



Arizona Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment Annual Report 2018 - 2019



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

Supporting and Supported by



REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

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
Amy Porterfield, Vice-Chair
Allan Curry, Secretary
Ted Chittenden
Ed Gervasoni
Donald Porterfield
Bea Shapiro
George Martinez
Nathan Pullen
Mike Gordon
Jim LaMay
Janet Fisher
Annette Reichman
Kristen Mackey

Pending appointments

David Steinmetz
Terri Hedgpeth
Michael Bailey

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

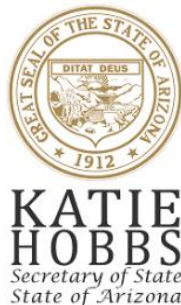
DONE at the Capitol in Phoenix this twenty-ninth day of May in the Year of Our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Ninety-two and of the Independence of the United States of America the Two Hundred and Sixteenth.

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.

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](#).





Bob Kresmer

Message from the Chair

To assure that the specialized needs of Arizonans who are blind continue to be addressed effectively, the Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI) met with and advised the Governor's Representatives, Arizona Legislators, and agency management regarding issues important to blind seniors, students, parents of blind children, working-age customers of Arizona Vocational Rehabilitation Services, blind entrepreneurs, and persons with combined hearing and vision loss.

In support of Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration, the GCBVI advised the agency on policy and participated on hiring interview panels to enhance the accuracy in assessing the best possible candidates to fill DES/ RSA counselors and manager positions.

In public policy, our members advocated for protections in the best interests of children parented by blind individuals or children who could be parented by blind individuals through the establishment of procedural safeguards that require adherence to the ADA and respect for the due process and equal protection rights of blind parents or prospective blind parents in the context of child welfare, foster care, family law and adoption. Our members campaigned for additional support services that would empower deaf/blind students and seniors to participate more fully in their communities.

Our members assisted in streamlining and improving education service delivery by the Arizona State School for the Blind and many other Arizona school districts to blind, low vision, and deaf/blind students and their parents.

GCBVI Committee Chairs have recruited new members from the community to serve with us in fulfilling our mission. We have recruited three new, experienced and eager individuals for the Governor to appoint to our council.

We continue to seek input from across the state regarding unmet blindness needs and the system improvement opinions of blind and visually impaired Arizonans. Please continue to share your concerns and triumphs with us by attending our meeting and providing public comment or by providing your input via email at GCBVI@azdes.gov. We expect the year 2020 will bring us more opportunities to positively influence the lives of blind Arizonans.

Bob Kresmer

Chairman, Governors Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment

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



Kristen Mackey

Message from the RSA Administrator

Continuous improvement was the focus of program year 2018 and will remain a strategic initiative as we move into the 2019-2020 program year. The Department of Economic Security (DES) True North statement, “All Arizonans who qualify receive timely DES services to achieve their potential.”, will continue to guide our strategic plan development. I am pleased to report that many efficiencies have been gained over the past year and I am excited about future program improvements.

Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) staff and members of the Governor’s Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI) have engaged in several meetings to focus on 1) increasing the skill set of VR staff to better serve the specialty population and 2) streamline the referral process to ensure timely service provision. Cooperatively, the group has engaged in open dialogue to inform and educate, challenge, and cooperatively propose mutually agreeable solutions. Specific actions have been defined and additional conversations will occur over the year to drive program improvements.

In addition to the work directly with Arizona RSA staff, Council members actively engage in Council Committees to further the work of the Council. In the following pages you will see the activity of the Council committees to support the employment and increased independence of individuals who are blind, DeafBlind, or low vision.

I look forward to the sustained partnership and collaboration between DES/RSA and the members of GCBVI and am excited not only about what has happened but what will happen as we continue to work together.

Kristen Mackey

Kristen Mackey
Administrator, Rehabilitation Services Administration
Department of Economic Security

Committee Reports

Employment Committee

During State Fiscal Year 2019, The GCBVI Employment Committee continued our work toward the mission of the Council and we discussed ways to address Council priorities that resulted from recent Strategic Planning that were assigned to the Employment Committee. We continued with our branded concept of E75: Eliminate, Employ, Empower, to support the estimated 75% of individuals who are blind or visually impaired and unemployed. To that end, we have engaged in the following:

1. The GCBVI Employment Committee met regularly to discuss committee business.
2. We successfully honored 5 Arizona employers at our 4th Annual E75 Diversity Builders Awards Breakfast, which took place in February at Ability 360's Conference Center.
3. We held a follow up E75 Employer Education event in March, providing information on employment resources to 20+ employers.
4. Committee members presented information on networking skills to job seekers and participated in resume reviews at the NFBAZ conference.
5. We have planned a joint presentation at the upcoming VRATE conference, in conjunction with the AT committee.

