

**Arizona Governor's Council
on Blindness and Visual Impairment
GCBVI
Annual Report
July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018**



Ensuring that the specialized needs of Arizonans who are blind and visually impaired are addressed effectively.

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. here 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.

ATTEST:

Secretary of State

GCBVI Council Members

Amy Porterfield, Chair

Bob Kresmer, Vice Chair

Nicole Jeffords, Secretary

Dan Martinez

Ted Chittenden

Mike Gordon

Ed Gervasoni

Nathan Pullen

Mike Kanitsch

Allan Curry

Sharonda Goode

Donald Porterfield

Bea Shapiro

George Martinez

Janet Fisher*

Jim LaMay*

Kristen Mackey*

Annette Reichman*

Rich Sorey*

*Indicates Ex-Officio members

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 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.”



Message from the Chair

Members of the GCBVI include a wide range of volunteers dedicated to the improvement of the lives of people who are blind. GCBVI members bring with them a multitude of skills developed in the public and private sectors that are most valuable in the advisory role which the GCBVI plays. This Annual Report provides a picture of the important work being done by the Council.

In ensuring that the specialized needs of Arizonans who are blind and visually impaired are addressed effectively, this year, the Council has developed a comprehensive Strategic Plan encompassing a broad range of interrelated but not necessarily integrated systems that impact the community inclusion and participation of blind people.

A preliminary examination of the blindness education, transition, rehabilitation and employment preparation and acquisition services systems, revealed an opportunity for the Council to help build greater synchronicity between several public and private systems.

While ambitious and dependent on many moving parts, some of them external, the GCBVI is confident in our ability to build productive community relationships, which are fundamental to establishing agreed upon goals, policies and practices to promote a wider understanding and appreciation of our shared roles and responsibilities in furthering the engagement of people who are blind in society.

Our three to five-year systems-wide strategic plan fosters strong collaboration with State, Federal and private sector partners to open up employment opportunities, while continuing to address the absolute need to enhance, support, and expand blindness specific services.



Kristen Mackey

Message from the RSA Administrator

It is an honor to serve as the Administrator of Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) within the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES). RSA offers a wide range of services and supports that help Arizonans with disabilities achieve employment and independence through programs such as Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Business Enterprise (BEP), and Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB).

As RSA and the Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairments (GCBVI) share the common goal of promoting opportunities for persons with disabilities, RSA is pleased to collaborate with the Council to support several fantastic, ongoing projects.

The annual Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE) is the only expo in the Southwest dedicated solely to presenting information related to vision loss and is offered at no cost to the public. During this event, VR staff and Council members enjoy opportunities to present information and resources to the attendees and connect with local providers and community members.

E75 - Eliminate, Employ, and Empower, is another annual event that celebrates the successful employment of individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The gathering also helps address the high unemployment rate of individuals with blindness or visual impairments by serving as an opportunity for job seekers and potential employers to connect.

Finally, creation of the EyeKnow.AZ website is the result of ongoing collaboration between DES, GCBVI, and the Secretary of State's Office. The site provides an accessible, online directory of resources for individuals with vision loss or combined hearing and vision loss. EyeKnow.AZ is regularly promoted on DES social media and the site has seen an increase in usage because of the public awareness efforts.

As the Department maintains focus on continuous improvement, RSA looks forward to working with the council to ensure the good work that is already happening will continue, and that individuals with disabilities will continue to benefit from the efforts that are made.

Kristen Mackey

Administrator, Rehabilitation Services Administration
Department of Economic Security



Rich Sorey

Message from the SBVID Program Manager

Services for the Blind, Visually Impaired, and Deaf (SBVID) programs appreciate the partnership we share with the Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI) in addressing the specialized vocational rehabilitation and independent living needs of persons who are blind or who experience blindness combined with another disability or disabilities. In support of SBVID and persons who are blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind:

The GCBVI has engaged in advocacy efforts to ensure that the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) and Independent Living Blind (ILB) staff are compensated in a manner that is comparable to how other RSA staff are being compensated.

The GCBVI has connected with the SBVID Program Manager to identify cases where clients had concerns about service provision. The GCBVI encouraged those clients to contact the Program Manager and engage in an honest open conversation to find resolution for their concerns.

The RSA and the GCBVI worked together to plan and deliver the 2018 E75 Diversity Builders luncheon. The event brought employers, clients, and rehabilitation professionals together to meet one another, establish professional relationships, and discuss potential job and/or internship opportunities.

The GCBVI has advocated on behalf of the RSA with the Office of Procurement to streamline purchasing so that clients can receive services in a more timely and efficient manner.

Respectfully submitted by:

Rich Sorey

GOVERNOR’S COUNCIL ON BLINDNESS AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT
STRATEGIC/MANAGEMENT PLAN
2017-2021

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.”

In August of 2017, the members of the Governor’s Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI) met to begin discussions on a strategic plan, or blueprint, for the council’s goals and actions over the next four to five years. The council’s Executive committee, using the input from the full membership, worked out the details of the plan during the fall, and it was approved by the full council at its November 2017 meeting. Below is that plan.

