

**Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)  
Full Council Meeting Minutes**

March 17, 2017

**Members Present**

Amy Porterfield, Chair  
Ted Chittenden  
Bob Kresmer\*  
Sharonda Greenlaw  
Dan Martinez  
Nathan Pullen  
Ed Gervasoni\*  
Janet Fisher  
Donald Porterfield\*  
Nikki Jeffords  
Jeff Bishop\*  
Mike Gordon\*  
Jim LaMay  
Richard Sorey  
Allan Curry  
Tom Hicks

**Members Absent**

Mike Kanitsch  
Annette Reichman

**Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers, Admin. Assistant  
Teleconferenced\*

**Guests Present**

Kristen Mackey, RSA Administrator  
Diane McElmury, SBVID Operations  
Manager  
Larry Wanger, SILC  
Bea Shapiro\*, RSA  
Lisa Yencarelli\*, ASDB  
Julie Urban  
Krista McAllister  
Scott Weber, APOC  
Terell Welch, RSA  
Karla Rivas-Parker, RSA  
Ed House

## **Call to Order and Introductions**

Amy Porterfield, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m. at the RSA Video Conference Rooms located in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

## **Approval of January 20, 2017 Meeting Minutes**

Nikki Jeffords moved to approve the minutes of the January 20, 2017 GCBVI Full Council meeting as written. Bob Kresmer seconded the motion. Ted Chittenden requested the minutes be corrected to include the correct spelling of Window Eyes. The amended minutes were approved by majority voice vote.

## **GCBVI Chairperson's Report**

Amy Porterfield stated she met with the Director of the Governor's Office of Boards and Commissions, Laddie Shane and the Deputy Director, Tom Callahan. Ms. Porterfield stated the Boards and Commissions office records indicated the GCBVI had 15 open positions which was incorrect. Amy Porterfield stated she discussed the council's membership recruitment and vetting strategies with the Office of Boards and Commissions staff as well as the purpose of the GCBVI, and noted some individuals applied for membership online who did not understand the purpose of the council. Amy Porterfield stated she would meet with Dawn Wallace, the Governor's Office of Education, as well as Christina Corieri, Policy Advisor to Governor Ducey, to follow up on some issues related to council representation. She noted the council was interested in amending the bylaws to change the representation of the Arizona Association of the Parents of the Visually Impaired to a parent of a blind or visually impaired child.

Amy Porterfield stated she met with Kristen Mackey, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Administrator, and Rich Sorey, Services for the Blind Visually Impaired and Deaf (SBVID) Program Manager regarding RSA's Sunset Audit findings. Amy Porterfield stated they discussed the type of data that was analyzed in the Sunset Audit, and the council would be able to discuss the types of data the council would be interested in reviewing. Ms. Porterfield noted there were different ways to report successful closures, and the council was interested in reporting those statistics more accurately. Rich Sorey wanted to clarify that RSA statistics were reported accurately, and that RSA had been required to report the successful closures statistic. Amy Porterfield agreed that RSA had been required to report successful closures, and noted the agency would have a different formula for measuring that

data. Amy Porterfield stated the Legislative and Public Policy Committee and the Education Committee had been reestablished.

Amy Porterfield stated the council's consensus indicated the majority of members would be available on May 5, 2017 for the GCBVI Strategic Planning meeting. Ms. Porterfield stated the council would need to determine a location and a facilitator for the meeting. Ms. Porterfield asked that members submit their suggestions for meeting locations and facilitators to Lindsey Powers. She noted the ideal facilitator should understand the purpose of the council, and have experience with strategic planning.

### **RSA Administrator's Report**

Kristen Mackey stated RSA would delay the implementation of Salesforce, the new case management system, in order to ensure that all systems could be linked together seamlessly. Ms. Mackey noted RSA would extend services with Libera until the case management system could be moved to Salesforce.

