

Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)
Deaf-Blind Issues Committee Meeting Minutes
January 8, 2019

Members Present

Ed Gervasoni, Chair
Sue Kay Kneifel
Cindi Robinson
Megan Mogan
Mary Hartle
Carmen Green
Steve Wilson

Members Absent

Chris Desborough

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Julie Stylinski, ACDHH
Cindy Walsh, VCD
Larry Rhodes, COPD New Mexico
Jonathan Pringle, HKNC
Janice Gonzales, CART
Dustin McLaws, ASL Interpreter
Audrey Evans, ASL Interpreter

Call to Order and Introductions

Ed Gervasoni, Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:05 am in the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH) Conference Room, Phoenix, AZ. Introductions were made, and a quorum was present.

Approval of October 16, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Cindi Robinson moved to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2018 Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues meeting. Sue Kay Kneifel seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

Chair Report

Ed Gervasoni stated there were several methods of communication and reminded committee members and guests to identify themselves prior to speaking. Mr. Gervasoni stated that individuals were using ASL interpreters and CART, which could cause slight delays in communication. Ed Gervasoni stated there had been several changes within the committee, the state, and organizations. He added that he was considering restructuring the committee and inviting a representative from each organization, while remaining cognizant that a larger committee would require more members to obtain quorum. Cindi Robinson stated the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD) and the Valley Center for the Deaf (VCD) should be represented on the committee as well as an individual from the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC). Cindi Robinson stated the committee should continue to recruit members with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss (CVHL). Sue Kay Kneifel agreed and stated the committee could also recruit individuals from the service providers such as the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI) as well as agencies that provided comprehensive blind services. Sue Kay Kneifel stated the committee could also take on a holistic approach and view services from a lifespan approach that included youth transition age to older individuals. Mary Hartle agreed that each organization was important to the discussions of the committee and she encouraged the committee to recruit more CVHL individuals. Ed Gervasoni agreed that the committee should have a greater representation of individuals with CVHL. Mr. Gervasoni stated the committee needed to review service delivery in the state, examine barriers to services, and the training of interveners and Service Support Providers (SSP)s. Cindi Robinson stated the committee should also recruit parents of individuals with CVHL that were transition age or older.

National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) Update

Larry Rhodes stated he was the Deaf-Blind Director at COPD in New Mexico, although he had taken on a role as a consultant in Arizona. Larry Rhodes stated he did not have statistics regarding the NDBDDP, although he would take any questions from the committee and provide answers at a subsequent meeting. Ed Gervasoni stated that he had forwarded some questions to Anne Levy, COPD previously, and he would follow up with her. Mary Hartle inquired whether there had been any staff changes at COPD. Ms. Hartle stated that she often had to wait one or two weeks in order to get an appointment with James Rice and stated that COPD and VCD likely needed more staff. Larry Rhodes stated that Perkins School for the Blind had the contract with I Can Connect in New Mexico and Arizona, and some

questions would be directed to that agency. Larry Rhodes stated that as he traveled throughout New Mexico and Arizona, he was able to do intakes and assessments. Mr. Rhodes stated there had not been any recent staff changes, although James Rice and Amy Spears were providing more training on assessments and technology. Cindy Walsh, VCD stated that James Rice had focused on serving clients in rural areas on average of two or three days a week. Mary Hartle thanked Cindy Walsh and stated she was not implying that James Rice was not doing his job. Ms. Hartle stated that VCD would benefit from more staff to provide training to clients quickly. Larry Rhodes stated that COPD was considering hiring a contractor to work with the I Can Connect program in Phoenix. Ed Gervasoni stated that some consumers were slow learners and technology changed so frequently, which added to the issue. Larry Rhodes stated there were clients that never had a computer or an iPad or had a learning disability that created a learning barrier. Ed Gervasoni stated the benefit to having workshops for individuals with CVHL to obtain training and to also have a network of individuals that could provide support. He added that some clients learned one thing related to Assistive Technology (AT), but did not have the knowledge to troubleshoot a problem. Jonathan Pringle, HKNC stated that I Can Connect could be used as a comparable benefit and that Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) could be used if the individual was seeking employment.

SSP Services in Arizona Follow-Up

Cindy Walsh stated that if an individual was eligible for services through the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHDD), the client was referred to ACDHH. Cindy Walsh stated if an individual required transportation, the individual could receive services through COPD or VCD. Ms. Walsh noted that COPD and VCD could not, however, provide transportation only. Cindy Walsh stated from July through December 2018, in Tucson, 7 individuals received SSP services and 122 service hours. Cindy Walsh stated Tucson had the capacity to provide more case management services. Cindy Walsh stated in Phoenix, 10 individuals received SSP services and 486 hours of service. Cindi Robinson inquired whether individuals in Phoenix requested more hours or whether Phoenix had greater resources in order to provide more service hours. Cindy Walsh stated that COPD provided more case management and could route funds towards case management activities. She added that VCD had some private and separate pay opportunities for individuals that were eligible.

