**Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

**Commission Report**

**February 2020**

**Field Services:**

Sept 13: AT Specialists, Paul Miller and Magan Rowan, set up an exhibit table at the OKHR Workforce Conference in OKC. They demonstrated magnification items such as video magnifiers and OrCam glasses to Human Resource professionals who were in attendance at this conference.

Oct 1: Transition Counselor Jennifer Hawkins attended a Go Global East Central University Study Abroad Fair. There were exhibits from various international universities, with booths manned by ECU students who had attended these universities in various programs. Students gave presentations involving forming relationships while studying abroad, short term trips to Moscow and St. Petersburg and a short term trip to Mexico. The short term trips give credits in political science to participants.

Oct 2 Staff from VR and SBVI attended the Garvin County Job Fair at Crossroads Church in Pauls Valley. Brochures and information were given to job seekers who attended and staff visited with several companies who were in attendance to enlighten them about DRS services. Some of the employers present were MAC Truck, Amcor, DJK Enterprises, WalMart Distribution Center and Davis Correctional Center.

Oct 3 Counselors Jennifer Hawkins and Wade Walters attended a job fair hosted by the Choctaw Nation. The two hosted a booth at which they handed out literature and brochures about the various services that are available to visually impaired and blind job seekers in Oklahoma. Information was taken by a representative of the Choctaw Nation Human Resources Department to share with her entire department so hopefully that will open up some opportunities for our clients who are Choctaw in this area.

Oct 10 Counselors Charity Eidson and Jennifer Hawkins attended a job Fair for the City of Coalgate which consisted of staff from VR and SBVI, Workforce, the Coal County Hospital and Nursing Home and representatives from the Choctaw Nation. Our staff were able to speak with the reps from the Choctaw Nation, as well as the hospital and nursing home about potential employment for clients who reside in that area.

Oct 10 Staff from VR and SBVI participated in the 2019 Career and College Expo which took place at the McAlester Expo Center. VR and SBVI hosted a booth and disseminated information about our programs and office locations. Also in attendance were numerous employers and agencies, as well as universities and career techs. Multiple schools from the local area were bussed in and visited each table on a rotating basis. Throughout the day many students, in addition to a few parents and random school staff or chaperones, showed interest and inquired about DRS; not only in regards to services, but also interest in career opportunities. They even had someone stop by specifically to share a success story, which is always exciting.

Oct. 10-11 – Rehabilitation Teacher, Ani Severtsen, presented for the Dibble Senior Center and about 15 seniors visited with her to ask questions and take brochures and business cards for SBVI services.

Oct 15 Various activities were held across the state to recognize White Cane Day Awareness, which is always October 15th of each year. Most notable were an organized celebration and walk through downtown OKC in which the Director, DA and FC participated along with SBVI staff and clients. Proclamations by Governor Stitt and Mayor Holt were read by the Director and DA, respectively, and then the walk ensued. Free passes to ride the new streetcars were passed out to anyone who wanted to take advantage of that activity after the walk through downtown. SBVI O&M specialists, Liz Scheffe and Debi Trout, led the walk and streetcar activities and VS staff hosted a table with information about Visual Services and the White Cane Law. Informational cards were also handed out during the walk to let the public know about the importance of following the law for the safety of blind pedestrians.

In Tulsa on the same evening, staff from SBVI and OSB set up tables in Woodland Hills Mall to disseminate information about the White Cane Law and a walk took place there as well. There were also activities led by consumer and support groups across the state, including the Duncan Council of the Blind and the Tulsa Council of the Blind to commemorate this very important law and spread the word to the public.

Oct 16 – Rehabilitation Teacher, Ani Severtsen, presented for the Newcastle Senior Center. About 35 seniors attended to receive information about DRS services.

Oct 16 – Rehabilitation Teacher, Debra Mendez, participated in the Cheyenne-Arapaho Job Fair. There were about 100 visitors to the fair. SWOSU was in attendance and Ms. Mendez was able to talk with the Dean of Students to explain how RT, O&M and AT Specialists can work with their students who need adaptive equipment and training. Hopefully this will lead to better relationships with SWOSU and services to students who need them.