Kristen Mackey stated RSA released 170 names from the Order of Selection (OOS) wait list, in which 80 cases had been closed, 7 cases had moved into a plan, 13 cases were in plan development, and 26 cases were in the process of being closed (**NOTE: ATTACHMENT A**). Kristen Mackey stated for FFY17, RSA placed 660 individuals into employment and noted the previous week, 31 individuals were placed into employment. Kristen Mackey stated the previous month, RSA placed 131 in employment. Ms. Mackey noted 16,301 cases were open currently, which was a 4.5% increase from the previous year. She stated the total number of individuals on the wait list was 2,830, which was a 33.3% decrease from the previous year. Kristen Mackey stated more individuals were being served, and noted that RSA's expenditure rate had leveled out. Kristen Mackey stated the Council Liaison position had been posted, and she anticipated the position being filled within the next couple of months.

Amy Porterfield inquired regarding the projected budget deficit reported at a previous Full Council meeting. Kristen Mackey stated the previous projected budget deficit would be 20 million in 2018, although that deficit had decreased. Kristen Mackey noted the projected budget included the re-allotment of 16 million in funds. Kristen Mackey stated her records indicated the new projected deficit would be 2 million, although she would verify that information. Amy Porterfield inquired whether RSA had been able to identify the reason for the increase in service expenditures. Kristen Mackey stated several contracts renewed with increased services costs as well as an increase in the number of individuals served. Amy Porterfield inquired

regarding the Blind and Visually Impaired (BVI) Comprehensive Program contracts extension. Kristen Mackey stated the BVI Comprehensive contracts had been extended until September 30, 2017.

Amy Porterfield stated RSA was interested in reporting the data that would be useful to the council. Ms. Porterfield inquired regarding the types of data that Libera could pull. Kristen Mackey stated there were difficulties in pulling accurate data from Libera. She stated RSA was currently reviewing the cost per closure with placement and without placement, the average number of days to obtain employment, the number of placements, average hourly wage, the number of Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE), and the eligibility compliance rating. Dan Martinez inquired regarding the statistics reported during RSA's weekly huddle meetings. Kristen Mackey stated RSA would be changing the statistics reported, although currently the agency was tracking the average number of days from application to eligibility, the eligibility determination compliance, the number of days from eligibility to IPE, the number of individuals in the VR program and in the OOS, the number of placements, the number of successful rehabilitations, and successful closure percentage, which would be changed to the number of clients that retained employment for 90 days.

Nikki Jeffords inquired whether the data could track the cases according to disability and refer to blind or visual impairment cases. Kristen Mackey stated she recently received a report indicating the increase or decrease per service code, and would share that information once the information had been verified for accuracy. Rich Sorey stated RSA was interested in measuring the successful and unsuccessful outcomes that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) required. Tom Hicks inquired whether RSA was tracking the military veteran caseloads. Kristen Mackey stated RSA could pull the veteran specific data, although the agency was not currently reviewing that information specifically. Tom Hicks stated he would be curious to know the unemployment rate of blind individuals. Dan Martinez inquired whether Tom Hicks was interested in learning the unemployment rate of blind individuals or the numbers of blind individuals that were unemployed. Kristen Mackey stated the labor participation rate was a more accurate reflection of the individuals looking for work in the community, whereas the unemployment rate included the numbers all individuals not working, including the disengaged. Mike Gordon inquired regarding the 165 individuals placed in employment. Kristen Mackey stated the statistic referred to all RSA cases, and was not separated out according to disability, although Diane McElmury would have the blind and visual impairment statistics.

