

Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)
Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues Meeting Minutes
February 13, 2018

Members Present

Ed Gervasoni, Chair
Chris Desborough
Cindi Robinson
Mary Hartle
Carmen Green*
Sue Kay Kneifel

Members Absent

Steve Wilson

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers, Council Staff Liaison
*Teleconferenced

Guests Present

Aimee Mousavie
Sandra Solomon
Kim Minard
Candis Gingras
Cindy Walsh
Virginia Thompson

Call to Order and Introductions

Ed Gervasoni, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:25 am in the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP) Conference Room, Phoenix, AZ. Introductions were made, and a quorum was present.

Approval of November 14, 2017 Meeting Minutes

Mary Hartle moved to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2017 Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues meeting. Chris Desborough seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

ACBVI Service Program for DB/CVHL Individuals

Virginia Thompson, Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI) stated that ACBVI had a Comprehensive Services contract with Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), which allowed the agency to serve blind first, deaf first individuals and individuals with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss (CVHL). Virginia Thompson stated ACBVI provided instruction on Orientation and Mobility (O&M), adaptive communication training, ASL instruction as needed and how to use different communication

techniques. Virginia Thompson stated the agency provided clients with the resources available in the community and assisted the clients in applying for those services. Virginia Thompson stated ACBVI was seeking a mobility specialist proficient in sign language. She noted that the agency offered a primary language approach and would provide staff that could directly communicate with the client. Virginia Thompson stated the center worked as a team to ensure that clients received the services they need. Virginia Thompson stated the ACBVI was not qualified to teach individuals how to be SSPs, but could assist individuals in using SSPs. Virginia Thompson stated that several individuals did not identify as having CVHL and therefore did not have access to the services available. Ed Gervasoni noted that the individual should self-identify as having CVHL and that the agencies and organizations should provide the education to help the individual identify the resources they need. Virginia Thompson stated that there are likely more individuals with CVHL that do not identify as having CVHL and could benefit from additional training from ACBVI. Ms. Thompson stated the ACBVI added the services of supported education, job readiness and DST, which prepared the individual for IT support. Cindi Robinson inquired regarding the educational support that the center offered to clients. Virginia Thompson stated the center provided instruction to students on how to access the Disability Resource Centers and to advocate for themselves. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether the ACBVI provided coaching or mentoring to the students. Virginia Thompson stated the supported education program provided tutoring if tutoring was not provided by the school. Mary Hartle stated her understanding was that the schools should be responsible for providing tutoring to students. Ms. Thompson stated that ACBVI provided tutoring as backup in case the school did not offer tutoring.

Virginia Thompson that some ACBVI staff were learning ASL as a supplementary communication method with clients. Ms. Thompson stated that six staff members were proficient in reading Braille and some staff members were proficient in Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI). Virginia Thompson stated the center offered a social recreation program, where clients were taught basic sign language. Cindi Robinson inquired whether ACBVI based their services on services offered by the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC). Virginia Thompson stated the Comprehensive Services were modeled after RSA services, although the long-range service plan for Independent Living (IL) was modeled after HKNC services. Chris Desborough inquired why the ACBVI modeled services after HKNC. Virginia Thompson stated that HKNC's services were successful, although the center applied comprehensive services to the service delivery as well. Chris Desborough stated he received feedback from individuals that attended HKNC whom indicated that the proficiency level of the organization was low. Mary Hartle stated she attended HKNC for a week-long technology training

and noted that students did not receive a lot of Braille or cane travel instruction. She added that the HKNC instruction was not a full day of instruction. Virginia Thompson stated that the comprehensive services were offered Monday-Friday from 8:30-3:00. Mary Hartle inquired why the instruction ended at 3:00 pm. Virginia Thompson stated that the instruction ended early to accommodate individuals' transportation needs. Cindi Robinson inquired whether ACBVI served individuals with multiple disabilities. Virginia Thompson stated the center served clients with multiple disabilities such as Assistive Technology (AT) training to clients as part of the contract with RSA. Ms. Thompson stated the center assessed all clients and were able to provide services to address all clients' needs. Chris Desborough suggested the ACBVI be mindful about how the HKNC was perceived in the community. Ed Gervasoni stated the Lighthouse for the Blind in Seattle offered a great day program to individuals, although housing was not offered to participants. Aimee Mousavi stated her brother-in-law worked for the Lighthouse for the Blind under a government contract working with individuals with CVHL. Ed Gervasoni inquired regarding the number of CVHL clients served at the ACBVI. Virginia Thompson stated she knew of four individuals with CVHL, although there were two clients currently receiving services. Cindi Robinson inquired whether ACBVI applied for the SSP training contract offered through the ACDHH. Virginia Thompson stated she was unaware whether the center applied for the contract.

National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) Update

Ed Gervasoni stated he would forward some questions to Cindy Walsh regarding the NDBEDP program to be addressed at the next committee meeting. Mary Hartle inquired whether Cindy Walsh knew about the current funding for SSP services through the VCD. Cindy Walsh stated the funding remained flat and noted that Julie Stylinski, VCD monitored the SSP funds available monthly. Ms. Walsh stated that VCD continued to recruit individuals that could provide SSP services.