Category I: Education

Priority 1: Accessibilities standards are developed and implemented for instruction and testing for infants and toddlers through post-secondary education.

Responsible Committees: Legislative and Public Policy (lead); Assistive Technology, Education

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 2a: Best practices are developed, implemented, and available for all Arizona school districts to administer expanded core curriculum education.

Responsible Committees: Education (lead); Legislative and Public Policy; Assistive Technology

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 2b: Develop and implement collaborative data collection mechanism to track test scores K-12 for all school districts in Arizona.

Responsible Committees: Education (lead); Legislative and Public Policy; Assistive Technology

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Category II: Employment

Priority1: VR services are funded by utilizing all methods available. All blind Arizonans are receiving services and Comprehensive Programs are available to all blind consumers.

Responsible Committees: Legislative and Public Policy

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 2a: BEP remains stable, protected by Legislation, and continues to create opportunities for blind VR consumers.

Responsible Committees: Employment (lead); Legislative and Public Policy

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 2b: Pre-ETS and Comprehensive Services preserve specialized quality training for blind VR consumers. Skill and employment growth outcomes are increased.

Responsible Committees: Employment (lead); Legislative and Public Policy

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 2c: DES revises procurement process to be commensurate with purchasing technology that is subscription and cloud based.

Responsible Committees: Legislative and Public Policy

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 2d: Implementation of an ongoing employer education campaign.

Responsible Committees: Employment (lead); Public Information

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 2e: SBVID best practices are revised with collaboration with GCBVI and blindness stakeholders.

Responsible Committees: Legislative and Public Policy (lead); Employment

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 3a: Implementation of mentoring program pairing successfully closed VR consumers with new VR consumers.

Responsible Committees: Employment

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 3b: Implementation of best practices for AIB and community partners using GCBVI and blindness stakeholders.

Responsible Committees: Employment

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Category III: Independent Living (Blind Services)

Priority 1: ILB funding is increased and services to older blind consumers in stable and sustained.

Responsible Committees: Legislative and Public Policy (lead); ILB Committee

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 2a: Under 55 ILB funding is established and sustained.

Responsible Committees: Legislative and Public Policy (lead), Public Information, ILB

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 2b: ILB services to all populations are universally available statewide.

Responsible Committees: ILB (lead); Deaf-Blind, Legislative and Public Policy

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 2c: SSP services to deaf-blind Arizonans is sustained across the state

Responsible Committees: Deaf-Blind (lead); Legislative and Public Policy

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 2d: ILB best practices are established for SBVID ILB unit with GCBVI and blindness stakeholders.

Responsible Committees: ILB (lead); Legislative and Public Policy

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 3a: Public service agencies receive regular feedback regarding accessibility.

Responsible Committees: Legislative and Public Policy (lead); Assistive Technology, Public Information

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 3b: Best Practices are established and implemented for ILB consumers who are deaf-blind

Responsible Committees: Deaf-Blind (lead); ILB, Legislative and Public Policy

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Category IV: Council Integrity and Function

Priority 1: GCBVI is recognized as a critical council in Arizona that is equal to that of the State Rehabilitation Council for blind services.

Responsible Committees: Executive (lead); Legislative and Public Policy, Public Information

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 2a: All GCBVI members are engaged in committee work and produce work product

Responsible Committees: Executive

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 2b: GCBVI is staffed with 1 full-time equivalent position.

Responsible Committees: Executive (lead); Legislative and Public Policy

Priority 2c: GCBVI is recognized as an information and referral resource for both consumers and agencies and businesses that serve blind consumers.

Responsible Committees: Executive (lead); Public Information; Legislative and Public Policy

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 3a: GCBVI has a budget line item to accomplish goals.

Responsible Committees: Executive (lead); Legislative and Public Policy

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 3a: Public awareness of the GCBVI is raised and positive outcomes are common knowledge.

Responsible Committees: Public Information

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Priority 3c: EyeKnow.AZ includes an accessibility resource page.

Responsible Committees: Public Information (lead); Assistive Technology

Accountability Report Due: Biannually. Committees will provide updates at each meeting.

Committee Reports

Deaf-Blind Issues Committee

The committee continues to be active in matters concerning citizens who are Deaf-Blind (D-B) or who live with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss (CVHL) in Arizona. The following bulleted sections address the areas of focus and type of activities in which the committee continues to be actively involved:

Support Service Providers (SSPs)

SSPs provide specialized services to self-directed people who are D-B or have CVHL for the purposes of gaining access to communication, visual and auditory information, and travel within community environments for the purposes of managing and maintaining healthy independent living.

- Assisted ACDHH with their efforts to conduct focus group meetings with individuals who are D-B and CVHL as well as service providers in both the Tucson and Phoenix metro areas during October 2017 as preparation for a statewide SSP program.
- Advised the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing (ACDHH) as it begins the process of implementing a Pilot Statewide SSP Program starting in July of 2018.
- Continued to stay informed about SSP service delivery in Tucson from the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD) and in Phoenix from the Valley Center of the Deaf (VCD) from both the perspectives of the service agencies and the consumers using the services provided.

