**Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

**September 14, 2020**

**Special Recognition**

Outstanding work of staff from the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped led them to a national honor. DRS’ OLBPH received the Regional Library of the Year Award from The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled at the Library of Congress.

“Receiving this national honor is a real tribute to the hard working and dedicated staff at the Oklahoma Library for the Physically Handicapped,” DRS Executive Director Melinda Fruendt said. “I am proud of our library staff in their commitment to providing progressive and innovative programs for patrons across the state of Oklahoma.”

Upon congratulating Kevin Treese and library staff on this honor, Jill Streck, Recording Studio Director said “I would also like to mention Breanne Loving-Mendez, the volunteer you will see in the sound booth in the story.  Breanne is a professional voice-over actor and audio book narrator for Audible, who also volunteers with us.  She agreed to come in for the last-minute story, and was a total pro narrating in front of the camera!”

**Executive**

July 16 – Director and Executive Team participated in the Governor’s Leadership Summit.

July 20 – Director served on review committee for the Centers of Workforce Excellence applications.

July 20 – Director participated in the Oklahoma Works core partners meeting.

July 22 – Director participated in the Oklahoma ABLE Tech advisory council meeting.

July 28 – Director listened in on the virtual town hall meeting at Disability Determination Services.

July 30 – Director and staff met regarding accessible resources and how to communicate with other state agencies and partners.

July 31 - Director participated in the Governor’s Council on Workforce and Economic Development. New bylaws change: DRS Director is now a member of the Workforce System Oversight Committee (WSOC).

August 3 – Director and staff met with newly appointed Commissioner Flannery.

August 5 - Director and staff participated in the VR/SBVI performance team meeting.

August 6 – Director met with staff within the Professional Development unit to discuss staff development.

August 6 – Director, Tracy Brigham and Mark Kinnison met with a select group from the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) on an Equality Initiative.

August 10 – DRS Executive Team met.

August 11 - Director participated in the monthly Cabinet meeting.

August 18 – Director, Kevin Statham and Kevin Nelson met with Senator Rosino for a meet/greet and budget discussion.

August 25 – Second meeting with CSAVR on an Equality Initiative.

September 2 - Director and staff participated in the VR/SBVI performance team meeting.

September 3 – Director made a DRS welcome and presentation during the virtual Oklahoma Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Conference.

September 4 - Director participated in the monthly Cabinet meeting.

September 9 – Director and staff participated in the virtual Oklahoma APSE and Oklahoma People First conference.

September 10 – Director and staff participated in the virtual Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council strategic planning session.

In the last two months, Director participated in a variety of videos for future events.

**Executive Projects – Stephanie Roe**

Updates about DRS Operational Status continue to be provided to the Rehabilitation Services Administration to keep them informed of the circumstances we are facing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Updates include office operation and telework status for VR/SBVI staff.

Updates to the DRS Strategic Plan are required to be submitted with the budget request by October 1st. The leadership of each division and school are reviewing the strategies identified in our current strategic plan to update successes that have been achieved or are still in progress.  In addition, they will determining any required updates, revisions or new strategies for meeting the goals and objectives of DRS in the future.  Executive leadership is developing priorities focused on how the leadership team will support the division-specific goals.

**DRS ADA Coordinator – Charles Watt**

ADA accessibility evaluations have resumed and multiple site evaluations have recently been completed for DRS office locations and workforce system partners.

**Policy Administration and Development Section – Tina Calloway**

The 2020 rule revisions will be uploaded to iDRS and DRS website for an effective date of September 11th.  Continued review and revisions to chapter 10 and 25 are underway.

**Administrative Programs Officer - Elaine Woodward**

The solicitation for the license upgrades of ZoomText, ZoomText Fusion, and JAWS closed on August 17th. The legal department is currently reviewing the contract documents, then a contract award can be made.

The project to transition AWARE to Alliance for hosted services is underway. The ePro requisition and purchasing documents are currently being reviewed by the CIO at OMES.

Due to COVID, the $50,000 donation to the AIM Center from OSDE is no longer being spent on one solicitation of MagniLinks. The funds are now being used to purchase items as requested by the schools. Solicitations include handheld magnifiers and the BrailleNote Touch 32 Plus. The ePro req for the BrailleNote Touch was submitted on 8/31/20. Other purchases include an Acer Chromebook.

**Process Improvement – Lyuda Polyun**

**Federal Reporting**

RSA 911 PY2019 Q4 has been submitted.

Participated in a project meeting with Workforce aimed at Workforce’s disability data accuracy improvement.

**AWARE**

In July, AWARE was upgraded to a version that collects and reports data to account for changes introduced by RSA in the 911 requirements that went into effect on July 1.

Also in July we kicked off the new project to move existing scanned case documents now stored in a SharePoint Document library to the AWARE database for easier access and storage. The project is in its early stages and will officially move into high gear in October. The entire document migration process will take approximately 6 months to complete. With this migration we will enable a new process in AWARE so staff can attach supporting document directly to the AWARE case. That new process is currently being tested to optimize efficiency and ease of use for staff.

Also, over the past two months we have been working with SBVI/DVR leadership to insure proper documentation and recording of Credentials attained through training and education as well as training progress milestones. Both of these are Federal reporting requirements aimed at two Core Common Measures for Credential Attainment Rates and Measurable Skills Gains. We continue to work on a variety of training materials for staff to help improve federal reporting accuracy and completion in other areas as well.

**Case Reviews**

The QA team consistently reviewed case files closed both successfully and unsuccessfully during the months of July and August for Federal compliance. Cases were randomly selected from each unit across the State. The pull both from July and August had a lower number of cases for review due most likely to COVID-19. Approximately 141 cases were reviewed during this two month period.

Monthly Audit reports were compiled and submitted by the *Unit Supervisor* for Administration’s review of findings allowing for an opportunity for discussion and improvement.

Victoria Drake; member of the Policy Committee, has diligently worked on reviewing the Agency’s policy manual to ensure compliance with Federal requirements. Recommendations have been submitted. Timely endeavor.

Bi-monthly meetings attended with the Unit Supervisor to discuss and resolve outstanding concerns related to the auditing process.

**Program Standards, Statistical Research**

The research staff completed the staff Covid-19 survey report;

Completed the economic recession project report;

Continue to work with the AWARE team on data validity for the RSA-911;

Continue to work with Communications to share information about the 2020 Census;

Initiated the data gathering for the SFY2020 Legislative Map;

Created an online nomination form for the Commission Award;

Created and distributed via e-mail a VR and SBVI counselor survey for Business Services and Transition; and;

Initiated planning for a Covid-19 client survey to be sent to a random sample of open cases and cases closed successfully from October 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020.

***Respectfully submitted by***

***Melinda Fruendt, Executive Director***