

BSPC Committee Reports for June 2024

DRS Bureau Report, BSPC Report for June 2024

Brief introduction or scope of the program:

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) director for Illinois administers federal funds designated for the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA.) specific programs under the Director's responsibilities include Illinois' VR Services program (Title I); State Supported Employment Services program (Title VI); and Independent Living Services for Older Individuals who are Blind program (Title VII, Chapter 2.

Highlights and Summary of Accomplishments:

Fill vacancies from retirees with qualified people, by achieving a 7% vacancy rate at DRS. Please refer to Bureau Chief's report.

Seeking recommendations for the Bureau Chief of the Bureau of Customer and Community Blind Services from the Council.

Best Wishes for Kim Borowicz

Goodbye to an incredible leader and friend. I will miss your presence, and I'm excited to witness your continued growth through your new job! Remember me when you are more famous! Thank you for your contributions and service to the State of Illinois.

Division of Rehabilitation Services: Bureau Customer and Community Blind Services Field Service Report, BSPC Report for June 2024

BCCBS VR Field - year to date State fiscal year 2024

- A total of 145 customers received rehabilitation instruction and orientation and mobility services.
- A total of 271 Individualized Plans for Employment were written.
- A total of 307 customers were determined eligible for VR services.
- We are currently serving 1,333 customers.
- Seven customers have self-employment plans.
- 103 customers obtained competitive integrated employment. All three categories listed below have increased since the last reporting period.
 - Average wage is \$20.31
 - Average hours working per week 30.60
 - Percent with employer provided health insurance is 28.05%

Updates on Hiring in BCCBS

- BCCBS region 1 (Chicago and Cook County suburbs) offices are located at Chicago Wood St, Avalon Park, Humboldt Park, Chicago Heights, Emerald City, and Rolling Meadows. All Rehabilitation Instructor positions are filled in region 1 except Emerald City. The Spanish Speaking Counselor located at Wood Street and the Case Coordinator position located at Avalon Park are vacant.
- In region 2 all counselor and coordinator positions are filled. BCCBS region 2 offices are located at Aurora, Downers Grove, Rockford, and Waukegan. The Rehabilitation Instructor positions in Waukegan was posted June 25, 2024.
- In region 3 all counselor and coordinator positions have been filled. BCCBS Region 3 offices are located at Champaign, Peoria, and Rock Island. We have a Rehabilitation Instructor in Champaign and need to post the Rehabilitation Instructor positions in Peoria and Rock Island.
- In region 4 all coordinator positions are filled. BCCBS region 4 offices are in Decatur, Jacksonville, and Springfield. There is a Counselor Trainee in Jacksonville and all other Counselor positions are vacant. Springfield office has a Rehabilitation Instructor and an O&M Instructor and all other RMI positions are vacant.
- In region 5 all counselor positions are filled. BCCBS region 5 offices are in Murphysboro, Belleville, East Alton, and Mt. Vernon. Case coordinators are needed in the other offices. There is one Rehab Instructor in Mt. Vernon and all other RMI positions are vacant.

ICRE-Wood, BSPC Report for June 2024

Census

There is a total of 34 customers in the program: 11 residents, 19 commuters and 4 remote. The total count includes: 1 deafblind and 1 Spanish speaking customer.

Waiting List

Currently, there are 7 eager individuals on the waiting list.

Staff Shortage

There is a need for a Program Director, 4 Rehabilitation Mobility Instructors, 2 Mobility Orientation Instructors, 1 Health & Wellness Instructor, and Office Coordinator/Receptionist (Spanish speaking).

Recently, the positions of Residential Care Worker and Residential Care Worker Trainee were posted on the Central Management Services (CMS) website. We hope to have the vacant positions filled in the near future.

End of Term

The current term will end Wednesday, August 21st

Graduation

Thursday, August 22nd will be the next graduation. Staffings are in progress, therefore, a graduate count is unavailable at this time.

New Term

The next term will begin Wednesday, September 4, 2024

Custom Announcements

A former customer of ICRE-Wood recently graduated from Roosevelt University with a master's degree in counseling.

A current customer passed the GED exam while attending classes at ICRE-Wood.

A current customer has gained employment with the company Aspect as a Facility Trainer.

A current customer, while attending classes, is now employed at Walgreens as a Customer Service Assistant.