Oct 22 – Rehabilitation Teacher, Debra Mendez, attended the Branch 15 Ministry gathering. This is a faith-based organization that has four homes for women who are transitioning from prison to the community. The reason for the meeting was to let area partners know Branch 15 is looking at property in western Oklahoma and is considering opening a house in the area. The meeting was attended by law enforcement, at least one judge, potential volunteers and Ms. Mendez. Some of the women have endured difficult life situations such as chemical dependency, incarceration, human trafficking and domestic violence and this organization helps with reentry into society. DRS could be a vital piece to assisting the women in becoming self-sufficient and productive members of society.

Oct 25: SBVI staff participate annually in the 18th annual Macular Degeneration/Low Vision/ Glaucoma Seminar held at the Samis Education Center in OU Children’s Hospital. Presentations by Dean McGee Eye Institute physicians, New View Oklahoma staff, DRS Staff (Deitra Woody, Debi Trout and Shyreeta Hearne, as well as the OK Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. The majority of attendees were older blind. There were approximately 45 people.

Nov 5 – Rehabilitation Teacher, Ani Severtsen, presented to Brand Senior Center which is located in Moore.  Approximately 25 seniors attended this presentation to receive information about DRS services.

Nov 7 - Pam Holloway and Ani Severtsen worked a table at a senior center health fair in Oklahoma City. Approximately 15 senior citizens received information about Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

1/16/20 - Tammie Jones’ unit hosted a booth at an event at WTC College and Military Day at Burns Flat. Tammie Jones, Debra Mendez and LeaAnn Dozier staffed a table. The purpose of the event was to give high school juniors and seniors as well as Vo Tech students an opportunity to gather information about careers in the military and public service organizations. Approximately 150 students from various high schools and career techs attended the event. Represented at the career day were SBVI, United States Air Force, US Army, Rose State College, OSU, Western Oklahoma State College, OU and SWOSU.

**Business Services Program**

**October**

Business Advisory Council Meetings, Tulsa

New Day, New Way Meeting

Disability Courtesy, Interviewing Techniques and Accommodation Workshop for Businesses

OG&E Roundtable Networking Luncheon

Disability Awareness Resource Fair, Cameron University, Lawton

Capitol Access visit

DoubleTree Mental Health Training

The Gathering Business Summit

Texoma’s 2nd Annual Disability Networking Luncheon

OESC’s Career Fair, BSP booth, OKC, Tulsa, Durant

Mosaic Monthly Meeting, Oklahomans for Equality

OACEP Fall Conference

CSAVR Conference Presentation by BSP Coordinator

BSP Team Meeting

Business Services Network Meeting

Cherokee Nation’s Disability Employment Initiative, BSP Booth

**November**

Visit to Muskogee on behalf of Executive Director as representative in discussion about court reporting

Innovative Workforce Opportunity Council

Business Advisory Council Meeting, Enid, OKC

BSP Team Meeting

Dress for Success Career Assessments, Tulsa

One Stop Workforce Partners Meeting, Lawton

NE Business Services Meeting

OESC Career Fair, BSP booth, Shawnee

Mosaic Monthly Meeting, Tulsa Chamber

Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance /DRS Curriculum Planning

Dare to Dream College and Career Fair, BSP booth, Tulsa

ORC Quarterly Meeting

Social Justice Symposium: Optimism through Action

NE Workforce Partners Meeting

Oklahoma Works Annual Alumni Celebration

**December**

New Day, New Way NE Workforce Partner’s Meeting

Tips for Successful Interviewing, Rose State College

Oklahoma Business Summit for People with Disabilities Committee Meeting

Tulsa Partner Meeting

NE Business Service Team Meeting

Mosaic Monthly Meeting

BSP Team Meeting

**Transition**

October-January

Transition Coordinator (TC), Renee Sansom, has attended multiple trainings for supervisory credits at DRS and at the Jim Thorpe Building.

TC arranged Kimray tours for transition students in the Metro. Project Search sites attended along with other vendors and agencies. Approximately 75 people attended in total.

