

**Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)**  
**DeafBlind Committee Meeting Minutes**  
February 16, 2022

**Members Present**

Andrew Cohen, Co-Chair  
Jonathan Pringle, Co-Chair  
Virginia Thompson  
Megan Mogan  
Sue Kay Kneifel  
Mary Hartle  
Julie Stylinski

**Members Absent**

**Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers

**Guests Present**

Lee Bradley, ASL Interpreter  
Sandra Soloman, ASL Interpreter  
Bob Kresmer

---

**Call to Order and Introductions**

Andrew Cohen, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:06 pm. Introductions were made, and a quorum was present.

**Approval of May 18, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

Jonathan Pringle moved to approve the minutes of the May 18, 2020 Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues meeting. Sue Kay Kneifel seconded the motion, and Mary Hartle abstained. The minutes were approved by majority voice vote.

**Chair Report**

Jonathan Pringle stated the DB Committee had been idle for a while, and he was excited for the committee to begin meeting again. Mr. Pringle stated that he and Mr. Cohen encouraged the committee members to recruit deafblind individuals or individuals with combined vision and hearing loss (CVHL) to participate on the committee.

## **ACDHH Report on DeafBlind Program**

Julie Stylinski stated that Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH) staff would likely continue to work remotely for another year, although staff would meet with consumers in the office by appointment. Ms. Stylinski stated the Support Service Provider (SSP) contract had been renewed for another year. Julie Stylinski stated there were about 20 deafblind consumers that used the program for in home and out of home reasons in Phoenix and Tucson. She noted that ACDHH continued to provide video phones and VR interpreting services for deafblind individuals and individuals with CVHL to use ASL interpreting services. Julie Stylinski stated the program recently opened to high school students that were using ASL to make phone calls as well. Julie Stylinski stated ACDHH hoped to expand the phone program to deafblind equipment for individuals that did not qualify for the iCanConnect program or Vocational Rehabilitation (VCD). She added that ACDHH was also working with the DeafBlind of Arizona retreat. Bob Kresmer thanked the committee for meeting again and for providing feedback regarding how best to serve the deafblind population. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the efforts to provide widespread and standardized SSP training. Julie Stylinski stated that she provided the SSP curriculum to Catholic Community Services (CCS), although the curriculum needed to be continually updated. Ms. Stylinski stated she was also working with ACDHH to set up a twice a year SSP training for anyone interested in attending. Sue Kay Kneifel stated the committee was interested in making an SSP a credentialed professional. Ms. Kneifel stated other states developed a curriculum to make an SSP a credentialed professional. Julie Stylinski stated she spoke to an individual from the University of Arizona and discussed potentially developing an SSP course, which would certify the individual as an SSP. Andrew Cohen stated that a standardized training would result in a professionally credited SSP and inquired whether ACDHH would offer that recognition for SSPs. Julie Stylinski stated that ACDHH did not have the ability to provide a professional certification, although the commission could certify that an individual had completed the SSP training and could be a contractor under CCS. Ms. Stylinski stated the current SSP wages were not high, although if SSPs were recognized as professionals, they would have opportunities for higher wages and job opportunities.

Jonathan Pringle inquired the number of SSP hours available, how many individuals were currently using the SSP program, and whether services were only available in Phoenix and Tucson. Julie Stylinski stated the SSP contract was open to the greater Arizona area, although the program only received requests from the Phoenix and Tucson areas. She noted that individuals could receive up to 20 hours of SSP services, although they could request additional hours if needed. Julie Stylinski stated there were currently

about 20 individuals using the services, and some used the services weekly, and some only needed services monthly. Jonathan Pringle stated that committee members could inform individuals in the community about the SSP program and advocate for the SSP services available. Mary Hartle stated that she was an active user of the SSP program for in home services such as using the computer for non-accessible functions or labeling medications in Braille. Julie Stylinski stated there was limited funding, and if the funds were to run out, the program would have to wait until the following year to provide services. Andrew Cohen stated that if the program did run out of funds, it would demonstrate the need for the program, which would be a benefit. Megan Mogan stated the AZ DeafBlind Project maintained the Census data regarding the number of deafblind children, which could be used for Legislative efforts in advocating for additional funding. Julie Stylinski agreed and noted the importance in educating youth and their parents regarding the difference between SSPs, interpreters and interveners, so they were aware of the available resources.

### **VCD on SSP Program Update**

This item was tabled.

