

**Arizona Governor's Council  
on Blindness and Visual Impairment  
Annual Report 2021 - 2022**



Ensuring the Specialized Needs of Blind and Visually  
Impaired Arizonans are Addressed Effectively

Supporting and Supported by

Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) Program

Arizona Department of Economic Security

Your Partner for a Stronger Arizona

## **GCBVI Council Members**

Bob Kresmer, Chair  
David Steinmetz, Vice-Chair  
Amy Porterfield, Secretary  
Ted Chittenden  
Donald Porterfield  
Bea Shapiro  
Nathan Pullen  
Mike Gordon  
Allan Curry  
John McCann  
Steve Tepper  
Jonathan Pringle  
Annette Reichman  
Andrew Cohen  
Brian Dulude  
Kristen Mackey

### **GCBVI Mission:**

“To provide the leadership, advocacy, and guidance that promotes opportunities for Arizonans of all ages who are blind or visually impaired that result in increased dignity, respect and independence

### **GCBVI Vision**

“Create, foster and sustain a climate of opportunity where all Arizonans who are blind or visually impaired are able to direct their own lives and reach their personal chosen goals and objectives”

## GCBVI EXECUTIVE ORDER 92-15:(Supersedes Executive Order 86-15)

WHEREAS, blind and visually impaired persons are an integral and growing part of our community; and

WHEREAS, there are many organizations in the public and private sectors which serve the special needs of these Arizonans; and

WHEREAS, various cooperative activities among these organizations have demonstrated a commitment to coordinate their efforts and to eliminate duplication and gaps; and

WHEREAS, establishment of a Governor's Advisory Council has been identified as the most effective approach to accomplishing these goals.

NOW THEREFORE, I, Fife Symington, Governor of the State of Arizona, do hereby create a new Executive Order for the GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON BLINDNESS AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT and delineate herein its purpose, structure, and function.

**PURPOSE.** The Governor's Council on Blindness & visual Impairment was established to provide a mechanism to ensure that the specialized needs of blind and visually impaired Arizonans are addressed effectively.

**STRUCTURE.** The Council shall consist of twenty (20) members appointed by the Governor and shall meet at least once each calendar quarter; the term of office of the members shall be three years.

A. Fourteen (14) of the members shall be consumers (i.e., blind or visually impaired individuals or parents/guardians thereof). Three of the members shall be appointed from the Arizona Council of the Blind; three of the members shall be appointed from the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona; three of the members shall be appointed from the Blinded Veterans Association; one of the members shall be appointed from the Arizona Association of Parents of the Visually Impaired, and four shall be appointed as consumers-at-large.

B. Six of the members shall be representatives of the general community including business, government, employers, and advocates.

C. There shall be four non-voting members who shall serve as ex-officio members. The members shall be:

The manager of Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired in the Department of Economic Security.

The Superintendent of the Arizona State School for the Deaf and Blind.

The Chief Librarian for the Arizona Department of Library, Archives and Public Records, Arizona State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

A representative of a private non-profit agency that provides services to the blind and visually impaired.

D. The Council shall encourage broad participation by other organizations and individuals interested in blind and visually impaired Arizonans to develop and periodically review and recommend goals and objectives to meet the needs of this specialized population. These goals and objectives shall be based on identified needs and shall be designed to cover gaps in existing services.

### 3. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES. The Council shall:

A. Advise and assist the Governor, the Legislature, and all State agencies providing services to blind individuals, in matters concerning blindness and visual impairment.

B. Submit to the Governor and the Legislature by September 1 of each year, a comprehensive Annual Report on the Council's activities, accomplishments, and recommendations; submit other reports as deemed advisable; conduct periodic statewide conferences to address issues and exchange information.

C. Review and make recommendations, when necessary, on plans and strategies for meeting the needs of blind and visually impaired Arizonans statewide.

D. In cooperation with all related organizations, conduct a comprehensive program of professional and public education to heighten awareness of the capabilities, potentials, and needs of blind and visually impaired persons.

E. Monitor programs and services for blind individuals to encourage efficient and coordinated use of resources in the provision of services.

4. ADMINISTRATION. The Council shall be located within the Office of the Governor. Staff and administrative support shall be provided by the Department of Economic Security.

5. COMPENSATION. The Council members shall receive no compensation but shall be entitled to reimbursement of travel and per diem expense according to State policy.

6. EFFECTIVE DATE. This order shall become effective immediately.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed on the Great Seal of the State of Arizona.

