**Board Meeting Reports**

**June 14, 2022**

# Director's Report – Emily Wharton

We are very grateful to Governor Reynolds and the General Assembly for approving our requested SFY23 budget. This will allow us to move forward to improve and expand services to blind Iowans in the coming year.

Our 2021 RSA VR Program Monitoring Corrective Action Plan (CAP) has been approved. We are working on meeting its requirements over the next year. As part of this, we are working on a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the general agency. In addition, the Commission Board will be reviewing many of our policies and procedures over the next several meetings. We are working on an overhaul of the Iowa Blindness Empowerment and Independence Center (IBEIC) student manual and making requested updates to the VR Program manual. When updates are approved, they will appear on our website's "Policies and Guidelines" page at: <https://blind.iowa.gov/policies-1>.

The end of May and early June brings a lot of preparation to IDB. Accounting is busy preparing for the end of state fiscal year 22 and the beginning of state fiscal year 23, wrapping up our audit, and this year, dealing with the added challenges of the transition to the state's new fiscal management system. We have a fabulous team in accounting: our CFO Cheri Myers, Jeremiah Shar, Jenny Gries, and Kelli Brennan. We are working to add another part-time clerk to help out and the team is taking on a student intern this summer. Jenny is great at tech and excelled at computer class while in the Center, so she does a lot with helping screen reader users work with the new Workday system and communicate issues she finds with the developers. Jeremiah is who folks talk with about Gifts and Bequests requests. He does this so I can make decisions without knowing who the requestor is and this is very helpful. Jeremiah has also done great work in submitting Social Security reimbursement requests. Kelli does a number of things and I enjoy getting to say hello to her as she is out and about picking up mail or distributing checks. I like to give Cheri a hard time about being unlike most accountants because she cares so much about the why behind what she is accounting for and will go the extra mile to make sure people get what they need to do their jobs. They have great teamwork and customer service. I wanted to highlight this because what they do makes what our direct service staff do possible and how they go about doing it makes everyone's days brighter. Also, because so much of what they do is behind the scenes, they rarely receive the recognition they deserve.

We are hoping to have our request for proposals (RFP) for a new case management system release before this report comes out. While eForce has served us well for many years, the code base is becoming increasingly difficult to keep running on modern, secure servers.

We are in the process of completing our re-certification as a Service Enterprise. This process helps us to improve and expand the ways we work with volunteers to provide more and better service to blind Iowans. I would like to again thank all the volunteers who gave of their time and talents in the last few years. You made hard times easier. I'm thinking particularly of the narrators who started the IDB Reads during the pandemic, to help reduce the isolation that many patrons felt. I also want to mention that we have many different types of volunteers doing very different things to help our agency. A large number of our volunteers transcribe and proofread braille and narrate or edit audio, however, consumer groups volunteer with youth, center and senior programs. We have volunteers helping with our Self-Advocacy Seminars and Braille Trainings throughout the state. We have individuals donating their skill as graphic designers and editors. We have clerical volunteers who fix book players and shelve books. To learn more about volunteering with IDB, visit <https://blind.iowa.gov/volunteers>. We are completing a survey of staff to determine additional areas of need for volunteers and also a survey of volunteers to help us learn how to improve their experience. If you receive such a survey, please do take a moment to fill it out.

At our May quarterly all-agency staff meeting, I asked staff to dream. We are coming out of a period of great uncertainty and challenge that made looking more than a week ahead very difficult. Because of the SSA reimbursements mentioned above, we are hoping to have the ability to take on some tasks that needed to be on the backburner as well as dream up new ways that we can improve and expand our services. We have many creative minds within our agency and a great deal of energy and enthusiasm. However, I would love to hear thoughts and ideas from community members. These can be shared via email to emily.wharton@blind.state.ia.us or shared at my monthly Director's Forum.

Director's Forum was moved to Tuesdays. A survey was taken to find the time that most attendees would prefer. This will be held on June28 from 12:00-1:00 and at this same time on the fourth Tuesday of every month. The report portion is recorded and shared via podcast afterwards at: <https://shows.acast.com/idb-director-forum>. Here is the Zoom connection info:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/109673957?pwd=bStha0U3WFdhdFhCS0wzcThnOVBZdz09>

Meeting ID: 109 673 957

Passcode: 2222

One tap mobile

+16513728299,109673957# US (Minnesota)

+1 651 372 8299 US (Minnesota)

Meeting ID: 109 673 957

CFO – Cheri Myers

## Federal Grant Update:

Enclosed is the Grant Report as of 4/30/2022. The FFY22 grant award notices have been fully received.

