

DHS - DIV OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

Enabling Laws

Act 21 of First Extraordinary Session of 2003
A.C.A. §25-10-201 et seq

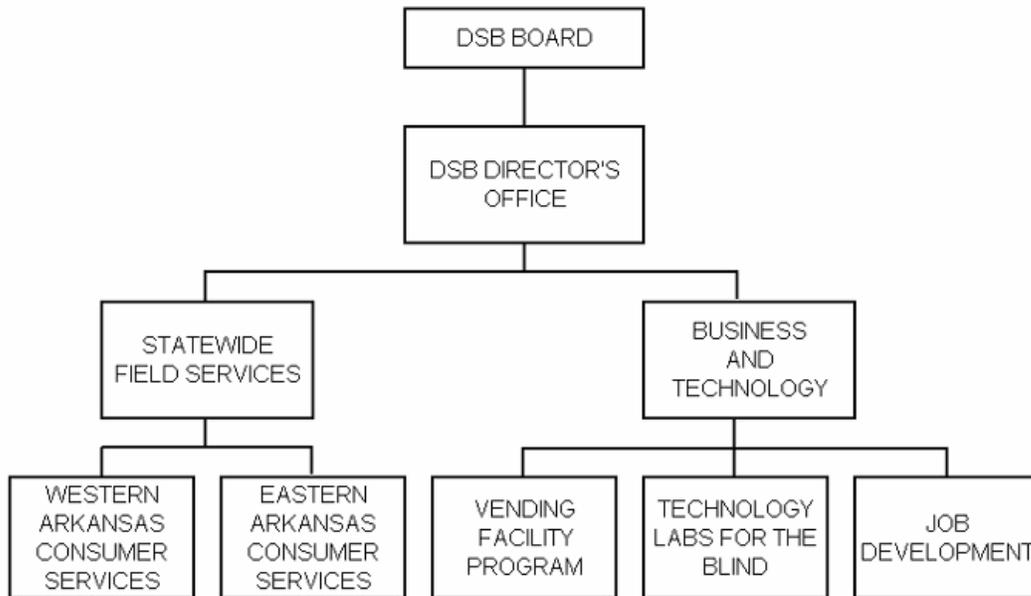
History and Organization

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 DHS 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 matches the VR grant at 21.3% and Older Blind grant at 10% and provides a small amount of additional discretionary general revenue with which DSB secures additional federal funds. Total Base Level for the division is \$5,880,427 in FY06 and \$5,966,903, with 67 Base Level positions each year.

For the 2005-2007 biennium, DSB seeks approval for four initiatives, all of which are anticipated to be funded through federal revenue. First, the division requests appropriation only for three positions for the Older Blind Program and approval of their associated payroll and personal services matching costs. These positions will staff a Medicaid Waiver program and enable DSB to provide three full time equivalent Senior Rehab Teachers for the Blind to teach activities of daily living to blind and visually impaired persons age 55 and older who are at risk of institutionalization. Two of these positions include a Secretary II position and a Braille & Recording Specialist position. These positions are requested to be restored and then reclassified as Senior Rehabilitation Teachers for the Blind. The third position requesting to be restored for the Older Blind Program is a Senior Rehabilitation Teacher for the Blind.

Additionally, \$15,000 of appropriation, to be funded with federal funds, for each year of the biennium is requested for the Purchase of Services Program to enable Rehabilitation Teachers to purchase specialized equipment, training and supplies.

The second DSB initiative seeks \$300,000 of unfunded appropriation per year in the Purchase of Services Program to enable DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to secure a variety of services for consumers from local ophthalmologists, optometrists, hospitals and equipment companies to advance consumer progress toward their individual rehabilitation goals for employment.

Third, DSB seeks appropriation only for the Vocational Rehab Program to restore three Counselor support positions and one Accountant. This will provide timely support to Counselors, particularly those who are blind or severely visually impaired, and allow timely recruitment of fiscal staff in the event of turnover.

The fourth DSB initiative seeks appropriation only for salary and associated payroll matching for restoration of one Senior Rehabilitation Teacher for the Blind.

Audit Findings

DIVISION OF LEGISLATIVE AUDIT
AUDIT OF :
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2002

Findings

Recommendations

Audit findings are reported under the DHS-Director's Office/Office of Chief Counsel on page 3.

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 / Program Summary

Historical Data						Agency Request and Executive Recommendation								
Appropriation / Program	2003-2004		2004-2005		2004-2005		2005-2006				2006-2007			
	Actual	Pos	Budget	Pos	Authorized	Pos	Agency	Pos	Executive	Pos	Agency	Pos	Executive	Pos
896 Div of Services for the Blind	3,358,712	62	3,977,130	67	4,327,710	75	4,344,952	74	4,313,118	74	4,437,557	74	4,405,110	74
898 Blind-Purchase of Services	2,012,372	0	1,807,058	0	1,807,058	0	2,122,058	0	2,122,058	0	2,122,058	0	2,122,058	0
Total	5,371,084	62	5,784,188	67	6,134,768	75	6,467,010	74	6,435,176	74	6,559,615	74	6,527,168	74