TC and Brandi Hurley attended multiple project search meetings to represent DRS. Project Search meetings are every month at each location. Still in the process of discussion with Georgia and OU about another Project Search site to be in Muskogee VA where we will focus on the School for the Blind. We have begun discussion with Tulsa Public Schools to have a Project Search site there as well as another site at St. Anthony’s in OKC.

Both Brandi and TC are involved with the Cultivate mentoring group held by DRS training unit, which ended in November. Another mentoring group, Brain Fit began in January.

Brandi, TC and Jim Kettler continue to receive School Work Study contracts at the schools. We have added approximately 12 new sites this year. We have begun the process for FY21 already, as well as, update the list of counselors. Kim Lohr has been helping us get and keep the list of counselors and schools up to date for every quarter. This spreadsheet is being sent out along with the Trendy Transition Newsletter every quarter! We are so grateful for both Jim and Kim!

TC continues to be involved with the Transition Committee through CSAVR and NCSAB.

TC attended and presented on Transition at the 14th OTI in Owasso.

TC, Brandi and Casey Williamson (IT) have spent time developing the Transition page internally for DRS employees; working on forms, best practices and Transition related topics to the page.

TC attended multiple OJA, OCCY, SOWJC and COJC meetings about the youth in custody.

TC has participated in multiple NTACT webinars.

TC, Brandi and Lori Chesnut (OSDE) have met multiple times since the Capacity Building Institute to discuss the survey for students and parents for the Transition Institute.

TC and Brandi held a transition training for staff in transition. It was more of a self-help training where they could focus on making themselves better.

TC and Brandi attended the Division on Career Development in Transition training in Seattle along with several Pre-Ets specialists from OU.

TC attended and presented at the CSAVR and NCSAB Conference in Florida.

TC met with Epic charter schools and Oklahoma Virtual Charter Academy on how to build a working relationship and work together for students with disabilities as well as incorporate virtual job shadowing opportunities to those students.

TC has been involved with the Oklahoma Transition Council and they are in the process of developing their 15th Annual Transition Institute scheduled on September 28 and 29 at the Embassy Suites in Norman, OK.

TC has presented four presentations in Spanish to parents and advocates of students with disabilities to families who English is not their first language. This will help develop some self-advocacy skills for parents, transition aged youth during the IEP’s, and IPE’s so that those kids can be successful and not fall through the cracks. There are plans to continue this in OKC and Tulsa through this year.

TC and Brandi attended the SBVI cook out – social gathering and training for staff.

TC attended the FC/PM meeting that VR held

TC and Brandi attended several BAC meetings held by Fatos Floyd. All project search sites, OSD, OSB and many other schools will be present for this event. TC and Brandi to present material on transition at the career expo.

TC and Brandi attended the Autism Conference held in Midwest City

TC and Brandi attended staffing meetings for Pre-Ets with OU

TC, Lori Chesnut (OSDE) and Sharon Baker (Career Tech) attended the NTACT/VR/SDE/CTE conference held in California to learn about collaboration amongst the state with those entities.

TC met with V. Davies (Eastern Technology Center) about SWS and other opportunities for the Choctaw, Harrah, Shawnee, Jones, Luther areas.

TC and Brandi attended the Wrights law Conference in OKC to learn more about transition law in the state.

TC met with Jamie Hooper and the City of Manitou regarding SWS/OJT possibilities for SWOJC

TC attended with Jody Harlan, Chris Dvorak and Rita Echelle the Resilience video that OKDHS presented with First Lady Sarah Stitt in showing the science of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

TC has been a part of the interview panel for Fatos Floyd with the Business Services Program in hiring for OKC.

TC and Brandi have been in conversations with Jen Randle with YLF about the FEAT talk. Discussed power point ideas and changes, as she will present nationally this year. Made updates to the VR process.

TC and Brandi have attended several Project Search open house nights for parents and students to answer questions as they arise.

TC attended the Strategy Group: Employer Support and Engagement session with Ed Long to develop strategies for employers to gain knowledge of different programs in the state and to develop a talent pipeline for all job seekers in Oklahoma.

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Camp (Crushin’ Life), is scheduled for June 14 – June 20 at OU Campus.

TC attended the Strategic Planning meeting of the ORC and assisted with development of the Transition Committee Strategic Plan and gave updates as needed. In addition, attended committee meeting for Transition with ORC and it appears that committee is meeting the goals for the year.