Interveners

Interveners provide specialized services to non and limited self-directed people who are D-B or have CVHL for the purposes of gaining access to communication, visual and auditory information, and travel within educational, home and community settings. In addition, they develop and prepare activities and materials for the individual and form working alliances with family, educational and community members.

- Supported and collaborated with AHCCCS to research and develop a new Community Intervener Service for the ALTCS program.
- Continued to learn and stay informed about intervener services for children living with Deaf-Blindness or CVHL in educational settings within Arizona from the point of view of the Arizona Deafblind Project.

Advocacy & Education:

- Continued to gather information from DeafBlind Connections in Arizona, Inc., in its efforts to provide advocacy services for individuals with D-B & CVHL as they encounter barriers within various service delivery systems.
- Became informed about a new program established by the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI) in Phoenix, which is designed to teach independent living skills to individuals with deaf-blindness and CVHL.
- Provided presentations on a range of topics at several conferences concerning matters that effect individuals living with deaf-blindness and CVHL.

Access Technology

iCanConnect is another name for the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP), a federal program designed to help the many thousands of Americans with combined hearing and vision loss to connect with family, friends and community through the acquisition, instruction, and use of appropriate access technology.

- Continued to monitor the delivery of access technology and training to individuals who are D-B or have CVHL throughout Arizona. The statewide program is administered by a partnership between COPD and Perkins International.
- Used data from these efforts to become more informed about the demographics and needs of individuals living with Deaf-Blindness and CVHL in order to better advocate on their behalf.

Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)

- Continued to collaborate and stay informed about the efforts and activities of RSA to serve individuals with Deaf-Blindness and CVHL, ranging from transition age to independent living support for older adults.
- Used information and demographic data from RSA to better advocate for the needs of the D-B and those with CVHL in Arizona.

Arizona DeafBlind Project

The Arizona DeafBlind Project is a federally funded grant program whose purpose is to provide technical assistance, training, information, and resources to families, educational team members, and other service providers who work with children ages birth to age 22 with an educationally significant combined vision and hearing loss.

- Continued to collaborate and stay informed about the efforts and activities of the Arizona DeafBlind Project serving children with Deaf-Blindness and CVHL ranging from birth to age 22.
- Used information and demographic data from the Arizona DeafBlind Project to advocate for the needs of children living with deaf-blindness or CVHL in the state. Ongoing.

Committee Members:

Ed Gervasoni, Chair

Steven Wilson

Mary Hartle

Chris Desborough

Carmen Green

Sue Kay Kneifel

Cindi Robinson

Assistive Technology Committee

Purpose

The Assistive Technology (AT) Committee provides expert information technology accessibility advice for the Council. Committee members stay current on accessibility in technologies, websites, and systems and share their expertise with stakeholders in order to create a barrier free environment for people who are blind and visually impaired.

Committee Accomplishments

The Committee partnered with the Public Information Committee and recommended changes that would make the EyeKnow.AZ website more user-friendly for its blind and visually impaired constituents. Through printed handouts, public presentations, and interpersonal consultations, the Committee continued its efforts to inform the blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind populations about new technologies, current trends, and system updates and innovations in accessibility.

Committee Goals for Next Year

The Committee will continue strategic collaboration with other GCBVI committees to ensure greater information accessibility for people who are blind in education, employment, on websites, and many other areas. It will continue to evaluate existing and emerging information technology products and services and advise any individual, group, or organization that can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by its use as to our analysis of its viability for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Committee Members

Sharonda Goode, Chair
Nathan Pullen
Ed Gervasoni
Julie Jones
Scott Mehosky
Sue Lehew
Bea Shapiro
Jaime Trausch

Employment Committee

During State Fiscal Year 2018, The GCBVI Employment Committee continued our work toward the mission of the GCBVI. We discussed ways to address Council priorities that resulted from the recently passed Strategic Plan that were assigned to the Employment Committee. We also continued working with our branded concept of E75, “Eliminate, Employ, and Empower” the estimated 75% of individuals who are blind or visually impaired and unemployed. Towards this end, we have engaged in the following:

- Created, in collaboration with the Department of Economic Security (DES), an E75 Video public service announcement, to alert the public and potential employers to the capabilities of individuals who are blind and visually impaired.
- Presented at the Governor’s Summit on Civic Engagement and Volunteerism to share the value blind and visually impaired individuals can bring to the table, and we asked for advice in how to grow our audience in the future.
- Sponsored a Business Breakfast in collaboration with Arizona Industries for the Blind (AIB) at the Flinn Foundation, where Kirk Adams, President and CEO of the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB), spoke to 30+ employers about the benefits of embracing a workplace of diversity and inclusion.
- Successfully honored 6 Arizona employers at our 3rd Annual E75 Diversity Builders Awards Luncheon, which took place in January at Ability 360’s Conference Center.