## Budget Report:

State FY22 budget report through 4/30/2022 is enclosed in the packet. The report included report compares year to date to the annual budget based on state fiscal year. There is a brief explanation in column F on any item that appeared to be over budget to date.

The Gifts and Bequests report is at the bottom of the FY22 Budget report.

SFY23 budget has been approved by the legislature and Accounting is waiting for the Budget to be opened for entry by the Department of Management.

## WorkDay Conversion:

The conversion to WorkDay has been moved back to May 2023. End to end testing is schedule to start and all of the accounting staff will assist in testing each area of WorkDay at least one procedure in each.

## State Fiscal Year End:

I am quite happy with my accounting staff as IDB’s accounts payable are in the best shape since I started. They have worked hard each month to clean up any old and outstanding invoices.

## Other:

* The FY22 audit is in process and still has not ended. Work continues with the auditor, and it is expected to be done 6/3/2022.
* Planning to attend the next NRLI session in DC in September 2022.
* Part-time Accounting Clerk 2, Peggy Halterman resigned to go back to her previous employer. Have interviewed for a replacement and should hire this week.

# Education and Training Team – Helen Mejia

## Personnel

* Anisha Bryant joined the team as a temporary secretary effective April 4. She is assisting the Education and Training Team with a variety of tasks including tracking project completion and data entry.
* Cindy Clefisch resigned her position as a Vocational Rehabilitation Teacher effective May 13.
* Kaitlyn Kelly resigned her position as a Youth Services Worker effective June 9.
* We are in the process of hiring for several positions and anticipate having more announcements in June.
* We are pleased to have ten temporary staff join us to work this summer’s LEAP program: Ally Mendez, Christopher Ashman, Jeff Jasper, Kacey King, Kyle Garcia, Mackenzie Colglazier, Naim Abu-El Hawa, Oscar Montiel, Trang Ha, and Trinh Ha.

## Pre-Employment Transition Services

* 8 youth participated in the September youth weekend retreat.
* 9 youth participated in the October youth weekend retreat.
* 9 youth participated in the December youth weekend retreat.
* 13 youth participated in the January youth weekend retreat.
* 13 youth participated in the February youth weekend retreat.
* 13 youth participated in the February youth weekend retreat.
* We have had a total of 19 different students participate, and 9 new students have attended their first retreat this year.
* 16 students are currently set to attend the 2022 LEAP program.
	+ The program will run June 12 - August 13.
	+ Students will live in apartments and attend classes at Grand View University.
	+ Students will participate in a STEM activity with the library every Thursday afternoon.
	+ Students will have classes in blindness philosophy, braille, cane travel, career exploration, life skills, and technology.
	+ Students will participate in a range of activities in the community in order to build confidence, and work on self-advocacy and other soft skills.

## Young Adult Transition Program

* 5 students are currently enrolled to attend the program during the 2022-2023 school year.

## Client Training

* Approximately 100 clients are currently receiving services from a Rehabilitation Technology Specialist.
* Approximately 150 clients are currently receiving services from a Vocational Rehabilitation Teacher.
* 7 clients participated in the March self-week session.
* 5 clients participated in the May self-week session.
* 17 clients have been accepted to attend the July session. We added a July session for clients who are more available during the summer. Instructors are working with their clients to help more clients who apply to participate follow through and attend the week.
* Applications are being accepted for the October, March and May sessions.
* Approximate total number of direct services recorded as provided to clients by VR Teachers, Rehabilitation Technology Specialists, YATP or LEAP staff members so far during program year 2021, which began July 1, 2021: 3,200. These services include Disability Related Skills Training, Job Readiness Training, Rehabilitation Technology, Pre-ETS Job Exploration and Counseling, Pre-ETS Work Based Learning Experiences, Pre-ETS Counseling on PSE Enrollment Opportunities, Pre-ETS Workplace Readiness Training, and Pre-ETS Instruction in Self-Advocacy.
	+ Program year 2020: 3,000
	+ Program year 2019: 3,100
	+ Program year 2018: 1,600

# Independent Living Program - Kimberley Barber

## Independent Living Brochures

The Independent Living brochure drafts have been received by 818: A Tiny Design Empire. The next steps are to have the team review these drafts, then we will reach back out the designer with any changes. After the draft is proofed and approved, we will send the finals to the printer.