Pre-Ets contract is doing great. We have eight specialists that continue to work in the schools. One was hired to work in the Oklahoma City Public School System (all high schools); Another was hired to work the “west” part of the state at this time including Lawton and surround schools, up to Tuttle, Newcastle, Blanchard and other rural schools; The third will be focusing on Moore/Norman and down through Little Axe, Purcell and other surrounding schools in that area; The fourth one is the lead and is a mentor to the others at this time but still working on the east side of OKC in Luther, Jones, Chandler, etc.; The fifth is working in the Muskogee area; The sixth is working the Tulsa area; The seventh is working with our online virtual academies and online charter schools; our eighth is doing work in the Enid and surrounding areas. TC, Brandi and Judi Goldston present at any event we can get to regarding DRS and the partnership with OU and Pre-Ets by multiple meetings with public schools and other agencies. Working with the workforce centers as well is one of our many goals. In this Pre-Ets contract, we will be including peer mentoring as part of the contract along with the five required fields of the WIOA.

Judi Goldston and TC are planning to host a Pre-Ets conference for surrounding states this summer

We are awaiting responses from OSDE regarding STEM camp for the juniors and seniors at the beginning of the school year in August/September so that we do not interfere with camps they currently have going on in the summer. Dates for all other STEM camps for the summer are as follows:

* 1. Meeker - June 2nd-4th 2020
  2. Ada - June 8th-10th, 2020
  3. Tushka -June 16th -18th, 2020
  4. OKC - June 22nd – 24th, 2020
  5. OSB Tentative -  June 29th - July 3rd, 2020 (Self-Advocacy camp possibly with Pre-ETS specialists too)
  6. Lawton – July 13th – 15th, 2020
  7. Owasso – July 20th – Jul 22nd, 2020
  8. Tulsa Central Church – July 29th – July 31st, 2020

TC, OSB staff and Teresa McDermott currently attend quarterly meetings at OSB to discuss the kids and see where everyone stands with work and their cases.

Camp WOW – May 31 – June 5, 2020 for one week. Applications and flyers have been sent to staff, school administration, Transition Council, ORC and OSDE for dissemination. We have a person from Workforce leading the camp again and will have our Pre-ets specialists as full time support as well.

STEP (Summer Transition Employment Program) flyers and applications have been sent to staff, school administration, Transition Council, ORC and OSDE for dissemination. STEP locations this year is in Norman/Moore, Edmond, OKC and Owasso/Collinsville. Celebrations will be at the end of each STEP program in July and August.

TC and Brandi continue to work on audits and new contracts for Work Adjustment Training statewide.

TC has been involved in Lead/Learn/Live post-secondary education program meetings. Contract through the NSU Riverhawks program is in force and began January 1st.

TC has been involved in multiple Statewide Education Leadership Network Meetings (SELN)

TC met with the Central Oklahoma Association for Teachers Coalition (COATC) to provide information to them regarding the new Pre-ets contract.

TC has been involved with the State Workforce Youth Council meetings and participates on the ICAP subcommittee

TC met with Delaware Nation about transition and collaborating. Also, met with Cheyenne Arapaho tribe about collaborating for summer this year. They are giving WOW students water bottles and hand sanitizer this year.

Continue to work with Brett Jones on new checklists for Transition. The new brochures are in and look great. We also have developed a WAT/SWS one pager that is currently in the bidding process. We have discussed making signs/boards with prams that Transition currently has and will be doing for events.

TC, Brandi, Carolina Colclasure (ORC) and Lori Chesnut (OSDE) are still collaborating to finish the Transition Planning folders. There have been some hiccups along the way, but we are almost to a point of printing. Some final discussions are in the works for printing.

Brandi and TC have offered to help take applications at parent nights and open houses for Project Search students so that we can have sufficient applicant numbers for the different programs. The counselors are including us (mostly) in emails about reaching out to schools and letting us know their needs.

TC met with Jeri Cooper and Stephanie Butler regarding the Deaf-Blind population and discussed being more involved with Transition.

TC attended and spoke at the Tech Now Training for new teachers regarding Tech-Now, STEM and the possibilities that DRS can offer.