Julie Stylinski stated on December 3, 2018, the SSP program offered through the ACDHH was changed to include in home services. Ms. Stylinski stated ACDHH was able to provide 10 hours of outside of the home services and 10 hours of in-home services. Julie Stylinski stated she shared the list

of eligible in-home services with the consumers. She stated that of December, the ACDHH had provided 33.25 hours of SSP services and 8.25 of those hours were used inside the home. Julie Stylinski stated ACDHH recognized the transportation issue and were working with the Arizona State Procurement Office to identify a solution. She noted that she continued to welcome feedback from consumers and to identify gaps in the system in order to provide services to the CVHL community. Cindi Robinson inquired whether the 33.25 service hours were in Phoenix or Tucson. Julie Stylinski stated all the service hours were in Phoenix and that no consumers had requested SSP services in December.

Sue Kay Kneifel stated there were 400+ individuals with CVHL in the state and suggested the committee or a partnership with other agencies consider conducting another statewide needs' assessment and identify individuals of educational age, while providing resources of the available agencies. Jonathan Pringle suggested the committee develop a common intake process so that an individual requested a large screen phone, would also be asked questions regarding SSP services or transportation needs. Sue Kay Kneifel stated her concern that the process would target adults seeking service but would not include individuals that were not aware of the available services. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH would hold some community meetings and could revisit some questions that would be asked during those meetings. Carmen Green stated the meetings would also allow the ACDHH to provide outreach to consumers and consumer organizations or allow individuals to complete the survey if unable to attend one of the meetings. Sue Kay Kneifel encouraged outreach to non-traditional agencies such as the Department on Aging, Raising Special Kids, the Arizona Early Intervention Program (AZEIP). Larry Rhodes stated that New Mexico served individuals with CVHL and the population that was increasing was the aging population. He noted that he would estimate approximately 1500+ individuals with CVHL in the state eligible for services in Arizona. Larry Rhodes stated that COPD had recently modified the intake form to identify the needs of CVHL individuals. Cindi Robinson stated the previous statewide needs assessment took almost two years to develop the questions and were distributed to the traditional and non-traditional agencies. Cindi Robinson stated the committee then waited approximately three years to receive the results from HKNC. Ms. Robinson stated the information was still viable and could be revisited and inquired whether the ACDHH would conduct Town Hall meetings. Carmen Green stated the meetings would be similar to Town Hall meetings but would likely be smaller meetings. Cindi Robinson agreed that a similar intake form would be useful to identify individuals in the community. Ed Gervasoni stated some of the blindness agencies such as SAAVI Service for the Blind and the VA could use the same tool to identify individuals. Sue Kay Kneifel stated the committee could also consider

agency data sharing agreements, such as the agreement between the Department of Economic Security (DES) and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE). Mary Hartle stated there was an American Community Survey several years prior, which identified 4800 CVHL individuals in Arizona, whom were largely in the aging population, and suggested the committee contact the Area Agencies on Aging as well as senior centers. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH currently has a Hearing Healthcare Program run by Michelle Michaels, which would be more person-centered and would be able to refer clients to additional resources. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH had a relationship with the Area Agencies on Aging and could encourage sharing resources. Cindi Robinson inquired whether Larry Rhodes would be able to share COPD's intake form. Larry Rhodes stated the current intake form was being modified, although he could share the questions that would be asked. Jonathan Pringle stated that in the past, he worked with an itinerant home health staff member, whom was able to provide referrals and educate individuals in the community. Julie Stylinski stated that when she worked for VCD, part of her intake process included obtaining signed Release of Information (ROI) from the individual so that she could contact different agencies such as Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and the individual could quickly obtain services from that agency. Julie Stylinski stated the benefit to having one intake package to be able to reach out to a variety of agencies. Ed Gervasoni stated there was a wide array of services for consumers, which was exciting.

