

DHHS - DIV OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

Enabling Laws

Act 1291 of 2005
A.C.A. §25-10-201 et seq.

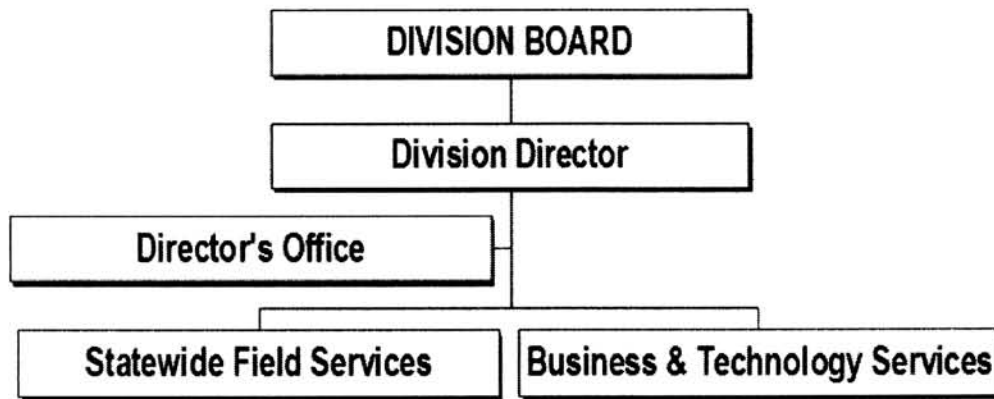
History and Organization

During the 1940s and early 1950s, blind Arkansans received rudimentary services from generically trained "home teachers" employed by the Arkansas Department of Public Welfare. Services consisted of non-specialized instruction in independent living skills and monthly stipends paid from Aid to Aged, Blind and Disabled funding. Little effort was made in vocational skills development or job placement other than the operation of vending stands in predominantly federal locations.

In 1955, the emphasis shifted from welfare to rehabilitation, and the state responsibility for services to blind persons was transferred to the Department of Education, Division of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. However, blind persons were still provided generic services within the general population of disabled consumers. Later, the Arkansas General Assembly recognized the value of specialized services to blind persons, and passed Arkansas Act 180 of 1965 creating the Division of Rehabilitation Services for the Blind within the State Board of Vocational Education. Over the next two decades, the general assembly would pass laws to combine and separate services to blind persons within various state departments several times until passing Act 481 of 1983.

Act 481 established the Division of State Services for the Blind (DSB) within the Department of Human Services, and vested responsibility for DSB within a policy-making board. Five of the seven members represent statewide consumer, civic and professional organizations involved in state services to blind persons. The two remaining members represent the public at large. By law, four of the seven DSB board members must be blind or severely visually impaired. All members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The DSB Board is a policy making body responsible for rehabilitation services provided to blind Arkansans of all ages. It sets program policy and employs a Commissioner (director) to oversee agency operations within applicable federal and state law. Because of the governing structure of the board, DSB is recognized federally as a Commission within the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act. The Division of State Services for the Blind is also designated as the state-licensing agency for the Randolph Sheppard Vending Facility Program for Arkansas.

Under the current structure of specialized services, the number and quality of jobs obtained by blind and severely visually impaired persons has grown markedly. DSB has been repeatedly commended nationally for its role in the success of DSB consumers and reports rank Arkansas among the top states in consistently exceeding federal service standards.



Agency Commentary

The DHHS Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) is responsible for the provision of rehabilitation and social services to blind and severely visually impaired persons in Arkansas. Services are provided through the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program and the Older Blind Program. Specially trained itinerant counselors travel the state to arrange for, purchase or deliver services necessary to the rehabilitation goals of blind Arkansans. Both programs are funded by the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration through formula grants based upon the elevated incidence of disability in the Arkansas population. The state is required to match the VR grant at 21.3% and Older Blind grant at 10% and provides a small amount of additional mandated general revenue with which DSB meets its Maintenance of Effort and secures additional federal funds. Total base level for the agency is \$ 6,235,781, with 69 positions authorized each year.

