**Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

**March 9, 2021 Regular Board Meeting**

**Virtual via Zoom**

Meeting was called to order at 9:11 a.m.

Commissioners in Attendance: Britt Raubenheimer (chair), BJ Stinger, Al Schneider (vice-chair), and Sue Walker

ICBVI Staff in Attendance: Beth Cunningham, Bailie Weir, Steve Achabal. Mike Walsh, Corey Bresina, Greg Metsker, Rocio Gil, Jeff Weeks, Kevin Jernigan, Chris Johnston, Linda Upton, Matt Queen, Dawn Scott, Earl Hoover, Alison Steven, and Jennine Dixon.

Guest in attendance: Theresia Hout,

ICBVI Mission statement read by Bailie Weir.

The **MOTION** to approve the agenda was moved by Sue Walker and seconded by BJ Stinger, all were in favor.

The **MOTION** for all board members to approve the minutes for the Sep 24, 2020 and Dec 15, 2020 meetings and provide comments directly to Bailie Weir prior to the next board meeting was made by Al Schneider and seconded by Sue Walker, all were in favor.

**Administrators Report: Beth Cunningham**

Wow, it is almost Spring already. I can’t believe it has been a year since Covid struck our country. It has certainly been a different type of year. However, our agency has continued to provide services and has been adapting to all of the situations as they change. A few of the things we have been working on since 2021 began include:

• **Strategic Plan**—due June- management team is going to be focusing on this beginning the end of March and completing by June 30th. Mike shared some great ideas and we are planning to work on creating in a way that will be measurable and help us to justify any future needs that we bring to the Legislature.

• **Update performance measures**- along with the SP, we are changing our performance measures: This will make them more consistent with how we are measured by RSA.

* Our current ones include some things that RSA will no longer be tracking due to some of the changes brough about by WIOA and just the general change in emphasis on how services are measured.

• **Audit** – We have a meeting tomorrow to meet with the audit team for the recent “single audit”. We anticipate that the auditors will be coming in March to re-visit some areas that we have been working on to improve in BEP to hopefully close out our Management Review audit form 2019. Corey and Arianah have been working hard to ensure compliance and keep internal audits of the vendors on track.

• **Social Security Tracking-**(ticket to work) Trina, Bailie, Tom, myself and Mike- we have been working on refining this system to ensure that we are able to get all of the SSA reimbursement that we should from Social Security. Bailie was recently able to file two claims one for $25,000. And one for $7000. As we continue to improve this system, we are likely to consistently see some reimbursement each year. Of course, we will hold off on that judgment until we see if and when these get paid.

• **SWEP/ Summer programs** – the SWEP team has been meeting to figure out the best strategy for providing this program this year. SWEP is looking like it will be a hybrid program and I will let Alison or Mike discuss this further.

• **Migration to Orio**n – entire team and Tom – the migration is still happening and we hope this year will bring more progress. Tom has had to continually stop and update the 911 data collection, which makes it difficult to complete this project.

• **Website changes**- Tom and team- Tom is working on this and it should be accessible and we will be able to add our videos on it once it is ready.

• **Luma**- (the new state financial reporting system) primarily Trina and Corey keeping us in the loop- Trina has been completing workbooks to get our agency’s data in this new system and this has been taking up a lot of her time. It is anticipated that the switch will take place this summer.