Amy Porterfield stated the council could request the case costs for BVI clients, and the case outcomes for BVI clients. Ted Chittenden inquired

whether RSA could track how many blind clients obtained employment through changing their employment goals. Bob Kresmer stated, for example, if an individual was interested in a job as a Physics Instructor, and settled for a job at a call center. Mr. Kresmer inquired whether RSA could track that type of data. Kristen Mackey stated Libera could track the change in employment goals, although the system would not be able to track anecdotal goals. Ms. Mackey noted WIOA would require the agency to track the second quarter after exit earnings and the fourth quarter after exit earnings. Dan Martinez inquired whether RSA could track the recidivism rate. Kristen Mackey stated RSA could track the number of returning clients. Nikki Jeffords stated she would be interested in tracking the number of clients that had participated in the Summer Transition Program and closed successfully. Tom Hicks inquired whether the different comprehensive contract programs were tracked for successful outcomes. Kristen Mackey stated the Contracts Monitoring Unit monitored the contracts, and noted the BVI contracts were not historically monitored, although those contracts were currently being reviewed. Bob Kresmer inquired whether the council could review the dropout rate for blind students entering college. Mr. Kresmer inquired whether RSA could review the past ten years of Transition data and identify the reasons students tended to drop out of college during their first year. Diane McElmury stated the Transition statistics were tracked, although RSA had not reviewed that data yet. Diane McElmury noted RSA had the names of all the students that participated in the Transition program, and could compare that information to the students that went into Supported Education. Amy Porterfield inquired whether RSA had the data which included the names of the students that had graduated. Diane McElmury noted that data had not been reviewed yet. Kristen Mackey noted as Libera updated, WIOA would require that RSA track that data.

Jim LaMay inquired whether RSA distributed overall Client Satisfaction surveys for blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind clients. Kristen Mackey stated RSA administered a comprehensive Client Satisfaction survey and pulled a random sample of those surveys. She noted the surveys were emailed to clients, and were available in offices as well. Bob Kresmer inquired whether RSA could identify whether clients had learned the necessary skills to perform their jobs. Kristen Mackey stated RSA asked that vendors rate the clients' progression, although that data would have to be hand pulled from the system. She noted that WIOA would require RSA review the education gains and skills gains. Tom Hicks inquired whether RSA measured the employers' satisfaction with the clients placed into employment. Mr. Hicks noted the Employment Committee was interested in building relationships with employers that hired blind and visually impaired individuals. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was collaborating with the division partners in the Employment Administration, which used the Arizona Job

Connection's labor pool. Ms. Mackey noted the Business Service Representatives (BSR) were located in every local area and encouraged employers to post jobs on Arizona Job Connection. She added that Terell Welch and Tim Stump were under the Employer Engagement Administration, and were trying to increase the knowledge of all BSRs in employing individuals with disabilities. Rich Sorey stated historically, there had not been an emphasis on the counselor level to develop relationships with employers and marketing the clients. Mr. Sorey noted the counselor performance evaluations would develop some accountability measures to enhance the relationship building with employers. Amy Porterfield inquired when RSA would begin tracking the number of clients that retained employment for 90 days. Kristen Mackey stated the process had been proposed, and noted RSA could potentially track that information in May. Amy Porterfield inquired whether RSA would track successful closures and unsuccessful closures. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was interested in the successful and unsuccessful closure rates, although the agency would not be required to report that data. Amy Porterfield summarized the council was interested in reviewing the same data that WIOA tracked, and include the number of successful closures that participated in comprehensive services.

### **SBVID Program Manager's Report**

Diane McElmury, SBVID Operations Manager, stated as of February FFY 17:

The total number of individuals in the VR program was 1,215  
The total number of individuals in the OOS was 99  
The total number of individuals in Priority Two was 79  
The total number of individuals in Priority Three was 20  
The number of VR applications was 113  
The average number of days from application to eligibility was 43  
The eligibility determination compliance within 60 days was 79.7%  
The number of new plans written was 107  
The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 82.5  
The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 76  
The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 79.3%  
The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$25.48  
The average hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$13.34  
The number of clients placed was 17  
The number of clients closed successfully was 19

The February FFY17 Deaf Blind Population statistics:

The total number of individuals in the VR program was 54  
The total number of individuals in the OOS was 1