SSP Services in Arizona Follow-Up

Carmen Green stated that she and the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH) had been working with the Arizona State Procurement Office regarding the Support Service Provider (SSP) contract. Carmen Green stated the Procurement Office had recently undergone leadership change and some of the processes had changed. Ms. Green stated the ACDHH had considered all the feedback received during the public Town Hall meetings in Phoenix and Tucson and had moved the information forward to the Procurement Office. Carmen Green stated she anticipated a

decision regarding the vendor that would be awarded the SSP provider contract soon. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether a Request for Proposal (RFP) would be submitted so that vendors could provide bids on the contract. Carmen Green stated that all vendors enrolled in ProcureAZ under a specific commodity code received the Request for Information (RFI). Ed Gervasoni inquired regarding the commodity code. Carmen Green stated she could request the actual commodity code. Chris Desborough requested a summary regarding the feedback received during the public Town Hall meetings. Carmen Green stated she would share that information and noted that Procurement staff attended the Town Hall meeting in Phoenix. Mary Hartle inquired whether Carmen Green could notify the committee regarding the vendor selected to provide SSP services. Carmen Green stated she would share that information with the committee, once the contract had been awarded. Cindi Robinson stated that few agencies would have the knowledge, experience and staff to provide the SSP services. Chris Desborough stated his concern that members of the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues were not informed regarding the information include in the RFI. Carmen Green stated that several processes had changed due to the leadership change within the Procurement Office, which included the distribution of a RFI instead of a RFP.

Cindi Robinson stated the committee had worked diligently on the development of a SSP program and expressed her concern that an agency without sufficient experience would be awarded the contract. Ed Gervasoni noted that agencies with experience providing SSP services were not necessarily trained to provide adequate SSP services either. Carmen Green stated that the changes in the Procurement Office allowed vendors that responded to the RFI to begin discussions with the Procurement Office. Carmen Green noted that ACDHH would oversee the SSP service provision and would be able to provide that checks and balances to the process. Ms. Green added that ACDHH would be able to provide feedback regarding the potential vendors as well. Sue Kay Kneifel stated that ACDHH could submit a list of potential vendors to the Procurement Office if those vendors were willing to register with ProcureAZ. Ms. Kneifel noted that the Procurement Office would accept those recommendations as the subject matter experts. Ed Gervasoni suggested the ACDHH consider the needs of individuals that were deaf first, blind first, and the aging population which all had different SSP needs. Mr. Gervasoni stated that a deaf individual for example, would have difficulties communicating with a blind SSP and noted that not all individuals had the technology skills to bridge that communication gap. Mary Hartle inquired regarding the information the ACDHH received during the Town Hall meetings. Carmen Green stated many individuals indicated that their SSPs did not provide proper guidance, the SSPs did not have a variety of skills, and that several individuals were not well matched with a

SSP. She added that the individuals in the Phoenix Town Hall meeting expressed more positive feedback compared to the Tucson Town Hall meeting individuals. Chris Desborough inquired whether the ACDHH would provide evaluations of the vendors providing SSP services. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH would communicate with the vendor monthly and that she would review the information submitted from the vendor and would be aware of the services provided to the consumers. Cindi Robinson inquired whether the contract could be awarded to several vendors. Carmen Green stated that based on the RFI, the contract would be awarded to one vendor. Ms. Green noted that the contracts would be awarded for one year with the option to renew the contract for an additional year. Chris Desborough suggested that the ACDHH utilize the knowledge and experience of the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues members. Cindi Robinson inquired whether the funds were time limited. Carmen Green stated the funds were appropriated annually for five years. Cindi Robinson stated her hope that all the funds were used annually, and that the Legislature would continue to approve of the funds to the ACDHH. Carmen Green stated that any unused funds would go into ACDHH's general funds and that the agency had some flexibility in expending those funds. Carmen Green stated that she could request information regarding the potential vendors and she encouraged committee members to forward any suggested vendors to the ACDHH to be considered for the contract.

SSP Training Curriculum Update

Carmen Green stated that ACDHH anticipated holding the first SSP Training from March 15-17. Ms. Green stated the instructors would provide training based on the curriculum developed with the University of Arizona. Carmen Green stated individuals from the Valley Center of the Deaf (VCD) and the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD) would provide the training. Ed Gervasoni stated he planned to attend the training and suggested that SSP clients be encouraged to offer feedback regarding the trained SSPs. Cindi Robinson inquired whether standards and competencies for SSPs existed. Carmen Green stated that the individuals would receive a certification upon completion of the three-day training. Cindi Robinson stated that individuals participating in intervener training historically completed fourteen days of training, which had recently been changed to three years of online training. Ms. Robinson stated the individuals that applied for intervener certification were required to demonstrate knowledge and skills 79 competencies in seven areas. Cindi Robinson suggested that individuals that completed the three-day SSP training be offered a certificate of completion rather than SSP certification. Cindi Robinson inquired whether the training would emphasize deaf first, blind first, and individuals with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss (CVHL). Cindy Walsh, Valley Center for