* Greg and I and some staff from his team (Larry and Scott) are resuming a meeting with **State History Museum to** see how we can consult with them on improving accessibility for their blind patrons who come to the museum and to the Old Pen.
* Next week, Steve and I are meeting with the director of the **Council on Domestic Violence and Victim Assistance** to see how we might be able to collaborate and to ensure that our clients and staff have information about this agency as a resource should it be needed and vice versa
* We are continually evaluating and updating protocols for Covid. Currently, Steve’s team is going to begin providing more in person services.
* I am meeting with staff from each region right now and then will begin meeting with Boise staff. This is just for an opportunity to catch up and connect and hear any issues they want to discuss in their regions or teams
* Yesterday, I had a meeting (along with Jane from IDVR) with Russ Fulcher’s aid to discuss a letter that we recently sent requesting waivers for our grants, so that we have another year to spend our grant and a waiver for meeting MOE.
* Our JFAC meeting was January 18th. Our budget setting was February 26th and everything has now been set – everything passed that we requested --- we requested a supplemental to move funds so we could purchase a vehicle to replace a vehicle. We also requested 2 additional vehicles in replacement items.
* In March, I will present to the NFB and provide an overview of what has been happening with the agency this year. I will provide an update on each program.
* In April there is a virtual CSAVR conference spread over 2 weeks that will be half- days.
* At the end of April, Mike and I plan to go to the Lewiston and CDA office
* In May, Corey and Mike and I will all take a trip to Idaho Falls, Pocatello, and Twin Falls.
* Over the next two months, I will be soliciting feedback from staff and doing performance evaluations on all of the managers.
* We are awaiting CEC guidance and will work on a matrix for rate increases once we receive that.

And before you know it, it will be summer…..

**Review VR and IL Changes: Mike Walsh**

The **MOTION** to approve the change in the appeals guidelines from 21 days to 15 days in the VR Manual so that it reflect State Rule was made by Al Schneider, and seconded by BJ Stinger. All were in favor.

The **MOTION** to remove FNA in the VR manual and publishing, was made by Sue Walker, and seconded by BJ Stinger. All were in favor.

**Discussion of a Staff Survey: Britt**

The question of whether or not we should conduct a staff survey was brought to the table. It has been a few years since the last one, but there was concern about adding extra stress on the staff as ICBVI is still working under the COID-19 changes.

Based on managers and staff discussion, many feel that having a survey this year may be a good opportunity for staff to speak up.

The **MOTION** for the board to put together a survey in the next few weeks was made by Al Schneider, seconded by BJ Stinger. All were in favor.

**Assessment and Training Center Report: Greg Metsker**

The ATC report probably sounds like a broken record: We continue to have low numbers in the center, we are all wearing masks and we do our best to social distance. I think everyone, staff and students alike are kind of worn out from trying to run a training center under COVID 19 conditions. There does seem to be a little light at the end of the tunnel however, but for the time being the protocols we are following in the ATC will likely be in place at least until the summer term. We currently have 6 students in the ATC, 4 of whom come in person and two who are receiving computer training remotely using the Team Viewer software that Larry purchased last summer, or via the telephone.

I will focus on 3 things that have been or will be rays of sunshine in the ATC. The first such item was several sightings of Buddy the elf shortly before Christmas. I know some of you heard about this. What started as a simple challenge from Kevin Jernigan to try and encourage ICBVI staff in the Boise office to donate to Jeff Weeks’ Boise Rescue Mission fundraiser, turned into kind of a big deal with Kevin/Buddy eventually making it onto the evening news in Boise. The deal started out with Kevin saying he would wear an elf costume to work if the Boise office could raise $200 to donate to the rescue mission. Then he upped the ante and said he would wear it outside during a Mobility lesson if we could hit the $300 level. At that point it became a big deal and the regional offices got involved and even some of the board members contributed. In the end Kevin’s commitment and clever idea helped raise over $500 for the mission. Little did Kevin know that his idea to dress like an elf would morph into such a big deal and give ICBVI staff something fun to participate in and galvanize around during the holidays. I can’t say enough about how the whole elf thing helped us forget about COVID for a while and how it prompted us to help others in need. Thanks to Kevin and Jeff for making it happen.

The next thing that is happening in the next couple of weeks is that the ATC staff and students are going to conduct our first activity day in over a year, on March 12th. With the virus shutdown last spring, and with the restrictions in place within the ATC and outside of it, activity days have kind of fallen by the wayside. The current group of students approached the staff during morning announcements last week and asked if maybe they could resume the activity days before the end of this term. We talked about it and we all felt like there had to be a way to make it happen, so the students picked a leader and co-leader and they are coming up with a plan for the day that will be something fun and also give them a chance to practice the skills they are learning in a slightly different way. I was pleasantly surprised at how strongly the students felt about starting up the activity day tradition again.