The total number of individuals in Priority Two was 1  
The total number of individuals in Priority Three was 0  
The number of VR applications was 2  
The average number of days from application to eligibility was 160.8  
The median number of days from application to eligibility was 164  
The number of new plans written was 4

Diane McElmury stated the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Office needed three Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind, and two Rehabilitation Technicians (RT), and noted selections had been made. Ms. McElmury noted she made a selection for a Purchasing Technician, and a Hard of Hearing Counselor for the Stone office in Tucson. She stated the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Office interviewed and selected a Supervisor, a Hard of Hearing Counselor, and a RT. Diane McElmury stated she held the Transition Workshops, which were well received. Ed Gervasoni inquired regarding the number of deaf-blind clients participating in the Summer Transition Program. Diane McElmury stated two students attended the workshops, and noted Ellen Boyd sent an average of four students to the Helen Keller National Center each summer.

Karla Rivas-Parker stated the Independent Living Blind (ILB) statistics were:

ILB was currently serving 502 individuals  
There were 312 individuals in Status 13  
From October 1, 2016 to current date, ILB closed 97 cases successfully and 13 cases unsuccessfully  
ILB recently assigned 55 cases and 126 cases were currently on the wait list  
ILB received an average of 7.25 referrals a week, and received 167 new cases from October 1, 2016 to the current date  
ILB assigned an average of 6.25 cases a week and assigned 149 cases since October  
The average time receiving a referral to assigning a referral was 83 days

The Wait List according to district:

District 1- 63  
District 2 – 23  
District 3 & 4 – 15  
District 5 – 10  
District 6 – 7

Karla Rivas-Parker stated there were currently six Rehabilitation Instructional Services Specialist positions out of the ten available and, one Assistive Technology position out of the two possible. As of January 23, 2017, ILB distributed 108 Resource Directories to individuals or agencies. Kristen Mackey noted the Arizona Department of Administration (ADOA) was

involved in all agency hiring, which slowed down the HR process. She added that several position descriptions had not been updated in several years, and noted HR required those positions go through the entire approval process again. Nikki Jeffords inquired whether Karla Rivas-Parker had any case expenditure data for the ILB program. Karla Rivas-Parker noted she did not have that information. Jim LaMay inquired whether the 126 individuals on the wait list were 65 years and older. Karla Rivas-Parker stated nine individuals were 54 and under. Dan Martinez inquired whether ILB was able to provide services in group settings as opposed to individually. Ms. Rivas-Parker stated ILB began a pilot in which four groups of four individuals enrolled in an eight week training. Karla Rivas-Parker stated due to each client's individual needs and the ages of clients, most clients received individualized training. Nikki Jeffords inquired regarding the process for determining which clients were served internally versus externally. Karla Rivas-Parker stated the clients were assigned to a counselor or provider based on caseloads although clients in rural areas were assigned to the only provider available in that area. Jim LaMay inquired regarding the average number of hours of instruction each client received. Karla Rivas-Parker stated the instruction hours varied according to the clients, and noted older clients required more instruction. Jim LaMay inquired whether ILB could track the average number of hours clients spent in Orientation and Mobility (O&M), Rehabilitation teaching or Assistive Technology (AT) training. Karla Rivas-Parker noted the average times might vary although she could attempt to locate that data.

Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the budget for ILB for 55 and older. Karla Rivas-Parker stated ILB received a consistent budget of \$940,000 for 55 and older clients and a budget of \$40,000 for clients 54 and under. Kristen Mackey stated RSA could match the Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) grant, although there was no funding source for 54 and under clients. Amy Porterfield inquired regarding RSA's ability to bring down the allocation for Social Security reimbursement. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was requesting reimbursement of 1 million and was trying to identify the mechanism to increase funds. Amy Porterfield noted in the past, RSA had not requested the reimbursement amount that the agency could potentially receive. Ms. Mackey noted the Libera system and the Social Security system were not compatible, and RSA had limited time to enter the information. She noted if RSA was late in entering the information, it was considered untimely and RSA was not eligible for reimbursement. Kristen Mackey noted RSA monitored the SGA levels for nine months. Amy Porterfield inquired whether RSA had positions that monitored the Social Security reimbursement activity. Ms. Mackey stated there were two positions that monitored that activity. Jim LaMay inquired regarding the low number of individuals on the 54 and under wait list. Karla Rivas-Parker stated individuals were assigned