GOVERNOR

DONE at the Capitol in Phoenix this twenty-ninth day of May in the Year of Our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Ninety-two and of the Independence of the United States of America the Two Hundred and Sixteenth.

About EYEKNOWAZ <https://eyeknow.az.gov>

EYEKNOWAZ has been developed as a directory of resources and services for individuals with vision loss or combined hearing and vision loss and for the community. Listings in the directory are categorized by interests and needs to connect users with organizations providing services and information. This directory is not comprehensive, nor do listings imply endorsement or evaluation of programs in any way.

Please send all questions, comments, and suggestions for resources to [GCBVI@azdes.gov](mailto:GCBVI@azdes.gov).

This website is supported by the [Arizona Governor's Council on Blindness & Visual Impairment](#), with assistance from [Arizona Department of Economic Security's Rehabilitation Services Administration](#) and [Arizona Secretary of State](#).



## **Message from the Chair**

Bob Kresmer

The Council (GCBVI) remained concerned with the effects of the Corona Virus pandemic on the blind and visually impaired residents of Arizona. The council engaged in efforts to make this population of blind students, adults, parents of b/vi children, educators, and seniors aware of the state and county resources for vaccination, and the regulations and policies that would affect their daily lives.

Several of the council appointees were reappointed for an additional membership term this year. The GCBVI continues efforts to recruit new members with expertise and experience in many areas of direct relevance to our blind population such as education, employment, training, and advocacy.

The GCBVI monitors and advises state agencies that serve the blind such as the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind, Arizona Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and the public and private contractors that provide the services that are administered by state agencies.

The Council looks forward to another year of reaching out to the blind and visually impaired Arizona residents, the Governor and legislators, and the providers of specialized services.

## **GCBVI's Advisory Role**

- Assures that feedback and advice reflect the views and experiences of people who are blind
- Is a public information and referral source on blindness and deaf blindness
- Fosters client empowerment in the provision of services
- Ensures the policies, practices, services, and marketing activity of the state of Arizona reflect the views and respect the dignity of people who are blind

## **GCBVI Strategic Direction**

- Supporting the highest quality service delivery for blind and deafblind Arizonans
- Cultivating resources for blind and deafblind Arizonans
- Developing effective communication with stakeholders
- Promoting the growth and development of the Council

## **Client Success Stories**

### **Ms. G**

Ms. G is a seventy-eight-year-old woman living in Arizona. At the time of her rehabilitation teaching and orientation and adjustment to disability assessments, she indicated that her blindness was caused by both macular degeneration and glaucoma. In addition to her vision loss, Ms. G also stated that she has significant other medical conditions to include difficulty with her liver and kidneys and general movement and stamina.

During her initial assessments, Ms. G indicated that she was having difficulty in numerous activities of daily living. Within the area of communication, she was having trouble with time management tasks such as keeping her appointments and knowing the time, and with record keeping for important information such as phone numbers and lists. In the area of home management, she indicated that activities such as pouring liquids, measuring ingredients, and seeing appliance settings were troublesome. Furthermore, within the area of personal management, Ms. G stated that tasks such as managing finances and reading are difficult. Finally, in terms of the adjustment process she is undergoing regarding coping with and accepting her blindness, Ms. G indicated that she has felt lonely and that she is not part of a community, especially since she suffered a stroke a couple of years ago and has also been home bound since the beginning of the COVID19 pandemic.

As Ms. G stated she has many doctor appointments and needs to take medications at the same time each day, she was provided instruction in the use of a large print wall calendar and talking clock that will announce both the date and time. Additionally, as she often needs to take down information over the phone in terms of her medical appointments such as addresses and instructions on what information she needs to bring, she was provided training in the use of a digital recorder so she can have an audible record to refer to at a later time. As a result of receiving instruction in time management and record keeping activities, Ms. G states that she feels a greater sense of control and independence, and that she feels less stress and apprehension concerning these daily tasks.

Within the area of adjustment to disability, Ms. G has been provided with numerous resources for accessing information and other learning outlets. These included organizations such as NFB Newsline, Sun Sounds Radio Reading Service, and the Hadley Institute. Furthermore, she was provided with information for local chapters of the National Federation of the Blind and the American Council of the Blind, as well as a local support group and organization, The Tucson



Society of the Blind. Social by nature, Ms. G reported during the next lesson after being provided these resources, that she had contacted all three groups and spoken with individuals about the organizations and her current situation. Since being provided the information about these groups 2 months ago, She reports that she attends sessions regularly, and in her words, has “a greater sense of hope”. As she continues participating in rehabilitation and adjustment services, Ms. G has continued to report a greater sense of independence, and reports that this initial participation has branched out into other areas of her life, such as her upcoming participation in a stroke recovery support group, as well as exercise classes and orientation and mobility instruction.