## Older Individuals who are Blind Technical Assistance Center (OIB-TAC)

OIB-TAC sponsored their annual 2022 Program Managers in Denver, Colorado from May 11-12. Director Kendra Farrow from OIB-TAC lead our group and Nikki Jeffords, VR Program Specialist with the United States Department of Education (OSER/RSA) also joined our group to observe and share insight.

In addition to having the opportunity to network with other Program Managers, the following conference topics were covered:

* + Old Blind Program Best Practices
	+ Who is a Qualified Professional?
	+ Mission Recruit
	+ Planning & Celebrating Measurable Goals
	+ Best Practices for Providing Assistive Technology

## Independent Living Advisory Committee (ILAC)

ILAC has been a well-established group of volunteers over the past years who agreed to meet at least quarterly the last few years; originally in-person then transitioned to meet via ZOOM. ILAC is charged to consult on matters of policy, program development, implementation, and evaluation, particularly regarding the initial development and periodic revision of the State Plan for Independent Living. The Committee also is charged with special responsibilities in the areas of outreach and advocacy.

With changing times, we experienced challenges to recruit new members to the table. As interest to volunteer on our committee has appeared momentarily diminished, we sought answers to find a new approach or subsequent models to reach our constituents for Independent Living and the Older Blind programs. Upon conversation with and support from the entire ILAC community, it was decided that we could potentially create better consumer engagement by having the IL Administrator, IL teachers, and with invitation, the IDB Director attend and host informational meetings via ZOOM then turn them into Podcasts. Interested constituents could join to provide valued feedback/suggestions for programming purposes, ask questions, and receive important program updates as well. The archived podcasts could be available 24/7 for any interested party to view then follow-up with the program administrator if desired.

All ILAC members were very much in favor of this model and though it would be far-reaching. ILAC will no longer be meeting as a group in moving forward; we will move to this new model effective August 2022 on a quarterly basis. At this point, we will continue to hold these meetings the same time and date.

## Business Service Partnership with Drake University

Drake University is partnering with Iowa Department for the Blind and Independent Living Division by holding a summer [Mandela Washington Fellowship](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.drake.edu%2Fyali%2F&data=05%7C01%7Clisa.boes%40drake.edu%7C80b493b29b174030d07908da3911ab81%7C6f028129009c4b33b633bbfc58bbd960%7C0%7C0%7C637885045303899927%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=3nC%2BVjQak%2Fuedkjcws2pRg2mvnZknQEUTV0ucZYNVXs%3D&reserved=0) on their campus. The fellowship consists of 25 professional adults from different countries in Africa. Their guests will be on their campus from June 8th- July 17th. They were notified that they will have two fellows joining who are blind: both professionals from their countries. They requested business services from our agency. As a WIOA partner, we can offer information and support and training services. We have met with a couple of Drake staff members already, including the global partnership coordinator to align services which will begin June 8.

## IL Integration

The Independent Living and Orientation Center will be gearing up for another ILOB Integration for those over the age of 55 August 14-19, 2022. We are just starting the process of planning for this event, so stay tuned.

## Community-Based Training Events

ILR teachers are very excited that clients want to participate in Community-Based Training events. There was a two-day event held here at the Department in April and one in May. Another training event was held in Cedar Falls in May as well.

# **Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped Report and Statistics – Sarah Willeford**

## Library Updates

The library held the Iowa Regional Braille Challenge on Saturday, February 26th at the Iowa Department for the Blind. Eight students and their families attended the event in person, while nine students tested remotely at their schools. The library is proud to announce that there are two finalists from Iowa competing the Braille Challenge finals. Nathan Deeds is a finalist in the Varsity group and Khanh Tran is a finalist in the Apprentice group. They have been invited to compete at the National Finals June 24 & 25 at the University of Southern California.

The Department and Library took part in the Des Moines Book Festival on Saturday, March 26th in Downtown Des Moines. Library staff had a table and provided a hands-on braille activity in an activity nook and had over 240 people visit. The staff also conducted two introductions to braille workshops, one for adults and one for families and had 70 individuals participate. Library staff will be participating in the Des Moines Downtown Famers Market on Saturday, August 20th with a booth that will provide information and a hands-on braille activity.

The Elizabeth Perowsky Volunteer Workshop and Luncheon was held on Friday, April 22nd at the Iowa Department for the Blind to recognize all the wonderful volunteers. Each year the Elizabeth Perowsky Memorial Award and other recognitions are given to our volunteers in appreciation for all that they do for our library.  This year it was unanimously decided that all our volunteers deserved the Elizabeth Perowsky Memorial Award for their hard work and dedication to the library.