TC attended the Epilepsy Foundation Conference in Altus to speak about services for the South West part of the state. There is a need for collaboration in that part of the state.

**OLBPH**

AIM Center:

To give some perspective on the growth of the program, the data from the previous school year has been included.

Students using BRAILLE**:**

18/19 school year = 17

19/20 school year = **68**

This is a huge increase due to early intervention, students moving in from other states, awareness of the AIM Center and outreach.

Federal Quota

18/19 school year = 753

19/20 school year = **889** (we are currently waiting on 51 parent releases so this number may go down before the final phase of FQ registration but again, HUGE increase from last year. This of course, doesn't include the students who are being served in the AIM center on IEPs but don't qualify for FQ.)

To meet the growing needs of our students using Braille, the AIM Center has added additional Braillers, \*BrailleBuzz and \*\*Taptilos to the collection.

**\*** BrailleBuzzis an instructional toy for young braille learners age’s two to five. It encourages practice with braille characters and phonics, similar to a variety of audio-based toys that teach print writing.

BrailleBuzz resembles a cartoon bumblebee, encouraging little ones with audio feedback. A friendly recorded human voice and fun sounds are paired with a Perkins-style braille keyboard, designed with little hands in mind.

Three Modes of Play

– Phonics Mode: fun sound and letter associations are made.

– Keyboard Mode: all key combinations are announced with dot numbers.

– Letters Mode: dot number announcement reinforces the relationship between reading letters and writing

on the keyboard.

\*\*TAPTILO all-in-one braille education solution combines a hardware device with the latest braille cell

technology and an innovative application that can be used seamlessly with the device.

Various pre-made lesson plans and teaching resources, easy to personalize lessons to individual student and track learning progress. Create custom teaching material, play games with students, and reinforce learning through various self-guided activities. Manage and download new content from free app.

Knowledge of braille isn't required to teach braille with Taptilo. Simply select or type a word in the app, and Taptilo will do the translation. It also includes various pre-made lesson plans, teaching resources, and self-guided activities. (This is vital in Oklahoma as we have a shortage of VI teachers who know braille!)

AIM Center is in the process of building an on-line ordering system coordinated with KLAS to allow TVIs to access our catalog and submit orders securely through the KLAS OPAC system, eliminating the need for paper copies; one step closer to becoming paper-free.

**OLBPH Audiobook Circulation**

SFY 20 Totals as of January 202088,131

**BEP**

The interview selection committee held interviews on December 30, 2019 for the BEP Coordinator position. Tannica Binder was selected and accepted the position. Her official start date was February 1, 2020.

With Ms. Binder’s acceptance as BEP Coordinator, we will now be announcing the Business Manager position.

Ft. Sill arbitration began in San Antonio in January. The Office of the Attorney General has stepped in to assist. We will not have any information until at least April.

2 licensed managers completed the new training program. We will begin training again in March and will have 3 trainees who have already successfully passed initial assessments.

Continued focus on growth with site surveys to add facilities and assessing clients for entrance into the program.

**Production:**

Title I: Applications to date = 114        Cases in Service Status =92       Cases in Delayed Status = 65     Successful Closures = 33

Avg Hourly Wage/Successful. Closure = $15.01/hour

Older Blind: Applications to date = 50            Plans Written = 62       Currently Being Served = 303     Goals Met = 17

**Division Administrator Activities:**

Highlights--- White Cane Safety Day; Policy Committee; Blindness Agency Community of Practice Meeting; VR/SBVI Performance Measures Meetings; Commission Meetings; ETeam Meetings; ORC; ORC Exec. Committee; OSD Ground Breaking; BEP facility selection committee; BEP Training: CSAVR Calls; OK Manufacturing Alliance Meetings; YTAC Conference Call; Lead/Learn/Live Planning Meetings; PMP Meetings with staff; Academy Planning Meeting; CSAVR/NCSAB; ECM Meetings; Telecommuting Planning Meeting; BEP manager meetings; PM interviews; BEP Training meetings; Governors Council on Workforce Development Meeting

Respectfully Submitted:

Tracy Brigham, MBS, LPC, SBVI Division Administrator