One other event that is on the horizon, April 6th to be specific, is that the ATC along with help from Alison and some of the VRC’s will be putting on a virtual version of the Blindness and Transition 101 seminars that we started a few years ago. Given that we are leaning towards a hybrid SWEP model for this summer, one that involves online Zoom sessions once a week combined with participants working at jobs in their home communities, there is a need to offer some training to the CRP’s who will likely be helping us find jobs for the transition youth who will be participating. Offering a Blindness 101 seminar should be a good way to educate employment specialists and job developers around the state about blindness and work-based learning experiences, as well as the ways that folks who are blind are able to perform job related tasks. The virtual delivery model will be a new challenge for us, but there are already ideas about how to offer Shop, Mobility and ADL classes via Zoom, as well as the other classes. We are getting pretty good at improvising and thinking outside the box at this point. I think it will work well and might even impact the way we do the seminars in the post-COVID future.

**Business Enterprise Program: Corey Bresina**

*FFY 2021 Revenue and Profit Comparison available upon request*

**Financial Snapshot**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2021** | **OCT-DEC****(Q1)** | **JAN-MAR****(Q2)** | **APRIL-JUNE (Q3)** | **JULY- SEPT** **(Q4)** | **Total** |
| Total Sales | $374,811.62 |  |  |  | $374,811.62 |
| Total Net Income | $105,615.28 |  |  |  | $105,615.28 |
| Set Aside Collected | $7,872.60 |  |  |  | $7,872.60 |
| Average income % | 21.50% |  |  |  | 21.50% |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2020 | OCT-DEC(Q1) | JAN-MAR(Q2) | APRIL-JUNE (Q3) | JULY- SEPT(Q4) | Total |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Total Sales | $569,432.16 | $552,635.34 | $159,624.72 | $473,124.02 | $1,754,816.24 |
| Total Net Income | $146,611.94 | $131,955.55 | $(20,445.52) | $112,706.49 | $371,114.43 |
| Set Aside Collected | $14,749.54 | $13,240.05 | $3,990.24 | $12,769.86 | $44,778.28 |
| Average income % | 26.84% | 24.60% | -97.26% | 22.32% | -15.04% |

BEP Specialist:

Attended NABM’s *Get it Done in ’21* virtual training in which representatives from the National Association of Truck Stop Operators discussed rest area commercialization and the changes that will occur as electric and driverless vehicles become more prevalent. This session also included a segment with the U.S. General Services Administration regarding the future of GSA properties in the Randolph Sheppard program as agencies consider their telecommuting options fo the future.

Attended multiple webinars hosted by the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind and National Association of Blind Merchants regarding PPP Loans and FRRP funds.

Attended the virtual RSVA Sagebrush conference which included new micro market innovations, sanitation technology, and food trends. 1 BEP Vendor also elected to participate in this virtual conference.

Attended the “Celebrating 92 years of Advocacy for Service Dog handlers” webinar.

Representing ICBVI on the Fred Riggers Disability Awareness Day online celebration committee. Online events and awareness info can be found on the Consortium for Idahoans with Disabilities Facebook page.

Created a new internal financial review schedule for 2021. Twice a year each vendor provides the supporting documentation that was used in determining their set asides for BEP staff to review. There are three groups of three vendors each. Beginning in February 2021 we will rotate through the groups for review in alternating months. For example, group one will submit documents for January in February; group two will submit documents for march in April and so on. This will allow an equal amount of time to pass between each group financial review and provide a better timeline for the BEP staff to complete these reviews.

BEP Repair and Maintenance:

Justin continues to perform necessary and systematic R&M for the vendors around the Treasure Valley, Magic Valley, and Eastern Idaho. For the vending locations in Northern Idaho, we currently have a couple of regional contractors who are able to facilitate when needed.

