meetings will continue as edits are made section by section. The finalized Plan will be submitted to the Department of Labor and Department of Education in March 2022. Partners include the Vocational Rehabilitation Department (general agency), Department of Employment and Workforce, Department of Social Services, Adult Education, and SCCB.
* Vocational Rehabilitation counselors, Regional Directors, Employment Consultants, and several other SCCB staff members began participation in VR Technical Assistance Center-Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE) trainings.
	+ Two virtual trainings were presented: State of the Science in Blindness and Rural & Remote Service Delivery. Trainings will be held weekly through the end of the year.
	+ Upcoming trainings will include Labor Market Analysis, Customized Training for SC, and other topics.
* Training Center staff attended the Assistive Technology Leadership Conference on October 8. Many state school district staff attended and received information about SCCB services. School staff was encouraged to contact SCCB if services were needed.
* On October 13, several staff attended the Able SC Employer Summit. A two-minute video highlighting SCCB’s services and programs was featured between presenters to educate employers about services the agency offers.
* Several staff will attend the annual South Carolina Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) conference, November 4-5 to learn more about working with youth and enhance SCCB’s relationships with Teachers of Visually Impaired students and other educational service providers.
* Senior Managers will attend the Council for State Administrators in Vocational Rehabilitation fall conference. RSA updates, strategies for improving VR counselor retention, enhancing service delivery, and managing and leading change will be presented.
* New employees welcomed to the SCCB team in September include:
	+ Esther Munoz, Bilingual Deaf/Blind Coordinator
	+ Manuel Pierre, IT Program Assistant
	+ Jennifer Coleman, Procurement Manager
	+ Rodney Clay, IT Manager
	+ Brandi Brooks, Human Resources Assistant

Quality Assurance Update

Michael Daniels reported:

* The Quality Assurance (QA) department launched the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 22 Quarter 1 Data Validation Review report for VR, Older Blind, Children’s Services, and Prevention of Blindness. The purpose of the Data Validation Review is to help ensure the agency is providing quality services to consumers in a timely manner. QA monitors agency compliance with state, federal and agency established policies and procedures. Case review audits are conducted for all consumer service programs to improve the quality and timeliness of service delivery.
* The QA process is designed to substantiate the accuracy of data reported, document anomalies in case reporting, track the percentage of cases in compliance, and document areas of continuous improvement, which may include staff development training.
* 383 case files were reviewed during the quarter:
	+ 210 Vocational Rehabilitation case files.
	+ 138 Older Bind case files.
	+ 14 Children’s Services case files.
	+ 21 Prevention of Blindness case files.
* Cases in compliance over the past five quarters continues to trend upward. Areas of continuous improvement were identified, allowing program directors the opportunity to provide additional training for their counselors.
* The Consumer Satisfaction Survey is used to gauge and evaluate the quality of services provided to consumers who exit a program. Consumers in the VR, Older Blind, Children’s Services, and Prevention of Blindness programs were surveyed. Consumers could also contact the QA Director to complete the survey by phone.
* Between July 2019 through June 2021, 378 surveys were mailed to consumers with closed cases in the VR program and 552 were mailed to consumers with closed cases in the Older Blind program. Consumer satisfaction was 87% and 79%, respectively. The overall response rate was approximately 20%. New strategies to boost the response rate to 25% were being developed.
* Several consumers successfully exited into employment in various industries during the first quarter. Job titles include Computer Programmer, Middle School Teacher, Office and Administrative support, and Food Service First-Line Supervision.
* Vendor Satisfaction and Employer Satisfaction Surveys are scheduled to be launched in January. They will be used to evaluate the helpfulness of the agency’s staff and evaluate the quality of service the agency is providing to vendors and business partners. Dr. Johnson asked if with the vendor survey had they been contacted about any questions to ask. Mike stated that they had not but that they would be contacted for the next survey. Chairperson Johnson asked if the vendors had been contacted about questions to ask. Mr. Daniels stated that they would be contacted for the next survey. Ms. John asked if the BLV would be included in the satisfaction survey and Mr. Daniels confirmed they would be included on the next report.

Old Business

None

**New Business**

None

**Public Comment**

None

**Future Board Meeting Schedule**

November 23, 2021
The meeting will be held via Zoom beginning at 11:00 am.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairperson Johnson called for a motion to adjourn at 11:55 am. A motion was made by Susan John and seconded by Mary Sonksen. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Signatures

 Dr. Judy Johnson, Chairperson

Mary Sonksen, Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
Date