The GCBVI Employment Committee is honored to serve the Council. We will continue to create opportunities to advocate for the rights of Arizonans who are blind or visually impaired, especially those seeking to enter the workforce.

Committee Members

Nicole Jeffords, Chair

Terrell Welch

Kevin Foster

Tanner Gers

Jordan Moon

Bea Shapiro

Jim Strohacker

Education Committee

The Education Committee is working with several community partners to assure that the education of students who are blind is equivalent to the education received by their sighted peers. The committee is composed of education professionals, Vocational Rehabilitation services agency members, and private agency professionals, as well as parents of blind students. We have formed three work groups:

- Early childhood
- Kindergarten through Grade 12
- Transition age and college students

We are working with the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB) and the Arizona Department of Education to establish base lines for comparing the achievements of students who are blind with the achievements of their sighted peers. We meet every month, and ours is a very active committee in our effort to achieve the goals of the Council.

Our future goals include:

- Collaboratively develop a data collection mechanism that tracks test scores from Kindergarten through Grade 12 for all school districts in Arizona.
- Assure blind and low vision accessibility standards are in place for instruction and testing of infants and toddlers through post-secondary education students.
- Establish a clearing house of manuscripts on best practices in the education of students who are blind and visually impaired and make it available to all Arizona school districts' personnel who administer expanded core curriculum education.

Committee Members

Bob Kresmer, Chair

Doris Woltman

Jared Kittelson

Ed House

Lisa Jackson

Lisa Yencarelli

Julie Urban

Legislative and Public Policy Committee

Members of the Legislative and Public Policy Committee were busy between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018. With the backing of the GCBVI, a bill was passed in the State Legislature that would make it illegal for social workers to remove children from their homes solely because of the visual disability of one or both parents. The GCBVI also supported efforts to exempt the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation from some of the state's purchasing policy requirements. While this effort failed in 2018, due mainly to an opinion issued by the office of the State Attorney General, it is expected that efforts to reform the purchasing process for needed equipment for blind Arizonans in the Vocational Rehabilitation program will resume in 2019.

The Strategic Plan developed in 2017 gives the Legislative and Public Policy Committee many goals on which it must take the lead. These goals include:

- 1) Ensuring that funding for VR services is available through all possible methods;
- 2) 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;
- 3) Revising SBVID best practices with collaboration from the GCBVI and other blind stakeholders;
- 4) Ensuring that funding for independent living training for blind and visually impaired seniors is both increased and sustained; and
- 5) 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.

The Legislative and Public Policy committee is prepared to meet these strategic plan goals.

Position Statements

The Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment appreciates the Governor's and State Legislature's support to the blind community through increasing the Arizona line item for Vocational Rehabilitation services. Through this increase, blind/visually impaired Arizonans will no longer wait for services and will be able to access the tools they need to obtain employment and contribute to our communities. The GCBVI believes that increased support means increased responsibility for successful outcomes and transparency.

Future Considerations: The GCBVI will continue to observe the access to and quality of Vocational Rehabilitation services, and advocate for increased service levels with increased outcomes with the adherence to best practices. To ensure that all blind RSA consumers have the access to services that provide tools for eliminating access and skill related barriers to independent living and employment, it is imperative that RSA collaborate with blind consumer groups and the GCBVI for guidance and feedback. This includes policy development, selection of key blindness professionals working in RSA Services for the Blind Visually Impaired and Deaf, and in the training and development of RSA staff working with Blind and Deaf-Blind consumers.

The Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment supports the philosophy of the Managed Service Provide (MSP) for services to blind consumers within DES/RSA. The GCBVI appreciates the focus on best practices for customer values and needs, and the elimination of wasteful barriers that

impede the time and efficiency for achieving consumer outcomes for employment and independent living. The GCBVI believes that best efficiency can be achieved through collaboration with consumer groups and private organizations for development and implementation of best practice approaches to vocational rehabilitation and independent living services. Additionally, further analysis of procurement practices, hiring, training staff, and efficiently assigning and processing consumer caseloads will support a productive service delivery system. Finally, the GCBVI asserts that the highest quality and efficiency of federal funding can be best achieved through public-private partnerships where the responsibility for serving blind Arizonans can be shared both from direct service and fiscal contributions through contracting.

Future considerations: The GCBVI calls for increased transparency within the DES Office of Procurement for the exploration of more efficient use of state and federal funding. Through an open and collaborative relationship with consumer groups and community, DES will learn about the most effective use of funds while focusing on consumer outcomes. The GCBVI additionally calls for a re-evaluation and update to best practices for Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living services for blind consumers to ensure that consumers and community groups can provide feedback on how services impact employment and independent living outcomes.

The Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment supports inclusive, and accessible education for all of Arizona's blind students from early intervention through post-secondary education. The GCBVI believes that fully inclusive, educational experiences for blind students can only exist when a best practice approach for implementing the Arizona state standards as well as the Expanded Core Curriculum is developed and supported by the Arizona Department of Education, public school systems, private and charter school entities, the Arizona State School for the Deaf and Blind, School for the Blind, and all relevant stakeholders within the blind community.