October – Justin and I traveled to eastern Idaho (INL desert sites, Idaho Falls, and Pocatello) to work on several machines that needed repair. We also installed a new security camera system and reorganized the equipment layout in the Idaho Falls SSF micro-market market.

November - Justin and I made a trip to Pocatello to meet with the FBI. We discussed the possibility of setting up a micro market in their new data center facility. We took measurements of the possible locations in the building and discussed their expectations. Justin also repaired some equipment at various vending locations for Travis and Craig. This work included installing security cameras at freeway rest areas where machines had recently been broken into.

December - Justin and I traveled back to Pocatello to begin the installation of the micro market at the FBI location. We assembled and installed everything that was delivered, but we had a display cabinet and cooler that were delayed. Additionally, we went back to the SSF micro market in Idaho Falls to put in a new credit card swipe.

January – Justin and I went back to Idaho Falls to upgrade the computer motherboard in the SSF market kiosk. The original motherboard was outdated, and this update should extend the life of the kiosk for another 3-5 years. We also completed the FBI installation, as the missing cabinet and cooler had finally been delivered. Travis met us there and he was able to get his new market fully up and running.

January – The LBJ café (The Bridge Café) had some significant changes made to it. This location has experienced a substantial loss of foot traffic due to Covid-19 and some operational efficiencies needed to be created. The vendor suggested that we combine the espresso/coffee station with the main cashier counter, and this request was approved. Professional plumbers and electricians were needed to properly move water and electrical lines to accommodate the equipment moves. Tony was pleased with the end result and his location has been working more efficiently with these changes.

**Consumer input**

Jamison: Is a client with the Idaho Commission for the Blind in the Pocatello area who has been working with us since he was a freshman in High School. He started out never wanting to go to college as it would be a major financial hurtle to overcome, and he really did not know what he was going to do for himself. Later, through some work based learning experiences, including SWEP, he started getting interested in mechanics. ICBVI encouraged him to pursue education in Desil Technology, which he did! With all but a few general education classes left to complete, Jamison is now working in his field and excited to see what the future holds.

Al Schneider: Updated the group on the plans for a virtual Cycle for Independence. It is set up as a two-week event where you can ride wherever you want. After you ride, you can log your information back on the website where you registered. More information can be found on http://cycleforindependence.org .

Teresia: Thanked everyone for the Fair Minimum Return which was distributed to the vendors in 2020. She continued by describing how COVID-19 has impacted her business personally and mentioned that her Micro-market is still 100% closed down, which impacts her revenue by 70%. In Canyon County, about 35% of staff are continuing to work from home at this time, which will continue to affect her revenue in the future. She is ultimately concerned about the future of success in BEP as many businesses, including the government offices may continue some level of telecommuting. She is asking that the BEP staff start thinking outside the box, including the option of looking for options in the private sector so BEP can begin to foster and grow.

The **MOTION** to move into Executive Session as allowed by Idaho Code 74-206(1)(b) to conduct a performance evaluation for the Administrator. was made by Al Schneider and seconded by BJ Stinger. All were in favor. A roll call was required:

Brit Raubenheimer, Aye

Al Schneider, Aye

BH Stinger, Aye

Sue Walker, Aye

Let the minutes reflect that an Executive Session was conducted to perform the Administrator’s annual performance evaluation.