internally, and to outside providers to receive services. Jim LaMay noted that ILB would need higher numbers of individuals on the wait list in order to request additional funding. Kristen Mackey stated individuals 54 and under that were seeking employment were placed in VR. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether ILB tracked the number of individuals with combined vision and hearing loss (CVHL). Karla Rivas-Parker stated she could provide that information.

## **BEP Program Update**

Nathan Pullen stated the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) currently had eleven staff and one open position for the Fiscal Manager, which should be processed through HR soon. Nathan Pullen stated BEP had appointed an operator to run the joint venture at the Yuma Marine Base with the BEP program in California. Mr. Pullen stated an operator had been chosen for the prison in Florence and noted that operator's contract with Swift trucking would be open for a bid. He stated the DES West Cafeteria facility went up for bid, and interviews were scheduled. Nathan Pullen stated BEP currently had some rural locations available in Yuma, Winslow, and Lake Havasu. Nathan Pullen stated the Arizona Participating Operators Committee (APOC) was in the process of revising the training program and had four perspective trainees that would begin training soon. He stated BEP would begin remodeling the Durango Grill, which would include a Starbucks coffee concept. Nathan Pullen stated the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) cafeteria would receive a small remodel to include Starbucks coffee. Mr. Pullen stated BEP was making progress with the city of Phoenix and had about 45 potential sites to survey and noted about 100 sites were deemed viable. Nathan Pullen stated BEP would be expanding to Flagstaff and would develop a north Arizona vending route. Nathan Pullen stated the city of Queen Creek contacted BEP requesting services, which could expand the Mesa or Pinal County vending route.

Nathan Pullen stated several operators and staff attended the Sage Brush Convention, a Randolph Sheppard convention, which allowed BEP operators and staff to share success stories and to network. He added that several operators and staff would attend the NAMA Conference in April, which was the largest vending conference. Nathan Pullen stated the median BEP operator income was \$62,000. Mr. Pullen stated BEP held an all-operator meeting in January, and noted the policy regarding operator debt was discussed. Nathan Pullen stated Fox News recently interviewed BEP and showcased the operator running the coffee shop at the Arizona State Capitol. Amy Porterfield inquired whether BEP intended to modify the eight step process that operators would need to complete in order to be eligible for BEP training. Nathan Pullen stated BEP would revise the language, which would

require BEP operators have a high school diploma or a GED. Amy Porterfield inquired how BEP was able to assess a potential operator's math skills, for example, if that individual graduated high school several years prior. Nathan Pullen stated operators would still undergo assessments to ensure the individuals were competent in business math. Nathan Pullen stated BEP met with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselors to explain the business math competency that potential operators would need in order to complete the BEP training program. Amy Porterfield inquired whether BEP would consider splitting up some of the larger vending routes to offer to new operators. Nathan Pullen stated one operator in Tucson and two operators in Phoenix were waiting for vending routes and noted that BEP would not take existing routes away from current operators. He noted that several sites were overlapping and BEP hoped to split up those routes. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the number of operators unable to make a viable living as a BEP operator. Nathan Pullen stated the lowest annual income as a BEP operator was \$35,000 and noted that BEP would not allow an operator to make below \$25,000.