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 and we will make efforts to ensure we do not become stagnated or complacent in our duties.

Committee Members

Nathan Pullen, Chair

Terell Welch

Bea Shapiro

Ben Fox

David Steinmetz

Jordan Moon

Kevin Foster

Terri Hedgpeth

Assistive Technology Committee

Since I became the Chairman of the AT Committee in January, we have had three meetings this year, March 27, May 15 and June 12, 2019. The AT Committee will be working with the GCBVI Education Committee. The AT Committee will be working on how to come up with a way to provide training to teachers of the visually impaired to learn more about new technologies. The AT Committee is also working on the presentation for VRATE. This year the VRATE presentation topic will be on Workplace Assessment Tools. I think it will be beneficial for AT providers to assist consumers and employers

Committee Members

Beatriz Shapiro, Chair
Sue LeHew
Ed Gervasoni
Nathan Pullen
Mark Nelson
Terri Hedgpeth

Independent Living Committee

This was previously a committee that had been inactive, so a portion of time was spent developing a new committee. The committee is currently comprised of two GCBVI members and five members of the community who bring various expertise to the committee.

The committee has primarily been involved in information gathering for the Strategic Plan lead committees. Activity has been related to review of RSA-ILB Annual Report; New ILB Services Guidelines; and review of Best Practices (RSA-VR Guidelines) as ILB has no established Best Practices. We have also reviewed important changes to ILB justification for equipment costs.

Since outcomes are assigned to the Legislative and Public Policy as Lead Committee and to the DeafBlind community regarding SSP services, there should be additional detail for their reports. Within the next year, our committee will urge for the establishment and work with the SBVID unit in the establishment of their own Best Practices Guidelines as the Scope of Work; limited amount of timing

available, and outcomes of services are all significantly different from Best Practices Guidelines for Vocational Rehabilitation.

Our committee hopes to work closely with the ILB community of RSA which will begin meeting in July of this fiscal year.

Regarding policy and strategic goals, we urge the Legislative and Public Policy Committee to advocate for restoration of Independent Living Services for individuals who are blind and visually impaired under 55 years of age. (Currently no services exist for specialized services). We would also urge the Legislative and Public Policy Committee to examine the funding for individuals who are over 55 years of age where funding has remained flat for over 10 years; and this demographic population represents the largest segment of the blind and visually impaired population.

Committee Members

Jim La May - Chair and Member of the Governor's Council; ACBVI CEO & President

George Martinez – Member of The Governor's Council

Karla Rivas-Parker – Program Manager for Independent Living Program RSA

Tom Simmons – Former Chairman Governor's Council; Lions Club Official

Katie Gomez – SAAVI IL Representative; Rehabilitation Counselor

Virginia Thompson – ACBVI Representative; Representing Deafblind Issues

Frank Vance – ACBVI Representative; Rehabilitation Director

Public Information Committee

The past 12 months have been successful for the Public Information Committee. We participated in several events that were specifically designed to bring awareness to the blind, low vision, and deaf-blind communities about the council, and we committed to promote and support the EyeKnow.az.gov website as well.

Events we attended over the past 12 months included the Arizona Technology Access Program (AZTAP) that occurred in July 2018; the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona convention that was held in early September of 2018; the White Cane Day festivities sponsored by the Phoenix Veterans Hospital; in mid-October of 2018; and the Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE) conference in mid-November of 2018. We also attended the E75 Diversity Awards Breakfast set up by the Employment Committee in February of

2019; and one of our members, David Steinmetz, attended the Chandler Lions Club meeting at the Sunbird Golf Course in June of 2019.

Speaking of the Employment Committee, our committee finished creating the cards to be handed out to potential employers with the assistance of that committee. These cards briefly state and reinforce the benefits of hiring blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind individuals.