Future Considerations: The GCBVI calls for a task force to develop and analyze a data-based strategy to measurably improve the teaching of and learning by Arizona blind and visually impaired students. Currently, the Arizona State School for the Deaf and Blind reports that Main Campus blind/visually impaired students are testing at the bottom 5% of all Arizona students. The GCBVI asserts that to identify best practices for instruction to blind/visually impaired students to be effective, it is imperative that we gather all test score data to identify what is and is not effective practices for instruction to blind/visually impaired students K-12 in all districts and schools through the state of Arizona. The GCBVI further calls for full implementation of Arizona's Braille Literacy Law, which includes effective assessment of all blind/visually impaired students, guidelines for full implementation, and effective training and support to Arizona teachers of blind students.

The Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment supports the continuation of the Business Enterprise Program. The Business Enterprise Program in a close partnering relationship with Rehabilitation Services Administration's Vocational Rehabilitation Program, offers legally blind persons the opportunity to become independent entrepreneurs capable of achieving their fullest potential through self-employment. Being self-supporting through one's own efforts is fundamental to the American way of life. Today, thousands of blind Americans are living proof that this program works.

The GCBVI supports the Business Enterprise Program and considers it to be a vital tool for

employment of people who are experiencing a staggering 70% unemployment rate. Removal of BEP locations, or the elimination of this crucial program is not acceptable.

Future Considerations: The Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment calls for stronger support from the Department of Economic Security in the areas of maintaining and growing vending opportunities by collaborating with consumer groups

Committee Members

Amy Porterfield, Chair

Bob Kresmer

Ted Chittenden

Donald Porterfield

Allan Curry

Public Information Committee

The efforts of the Public Information Committee center around developing two-way communication with stakeholders. The committee disseminates information to stakeholders on the excellent work of the GCBVI in assuring that the specialized needs of people who are blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind are met effectively. Additionally, the Committee utilizes traditional communication and social media in support of Council growth and the development of Council membership.

Any discussion of what the Public Information committee did during this period must begin with the GCBVI's Strategic Plan. Developed by Council membership in August and finalized by the Full Council in November, the Strategic Plan gives the council and its committees a road map of what the near and far-term goals of the GCBVI are and where we should be placing our emphasis. For the Public Information Committee, these goals included:

- Working closely with the Assistive Technology (AT) Committee to improve access to the EyeKnow.AZ database.
- Collaborating with the Employment Committee to publicize the latter's efforts to make more employers aware of the capabilities and employment potential of blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind Arizonans.
- Creating greater public awareness of the GCBVI and what it does for both the blind/visually impaired/deaf-blind communities and the general public.

Our partnership with the AT Committee has led to the development of a Best Practices and Standards page on the EyeKnow.AZ website. In addition, we are in ongoing discussions with this committee concerning how to make it easier for website users to print search results.

The Public Information Committee has created "rack cards" with specific information aimed at encouraging employers to consider adding more blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind persons to their payrolls. We are currently in the process of working with the Employment Committee to refine these cards to be more useful to that committee. The Public Information Committee also assisted the Employment Committee with its annual E75 Conference held on January 26, 2018. The Public Information Committee always has an open hand out to all the council committees to assist in publicizing any upcoming events.

Public Information Committee (and other council members) staffed GCBVI exhibitor tables at the following events during the reporting period:

- The NFBA convention (September 1 and 2, 2017)
- The Macular Degeneration Association (September 23, 2017)
- the VA White Cane Safety Day event (October 19, 2017)
- the VRATE Expo (November 18, 2017)
- the Convention of the Arizona Lions Clubs (May 18-19, 2018)

In addition, the committee's chairperson, Ted Chittenden, attended all the Introduction to Blindness Workshops (save one) held by Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) during this reporting period to introduce the clients to the GCBVI and its role in advocating for the community to the highest offices of state government.

The EyeKnow.AZ website continues to grow in popularity. Community committee member Carlos Paraskevas has taken on the task of making sure that all of the website's listings are up-to-date.

RSA's Council Liaison Lindsey Powers, keeps the council's Facebook page updated with information supplied by the members of this committee. It has been slow, but there has been some renewed interest in this page as of late.

This committee's report would be remiss if we didn't note the passing of long-time committee member Barbara McDonald in late May of 2018. Barbara's contributions from her humor at committee meetings to the "Barbara's Bits" postings on Facebook will be difficult, if not impossible, to replace.

The committee is currently searching for community members to serve on it. Goals for next year include the recruitment of at least two new members to ensure that this committee can continue to fulfill its goals set forth both by the council and its strategic plan. We need to increase knowledge and involvement by the blind/visually impaired/deaf-blind community in the council and increase the awareness the general public has about our purpose and function. This means being present at more events. We also need to continue to work more closely with the other council committees to ensure that events they sponsor get more publicity. Knowledge and interest in both the GCBVI's Facebook page and the EyeKnow.AZ website needs to continue to grow. We look forward to reporting on developments in these areas in future submissions.