## **Mr. P**

Mr. P is an 82-year-old man with glaucoma and very little vision. When he contacted our office, his goals included reading mail and white cane training. After doing a low vision evaluation it was determined that he will need a device that will read to him instead of magnification. After a couple lessons he is using the smart reader on a regular basis, for mail, and instructions for other devices.

He and his wife share the cooking responsibilities, but he was starting to give up on cooking because he felt nervous doing things like chopping. I gave him some equipment and we worked on safety techniques for cutting and slicing different foods, as well as using the stovetop and oven. He feels much more secure and can go back to making meals independently.

He is the treasurer for his church and his wife needed to read the amount of money people were leaving in the collection plate, so I ordered the money identifier and he is now able to resume that volunteer job. He is now waiting for white cane training and then he will be fully closed and totally independent.

## **Mrs. P**

Mrs. P is an eighty-three-year-old woman who currently resides in southern Arizona. At the time of her rehabilitation teaching assessment, she indicated that her vision loss was due to macular degeneration. In addition to this condition, Mrs. P also indicated that she was prediabetic. During our initial meeting, Mrs. P indicated that she was having difficulty in completing daily activities in several areas. Within the area of Communication, she stated that she was having trouble with tasks such as signing her name, knowing the time, and managing her appointments, and in dialing the phone and tracking phone numbers. In terms of home management, Mrs. P indicated she was having difficulty in cooking activities to include pouring, measuring, and knowing where the settings were located on her appliances. Finally, in personal management, she stated she was having difficulty in reading everyday items such as her mail, food packages, and information she received from her doctor visits and prescription medications.

To address the communication area of her plan, Mrs. P was provided instruction in the use of adaptive handwriting templates and in techniques for signing her name such as the use of a signature guide or folding a document on the area to be signed to create a tactual line she could follow. Concerning time management activities, she was provided with training to use a talking clock that would announce the date and time and how to use a talking label wand where appointments could be recorded on individual labels with bar codes and reviewed later. Finally, Mrs. P was provided instruction in adaptive methods she could use for dialing the phone, but also in how she could also use the label wand to create a list of phone numbers with the device and stickers, thereby helping her to learn how different devices and techniques can overlap between completing different daily tasks.

Within the area of home management, Mrs. P was provided instructions in methods for pouring to include placing a finger inside her glass to feel the liquid level and listening to liquid filling the glass to hear the change in pitch. As she indicated during her assessment that she enjoyed baking upon occasion, she was provided training in alternative techniques for measuring wet and dry ingredients such as using bent measuring spoons to precisely measure liquids such as oil or water, and how to use cafeteria trays for measuring ingredients such as spices or flour to contain possible overflow. In addition, Mrs. P was also provided instruction and materials to label a variety of home appliances, along with emphasizing the use of concepts such as size, shape, and texture of materials to mark specific controls.

To address the difficulty Mrs. P was having with reading, we conducted a low vision evaluation to determine the best fit for a device to assist with this task. After completing this process and discussing her options based on the assessment and other documentation, she was provided a Clear Reader Plus, which has the capability to take a picture of a document, translate it into speech, and read it back to an individual. Once provided training, Mrs. P mastered the use of the device, and reported that she used it every day to read her mail, recipes on boxes, receipts, and other important documents.

As a result of receiving services, Mrs. P indicated that she feels increased independence and confidence in her ability to complete a variety of daily tasks. Furthermore, she stated that she was grateful to learn about different consumer and local groups where she could meet other individuals, as well as local resources where she could purchase equipment if she ever needs it in the future.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Assistive Technology Committee**

The GCBVI Strategic Plan gives the AT Committee many goals on which it must take the lead. These goals include the following:

- Accessibilities standards are developed and implemented for instruction and testing for infants and toddlers through post-secondary education.
- Best practices are developed and implemented and available for all Arizona school districts to administer expanded core curriculum education.
- Develop and implement collaborative data collection mechanism to track test scores K-12 for all school districts in Arizona.