Another committee we worked with during the past year was the Assistive Technology (AT) Committee. Our shared goal was to make the EyeKnow.az.gov easier to use by the blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind populations of the state. Upon the recommendation of the AT Committee, a slight adjustment was made so that individuals wishing to print out all the website's entries could do so without having to get in touch with the committee or the site administrator.

The EyeKnow.az.gov website continues to be a source of information for many blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind people, their relatives and friends, and professionals looking for information about state resources. As of June 2019, we began a project to add more information about museums that allowed tactile access to their exhibits.

The committee continued to participate in the Introduction to Blindness sessions sponsored by the Arizona Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. Participation by blind and visually impaired clients is voluntary, and there is a growing concern that new people in the program are choosing to skip this participation.

Yes, we have been busy, yet there is still much that needs to be done, beginning with finding ways to encourage blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind people seeking assistance to participate in the Introduction to Blindness workshops. We also need to expand our efforts to get word out about both the Council and the EyeKnow.az.gov website. We need to work more cooperatively with the other council committees (most notably Employment and AT) to promote their work beyond the bounds of the Council. Finally, committee membership has shrunk to 4 persons, and we need to attract new members to keep it going.

Committee Members

Ted Chittenden, Chair
Janet Fisher

Daniel Martinez
David Steinmetz

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, access to visual and auditory information, and access to travel within community environments for the purposes of managing and maintaining healthy independent living.

- Continue to stay informed, help advise and monitor the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing (ACDHH) as they began to implement a Pilot Statewide SSP Program which started in July of 2018. Unfortunately, the first year has been a very difficult start. The three main duties that SSP's provide to individuals who are Deaf-Blind or have CVHL are providing access to communication situations with others, access to auditory, visual and environmental information, and access to travel within given environments.
 - Transportation is the first issue that has not been resolved for the community. SSP's who work for ACDHH are not allowed to transport individuals in their own car, and many D-B & CVHL individuals cannot afford ride services on a regular basis for various types of community travel. Para-transit services have great limitations for certain types of travel needs and do not help to meet many of the travel needs required by members of this community. At this point in time, this program has not helped to resolve any of the transportation issues that the community faces.
 - Communication access during SSP service provision has become another obstacle that the community faces during certain circumstances. The Commission's current view on Sign Language Interpreting within the state of Arizona has greatly limited the types of communication support that an SSP is able to provide due to concerns of violating Arizona Interpreting Licensure Laws. ACDHH has been slow with resolving these issues and keeping the committee informed about its progress. Unfortunately, these have greatly hindered the types of activities the consumers can participate in up to this point.

We will continue to monitor and encourage ACDHH to take the broadest view possible so that the consumers who are D-B or have CVHL can get the most out of SSP services based on their needs, preferences and choices.

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, access to visual and auditory information, and access to travel within educational, home and community settings. In addition, they develop and prepare activities and materials for the individual, and form working alliance with family, educational and community members.

- Supported and collaborated with AHCCCS to research and develop a new Community Intervener Service for the ALTCS program due to be implemented in October of 2019
 - Currently working with a select group of individuals to help develop a tool to help determine the level and amount of Intervener services that an individual may need within the DD and ALTCS systems.
 - 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 from the Arizona Deafblind Project.

Access Technology:

iCanConnect (ICC) 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. As of July 1, 2019, these services will no longer be provided by the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf, but instead will be provided by the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI).

- We have appointed the lead person, Virginia Thompson to serve on our committee as a result. We will continue to monitor the delivery of access technology and training provided by ACBVI and ICC to individuals who are D-B or have CVHL throughout Arizona.
- We will continue to use data from these efforts to become more informed about the demographics and needs of individuals living with Deaf-Blindness and CVHL 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 Deaf-Blind 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 who have 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.
- Continued to learn about 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.
- Appointed Megan Mogan newly hired DeafBlind specialist who replaced Cindi Robinson following her retirement from the project.

Advocacy & Education:

- Continued to stay informed about a program established by the ACBVI in Phoenix, which is designed to teach independent living skills to individuals with deaf-blindness and CVHL. Appointed the lead person of the project, Virginia Thompson to serve on this committee.
- Learned about a new program established by The Helen Keller National Center to exclusively serve Arizona. Appointed Jonathan Pringle, the Arizona Field representative to participate on this committee.
- Continued to explore with varying stakeholders regarding both a statewide training and certification program for SSPs and Interveners.