For the 2007-2009 biennium, DSB seeks approval of two initiatives above base level:

OLDER BLIND PROGRAM. DSB requests appropriation and general revenue funding in operating Fund Center 896 to address services critically needed in the Older Blind Program. The program provides a much lower cost alternative to nursing home care by training older persons, who are blind or severely visually impaired, to be self-sufficient and remain in their own homes for as long as possible. In 2008, the request is to add four (4) new full-time Rehabilitation Teaching caseloads, E007, Grade 20, and one M066 Grade 21 Rehab Field Supervisor to the four existing Rehabilitation Teachers whose itinerant caseloads currently serve the entire state's Older Blind population. In 2009, an additional four (4) Rehab Teachers are requested. In each year of the biennium, Maintenance & Operation and Conference Fees and Travel is also requested in support of these personnel. Additional general revenue funds and appropriation is also requested in Fund Center 898 to purchase specialized training, audio clocks and calculators, long white canes for independent travel, etc., for older persons who are blind or severely visually impaired to enable them to remain independent in their own homes as long as possible. The goal is to enable individuals to remain in their own homes and communities at a much lower cost to taxpayers rather than being forced to enter a nursing home due to the absence of blindness-related skills necessary for self-reliance.

This staff teaches activities of daily living to blind and visually impaired persons age 55 and older who are at risk of institutionalization. These positions are needed in response to the dramatic increase in the population of older blind persons in the last ten years and in response to the state's 20/20 initiative. This initiative brings together the states experts on demographics and is producing

detailed projections of population growth & composition to enable state managers to target service delivery through the year 2020. Due to staffing, DSB is currently only able to accept 800 to 1000 older blind consumers on its caseload each year, while the Arkansas population, currently approximately 21,000, is increasing at a dramatic rate, costing taxpayers much more in premature nursing home placement of blind individuals who are not medically fragile.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION. DSB seeks unfunded appropriation in operating Fund Center 896 for restoration of five positions which were unbudgeted in 2007, for flexibility in meeting the compliance requirements of the federally approved State Plan for Rehabilitation in the event additional federal funds become available. For direct services, the request includes Salaries, Matching, Maintenance & Operations, Conference Fees and Travel, and Capital Outlay in operating fund center 896. In Grant fund center 898, DSB seeks unfunded appropriation for purchased services to enable DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to secure a variety of services for consumers in the event federal or other funds become available. Such expenditures may be made for the services of ophthalmologists, optometrists, hospitals, equipment companies, etc. to advance consumer progress toward their individual rehabilitation goals for employment.

Audit Findings

DIVISION OF LEGISLATIVE AUDIT
 AUDIT OF :
 DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
 FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2005

Findings

Recommendations

Audit findings are reported under the DHHS-Director's Office/Office of Chief Counsel.

Publications

A.C.A 25-1-204

Name	Statutory Authorization	Required for		# Of Copies	Reason (s) for Continued Publication and Distribution
		Governor	General Assembly		
None	N/A	N	N	0	N/A

Department Appropriation Summary

Appropriation	Historical Data						Agency Request and Executive Recommendation							
	2005-2006		2006-2007		2006-2007		2007-2008				2008-2009			
	Actual	Pos	Budget	Pos	Authorized	Pos	Agency	Pos	Executive	Pos	Agency	Pos	Executive	Pos
896 Div of Services for the Blind	3,508,491	62	4,051,796	69	4,405,110	74	4,674,314	79	4,138,723	69	4,870,663	83	4,138,723	69
898 Purchase of Services	2,103,509	0	2,122,058	0	2,122,058	0	2,342,808	0	2,342,808	0	2,373,558	0	2,373,558	0
Total	5,612,000	62	6,173,854	69	6,527,168	74	7,017,122	79	6,481,531	69	7,244,221	83	6,512,281	69

Funding Sources			%		%		%		%		%		%		
General Revenue	4000010	1,770,297	31.5	1,826,864	29.6			2,103,371	32.4	1,843,353	29.6	2,309,470	34.5	1,843,353	29.6
Federal Revenue	4000020	3,841,703	68.5	4,346,990	70.4			4,392,428	67.6	4,392,428	70.4	4,392,428	65.5	4,392,428	70.4
Total Funds		5,612,000	100.0	6,173,854	100.0			6,495,799	100.0	6,235,781	100.0	6,701,898	100.0	6,235,781	100.0
Excess Appropriation/(Funding)		0		0				521,323		245,750		542,323		276,500	
Grand Total		5,612,000		6,173,854				7,017,122		6,481,531		7,244,221		6,512,281	

Agency Position Usage Report

FY2004-2005					FY2005-2006					FY2006-2007							
Authorized in Act	Budgeted			Unbudgeted Total	% of Authorized Unused	Authorized in Act	Budgeted			Unbudgeted Total	% of Authorized Unused	Authorized in Act	Budgeted			Unbudgeted Total	% of Authorized Unused
	Filled	Unfilled	Total				Filled	Unfilled	Total				Filled	Unfilled	Total		
76	60	7	67	9	21.05%	74	57	10	67	7	22.97%	74	57	12	69	5	22.97%

Authorized in Act may differ from Authorized reflected on the Appropriation Summary due to Reallocation of Resources (Act 2303 of 2005 section 17(d)), Miscellaneous Federal Grant (A.C.A. 19-7-501 et seq.) and POOL positions (A.C.A 21-5-214(5)(A)).