Cindy Walsh stated the statewide interpreter contract that was open for bid in the fall included SSP services, although that Request for Proposal (RFP) had been closed. Cindy Walsh stated the Office of Procurement held a meeting with interpreting providers in preparation to reopen a bid, although the SSP services would not be included. Ms. Walsh requested an update on the SSP pilot project and whether the project would continue. Carmen Green stated the project was a fluid process and ACDHH was subject to the parameters imposed by the Legislature. Ms. Green stated she recently learned that the SSP services would not be included in the bid because no one had asked questions. Carmen Green stated the pre-offer meeting was about the SSP services and turned into questions regarding the statewide contract. She noted that she was not aware whether there would be bidding on the SSP portion in pricing. Carmen Green stated the Procurement Officer indicated that she had a more appropriate category for the contract, although the SSP services would not be included in the RFP. Cindy Walsh stated she attended the meeting where the providers were discussing the decision and noted the confusion from providers whom did not understand that they could bid for portions of the contract. Ed Gervasoni stated that Dara Johnson, Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) had indicated that AHCCCS could provide transportation to clients through

subcontracted agencies with insurance blankets. Carmen Green stated the new Procurement Officer indicated that other agencies might be willing to provide transportation to clients. Ms. Green stated she attended a meeting where she met the Board Chair of the Northwest Connect, that provides transportation specific to the northwest valley, and had been encouraged to submit their information to Procurement. Carmen Green stated she was not aware whether the 18-month pilot would continue once complete, although she would include transportation in any future requests. Cindi Robinson stated her understanding was the funds were provided short term. Carmen Green stated the Legislature approved a five-year period and the ACDHH Business Manager gave projections regarding the projected increase each year. She noted the ACDHH was approved to receive \$192,000 each year for five years. Carmen Green stated based on current usage, the ACDHH would have to justify the reason for not requiring an increase in funds. Ms. Green noted a justification was that the ACDHH could not provide transportation, which reduced the program usage.

Ms. Robinson inquired whether ACDHH would consider sharing the funds with COPD or VCD. Carmen Green stated ACDHH might not be the best vehicle for providing SSP services, although the agency would be able to represent that need based on the feedback from the community. Carmen Green stated that Mary Hartle's comments regarding the need to in home SSP services had initiated the discussion surrounding the need for in home services. Carmen Green stated the \$192,000 appropriated funds were not a tax to the ACDHH but was appropriated through the agency's funds and were able to communicate the need to the Legislature. Ed Gervasoni stated the importance for clients to have options in service providers and informed choice regarding their services. Carmen Green stated she was excited to see the types of services that other agencies would bid on such as transportation or the SSP portion. She noted that the agency had learned a lot throughout the process and would be able to offer great service options to deaf-blind individuals and individuals with CVHL. Mary Hartle thanked Carmen Green and Julie Stylinski for developing the list of eligible tasks that could be performed in the home and for providing 10 services hours for the in-home services. Larry Rhodes stated that New Mexico COPD received \$300,000, which had a smaller population compared to Arizona, and noted that \$192,000 would not be enough funds to provide services. Carmen Green stated that the funds would be used to provide direct services to clients and ACDHH would continue to identify how to best serve the clients, although she agreed the funds would not be enough to serve everyone. Cindy Walsh stated that VCD's donor funds would be gone June 30, and she inquired whether the RFP could be submitted quickly in order to offer a continuum of services. Carmen Green stated she was hopeful that the

statewide interpreting contract would be submitted soon and that shortly after, the Procurement Office would submit the SSP contract.

SSP Training Curriculum Update

Carmen Green stated the committee had commented at a previous meeting that three days was not long enough for the SSP Training, although HKNC indicated the training curriculum was too extensive in some areas. Carmen Green suggested the committee, or a workgroup review the SSP training curriculum and identify the steps necessary to offer a certification. Ms. Green stated ACDHH had been in contact with RSA regarding developing a workforce of paraprofessionals. Carmen Green stated she received a request from COPD to use the curriculum for University of Arizona interpreter training, which she granted. Ed Gervasoni stated the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB) was considering offering Joint Technical Education District (JTED) programs training paraprofessionals in Phoenix and Tucson. Mr. Gervasoni stated ASDB was also considering offering ASL interpreting while students were in high school or college. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether a certification like an interpreter certification could be offered for SSPs. Ed Gervasoni stated that certifications helped an individual to become job ready and eligible for employment. Larry Rhodes stated that HKNC had a National Community of Practice (NCOP) specifically for SSPs. Mr. Rhodes noted that most members were service agencies that provided SSP support in their states and that most states were struggling with developing SSP certifications. Larry Rhodes noted that SSP services were driven by funding and that each state would likely have their own certifications. Ed Gervasoni agreed that it would be easier to develop certification on the state level prior to national certification. He noted that Arizona had a growing population of aging individuals with CVHL.