**Fiscal Update: Trina Ayres**

Current status of the SFY21 budget:

 Appropriation: Expended: Percentage:

Personnel - General Fund 799,400\* 684,450.48 86.55%

 Federal Fund 2,199,700 1,219,443.88 55.43%

 Adaptive A & A 21,100 13,961.60 66.16%

Operating - General Fund 56,830\* 47,345.31 83.31%

 Randolph-Sheppard 27,600 24,839.71 93.62%

 Rehab Revenue (SSA) 34,300 5,240.85 15.27% Miscellaneous 28,100 2,235.48 7.95%

 Adaptive A & A 62,900 36,018.26 57.26%

 Federal Fund 613,900 289,234.66 47.11%

Trustee/Benefit - General Fund 572,950\* 276,713.32 48.29%

 Randolph-Sheppard 100,100 12,016.41 12.00%

 Rehab Revenue 13,000 12,256.67 94.28%

 Miscellaneous 56,300 -0- -0- %

 Federal Fund 470,300 110,535.06 23.50%

Total - 5,056,480

Reminder - the governor implemented a holdback and ICBVI’s plan included reductions in Personnel of $35,000; Operating, $13,970; and Trustee Benefit payments of $26,250.

The Joint Finance and Appropriation Committee (JFAC) passed ICBVI’s budget on Friday, February 26th, without questions, comments, or concerns. Once the governor signs the appropriation bills, the holdback will be rescinded. Approved in the budget was the request for three vehicles out of dedicated funds. One will be purchased this fiscal year and the other two in fiscal year 2022. CEC was also part of the approved appropriation, but no further details are available until DHR (Division of Human Resources) and DFM (Division of Financial Management) publish the guidance memo.

The FFY20 15% reserve requirement has not yet been met. We have expended $339,652.08 of the $416,730.15 requirement. The FFY21 grant award is 2,870,074 making the 15% requirement 430,511.

**Vocational Rehabilitation report: Mike Walsh**

The RSA 911 was submitted on February 23rd.

**Program Statistics**

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| **VR Program Statistics – PY 2019** |
| **Quarter** | **Total VR Clients** | **Pre-ETS** | **Enrolled in training** | **MSG** | **MSG Rate** | **Employment Outcomes** |
| Q1 | 373 | 65 | 116 | 10 | 8.9% | 23 |
|  Q2¹ | 342 | 70 | 106 | 10 | 9.1% | 9 |
|  Q3 | 321 | 63 | 97 | 7 | 6.4% | 7 |
| Q4 | 299 | 61 | 98 | 19 | 15.8% | 6 |

¹ Beginning of COVID-19

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| **VR Program Statistics – PY 2020** |
| **Quarter** | **Total VR Clients** | **New Referrals¹** | **Pre-ETS** | **# MSG**  | **MSG Rate** | **Employment Outcomes** |
| Q1 | 297 | 8 | 67 | 3 | 2.3% | 6 |
| Q2 | 313 | 21 | 73 |  |  | 4 |
|  Q3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Q4 |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. New referrals that achieve an IPE across 2 quarters

**Other Measures That Matter**

3 new views have been added to the RSA Dashboards – Other Measures That Matter

As part of Re-Think VR Performance, RSA created the RehabData Workgroup, comprised of VR program staff and RSA staff. RSA, CSAVR, NCSAB, and VR agencies are committed to rethinking the way we look at the performance of the VR program, improving results, and maintaining high expectations of both the VR program and Individuals with Disabilities.

**#1: Sustaining Employment After Exit**

**Definition:** The % of VR program participants who are employed at exit and employed in the 2nd and 4th quarters after exit.

**Value:** VR program participants should sustain employment after they exit the VR program. Our goal is that IWDs continue working. *This one is related to the WIOA common performance measures but slightly different.*

**#2: VR Service Provision**

**Definition:** # of VR program participants who received at least one VR service divided by the total # of VR program participants – on a quarterly and annual basis.

**Value:** Active engagement and meaningful service provision will result in VR program participants achieving Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE). *This includes in-house services provided by our staff.*

**#3: % of Participants enrolled in ed/training program leading to a recognized credential/employment.**

**Definition:** # of VR program participants who could earn an MSG, as they work towards a recognized postsecondary credential or employment, divide by the total number of participants being served. (MSG rate denominator as its numerator, while the denominator = total # of VR program participants served.

**Value:** If Individuals with Disabilities have opportunities to ear recognized credentials, they are more likely to achieve high-quality Competitive Integrated Employment.