Analysis of Budget Request

Appropriation: 896 - DHHS—Admin Paying Account

Funding Sources: PWP-Administration Paying

In 1983, Act 481 was passed, creating the Division of State Services for the Blind. The Act removed the Division from the jurisdiction of the Department of Rehabilitation Services and made it an autonomous state agency within the Department of Human Services. The Division is responsible for its own State Plan under the Federal Rehabilitation Act. Agency direction and performance responsibility lies with a seven (7) member consumer board comprised of organization representatives involved in providing services for people who have visual impairments. The member organizations include those such as Arkansas Lions, Blinded Veterans Association, Lions World Services for the Blind, Arkansas School for the Blind, and the Arkansas Affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind. By law, the majority of the members of the Board must be persons who are blind or severely visually impaired. This organizational structure was maintained in the reorganization of the Department when Act 348 of 1985 was passed. Services to individuals with visual impairments are provided by agency staff and by contracting with service providers who specialize in services for people with visual impairments.

The agency is funded through General Revenue (DSB - State Services for the Blind Fund Account) and Federal Revenue.

A cost of living increase is not incorporated in Base Level pending the outcome of the Classification and Compensation Study. FY07 salary levels have been held flat each year for all incumbents. Personal Services Matching may reflect increases in the Base Level due to the Social Security Tax maximum income limit and certain increases in Worker's Compensation and Unemployment Tax rates. Personal Services Matching also includes a \$30 increase in the monthly contribution for State employee's health insurance for a total State match per budgeted employee of \$350 per month.

896 DHHS - Administrative Paying Account

The agency Base Level request for the Operations appropriation is \$4,113,723 each year of the biennium with 69 budgeted Base Level positions.

898 DHHS - Grants Paying Account

The agency Base Level request for the Purchase of Services line item is \$2,122,058 each year of the biennium.

The agency Change Level request for their Operations appropriation is \$560,591 for FY2008 and \$756,940 for FY2009, with a General Revenue request of \$239,268 in FY2008 and \$424,617 in FY2009. The following delineates the agency request:

- Five (5) new positions (4- Grade 20 Sr. Rehab. Teachers F/T Blind and 1- Grade 21 Rehab. Field Supervisor) with salary and matching appropriation and General Revenue funding each year of the biennium. These teachers will provide in-home instruction to clientele, aged 55 and older, relating to daily living skills in order to enable them to become, or remain, self-sufficient in their own homes.

- Four (4) additional new positions (Grade 20 Sr. Rehab. Teachers F/T Blind) for FY2009 with salary and matching appropriation and General Revenue funding.
- Restoration of five (5) positions that are authorized but not budgeted with salary and matching appropriation only in the event that Federal or other funds become available.
- \$187,774 in FY2008 and \$224,000 in FY2009 is requested for the Operating Expenses line item for telecommunications, rent, mileage, meals & lodging, fuel purchases, office supplies, data processing supplies and software & licenses.
- \$8,111 in FY2008 and \$9,800 in FY2009 is requested for the Travel line item for specialized training for the requested new positions.
- \$25,000 each year of the biennium is requested for the Capital Outlay line item to replace old equipment.

The agency Change Level request for the Purchase of Services line item is \$220,750 in FY2008 and \$251,500 in FY2009, with a General Revenue request of \$20,750 in FY2008 and \$41,500 in FY2009. The following delineates the agency request:

- \$20,750 in FY2008 and \$41,500 in FY2009 in General Revenue funded appropriation to provide for increased clientele, for purchasing specialized training and adaptive services.
- \$200,000 in FY2008 and \$210,000 in FY2009 in unfunded appropriation in the event that federal or other funds become available.

The Executive Recommendation provides for Base Level in the Operations appropriation. Additionally, the \$25,000 in the Capital Outlay line item has been provided for in appropriation only each year of the biennium.

The Executive Recommendation provides for the Agency Request in appropriation each year of the biennium with no new General Revenue for the Purchase of Services line item.