Carmen Green stated the purpose of the SSP curriculum with University of Arizona was to develop a statewide SSP certification due to an inability to identify national certification. Ms. Green stated she was in contact with the Chair of the NCOP and could share that contact with the committee. Carmen Green stated the committee originally developed the SSP curriculum due to questions from other agencies regarding the roles of a SSP and so that SSPs would be considered professionals and compensated accordingly. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether the committee could review how the interpreter certification was developed as a potential model for developing SSP certification. Sue Kay Kneifel stated the ASDB JTED came out of a collaboration with the National Deaf Center and RSA had started working with Marana High School and Pima Community College. Sue Kay Kneifel stated the coursework would need to be aligned with what was occurring at the community college level. Ed Gervasoni stated the certification would

help to build capacity in the field of deaf-blindness and potentially encourage more students to become teachers of blind, visually impaired, deaf, and hard of hearing students. Carmen Green stated she could review the history of interpreter licensure and noticed the SSP curriculum was developed to provide training to individuals interested in becoming SSPs. Ed Gervasoni stated the SSP services were often misunderstood and the services were varying. He noted the SSPs should build their own capacity and eventually develop their own organization. Cindi Robinson recommended that there be levels of training such as entry, intermediate and advanced. Carmen Green stated the SSP guidelines included the committee's recommendation of training levels and inquired whether the committee approved of the three-day training as the first level of training. Ms. Green stated the three-day training might not be enough for a certification although the training could supplement an individual's years of experience in the field. Ed Gervasoni stated a workgroup could review the SSP curriculum and identify the next steps. Carmen Green stated the SSP training curriculum was a good start for potential SSP trainings or certifications. Ed Gervasoni stated the GCBVI would elect new officers at the next Full Council meeting, and he would discuss any changes to the committee with the new GCBVI Chair.

SSP Professional Development and Certification Discussion

This item was tabled.

ACDHH Budget Request

This item was tabled.

Intervener Training Update

Cindi Robinson stated the intervener training was a 2-year face-to-face training program sponsored by the Arizona DeafBlind Project that had been in existence for 19 years, although the previous year, the trainings had changes to online modules. Ms. Robinson stated that individuals completed the training in three years. Cindi Robinson stated that she and Megan Mogan had recommended that the trainings be offered as a combination of face-to-face and online modules. Megan Mogan stated she was committed to the continuance of the intervener training and had reviewed the feedback from individuals that had gone through training. Cindi Robinson stated she inquired regarding individual's preferences, and most individuals preferred the face-to-face training or a combination of in person and online training.

AHCCCS/ALTCS Services Update

Ed Gervasoni stated that Dara Johnson was unable to attend the meeting, although she had indicated that AHCCCS intended to move forward and expected to offer the Medicaid waiver program for individuals that qualified by July 2019. Ed Gervasoni stated she also forwarded an email to committee members indicating that AHCCCS would hold a meeting in late January or early February in Phoenix and Tucson for interveners. Ed Gervasoni stated that Ms. Johnson also indicated that a formal request was made to the Governor's Office for SSP services for the broader non-acute, (non-ALTCS) Medicaid population and would know whether the budget had been approved in January once the budget was released.

SBVID Report

Mary Hartle stated there were many individuals with customer service jobs and she inquired regarding the level of their hearing loss and how they were able to perform their jobs. Sue Kay Kneifel stated she did not know the level of each individual's hearing loss, although many customer jobs were computer based rather than over the phone. She noted that customer service was a broad field and noted that many companies were moving towards online only communication with customers. Mary Hartle stated there were also many clients placed in social work jobs. Sue Kay Kneifel stated the categories were the job or industry clusters but were not necessarily the job titles.

Deaf-Blind Connections in Arizona Update

Mary Hartle stated the D-B Connections in AZ continued to develop a Strategic Plan and would identify the goals and objectives for the organization. Ms. Hartle noted that D-B Connections in AZ continued to provide advocacy for DB individuals.

Conference Updates

This item was tabled.

National Deaf-Blind Citizens Update

This item was tabled.

Agenda and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues was scheduled for April 25, 2019 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH) Conference Room, 100 N. 15th Avenue, Suite 104, Phoenix, AZ. Agenda items are as follows:

- Chair Report
- National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) Update
- SSP Services in Arizona Follow-Up
- SSP Training Curriculum Update
- SSP Professional Development and Certification Discussion
- ACDHH Budget Request
- Deaf-Blind Project Update
- AHCCCS/ALTCS Services Update
- Deaf-Blind Connections in Arizona Update
- Conference Updates
- National Deaf-Blind Citizens Update

Announcements

Sue Kay Kneifel announced that RSA would hold a Reverse Job Fair where the clients could have a table at the fair and provide elevator speeches to employers. Sue Kay Kneifel stated the job fair would be on February 1, 2019 and individuals interested in attending could register with Tim Stump at TStump@azdes.gov.

Public Comment

Jonathan Pringle stated he had been appointed as the Deaf-Blind Specialist for HKNC and provided one-on-one service to assist with achievement of employment outcomes. He noted his role would be in the metropolitan and rural areas. Mr. Pringle stated his focus would be on employment and providing outreach regarding the services offered by HKNC.

Adjournment of Meeting

Sue Kay Kneifel motioned to adjourn the meeting. Cindi Robinson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.