May’s Library Chat podcast was a special episode for the library.  The library staff was asked to present at the annual meeting of the Friends of the Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped in April on the extraordinary lengths the staff went through to keep the library functioning during the pandemic. In addition, library staff spoke about the library receiving the 2020 National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled Network Library of the Year Award. The presentation by the library staff reflects on what was accomplished by the library over these two years and what we learned from the challenges and opportunities those years presented. It is an amazing story that we wanted to share as part of our May Library Chat Podcast by including the audio recording of our presentation.

The library is excited to offer a summer online course for paraeducators, associates and educators surrounding Accessible Educational Materials or AEM and Braille. This 8 week (June 13th – August 7th) online, self-paced course will combine our library’s Braille Bits course and our Instructional Materials Center courses on accessible educational materials into one. Participants will work through the Braille Bits lessons while having access to the library’s certified Braille transcribers for questions. They will also be provided information on Accessible Educational Materials through videos, articles, and other resources to sharpen and enhance their AEM knowledge.

The library will also be offering a summer online course, Accessibility 101 for Iowa’s Workforce System, for Workforce staff. The 8 modules will utilize online discussion, self-paced practical assignments, and resources for reference and ongoing learning to give participants knowledge and skills related to accessibility and Universal Design in Learning. The objective is to give participants an introduction to accessibility and universal design that will provide them with practical knowledge and skills that will help them to create materials, programs, and services that can be accessed by all job seekers. This is an 8 week online, self-paced class from June 13th – August 7th.

The library issued a request for proposals (RFP) for Instructional Material Center production tracking software. The RFP was awarded to Brackenwood Consulting for their software called Athena. It is a cloud-based platform designed to simplify the process of placing and handling orders, managing inventory, and tracking the production of books to meet student needs. The Instructional Materials Center Team is currently working with the vendor for the infrastructure setup and workflow integration and hope to have the software in use by November 2022.

## Summer Reading Programs

The Library will be hosting several programs this summer for patrons of all ages.

Ready, Set, Adventure! Summer Reading Program for all ages. The program will run from June 6th through July 29th and will offer lots of fun, virtual programs along the way. Join Youth Services Librarian, Denise Bean, three times a week via Zoom for her fun-filled activities - Double Craft Mondays, Story Prompt Wednesdays, and Food Frenzy Fridays.

STEM Experience for teens 14 years and older this summer. Teens will have fun with physical science, engineering, math, coding, and earth science and discover how to work through the Engineering Design Process through different activities. There will be special guest speakers throughout the summer introducing different topics and the teens will be using hands-on STEM activities.

When Story Time Comes to You Program is a partnership with public libraries throughout Iowa. Denise Bean, Youth Services Librarian, will visit different public libraries providing participants of all ages with a fun introduction to Braille, the story of Louis Braille, hands-on activities, and games. Participants are provided with braille activities to take home. Public libraries are provided with braille information and a print/braille book to add to their collection.

The Great Reading Challenge (GRC) is a six month long reading challenge open to adults 18 years of age or older who are a patron of the Iowa Library for the Blind and Print Disabled. To complete the challenge, you need to read 12 books between January 15, 2022, and July 15, 2022. The challenge of the GRC is to read books that fit into one of the many categories on the Mission page in ReadSquared.

Our Braille Babies and Books for Kids programs continue year-round. We have over 150 actively participating in our Books for Kids program which each month sends books to homes and schools to promote reading and braille.

## Online and Social Media

**Library Blogs**

Turning the Pages Library Blog. Find information on library services, programs and resources. <http://iowalibrary.blog>

Instructional Materials Center Blog. For educators and transcribers. Information on accessible educational materials, braille transcription, universal design and more. <http://idbimclibrary.blog>

**Podcasts**

* Library News: A monthly podcast by library staff about upcoming library events, programs, latest books and more.
* Library Chat: A monthly podcast by library staff where we review books and podcasts on all types of subjects.
* Braille Bits: A podcast reviewing each Braille Bits lesson and a discussion with a special guest about braille.