Appropriation Summary

Appropriation: 896 DHHS-Admin Paying Account
 PWP-Administration Paying

Funding Sources:

Agency Request and Executive Recommendation

Commitment Item	2005-2006		2006-2007		2006-2007		2007-2008		2008-2009	
	Actual	Budget	Authorized	Base Level	Agency	Executive	Base Level	Agency	Executive	
Regular Salaries 5010000	2,252,796	2,496,467	2,672,292	2,496,467	2,743,608	2,496,467	2,496,467	2,861,184	2,496,467	
#Positions	62	69	74	69	79	69	69	83	69	
Extra Help 5010001	14,353	40,000	42,900	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	
#Extra Help	8	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	
Personal Services Matching 5010003	664,634	741,829	814,490	803,756	896,321	803,756	803,756	937,179	803,756	
Operating Expenses 5020002	396,904	570,000	671,928	570,000	757,774	570,000	570,000	794,000	570,000	
Conference & Travel Expenses 5050009	18,232	20,000	20,000	20,000	28,111	20,000	20,000	29,800	20,000	
Professional Fees 5060010	136,527	183,500	183,500	183,500	183,500	183,500	183,500	183,500	183,500	
Data Processing 5090012	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Purchase of Services 5100004	2,103,509	2,122,058	2,122,058	2,342,808	2,342,808	2,122,058	2,122,058	2,373,558	2,373,558	
Capital Outlay 5120011	25,045	0	0	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	
Total	5,612,000	6,173,854	6,527,168	6,235,781	7,017,122	6,481,531	6,235,781	7,244,221	6,512,281	
General Revenue 4000010	1,770,297	1,826,864	1,843,353	2,103,371	1,843,353	1,843,353	2,309,470	1,843,353	1,843,353	
Federal Revenue 4000020	3,841,703	4,346,990	4,392,428	4,392,428	4,392,428	4,392,428	4,392,428	4,392,428	4,392,428	
Total Funding	5,612,000	6,173,854	6,235,781	6,235,781	6,495,799	6,235,781	6,235,781	6,701,898	6,235,781	
Excess Appropriation/(Funding)	0	0	0	521,323	245,750	245,750	0	542,323	276,500	
Grand Total	5,612,000	6,173,854	6,235,781	7,017,122	6,481,531	6,235,781	7,244,221	6,512,281	6,512,281	

Actual exceeds Authorized Appropriation by authority of Reallocation of Resources.
 Actual exceeds Authorized Appropriation due to Appropriation received from DFA for Agency funded Motor Vehicle Purchase.

Change Level by Appropriation

Appropriation: 896-DHHS-Admin Paying Account
Funding Sources: PWP-Administration Paying

Agency Request

Change Level		2007-2008	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL	2008-2009	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL
BL	Base Level	4,113,723	69	4,113,723	100.0	4,113,723	69	4,113,723	100.0
C01	Existing Program	233,715	5	4,347,438	105.6	421,917	9	4,535,640	110.2
C05	Unfunded Appropriation	166,323	5	4,513,761	109.7	167,323	5	4,702,963	114.3
C08	Technology	160,553	0	4,674,314	113.6	167,700	0	4,870,663	118.4

Executive Recommendation

Change Level		2007-2008	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL	2008-2009	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL
BL	Base Level	4,113,723	69	4,113,723	100.0	4,113,723	69	4,113,723	100.0
C01	Existing Program	0	0	4,113,723	100.0	0	0	4,113,723	100.0
C05	Unfunded Appropriation	0	0	4,113,723	100.0	0	0	4,113,723	100.0
C08	Technology	25,000	0	4,138,723	100.6	25,000	0	4,138,723	100.6