the Deaf (VCD), stated the Larry Rhodes would lead the training, which would be augmented by other staff. Ms. Walsh noted that there would be a panel with deaf first, blind first, and CVHL services. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether there would be training for the deaf-blind individuals on how to advocate for their services. Carmen Green stated the additional funds were for providing SSP training to SSPs and would not include training to consumers. Carmen Green stated during the development of the SSP training curriculum, the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) indicated that a two-week training would be too long, although she understood the importance of providing quality training. Sue Kay Kneifel suggested that ACDHH consider partnering with other agencies and organizations that provided personal care attendant training. Ed Gervasoni stated that ACDHH should develop methods for mentoring the SSPs and allow them to practice their skills. Carmen Green stated the SSP training from March 15-17 would be a good start to the process and the commission could modify the training as needed. Chris Desborough suggested that the ACDHH contact Pima Community College regarding assistance in developing the SSP training. Carmen Green stated she appreciated the feedback from committee members regarding the SSP training. Cindi Robinson inquired regarding the vendors that were under the commodity code and contacted regarding the SSP provider contract. Carmen Green stated she would request that information and share with the committee if the information could be shared publicly. Sue Kay Kneifel noted that the Procurement Office could provide that information. Mary Hartle inquired whether Carmen Green could share the RFI with the committee. Carmen Green stated she would request that information as well.

Cindy Walsh stated that the additional funds offered a great opportunity to provide SSP services, although the agencies would continue to need more funds. Ms. Walsh noted that the additional funds would be appropriated annually for five years, and would provide SSP services to clients statewide. Cindy Walsh stated that agencies continued to struggle to train and recruit SSPs, although if there were not enough hours available for those SSPs, the individuals would find alternative employment. Sue Kay Kneifel suggested that the agencies training SSPs partner with the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), the Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS) or the Centers for Independent Living (CIL)s which hired and trained personal care attendants. Ed Gervasoni stated that Dara Johnson, AHCCCS, attended the previous committee meeting and indicated that ALTCS intended to move towards using the Medicaid waiver to provide SSP services. Mr. Gervasoni noted that ALTCS was reviewing the current policy and identifying whether the services offered should be short term or long term. Ed Gervasoni noted his understanding that the additional funds would be allocated annually for five years with the intent to identify an alternate

service delivery for SSP services. Carmen Green stated she received some guidelines from Dara Johnson regarding personal attendant care training and services that could be implemented for SSP services.

SSP Professional Development Discussion

This item was tabled.

Deaf-Blind Connections in Arizona Follow-Up

Chris Desborough reviewed that the Deaf-Blind Connections in Arizona (DBCAz) started as the SSP Statewide Services Task Force, which was created from the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues to establish ways to identify funding sources for the implementation of a statewide SSP program. Chris Desborough stated the task force realized the group needed to become a legal entity and raised the funds to become incorporated. Chris Desborough stated that DBCAz intended to provide support and oversight on SSP services with the future goal of providing direct services to individuals. stated the had submitted the paperwork to apply for tax exemption. Mr. Desborough stated that DBCAz received release of information (ROI) for two clients and was advocating for one of the clients. Chris Desborough stated DBCAz worked with one of the clients for that individual to receive Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services and would continue to monitor the services. Chris Desborough stated the organization was aware of a third individual that might require assistance in the future. Cindi Robinson inquired regarding the typical age group of the clients. Christ Desborough stated DBCAz provided services to individuals 18 and up, although the organization would consider supporting Transition age students. Chris Desborough stated he met with COPD staff regarding ways to make materials and social media for accessible, although no efforts had been made yet. Chris Desborough stated he was aware of a grant funding source, although he could not apply until December. Aimee Mousavi suggested that Chris Desborough review the Grantwatch.com website, which offered monthly notifications on available grants.

ACDHH Budget Request Update

Carmen Green stated the ACDHH would receive the additional funds for the upcoming year. Mary Hartle inquired whether the \$192,000 had been included in the Governor's budget. Carmen Green stated the additional funds had been included in the Governor's budget.

Conference Updates

Cindi Robinson stated the Deaf-Blind International Network of the Americas Conference would be in Cape Cod, which was the first time the conference was scheduled in the U.S. Aimee Mousavi inquired how individuals could communicate in different languages at an international conference. Ed Gervasoni stated individuals could use ASL interpreters and interpreters for different languages. Cindi Robinson stated that the Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE) took place in November 2017.

AHCCCS/ALTLCS Services Update

This item was tabled.

Agenda and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues was scheduled for May 3, 2018 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:

- National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) Update
- SSP Services in Arizona Follow-Up
- SSP Training Curriculum Update
- SSP Professional Development Discussion
- ACDHH Budget Request
- Intervener Training Update
- AHCCCS/ALTLCS Services Update
- Deaf-Blind Connections in Arizona Update
- Conference Updates

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting stood adjourned at 1:12 p.m.