Bureau of Customer Community Blind Services: Business Enterprise Program for the Blind, BSPC Report for June 2024

Personnel Update

I was asked by Director Patrick to come back to my old position as Administrator of BEPB for a 75-day appointment. Last week was my first full week as Administrator.

The BEPB Administrator position was posted a couple weeks ago. The position will be based in Springfield. Applicants had until 6/27/2024 to apply.

Director Patrick approved the paperwork for one of our Business Consultants to be temporarily assigned to fill the vacant position of Budget and Contracts Manager. The position was filled on February 1st, but she went back to her old job within a couple of months. We are waiting for this position to be reposted.

We have been without clerical support in Springfield for some time. The position of Executive Secretary is in the process of being upgraded to an Administrative Assistant. We have hopes that this process will be completed soon.

Equipment

All equipment and service contracts have been updated in preparation for the new fiscal year. All end-of-the-year contract financial reconciliations, except for one, have been completed.

New Locations

Recently we were notified that the bid for Waubensee Community College in Sugar Grove was won by BEPB. It has two satellite locations with multiple vending areas. We will also be responsible for coffee and water service as well as at least one micro market. Next month we will be conducting site assessments to develop a comprehensive list of equipment.

Other recent locations that we have acquired are:

- Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- YMCA in Ottawa
- Kankakee Army Aviation Support Facility
- Illinois Building

Illinois Council of the Blind, BSPC Report for June 2024

The Illinois Council of the Blind held its convention in April 2024 with plans to hold another convention in Springfield in April 2025. ICB and other affiliates of the American Council of the Blind are now preparing for the annual conference and convention to be held in Jacksonville, FL, from July 5-12, with both in-person and virtual attendees. A number of virtual meetings will be held during the week of June 24.

The Education and Welfare Committee of ICB has continued to hold meetings. Concerns have included the ongoing issue of vote by mail and the statewide issue of high-speed rail. More recently, this committee has continued to express concern about the ongoing issues of the Bureau of Blind Services, staffing issues/vacancies, and now the issue of the bureau chief with the departure of Kim Borowicz, whom the ICB wishes well.

National Federation of the Blind of Illinois, BSPC Report for June 2024

NFB of Illinois State Convention

The 2024 NFB of Illinois State Convention will take place on October 18th - 20th at the Naperville Marriott Hotel in Naperville, Illinois. For those who are planning on attending, you can make your reservation by calling (630) 505-4900

Room rates per night are \$140 for a King Executive Room and \$150 for a Double Queen Room.

Keep an eye out for more information regarding the NFBI state convention in the coming months.

NFB National Convention

The National Federation of the Blind will host our annual National Convention from July 3rd - July 8th in Orlando, Florida.

To learn more about the NFB National Convention, you can visit the convention website by clicking [here](#)

NFBI Bell Academy

The National Federation of the Blind of Illinois (NFBI) is sponsoring its 2024 BELL (Braille Enrichment for Literacy & Learning) Academies.

The NFB BELL Academy—which stands for National Federation of the Blind Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning®—helps blind and low-vision children, ages four through twelve, develop the literacy skills that will empower them to achieve their academic goals and live the lives they want. Receive Braille instruction and other nonvisual blindness skills through fun, hands-on learning. Take advantage of this opportunity for your child to connect with blind role models, students, and more!

- Location 1: Chicago
July 22 through August 2, 2024
8:30 AM – 3:30 PM, Monday through Friday
- Location 2: Springfield
July 15 through July 19, 2024
8:30 AM to 3:30 PM, Monday through Friday

Voting Rights

The NFB of Illinois, Access Living Chicago, Equip for Equality, Illinois Council of the Blind, Tusk Philanthropies, Secure Family Initiative, and Reform for Illinois have been meeting on efforts regarding voting rights for blind people in Illinois.

For more information, please contact Denise Avant at davant1958@gmail.com
Federal Legislation

There are currently bills on the floor of Congress that the NFB of Illinois is asking for co-sponsorship from our members.

- Medical Device Nonvisual Accessibility Act H.R. 1328
- Transformation to Competitive and Integrated Employment Act H.R. 1263
- Transformation to Competitive and Integrated Employment Act S. 533
- Access Technology Affordability Act H.R. 3702
- Access Technology Affordability Act S. 1467
- AV Accessibility Act H.R. 7126