**Social Media**

Follow us on Twitter, like us on Facebook and check out the great resources on the IDB YouTube channel

**Library Statistics**

For March 2022, April 2022 and May 2022

Library Patrons Added: 121

Library Material Circulation

Total Circulation: 91,652

Braille: 1,406

Large Print: 258

Digital Books: 87,214

Magazine Issues: 2,603

Digital Players: 171

Library Collection

Total Books Added to the Library Collection: 2,102

Braille: 425

Print/Braille: 49

Large Print: 100

Digital Books: 1,528

Instructional Materials Center Orders Received

Total Orders Received: 804

BARD (Braille and Audio Reading Download) Usage

Total Books Downloaded from BARD: 11,580

Audio: 9,933

Braille: 1,647

Average Number of Patrons Using BARD: 587

Newsline Service Usage

Current Subscribers: 1,741

New Subscribers: 10

Telephone Calls: 7,452

Web Sessions: 21,275

“In Your Pocket” Deliveries: 28,117

E-mail Deliveries: 11,206

Iowa Newspaper Accesses: 77,864

National Newspaper Accesses: 4,549

International Newspaper Accesses: 141

Blog Usage

Library – Turning the Pages Blog

Visitors: 1,022

Views: 2,102

Instructional Materials Center Blog

Visitors: 504

Views: 1,281

Library Podcasts

Library News Monthly Podcast: 3 produced

Listens Online: 257

Sent Out on Cartridges: 1,788

Library Chat Podcast: 3 produced

Listens Online: 228

Braille Bits Podcast:

Listens Online: 383

Programming Statistics

Adult Programs Held: 25

Adult Program Attendance: 395

Youth Programs Held: 30

Youth Program Attendance: 271

Outreach Programs Held: 18

Outreach Program Attendance: 573

Total Programs Held: 73

Total Program Attendance: 1,239

# Orientation Center Report – Karly Prinds

## Orientation Center Students

As of 5/31/2022 we have six students and two staff in training. We had one student graduate on May 19. This student will be working for the LEAP summer program. Following the summer, he will be pursuing his Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling at Drake University. We will have a new student starting on June 6th and are looking forward to this.

In April, we hosted Younger IL students. In May we hosted Self Week students with a tour of the student apartments, dinner that evening, followed by string-ball.

We have had some great activities over the last couple of weeks. On May 20th, Center students and staff went to Pella. Everyone explored the town, ate lunch, and did some shopping. There was lots of learning, and everyone had a great time.

On May 25th, we all volunteered at Habitat for Humanity. We helped build a ramp and everyone worked hard hammering, shoveling, cutting with a saw, and laying cement.

# Vocational Rehabilitation – Keri Osterhaus

## Position Vacancies and Changes

* Anna Reilly completed her training in the Iowa Blindness Empowerment and Independence Center. She is now in the field completing counselor-specific training and has begun serving vocational rehabilitation clients in Benton, Linn and Jones counties.
* Ambrose Fowler-Harney will complete his training in the Iowa Blindness Empowerment and Independence Center in June. He will then be working in the field to complete counselor-specific training. He will then be serving clients in north and central Iowa (Story, Boone, Hamilton, Webster, Calhoun, Wright, Humboldt, Pocahontas and Polk counties).
* Carrie Wadding has been hired for the position of BEP counselor. Her first day is Monday, June 6, 2022.
* The BEP Executive Officer 1 position was reposted due to lack of applicants. The 2nd posting closed, and we are in the interview process.
* We have reposted the Employment Supports Specialist position due to lack of applicants. The post has been extended for two weeks.

# Program Updates

**Client Outcomes:** Since the start of the program year, counselors successfully closed 27 VR cases in competitive and integrated employment. Individuals have closed in the following positions since April 2022: auditor, clergy/pastor, cook, orientation and mobility instructor, property manager, secretary, stocker, and youth services worker. The average weekly earnings for these individuals was $452.00, averaging 28.75 hours per week. There are currently 24 individuals working in positions that meets their employment goals.

**Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment:** As shared at the March Commission Board Meeting, IDB is partnering with Interwork Institute at San Diego State University to conduct our triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). During the week of June 20, 2022, the project director will be conducting several focus groups and information interviews. Surveys will be sent out to former and current clients, agency staff, businesses, and partners.

**Unified State Plan:** We completed our portion of the modifications of the Unified State Plan. The Unified State Plan is now under review by our federal partner agencies.

**Transition Services:** During this past quarter we have had a number of counselors and teachers attending IEP and other transition planning meetings for students. Counselors have also been working with partner programs and employers to identify summer transition programs and work experience opportunities for students.

**New Programs:** We are partnering with Dale Carnegie to provide instruction in self-advocacy and workplace readiness training to students eligible for pre-employment transition services. This program will be held virtually in July. We have also developed a partnership with virtualjobshadow.com to provide additional opportunities for additional career exploration and workplace readiness training.