Committee Members

Ed Gervasoni, Chair
Mary Hartle
Carmen Green

Steven Wilson
Jonathan Pringle
Sue Kay Kneifel

Cindi Robinson
Virginia Thompson
Megan Mogan

Education Committee

The GCBVI Education Committee has been working toward several goals in 2019.

- The consistent application of the Arizona Braille law to ensure effective Braille teaching is offered in all counties in Arizona.
- Research and study for identifying appropriate certification and continuing education criteria for specialized teachers of blind and visually impaired students.
- Developing recommendations for the inclusion of relevant stakeholders in the governance of Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind.
- Studying the relevant rank of blind and visually impaired students in required Arizona high stakes testing, compared to standard students' scores.
- In conjunction with community stakeholders, the GCBVI Education Committee will develop surveys, gather stakeholder input and formulate policy and practices recommendations to share with the Governor, Legislature, and the relevant state agencies in the year 2020 that best serve persons who are blind and the community.

Committee Members

Bob Kresmer, Chair

Lisa Jackson

Lisa Yencarelli

Ed House

Jared Kittelson

Doris Woltman

Julie Urban

Success Stories

Arizona Industries for the Blind

Hello, my name is Bryaunah Heckard. I am a 24-year-old, visually impaired single mother of four and I am a proud employee of Arizona Industries for the Blind (AIB). I have been with the company for a little over four years now and it has brought remarkable change to my life and the way I perceive my visual impairment. As a child, I was told that due to my low vision I would never be able to do the things that AIB has enabled me to do.

As a teenager, I began to fear the possibility of losing my vision and having to rely on others for the rest of my life. After the death of my mother, when I was 15, I was determined to prove my doctors and family members wrong.

Even though the odds were very much stacked against me, I graduated in the top 20% of my senior class in 2012. Thanks, in part to the Vocational Rehabilitation program in the state of California, I was able to attend community college as a full-time student. Two years later, I welcome my first child and relocated to Arizona for a better living environment. I joined the Vocational Rehabilitation program here in Arizona and had my heart set on going back to school. On a chance field trip with the program, I ended up stumbling upon a job opportunity at AIB in the warehouse unit. At first, I immediately reverted to the notions I was fed as a child; that I was too blind to do something like that. To my surprise, more than half of the employees at AIB were visually impaired and some were even completely blind. I took a chance and ended up acquiring a position in Quality Control in December of 2015.

As of today, I am still a proud employee at AIB. In addition, I am a full-time student at Grand Canyon University; on track to earning my Bachelor of Science in psychology in the fall. My goal is to further my education by attending law school and receiving my Juris Doctrine to become an attorney. I am also raising four children; my four-year-old son, my one-year old twins and my 15-year-old brother. I have become the sole proprietor of my very own business in hopes of building something to leave behind to my children. I am also in the works of starting my own nonprofit organization.

Recently, one of my twins was diagnosed with cataracts and has undergone two rounds of cataract removal surgery.

Knowing the journey, he may be facing as he gets older, I feel it is my job to continue forth with my goals and serve as an example for my son that visual limitations does not mean you are disabled.

Working with AIB has shown me that my visual impairment is just that and not a handicap. I am an able young woman with the world in front of me.

The Arizona Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

Linda completed the BEP training program and after becoming a licensed operator was able to begin directly managing a successful vending route in west Phoenix. Recently, she was able to secure a concession contract and is now also operating a busy vending franchise at a city of Phoenix Aquatic Center during the summer months. The BEP provided training has allowed her to learn both vending and foodservice operations, which has prepared her to operate a successful business and allow her to live independently.

Foundation for Blind Children Adult Services

After retiring from 30 years of driving for UPS, Mr. Torrey-Bey was diagnosed with a substantial visual impairment. As a result, he was referred to Foundation for Blind Children (FBC) to have a low vision examination. In the process of that evaluation, he was informed about the comprehensive rehabilitation training services available at FBC for those interested in returning to work. He then applied for VR services and was referred to FBC to participate in those services. Through the comprehensive rehabilitation training, he was able to gain the skills he needed to obtain and maintain employment. Today, he continues to be successfully employed as a home health aide.