Funding Sources			%		%		%		%		%		%
General Revenue	4000010	1,615,214	30.1	1,770,435	30.6			1,800,158	30.6	1,800,158	30.6	1,826,864	30.6
Federal Revenue	4000020	3,559,404	66.3	4,012,753	69.4			4,079,269	69.4	4,079,269	69.4	4,139,039	69.4
Various Program Support	4000730	196,466	3.6	1,000	0.0			1,000	0.0	1,000	0.0	1,000	0.0
Total Funds		5,371,084	100.0	5,784,188	100.0			5,880,427	100.0	5,880,427	100.0	5,966,903	100.0
Excess Appropriation/(Funding)		0		0				586,583		554,749		592,712	
Grand Total		5,371,084		5,784,188				6,467,010		6,435,176		6,559,615	

Analysis of Budget Request

Appropriation / Program: 896 - DHS – 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 three main goals of the Division of Blind Services are:

- Employment - help blind or visually impaired persons in obtaining and maintaining employment that is consistent with their abilities and interests
- Rehabilitation Teaching - help blind or visually impaired persons to live as independently as possible through development of skills and adaptations that are needed to perform daily living activities.
- Prevention of Blindness - help to prevent blindness and, where possible, to restore vision.

Funding for this Program is derived from General Revenue (DSB - State Services for the Blind Fund Account) and Federal Revenue.

The Agency Base Level request for their Operations appropriation is \$4,073,369 for FY2006 and \$4,159,845 for FY2007. Base Level for this appropriation includes graduated salary increases of 3% to 1.5% each year over FY2005 salary levels, along with related Personal Services Matching costs for 67 Base Level positions. This includes a \$600 minimum increase for employees earning \$20,000 or below. Included in Personal Services Matching is a \$40 increase in the monthly contribution for State employee's health insurance for a total State match of \$320 per month.

The Agency Change Level request for their Operational appropriation totals \$271,583 for FY2006 and \$277,712 for FY2007 in Appropriation, and is comprised of the following:

- Salary and matching appropriation for restoration of eight (8) positions that were authorized but not budgeted to allow for flexibility.
- Transfer of salary and matching appropriation that is associated with one position to the Division

of Child Care & Early Childhood Education.

- Appropriation of \$43,175 in both years in Operating Expenses to provide support for three Senior Rehabilitation Teachers for the Blind who teach activities of daily living to blind and visually impaired persons age 55 and older who are at risk of institutionalization.
- Appropriation for position reclassifications (to Rehabilitation Teachers for the Blind) which will be used to assist Arkansans age 55 and older who are visually impaired. These teachers provide specialized training to enable at-risk persons to postpone or avoid institutionalization.

The Agency Base Level appropriation request for their Purchase of Services line item is \$1,807,058 in each year. The Agency Change Level request for this line item totals \$315,000 in each year and is comprised of the following:

- Appropriation of \$300,000 per year for purchase of services for blind or severely visually impaired consumers in the event additional federal funds become available. These services are tailored to help a blind person achieve or maintain appropriate employment. These services may include tuition, books, room and board for blind college students, surgery (such as cataract surgery), equipment related to blindness, and specialized instruction.
- Appropriation of \$15,000 per year for services associated with the Medicaid Waiver for Older Blind Program, which is pending federal approval. Services include canes, talking clocks, and specialized training related to blindness for Arkansans age 55 and older.

For the Operational appropriation (896), the Executive Recommendation reduces Travel-Conference Fees appropriation by \$9,000 each year of the biennium and approves the Agency Request for restoration of positions, Extra Help, Operating Expenses, and Professional Fees and Services.

The Executive Recommendation provides for the Agency Request for their Purchase of Services line item.

Appropriation / Program Summary

Appropriation / Program: 896 DHS – Admin Paying Account
Funding Sources: PWP-Administration Paying

Historical Data

Agency Request and Executive Recommendation

Commitment Item	2003-2004	2004-2005	2004-2005	2005-2006			2006-2007		
	Actual	Budget	Authorized	Base Level	Agency	Executive	Base Level	Agency	Executive
Regular Salaries 5010000	2,148,977	2,370,047	2,669,950	2,446,147	2,614,489	2,595,415	2,518,414	2,691,878	2,672,292
#Positions	62	67	75	67	74	74	67	74	74
Extra Help 5010001	30,013	42,900	42,900	42,900	42,900	42,900	42,900	42,900	42,900
#Extra Help	9	14							
Personal Services Matching 5010003	620,556	697,930	748,607	743,069	803,135	799,375	757,278	818,351	814,490
Operating Expenses 5020002	383,528	628,753	628,753	628,753	671,928	671,928	628,753	671,928	671,928
Travel-Conference Fees 5050009	12,826	29,000	29,000	29,000	29,000	20,000	29,000	29,000	20,000
Professional Fees and Services 5060010	132,281	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
DHS – Grants Paying Account 5100004	2,012,372	1,807,058	1,807,058	1,807,058	2,122,058	2,122,058	1,807,058	2,122,058	2,122,058
Capital Outlay 5120011	30,531	25,000	25,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	5,371,084	5,784,188	6,134,768	5,880,427	6,467,010	6,435,176	5,966,903	6,559,615	6,527,168
Funding Sources									
General Revenue 4000010	1,615,214	1,770,435		1,800,158	1,800,158	1,800,158	1,826,864	1,826,864	1,826,864
Federal Revenue 4000020	3,559,404	4,012,753		4,079,269	4,079,269	4,079,269	4,139,039	4,139,039	4,139,039
Various Program Support 4000730	196,466	1,000		1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Total Funding	5,371,084	5,784,188		5,880,427	5,880,427	5,880,427	5,966,903	5,966,903	5,966,903
Excess Appropriation/(Funding)	0	0		0	586,583	554,749	0	592,712	560,265
Grand Total	5,371,084	5,784,188		5,880,427	6,467,010	6,435,176	5,966,903	6,559,615	6,527,168

