

Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)
Policy Workgroup Meeting Minutes
March 8, 2019

Members Present

Amy Porterfield, Chair
Bob Kresmer
Ed House
Joanne Gabias
Karin Grandon

Members Absent

George Martinez

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Call to Order and Introductions

Amy Porterfield, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:05 am in the RSA Conference Room, Phoenix, AZ. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

Bob Kresmer stated he requested the development of a Policy Workgroup to create an outline for Services for the Blind Visually Impaired and Deaf (SBVID) staff, to discuss the restoration of the Orientation to Blindness Workshop, the council's involvement in the hiring process for SBVID staff and to discuss streamlining the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Plan Review

Amy Porterfield stated the council would develop a workgroup that would streamline the Strategic Plan so that the committees were able to communicate effectively regarding the completion of the tasks.

BVI Staff Training Outline Discussion

Amy Porterfield stated that she and Bob Kresmer met with Kristen Mackey to discuss the council's concerns regarding the lack of communication between SBVID supervisors and counselors. Ms. Porterfield noted that counselors were had to obtain supervisor approvals for client costs, although they were

not properly trained on how to provide those services. Amy Porterfield stated that RSA had confirmed that SBVID counselors could receive additional training and the council could provide oversight on that training. Amy Porterfield stated the workgroup needed to develop the draft outline of the training that SBVID staff should be required to receive. Ed House stated the workgroup could review national curriculums to ensure the workgroup did not miss relevant items. Amy Porterfield stated the workgroup could compare national training, although the policies and contracts were different compared to other agencies. Bob Kresmer stated his preference that the workgroup not replicate SBVID's previous annual and quarterly trainings. Amy Porterfield stated that SBVID's concept was good, although the program had changed. Karin Grandon stated the workgroup could consider the major components that should be included in the training, which could overlap with other trainings. Amy Porterfield stated that Kristen Mackey was interested to know what type of trainings the council would recommend. Karin Grandon inquired whether Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD)s were classified differently compared to other counselors. Amy Porterfield stated her understanding that Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind (RCB)s were classified differently. Bob Kresmer stated that counselors had been reclassified as part of the pay increase. Mr. Kresmer stated he would also be interested to review the current Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Policy Manual and the council's Best Practices. Amy Porterfield stated she reviewed the VR Policy Manual online periodically and noted that RSA had used the council's feedback on the policies that had been updated recently. She stated that she was unsure regarding the location of the Best Practices that had been developed.

Amy Porterfield suggested the workgroup begin by identifying the broad categories that should be included in the SBVID staff training outline. Ed House stated that offices in rural areas did not have a list of the blindness resources available. Karin Grandon stated that staff should have higher expectations for the population. Ms. Grandon stated that staff should also have knowledge of the common eye conditions, functional vision, and understand the roles of rehabilitation teachers, Orientation and Mobility (O&M) instructors, and Assistive Technology (AT). Amy Porterfield stated that staff should also understand non-visual skills to individuals with low vision. Bob Kresmer stated that Minnesota required new counselors to participate in immersion training where counselors would spend time at each agency during their training. Mr. Kresmer stated that he would like to see new counselors and supervisors participate in immersion training. Joanne Gabias agreed that she would like staff to have higher expectations for clients such as greater reading skills. Joanne Gabias stated that counselors would benefit from immersion training for one or two weeks. Ms. Gabias stated that some counselors expected their clients to learn the blindness

skills quickly, while other counselors had low expectations of their clients. She noted that clients also needed to learn skills to maintain their lives independently, such as how to iron their clothes, or fix things in their home, and not just the job readiness skills. Ed House agreed that counselors would benefit from immersion training if the agency was willing to support staff participating in training full time. Mr. House inquired whether the previous SBVID training included basic blindness training. Karin Grandon stated the RCB Core training did include blindness training, although some items could be added to that training. Ms. Grandon stated that counselors might not benefit from participating in part-time immersion training due to the difficulty in simulating blindness. Amy Porterfield stated that SAAVI Services for the Blind treated counselors as students, while other organizations gave staff a tour of their facility. Amy Porterfield stated that blindness training placed a great emphasis on training, which was unfamiliar to counselors that were accustomed to reviewing policy and procedures. Karin Grandon stated that counselors should understand the comprehensive training that clients would need to obtain employment or to live independently. Ed House stated the workgroup could review the federal expenditures according to disability and noted that blindness training often had more adjustment to disability training. Ed House stated that counselors would also benefit from talking to a successful blind or visually impaired individual and the resources that assisted that individual. Amy Porterfield inquired whether a consumer could be assigned as a mentor to the clients. Ms. Porterfield stated the training should include discussion of the consumer groups and advocacy training.

Joanne Gabias agreed that clients would benefit from knowing about the consumer groups, which could provide support after receiving VR services. Ms. Gabias stated in Pennsylvania, clients received AT equipment quickly, although clients did not receive training on how to use their equipment. Amy Porterfield stated that clients should receive continuous AT training on equipment used in the workplace and the application of that equipment. Bob Kresmer stated that in the past, RCB's were required to attend state conventions and would take turns attending national conventions. Karin Grandon stated the importance for counselors to see successfully blind and visually impaired individuals at those conferences. Ed House stated that RSA Administrators would also benefit from attending national conferences. Bob Kresmer stated the immersion training led to the development of the youth core training. Amy Porterfield stated that she would review the notes from the meeting and would distribute a draft outline to the workgroup for review. Karin Grandon noted that Amy Porterfield could compare the workgroup's suggested items to the previous RCB training. Amy Porterfield stated the youth training could include information regarding academics.

Agenda Items and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting date of the Policy Workgroup was scheduled for March 14, 2019 from 2:00-3:00 pm in the Council Liaison Office, Phoenix, AZ. Agenda items are as follows:

- SBVID Staff Training Outline Discussion

Announcements

Ed House announced that the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB) was developing a study that the council might be interested in being part of. Bob Kresmer stated that ASDB had completed Phase 1 of their Feasibility Study and would accept community feedback during Phase 2.

Public Comment

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

Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 9:58 am.