### **Committee Members**

Beatriz Shapiro, Chair

Sue LeHew

Bob Kresmer

Nathan Pullen

Mark Nelson

Karla Rivas-Parker

### **Independent Living Committee**

The GCBVI Strategic Plan gives the Independent Living Committee many goals on which it must take the lead. These goals include the following:

- Independent Living Blind (ILB) funding is increased and services to older blind consumers is stable and sustained.
- Under 55 ILB funding is established and sustained.
- ILB services to all populations are universally available statewide.
- ILB best practices are established for SBVID ILB unit with GCBVI and blindness stakeholders.
- Best practices are established and implemented for ILB consumers who are deafblind.

## **Committee Members**

Ted Chittenden, Chair  
Brian Dulude  
Katie Gomez  
John McCann  
Steve Tepper  
Frank Vance  
George Martinez

## **Public Information Committee**

The GCBVI Strategic Plan gives the Legislative and Public Information Committee many goals on which it must take the lead. These goals include the following:

- Implementation of an ongoing employer education campaign.
- Public service agencies receive regular feedback regarding accessibility.
- GCBVI is recognized as an information and referral resource for both consumers and agencies and businesses that serve blind consumers.
- Public awareness of the GCBVI is raised and positive outcomes are common knowledge.
- EyeKnowAZ includes an accessibility resource page.

## **Committee Members**

David Steinmetz, Chair  
Ted Chittenden  
Erin Pawlus

## **Education Committee**

The Education Committee of the GCBVI was very engaged in the situation that public and charter schools, colleges and universities, and their administrators confronted because of the pandemic.

The Education Committee convened information gathering virtual meetings and disseminated the information to the decision makers, students, parents, and teachers of blind and visually impaired students.

We are looking forward to the 2022-2023 school year and of returning to face-to-face education.

### **Committee Members**

Bob Kresmer, Chair  
Lisa Yencarelli  
Ed House  
Jared Kittelson  
Doris Woltman

### **Employment Committee**

The GCBVI Strategic Plan gives the Employment Committee many goals on which it must take the lead. These goals include the following:

- BEP remains stable, protected by legislation, and continues to create opportunities for blind VR consumers.
- Implementation of an ongoing employer education campaign.
- Implementation of mentoring program pairing successfully closed VR consumers with new VR consumers.
- Implementation of best practices for AIB and community partners using GCBVI and blindness stakeholders

### **Committee Members**

Nathan Pullen, Chair  
Terell Welch  
Bea Shapiro  
David Steinmetz  
Reggie Laister  
Jonathan Pringle

### **Legislative and Public Policy Committee**

The GCBVI Strategic Plan gives the Legislative and Public Policy Committee many goals on which it must take the lead. These goals include the following:

- Ensuring that funding for VR services is available through all possible methods.

- Making sure that all blind Arizonans who want them are receiving VR services and that the comprehensive blindness skills training programs are available to all blind consumers.
- Revising SBVID best practices with collaboration from the GCBVI and other blind stakeholders.
- Ensuring that funding for independent living training for blind and visually impaired seniors is both increased and sustained.
- Establishing and maintaining funding for independent living training for blind and visually impaired persons under the age of 55 who are not necessarily looking to return to the workforce.

### **Committee Members:**

Amy Porterfield, Chair  
Donald Porterfield  
Bob Kresmer  
Ted Chittenden  
John McCann  
Ed House  
Jonathan Pringle

### **DeafBlind Issues Committee**

The DeafBlind Issues Committee was re-established with fresh faces, hands, and voices. The first few meetings were focused on the growth of DeafBlind community and onboarding appropriate stakeholders and representatives. In parallel to the growth, a check was made on the progress regarding the three goals assigned to the committee. Those goals are the following:

- ILB (Independent Living Blind) Services to all populations are universally available statewide.
- SSP (Support Service Providers) services to deaf-blind Arizonans are sustained across the state.
- Best practices are established and implemented for ILB consumers who are deaf/blind.

SSP services have been growing at a steady pace in Phoenix and Tucson and more SSPs are needed to meet the higher demand which is an excellent problem. Awareness regarding ILB services are continued to be advertised and promoted across various communities in Arizona. Best practices for the DeafBlind population are evolving on a constant basis. The committee will formulate new goals for the committee to focus on year 2023.



## **Committee Members:**

Andrew Cohen  
Jonathan Pringle  
Mary Hartle  
Megan Mogan  
Sue Kay Kneifel  
Virginia Thompson