Justification

C01	OLDER BLIND. General revenue funding and appropriation to decrease the number of blind persons age 55 and older who are forced to move into a nursing home setting simply because they lack the skills necessary for living independently. In the absence of medical necessity, a nursing home is a much higher cost to state and federal taxpayers for ensuring safety and quality of life for older persons who are blind, than training individuals to remain safely in their own homes. For 2008, the request seeks four (4) Grade 20 E007 certified Rehabilitation Teachers for the Blind and one (1) Grade 21 M066 Rehab Field Supervisor. In 2009, DSB requests an additional 4 Rehab Teachers for the Blind. The teachers will provide in-home instruction in the activities of daily living related to blindness to enable consumers to become or remain self-sufficient in their own homes. Consumers will learn to navigate their environment safely; how to plan and safely cook nutritious meals; how to manage their financial and personal affairs without vision, etc. This in-home training represents an 80% savings in cost over nursing home care to consumers, their families or the taxpayers, and significantly improves the quality of life for everyone concerned. Requested also is Maintenance & Operations support for the Teachers and Supervisor, as well as additional Conference Fees and Travel related to the formal orientation of certified Teachers for the Blind approved under the federal Comprehensive System of Personnel Development within the Rehabilitation State Plan.
C05	VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION. Unfunded appropriation for job development for blind or severely visually impaired consumers in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, in the event additional federal or other funds become available. The request seeks restoration of five (5) positions, including two (2) K021 Grade 14 Rehabilitation Assistant IIs; two (2) K153 Grade 13 Secretary IIs; and one (1) K174 Grade 14 Braille and Recording Specialist. Appropriation is also requested for increased fuel costs for Counselor travel to consumer work places, and additional training related to the federally mandated Comprehensive System of Personnel Development, in the event federal or other funds become available. Unfunded appropriation permits the division to respond quickly to changes in the individual rehabilitation plans of blind and severely visually impaired consumers, enabling them to secure employment appropriate to their skills and education as the opportunities are developed. Federal rehabilitation funding is reallocated among state rehab agencies across the nation during each year and DSB seeks appropriation to utilize such funds if received. No additional general revenue match is required.
C08	Older Blind- General revenue funding and appropriation for purchase of computers, and software purchases for rehabilitation teachers and one supervisor to serve Arkansas older blind persons. Vocational Rehabilitation Services-unfunded appropriation is requested for upgrading computers, software, and other equipment for the Vocational rehabilitation program in the event federal or other funds become available.

Change Level by Appropriation

Appropriation: 898-DHHS-Grants Paying Account

Funding Sources: PWE-Grants Paying

Agency Request

Change Level		2007-2008	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL	2008-2009	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL
BL	Base Level	2,122,058	0	2,122,058	100.0	2,122,058	0	2,122,058	100.0
C01	Existing Program	20,750	0	2,142,808	100.9	41,500	0	2,163,558	101.9
C05	Unfunded Appropriation	200,000	0	2,342,808	110.4	210,000	0	2,373,558	111.8

Executive Recommendation

Change Level		2007-2008	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL	2008-2009	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL
BL	Base Level	2,122,058	0	2,122,058	100.0	2,122,058	0	2,122,058	100.0
C01	Existing Program	20,750	0	2,142,808	100.9	41,500	0	2,163,558	101.9
C05	Unfunded Appropriation	200,000	0	2,342,808	110.4	210,000	0	2,373,558	111.8

Justification

C01	<p>OLDER BLIND. General revenue funding and appropriation to decrease the number of blind persons age 55 and older who are forced to move into a nursing home setting simply because they lack the skills necessary for living independently. In the absence of medical necessity, a nursing home is a much higher cost to state and federal taxpayers for ensuring safety and quality of life for older persons who are blind, than training individuals to remain safely in their own homes. The request seeks appropriation and general revenue funding to purchase services for blind or visually impaired persons age 55 and older in support of the individual rehabilitation plans to enable them to remain independently in their own homes. Such appropriation and funding covers specialized training, magnifiers, and other adaptive equipment, services purchased from local providers, such as ophthalmologists, Lions World Services for the Blind, hospitals, etc. Consumers will learn to navigate their environment safely; how to plan and safely cook nutritious meals; how to manage their financial and personal affairs without vision, etc. These purchased services supplement the training by DSB certified Rehab Teachers for the Blind and enable DSB to provide services in the most cost-effective manner in a rural state. Successful rehabilitation of older persons who are blind or severely visually impaired represents an 80% savings in cost (over nursing home care) to consumers, their families or the taxpayers, and significantly improves the quality of life for everyone concerned</p>
C05	<p>VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION. Unfunded appropriation for purchased services for vocational rehabilitation and job placement of blind or severely visually impaired consumers, in the event additional federal or other funds become available. Such purchased services supplements the direct services provided by DSB certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and enables the agency to provide the most cost effective services, especially in rural areas. This unfunded appropriation permits the division to respond quickly to changes in the individual rehabilitation plans of blind and severely visually impaired consumers, enabling them to secure employment appropriate to their skills and education as the opportunities are developed. Federal rehabilitation funding is reallocated among state rehab agencies across the nation during each year and DSB seeks appropriation to utilize such funds if received. No additional general revenue match is required.</p>