**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**Achieving a Better Life Experience Program Committee**

Tuesday, August 31at 2:00 pm

Victory Building Conference Room, Suite 275 -- Little Rock, AR 72201

A meeting of the Arkansas Achieving a Better Life Experience Program Committee (“Committee”) was held on Tuesday, August 31at 2:00 pm in the Victory Building Conference Room, Suite 275 and via Zoom virtual meeting. Present at the meeting were Grant Wallace, Chief Deputy Treasurer (Designee for Treasurer of State); Joseph Baxter, Commissioner, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services; Kristie Hayes, Program Administrator, Arkansas Department of Human Services (Designee for the Secretary of Arkansas Department of Human Services); Khalel Pritchard, Senior Client Relationship Administrator, Ascensus; David Ponder, Vice President of Relationship Management, Ascensus; Fran Jansen, Director of 529 Programs and Financial Education; and Chris Scott, Manager, Arkansas 529 Programs.

The press was notified in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act.

Grant Wallace called the meeting to order at 2:04 pm.

David Ponder introduced the committee to Khalel Pritchard, Senior Client Relationship Administrator at Ascensus, that was filling in for Molly Peterson.

Grant presented the minutes of the June 10, 2021, meeting. Joseph Baxter made a motion to approve the minutes, Grant seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved by a voice vote.

Fran Jansen began her Director’s Report, highlighting events, meetings, and presentations. She stated that Commissioner Baxter hosted a site visit of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services for her, providing a high-level overview of the services they provide as well as introductions to key staff members. Fran informed the committee that she had also made a presentation to the Elizabeth Richardson Center, a leading provider of disability services in Northwest Arkansas. She explained that the staff were intrigued by the ‘ABLE to work’ provision that would allow their employed clients to save an additional amount into their Arkansas ABLE accounts. Fran provided information on a meeting with Steve Varady at Independent Case Management. She explained that Mr. Varady and Independent Case Management assist those with disabilities obtain employment and that Mr. Varady stated he would make an introduction between AR ABLE staff and the Director of the 3D program at Pulaski Technical College. Fran explained that the 3D program provides post-secondary educational opportunities to a diverse student population, specifically in the culinary arts, hospitality, and baking industries.

Fran closed her report by informing the committee of a presentation made at Arkansas Children’s Hospital ‘August Psychosocial Grand Round’ meeting, where ACH social workers, teachers, child life specialists, case managers and pastoral staff are typically in attendance. She reported that many of the attendees were interested in the Ugift component that allows someone to share a link where family and friends can contribute into an account.

Khalel Pritchard reported on the AR ABLE plan’s accounts, assets and contributions. He noted that there as of the end of July there was $2,419,247 in assets under management, a roughly 50% growth since the top of the year, driven mainly by contributions, but helped by market conditions. Khalel noted that 38% of those assets were in the ‘moderate’ portfolio option, followed by 21% in the ‘checking’ option. He noted that April was a great month for contributions, due to stimulus check distributions.

There being no further business, Grant moved to adjourn the meeting and the meeting adjourned at 2:23 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Fran Jansen, Director of 529 Programs and Financial Education