Committee Members

Ted Chittenden, Chair

Daniel Martinez

David Steinmetz

Janet Fisher

Carlos Paraskevas

Independent Living Committee

This was a previously defunct committee that had not been functioning for some time. Therefore, most of our efforts have been in the recruitment and reformation of this committee. Our committee is currently gathering information and data regarding current Independent Living Services provided to individuals who are blind and visually impaired residing in Arizona. The Committee has received:

- The Annual Report Independent Living Services FFY 2017
- Independent Living Services Guidelines
- Best Practices Vocational Rehabilitation Services (currently there are no Independent Living Best Practices)
- Assistive Technology for Blind and Visually Impaired Best Practices
- The recent Independent Living justification forms for High Equipment Cost

The committee is charged through in the Strategic Plan (by priority and sequentially) with:

1. Seeing that ILB funding is increased and services to older blind consumers is stable and sustained (Committee is under Legislative Public Policy as lead committee)
2. Re-establishing and sustaining Under 55 years of age Independent Living funding
 - a. Making Independent Living Services to all blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind populations universally available
 - b. Ensuring that SSP services to deaf/blind Arizonans is sustained across the state (Deaf Blind Committee Lead)
 - c. Establishing ILB Best practices for SBVID ILB unit with Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment and stakeholders
3. Making sure that public service agencies receive regular feedback regarding accessibility (Legislative Public Policy Lead committee)
 - a. Establishing Best Practices are established and implemented for ILB consumers who are deaf/blind (Deaf Blind Committee Lead)

Obviously, our committee has its work cut out for us over the next three years. Independent Living training funding has remained at the same level over the past ten years, and funding for independent living training of those under 55 years of age has not been available since 2013. It is ironic that the largest segment of the Blind and Visually Impaired population in the United States and Arizona should continually see the least amount of funding available to serve them. Our committee and the Arizona Governor's Council will work diligently to assist this underserved population.

Committee Members:

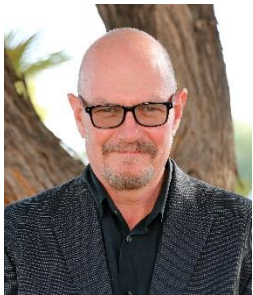
Jim LaMay, Chair
George Martinez
Frank Vance
Karla Rivas-Parker
Tom Simmons
Martha Macias
Virginia Thompson
Katie Gomez

Council Member Sketches



Janet Fisher, Ex-Officio member, is the Administrator and Chief Librarian for the Arizona Department of Library, Archives and Public Records, Arizona State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Janet is passionate about ensuring that everyone has access to information in a format he or she can use. She was instrumental in establishing <https://eyeknow.az.gov>, an online directory of services for individuals with vision loss or combined hearing and vision loss and for the community.

Nathan Pullen is the Program Manager at the Arizona DES Business Enterprise Program (BEP), where he provides financial management expertise as well as assistive technology services for both the agency and the BEP blind operators. Originally from North Dakota, Nathan moved to Arizona to attend ASU, where he earned a Bachelor's degree in International Business Management.



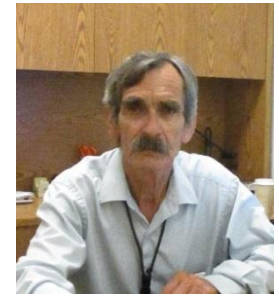
Michael Gordon has over twenty-five years' experience in the administration and management of government and not-for-profit human service agencies in both Arizona and New York State. Since March 2005, Michael has served as Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer of SAAVI Services for the Blind (formerly the Southern Arizona Association for the Visually Impaired [SAAVI]). Before this position Michael worked for the Arizona Department of Economic Security/Division of Developmental Disabilities as District II Area Program Manager.

Donald Porterfield is a Deputy County Attorney with the Pima County Attorney's Office and President of the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona. Donald lost most of his vision early in his second year of law school and is now legally blind. Mr. Porterfield is an active advocate for information access for students who are blind and the rights of blind parents.



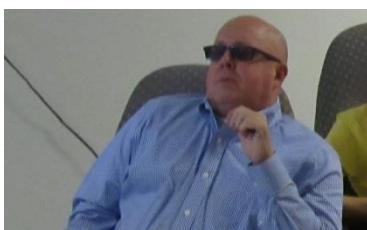
Ed Gervasoni, E. Ds. is an Orientation and Mobility and Adaptive Daily Living Skills Specialist for the Blind and Deaf-Blind. Ed is a native sign language speaker, who received a Bachelor's degree in Deaf Studies and American Sign Language Interpreting from Maryville College in Maryville, Tennessee. He also holds a Master's degree from San Francisco State University in Rehabilitation Teaching for the Blind and Deaf Blind and an Educational Specialist Degree in Orientation and Mobility for the Blind and Deaf Blind from the University of Arizona. Ed has over 34 years of experience working in both the public and private sector.