### **AZ DeafBlind Project Update**

Megan Mogan stated the AZ DeafBlind Project provided information, training and resources to educators and families and youth with CVHL. Ms. Mogan stated there were 4 staff members working in the DeafBlind Project, which worked under a Federal grant, which was housed under the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB). Megan Mogan stated a common myth was that all deafblind children attended ASDB or the Phoenix School for the Deaf (PDSB), in which only about 15% of deafblind students attended those schools and the majority of students attended public schools. Megan Mogan stated the program provided technical assistance, and on-going training to meet the needs of the educators or families. Ms. Mogan noted the majority of requests were for building an education plan for the student, or for increasing the student's access to the general education program. Megan Mogan stated the program has provided 5 intensive technical assistance plans, which usually for youth transitioning from Pre-School or students transitioning into adulthood. Megan Mogan stated the program anticipated an increase in referrals as families felt more comfortable seeking services, and there were currently 231 youth on the program's registry. Megan Mogan encouraged committee members to utilize the 2019 deafblind data, which would offer information regarding the number of deafblind children that would be moving into adulthood, as well as the race and ethnicity statistics. Megan Mogan noted that Arizona was

known for having a strong early identification and referral rate for deafblind babies, which was a testament to the partnership with the ASDB Early Learning program.

Megan Mogan stated there were currently 16 individuals in the 1<sup>st</sup> Intervener Training cohort, 5 in their second year, and 13 in their third year. Megan Mogan stated the program was seeing an attrition in the number of students enrolling in the program, and the main reason was due to pay. Ms. Mogan agreed with the need for credentialed positions to give individuals the opportunity for commensurate pay. Megan Mogan stated the AZ DeafBlind Project had established a Memorandum of Understanding with Raising Special Kids, to support families to navigate the systems in the state. Megan Mogan noted the program also hosted an Usher's Family Event in the fall. She added there was an increase in referrals from families of children that received genetic testing and were not diagnosed until adolescence. Jonathan Pringle thanked Megan Mogan and noted that he worked with her on the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) Youth Transition Program. Andrew Cohen inquired whether the AZ DeafBlind Project partnered with ACDHH or VR. Megan Mogan stated the AZ DeafBlind Project tried to offer technical assistance so that individuals that were eligible for those services knew that those services were available. She added that the program also informed families about the available services through the iCanConnect program, and the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI).

### **Agenda and Date for Next Meeting**

The next meetings of the DeafBlind Committee were scheduled for June 8<sup>th</sup> and August 17<sup>th</sup>. Agenda items are as follows:

- SBVID Report
- VCD on SSP Program Update
- iCanConnect Update
- SSP Training/Credential Discussion
- SSP Marketing/Job Retention Discussion
- ALTCS Update

### **Announcements**

Jonathan Pringle stated that 6 individuals were able to obtain employment through the HKNC the previous year. Jonathan Pringle stated the HKNC had 8 individuals attending the HKNC, and 2 individuals attended the virtual HKNC Summer Camp. Mr. Pringle noted that HKNC was able to re-open in New York in December and the center was planning for the Youth Transition Summer Program with RSA. Jonathan Pringle stated that he would

encourage committee members to reach out to their contacts and to invite them to attend future committee meetings. Mr. Pringle noted that committee members were welcome to suggest any agenda items to him and/or Andrew Cohen for future meetings.

Virginia Thompson stated that ACBVI now had an Assistive Technology (AT) Specialist in Tucson and was providing iCanConnect services there. She noted that he was also proficient in Braille and could offer assistance with Braille displays. Virginia Thompson stated ACBVI was open to consumers and were providing services to individuals in their homes while maintaining safety measures. Mary Hartle noted that she received assistance from the AT Specialist recently, and he was very helpful. Virginia Thompson stated the virtual Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology (VRATE) expo had been rescheduled for April 22<sup>nd</sup>, and there were 6-minute time slots open for anyone that would like to discuss deafblind services.

Bob Kresmer stated that SB 1487 had been recently submitted to the Legislature and could potentially increase funding for the Older Individuals Who Are Blind (OIB) program, which would include deafblind individuals. Mr. Kresmer stated that if the bill was passed, the GCBVI would welcome any assistance in reaching out to the deafblind community regarding a potential increase in funds. Virginia Thompson stated she would be interested in having a conversation with Bob Kresmer regarding individuals trying to qualify for OIB services. Bob Kresmer stated he would be willing to have a discussion with Virginia Thompson, Sue Kay Kneifel, and anyone else that would be interested.

### **Public Comment**

A call to the public was made with no response forthcoming.

### **Adjournment of Meeting**

Virginia Thompson motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mary Hartle seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:38 p.m.