Commitment Item 5100004 reflects grant payments for Purchase of Services.

Change Level by Appropriation

Appropriation / Program: 896-DHS – Admin Paying Account

Funding Sources: PWP-Administration Paying

Agency Request

Change Level		2005-2006	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL	2006-2007	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL
BL	Base Level	4,073,369	67	4,073,369	100.0	4,159,845	67	4,159,845	100.0
C05	Unfunded Appropriation	286,746	8	4,360,115	107.0	293,289	8	4,453,134	107.0
C07	Agency Transfer	(37,997)	(1)	4,322,118	106.1	(39,024)	(1)	4,414,110	106.1
C10	Reclass	22,834	0	4,344,952	106.6	23,447	0	4,437,557	106.6

Executive Recommendation

Change Level		2005-2006	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL	2006-2007	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL
BL	Base Level	4,073,369	67	4,073,369	100.0	4,159,845	67	4,159,845	100.0
C05	Unfunded Appropriation	286,746	8	4,360,115	107.0	293,289	8	4,453,134	107.0
C07	Agency Transfer	(37,997)	(1)	4,322,118	106.1	(39,024)	(1)	4,414,110	106.1
C10	Reclass	0	0	4,322,118	106.1	0	0	4,414,110	106.1
C19	Executive Changes	(9,000)	0	4,313,118	105.8	(9,000)	0	4,405,110	105.9

Justification

C05	DSB requests appropriation for restoration of 3 positions to staff Medicaid Waiver for Older Blind Program, which is pending federal approval. DSB requests \$43,175 in appropriation each year for operating expenses for costs associated with travel and service delivery for these 3 positions. DSB requests appropriation for restoration of 3 positions to provide support services to Rehab Counselors and Teachers, especially those who are blind, in the event additional federal funds become available. DSB requests appropriation for restoration of 1 Accountant position to permit timely replacement of administrative staff in the event federal funds become available. DSB also requests appropriation for restoration of one Senior Rehab Teacher F/T Blind position.
C07	DSB requests transfer of appropriation associated with one position to DHS-Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education.
C10	DSB requests appropriation for reclassification of one K174 Braille & Recording Specialist position and one K153 Secretary II position to SR Rehab Teachers f/t Blind (E007) positions. These are 2 of the 3 positions that would be utilized to staff the Medicaid Waiver for Older Blind Program. The number of Arkansans age 55 and older who are blind or visually impaired has risen by 23 percent between 1995 and 2005 but the number of Rehabilitation Teachers for the Blind has decreased from 13 to 6 in that time. These teachers provide specialized training to enable at-risk persons with severe visual impairments to postpone or avoid institutionalization. The average cost of the Older Blind training program last year was \$562 per person for instruction, supplies and equipment. During the same period, the average cost of nursing home care in Arkansas was \$40,150 per person. DSB requests reclassification of these positions to provide cost-effective instruction in the skills of self-sufficiency to the increasing population of blind and severely visually impaired persons age 55 and older.
C19	Executive Recommendation is for \$9,000 reduction in Travel-Conference Fees in each year of the biennium.

Change Level by Appropriation

Appropriation / Program: 898-DHS – Grants Paying Account

Funding Sources: PWE-Grants Paying

Agency Request

Change Level		2005-2006	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL	2006-2007	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL
BL	Base Level	1,807,058	0	1,807,058	100.0	1,807,058	0	1,807,058	100.0
C05	Unfunded Appropriation	315,000	0	2,122,058	117.4	315,000	0	2,122,058	117.4

Executive Recommendation

Change Level		2005-2006	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL	2006-2007	Pos	Cumulative	% of BL
BL	Base Level	1,807,058	0	1,807,058	100.0	1,807,058	0	1,807,058	100.0
C05	Unfunded Appropriation	315,000	0	2,122,058	117.4	315,000	0	2,122,058	117.4

Justification

C05 DSB requests \$300,000 in appropriation each year to provide flexibility for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in purchasing services for blind or severely visually impaired consumers in the event additional federal funds become available. These purchases include surgery, equipment related to blindness, and specialized instruction. DSB also requests \$15,000 in appropriation each year to purchase services for the blind that are associated with the Medicaid Waiver for Older Blind Program, which is pending federal approval. Services include canes, talking clocks, other equipment, and specialized training related to blindness for Arkansans age 55 and older.