Dan Martinez represents the Arizona Council of the Blind, an affiliate of the American Council of the Blind, on the GCBVI. Dan uses his twenty-five plus years of public service experience to build strong ties between the GCBVI and the disability, business and civic communities. Legally blind since birth, Mr. Martinez is passionate about creating employment opportunities for people who are blind. He encourages and mentors his peers in preparing themselves for employment.



Kristen earned her undergraduate degree in Exercise Science from ASU and went on to earn a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from San Diego State University. Kristen currently holds a Certification in Rehabilitation Counseling. Through Kristen's career she has worked with individuals across the lifespan in a variety of rehabilitation settings including early intervention, inpatient psychiatric facility, acute and outpatient rehabilitation, and state vocational rehabilitation program. Ms. Mackey has also worked in the administration of programs that provide services to individuals with disabilities as a referral coordinator, grant writer, and program manager. Ms. Mackey began her career with Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) as a vocational rehabilitation counselor, working with the transition population in 2007. Ms. Mackey worked in the policy unit for several years prior to moving into the role of Administrator for RSA programs.

Nikki Jeffords is currently the Rehabilitation Training and Outreach Specialist at The National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University. Nikki earned a Masters degree in Special Education and Rehabilitation from the University of Arizona and a post graduate certificate as a Vision Specialist in Vocational Rehabilitation from Mississippi State University. Ms. Jeffords' professional background includes work as a Rehabilitation Counselor in Arizona and Virginia and employment with several Arizona nonprofit organizations. As a person who is blind, Nikki is keenly aware of the issues blind people face when seeking employment.



Allan Curry has emerged as a leader in the blind entrepreneurial community and the food service and vending industry and for the past 25 years, Allan has focused on the food service industry and the vending arena in Arizona. His contracts have ranged from small office building snack bars to large-scale full-service cafeterias to roadside rest stops and now his primary focus is on penitentiary inmate visitation vending. Since 2008, Allan has operated the inmate visitation vending business at ASPC

Lewis Prison, Arizona's largest State penitentiary with an inmate population of nearly 6000.

After graduating with honors, magna cum laude, from the University of Texas with degrees in Government and English, Allan worked as a government affairs manager for the Greater Dallas Chamber of Commerce. Since then, Allan has pursued his entrepreneurial dream in partnership with the Randolph Sheppard opportunities in Arizona. Allan resides in Phoenix, Arizona with his wife Cathy and three children Destiney, Grant and Grayce.

Sharonda Goode was born blind but was never allowed to feel sorry for herself. Sharonda's education includes both Western Michigan University and Grand Canyon University. For employment, Sharonda has worked in the Assistive Technology field for over 15 years. She serves as Chair of the Assistive Technology Committee on both the Governor's Council for Blindness and Visual Impairment, as well as the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona. She has been an ordained minister since 2012. Her many hobbies include singing, reading, journaling, going to movies, and hanging out with family and friends.



Annette Reichman's career has been devoted to supporting children and adults who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. Her professional focus has also extended to supporting children and adults who are blind or visually impaired. Superintendent at Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (ASDB), Ms. Reichman has served as the Director of the Office of Special Institutions within the U.S. Department of Education (DoED). In this role, she has conducted monitoring and oversight of federally-funded special institutions, including the American Printing House for the Blind, Gallaudet University, the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf.



Bea Shapiro is the Assistive Technology/IT Consultant for Rehabilitation Services Administration with a specialty in Blindness/ Visual Impairments. In addition to the BVI Specialization, Bea has extensive experience working with AT for other disability groups including deaf-blind and blindness with physical access and has been working in the field since 1991. Bea holds certificates from CSUN (ATACP) and has completed the Master's level certificate courses in Assistive Technology from NAU. Bea is a member of the Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairments Assistive Technology Committee.



George Martinez currently manages his own public accounting firm serving clients across the state of Arizona. He voluntarily retired his Arizona CPA Certificate in May 2018. George graduated from the NAU School of Business with a BS in Accounting. After graduation he worked in the New York City financial district for 3 years as an auditor with Price Waterhouse. Mr. Martinez served 16 years as Secretary-Treasurer for a large nonprofit in Tucson and thereafter, he served for 15 years as a Senior Pastor for a church in Deming, New Mexico before returning to Phoenix and beginning his current business.

He serves as a Board member and officer for ACB and VRATE and is also an advisor for his Church Board.

Lindsey Powers is the Council Liaison for the GCBVI and Rehabilitation Services Administration and supports the council's mission and goals. Lindsey earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Arizona State University and a Master's degree in Information Resources from the University of Arizona.