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| **Other Measures That Matter – PY 2020 Q1** |
|  | Sustain Employment after Exit | VR Service Provision | Enrolled in Education/Training |
|  | ICBVI | National | ICBVI | National | ICBVI | National |
| Q1 | 58% | 62.9%¹ | 64.7% | 72.9%² | 48.3% | 29.5%³ |
| Q2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Q3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Q4 |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. Average for all VR programs calendar year 2018.
2. Average for all VR programs PY2019 Q1. Average for PY2019 was 83.8%.
3. Average for all VR programs in PY2019.

**Other Measures that Matter (In Development)**

RSA is phasing in new additional measures:

* Quality
* Efficiency (timely) case progression from application to plan development,
* Services to Students with Disabilities

**#1: Quality Employment**

**Definition:** Information related to employment status at exit and four quality indicators of employment:

* Median hourly earnings;
* Median hours worker per week;
* Employer-provided health insurance; and
* Social Security beneficiary information

**Value:** The mission of the VR program is to maximize employment opportunities for all IWD, including those with the MSD, and to assist IWD achieve economic self-sufficiency.

**#3: VR Process Efficiency**

**Definition:** Information related to how efficiently Individuals with Disabilites were determined eligible and received an IPE within the PY. This profile will also show the outcomes these individuals if they exited during the PY.

**Value:** Timely and effective service provision leads to high-quality Competitive Integrated Employment outcomes for VR program participants. Being engaged with applicants and eligible individuals and offering assistance to them during the eligibility and IPE development process are attributes of positive customer service.

**#4: Pre-Employment Transition Services**

**Definition:** This data may be used to evaluate the relationship between the provision of Pre-ETS, engagement in the VR process, and employment outcomes.

**Value:**  Early career exploration through Pre-ETS increases the likelihood of achieving high-quality Competitive Integrated Employment.

**Zero-Based Regulation Process**

In the next quarter, as required under the order, I will be doing a comprehensive review of both the VR (1502.02) and IL(1502.03) chapters in IDAPA. My goal will be to get the ARRF submitted by the end of July.

In the VR chapter I plan on eliminating the requirement for participants to complete a Financial Needs Assessment (FNA). Beyond that we will need to see what shakes out of the chapter reviews. Again, the focus is to remove restrictions…and not adding rules.

**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

The MOU with IESBB has been reviewed and updated.

**CSPD and Staff Training**

Most VR staff have taken several webinar based trainings; most of them free. Earl is planning a training he is leading this spring with all ICVBI staff (Windmills).

Emerging Leaders training is scheduled for this fall. Alison, Jackie, and Rocio will be attending this training. So far, it is scheduled to be in-person.

**Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance (PEQA)**

I am working in collaboration with the IDVR Program Evaluation team around the existing and new measures to evaluate program performance. I will also be working with them as they prepare for their monitoring later this year.

I have completed an internal audit instrument for our quarterly services reporting (RSA 911 data).

**Participant Satisfaction Survey**

Two respondents have completed the survey since it was launched last October. Both responses were very positive.

**Regional News**

Jackie and Shane have started a virtual support group for visually impaired VR participants. The purpose of the group is to provide opportunities for adults with low vision a safe place to connect with other individuals with similar vision discussing topics of interest with emphasis on developing a greater understanding, acceptance and self-awareness moving forward. So far there are 6 individuals in the group. The support group meets monthly via Zoom.

**Assistive Technologist and Business Engagement (Reported by Earl Hoover)**

***Assistive Technology***

During this 1st quarter, I have continued to work from home, remotely, during this pandemic. I have continued to provide Assistive Technology Assessments to counselors, partnered with Regional Rehabilitation Teachers, as needed, to facilitate in-person components of these assessments. I provided client training remotely. I have also been working with some of the instructors to provide them with remote hardware and software training to update or refine AT skills. I partnered with vendors to learn about new and developing technologies. I have participated in regional AT and ICBVI staff meetings via Zoom and Microsoft Teams. I have also been working with Alison Steven, Transition Services Coordinator, as she develops a statewide program to collaborate with BVI teaching staff throughout the state to provide better services to staff and students. Additionally, I am working on the College Days Planning Committee. I have also consulted with some of the TVIs from IESDB with questions on newer assistive technology products.