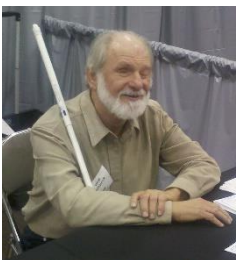


Ted Chittenden is currently a part-time braille proofreader for the Foundation for Blind Children (FBC) and the Arizona State Department of Education. Originally from California, Ted became the first totally blind person to attend, and graduate from, Brophy College Preparatory (1981). He went on to receive a Bachelor's in Communications from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles (1985) and a MBA from Arizona State University (1990). Ted worked in the hotel industry between 1990 and 2000 and as a full-time braille proofreader for Arizona State University from 2004 until 2011.

Richard Sorey is a Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and he earned his master's degree from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. Rich has been the Program Manager of Services for the Blind, Visually Impaired and Deaf with the Arizona Department of Economic Security since November of 2016.



Rich began his career with the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, where he served as a VR Counselor, regional Manager and Business Enterprise Program Manager. Rich moved on to direct the Blindness Division of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitative Services in 2011 and he was employed as the Director of the Iowa Department for the Blind for 4 years before moving to his current position. Rich has more than 30 years of work experience as a blind person, so he is very much aware of the challenges that blind people encounter in a work environment.



Bob Kresmer became blind suddenly while working as a Producer, Assistant Director, and Production Manager in the film industry in Chicago. He quickly enrolled in the Vocational Rehabilitation program and years later earned a Master's Degree as a Rehabilitation Teacher for adult blind individuals. Bob is very active in the National Federation of the Blind and serves on the Board of Directors of the NFBA and SAAVI Services for the Blind.



Jim LaMay has over 38 years experience in the administration and management of private not-for-profit service agencies in both Minneapolis and Arizona. Since September of 1990, he has served as the Executive Director, and later as President and Chief Executive Officer for the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Inc. He currently serves as an Ex-Oficio member of the Arizona Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment as a representative of private non-profit agencies that provide services to the blind and visually impaired community.

Amy Porterfield earned her Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling from the University of Arizona. As Chair of the Arizona Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI), Amy excels at providing leadership for the Council and is responsible for the facilitation of the council's strategic plan, as well as day-to-day activities, which includes the appointment and oversight of all Council committees and work groups and officiating at all Full Council meetings. Amy Porterfield is the GCBVI's direct liaison to the Governor's office and legislators on blindness related issues.



Amy is employed as Chief Operating Officer at SAAVI Services for the Blind. SAAVI Services for the Blind is a non-profit agency serving visually impaired adults in Arizona offering rehabilitation services, skills training and social and recreational opportunities.

Success Stories

Kole



Meet Kole. He was born blind and deaf. It was difficult for his family to bond with him because he didn't react to visual or audio cues. They were visited at home several times each month by an FBC vision teacher who helped them understand how to teach him.

When his mom joined FBC's parent program, her world changed. She met families with children who had similar health issues and realized she wasn't alone. She felt hope for her son for the very first time.

Prior to attending the parent program and getting her first glimpse of FBC's preschool, Kole's mom was going to opt out of preschool and keep him home until he was seven years old. Her visit had such an impact that she changed her mind and asked her school district to send Kole to FBC. Today, Kole is thriving. FBC has been a blessing in their lives and his mom is grateful for the way we improved his quality of life.

Thank you for helping students like Kole grow and achieve great things!

Gregory

Two years ago, Greg was at the top of his career field as a pilot for a major airline. In his 50s, he had a fantastic income and a great deal of respect from others in the industry. As many of us tend to do, Greg measured his self-worth by his career status. Things took a sudden turn for Greg when he suffered a stroke which resulted in a significant loss of vision. He was no longer able to fly, and his stellar career came to an end. He felt devastated and did not know where to turn.

Greg went to the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI) to learn what programs and services would be available. He realized that he needed something but didn't even know what questions to ask. During his intake interview, Greg learned about ACBVI's Orientation and Adjustment to Disability services. He was encouraged to join a support group designed especially for individuals who are adjusting to vision loss.

Gregory participated in ACBVI's Fundamentals of Adaptive Skills Training class. During this time, he learned how to modify his routine daily activities, so he could better hold on to his independence. He learned how to organize food and medication. He also learned quite a bit about kitchen safety and household management. Perhaps best of all, he learned how to use lighting and contrast to aid him in carrying out a number of tasks. For example, pouring coffee into a light mug or cup is far easier than pouring into a dark cup as the contrast between light and dark allowed him to use his remaining vision.

Greg noticed that a few of his peers were involved in wood turning. He was surprised that people without sight could use sharp instruments and power tools such as a lathe for turning wood. These individuals were active in crafting pens, bottle openers, wine bottle stoppers and many other products that involved turned wood. Although he couldn't fathom how this could be done by people who can't see, he took advantage of the opportunity to learn.

As he learned the techniques of turning and finishing wood products, Greg became especially skilled at these processes. His self-esteem improved markedly, and Greg began to realize that life is more than career status. He wanted to share his success with others and underwent training to be one of the instructors in ACBVI's wood turning program. He also learned the value of being patient with himself as well as with others and became one of ACBVI's highly regarded trainers.