***Business Engagement***

During this 1st Quarter. I participated in regional meetings remotely using Zoom. I attended the 2021 NET Summit virtual national conference. I have also provided consultation services with ISU’s Student Disabilities Services department to assist with a couple of employee workplace accommodations and provide information about ICBVI. I also have begun planning staff training for the Windmills Training program. This training will begin in March. I also assisted Comptroller’s Office and IT with accessibility feedback on their online training modules they are developing for future training on Lumos, I assisted DHR Cyber Security team on some accessibility issues, and most recently began working with the Legislative Service Office on some accessibility questions with their website.

**Pre-employment Transition Services (Reported by Alison Steven)**

Things are picking up now that Spring is approaching.

**Putting Your Best Foot Forward**: 6 students are participating in this curriculum from Mississippi University’s National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision. Putting Your Best Foot Forward is a job search curriculum that focuses on strengthening job search knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy with the goal of improving employment outcomes for youth with visual impairments (including blindness and low vision).

Rehab teachers are working with Alison to support the students as they work through identifying strengths and skills, work on job applications, resumes, interview skills and building their network of personal and professional contacts. The team of ICBVI teachers bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the program and the students are very engaged and learning and developing skills exponentially. April Mills has been a particular asset as she has co-lead the program and mentored a student-teacher as part of the process. This program started at the beginning of February and will run until the second week of April. Four of the participants are High School students and they will each receive high school credit for completing the program and the accompanying work experience.

**ICoP**: The Idaho Educators of the Blind and visually Impaired Community of Practice continues to meet monthly. Representatives from IESDB, ICBVI and independent Teachers of the Visually Impaired have found great benefit in sharing ideas and challenges and gaining understanding of one another’s roles and responsibilities. This collaborative group is strengthening the connections between the different agencies in Idaho that serve blind and visually impaired students.

**4SHOWI**: The first meeting of 4SHOWI took place on Thursday February 25. Blind and visually impaired students from Washington, Idaho, New Jersey and Vermont gathered together on Zoom for the first monthly meeting of students seeking to be socially professional. States will take turns each month to develop content addressing topics and issues of importance to the students. This is also a great opportunity to network with individuals from around the country. There are a total of approximately 20 students participating.

**Blind and Socially Savvy**: Recruitment has started for the this nationally recognized program that teaches comprehensive social skills from traveling to dining to job hunting. The program will start mid-April on Monday evenings and run for six weeks. Alison has heard a lot of good things about this program from other states who have already implemented it.

**Virtual College Days 2021**: Planning for this year’s College Days program is in full swing. The program has been extended with two orientation days prior to the full-time week. Once students finish up the College Days week, they will take a summer college class for credit. This will be at a College of their choice and most likely online. They will be supported through this process by meeting weekly with ICBVI staff for ongoing study and executive skills. The overall program length will be approximately 7 weeks.

**SWEP 2021**: Due to circumstances out of our control it will not be possible to hold SWEP as a residential program in Boise this year. Instead, this year SWEP will be a hybrid program starting the week of June 21 and lasting six weeks. Counselors will work with CRP’s to develop local Work Based Learning Experiences for students that participate. In addition, participants will meet virtually, once a week for training on Work Readiness topics.

**Creating Reliable Universal Structure for Human Interaction and Technology (CRUSH\_It)**: Earl Hoover, Jackie Stallings, and Alison have been collaborating with transition specialists from Washington to develop a webinar on improving online accessibility. Having attended many online presentations over the past year, this group felt it would be helpful to put together information and resources to help presenters to improve the accessibility of their webinars and workshops. The group is slated to present at the upcoming Pacific Northwest Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired on March 19.

**Independent Living and Sight Restoration Report: Steve Achabal**

**IL/ILOB Programs :**

With the announcement of the State of Idaho going to Stage 3, we are looking at how this may increase our ability to provide better services to our clients by being able to conduct in-person meetings when appropriate. We are looking at multiple factors to determine if and when these meetings may be applicable as well as establishing protocols and best practices to be able to provide services when remote facilitation is not practical. Our main priority is to provide services in the safest manner for both our staff and clients.

By being able to provide in-person services (face to face meetings) we will be able to meet with clients in environments such as public and community settings, places of employment, places such as schools, universities and other training locations, and in client’s homes/residences when deemed appropriate to do so.

We will continue to provide training and services remotely as well and when possible conduct face to face meetings in our ICBVI offices since we are more able to control these environments better than at a person’s home/residence. In-person meetings will be held only in situations where remote training is not applicable, and a number of other factors must be present. RT’s will submit in-person meeting requests to their supervisor for prior approval before being able to meet with clients. During face to face meetings with clients, specific safety protocols will be in place such as wearing masks, and social distancing a minimum of 6 feet apart at all times.

Brenda Knight, who has been a long time ICBVI employee, will be retiring at the end of March. Even though I have pleaded with her to stay for she is an extremely valuable member of the ICBVI team, she has decided that she would like to spend more time with her grandchildren, her husband and taking on new projects. We all wish Brenda the very best in enjoying this next chapter of her life, and hopefully she knows how much she is valued and how much she will be missed.

Interviews for her replacement will take place on March 3rd, and hopefully some excellent candidates will emerge through this process making our choice a difficult one.

Some peer support group leaders are meeting with their groups in person while others are meeting virtually. All leaders have done an excellent job keeping in touch with their members through this very difficult time. Hopefully as the weather gets warmer, and more vaccines are distributed more in-person meetings will be able to take place, even if they are outside. Meetings that are taking place do require masks to be worn and are all are trying to adhere to social distancing guidelines.

**Sight Restoration:**

The VRA’s continue to do a great job serving Sight Restoration clients. Referrals are down from last year, mostly we believe, due to COVID. Many physicians are not performing procedures as they were at this time last year, which of course effects our referral base for the Sight Restoration program.

For those individuals who apply for services, some do not meet the financial guidelines, and are not eligible for the program. For those that are accepted in the program the vast majority are closed successfully. This high percentage is due directly to the excellent customer service, intense communication and in some cases “hand holding” that the VRA’s do to assist these clients through this process.

**Low Vision Clinic:**

As in our Sight Restoration program, our Low Vision Clinic referrals have also been down this last quarter. Though it is normal during the holidays for referrals to go down, this has been a little exaggerated this last December, January, and February. We decreased the number of clinic days for January, and February from 5 to 4 to account for this. This allowed us to fill each of our clinic days fully, maximizing Dr. Hansen’s schedule. Referrals are starting to increase, and it is my belief that we will move forward for the remainder of the year being able to provide and fill 5 clinic days per month.

As updates and changes continue with COVID we will look at the feasibility of offering regional clinics in our Twin Falls and Lewiston areas, but no such decisions have been made at this time.

**ICBVI Store:**

As discussed at the last quarterly Board meeting, the ICBVI Store continues to have our doors open to the public. Customers are asked to schedule an appointment beforehand but are still being served whether they show up with or without an appointment. Staff continue to adhere to safety procedures such as wearing a mask, social distancing and wiping off aids and equipment after being used by customers.

**New Business**

The next ICBVI Regular Board Meeting will be held virtually on June 8th, 2021. Information on how to participate in this meeting will be shared with the staff and public.

**Meeting concluded at**

 Sue moved to end the board meeting at 2:20

Meeting minutes were respectfully submitted by Bailie Weir on May 18, 2021.