Rich Sorey thanked Karla Rivas-Parker for attending the council meeting and noted Ms. Rivas-Parker was welcome to attend any meetings to report on the ILB program. Rich Sorey noted the HR process in hiring staff had been somewhat challenging and noted SBVID had been close to hiring several positions, although those positions had to be reposted. Mr. Sorey noted several offices were short staffed, which required supervisors to take on extra duties, which slowed down the service delivery to clients. He stated RSA had developed a list of training for counselors, which included internal training and training on Libera, the case management system. Rich Sorey stated the position vacancy rate was significant and noted RSA was working diligently to hire counselors and supervisors and provide training for new staff. Nikki Jeffords inquired whether Rich Sorey was familiar with the Mississippi State counselor training. Rich Sorey noted he would support staff attending the Mississippi State counselor training if RSA had the appropriate funding necessary.

### **RSA Introduction to Blindness Discussion**

Rich Sorey stated RSA was working to finalize the agenda for the Introduction to Blindness orientation, in preparation for the orientation in April. Mr. Sorey noted RSA intended to move forward with the workshop, although he would be interested in receiving feedback from the providers regarding the processes that would work and would not work. Rich Sorey agreed that the workshop did have positive aspects in many areas, although a condensed orientation would still allow clients to discuss their rights, allow clients to have informed choice, and have the opportunity to learn about the

different vendors. He noted that RSA hoped that clients would become more independent and be involved in their VR process. Rich Sorey stated one of the biggest challenges to the Introduction to Blindness was the reduced staff. He noted that a condensed Orientation would allow RSA to move clients through the eligibility process quicker and develop the IPEs within the federal timelines. Mr. Sorey stated RSA was currently using substantial staff time and resources in offering the Introduction to Blindness Workshop, and the agency could utilize those resources more effectively. He stated RSA would request feedback from clients and vendors and continue to evaluate the process. Sharonda Greenlaw stated she attended the Introduction to Blindness orientation and noted at the time, she was new to Phoenix, and would not have been able to make transportation arrangements to visit all of the vendors. Ms. Greenlaw noted the group experience was valuable and that clients benefited from visiting the vendors in groups and hearing other clients' questions. Rich Sorey stated RSA intended to move forward with the condensed workshop, although he would be willing to revisit the process once he received feedback from clients. He noted that some clients had expressed that the workshop was lengthy and overwhelming, and he hoped to be able to develop an effective workshop process. Sharonda Greenlaw inquired whether Rich Sorey had reviewed the evaluations from previous clients that attended the Introduction to Blindness Orientation. Rich Sorey stated RSA had not reviewed the evaluations from previous years, although the agency intended to develop client surveys and assess whether the process was achieving the desired goals. Jeff Bishop stated the importance for the vendors and consumer organizations to be given the opportunity to speak to clients and noted that clients would be less likely to seek out vendors on their own. Rich Sorey stated he did want clients to be able to interact with vendors and to be able to compare the different programs that would best meet their needs. Bob Kresmer inquired whether the workshops would continue in their present form while RSA identified how to modify the workshops. Rich Sorey stated RSA would begin offering the new group workshop in mid-April, which would likely be a one-day workshop.

Amy Porterfield inquired whether RSA intended to remove the consumer group's presentations from the Orientation. Rich Sorey stated RSA would include discussion regarding the various consumer groups. Ms. Porterfield inquired whether representatives from the consumer groups would be able to provide presentations to the clients at the Introduction to Blindness Orientation. Rich Sorey stated the Orientation would not include presentations from the consumer groups and noted that clients would be responsible for reaching out to any organizations they were interested in. Bob Kresmer stated each counselor offered different levels of services and information, and some clients would not receive the same information if left to rely on their counselors. Rich Sorey stated he respected the concerns of

the council regarding counselors' services, although his goal was to strengthen the overall process. Mr. Sorey stated if RSA received feedback indicating that clients did not favor the new Orientation, the agency would consider revising the Orientation. Donald Porterfield stated he met with Henry Darwin, Interim DES Director, and Michael Wisehart, Division of Employment and Rehabilitation Services (DERS) Assistant Director, and noted that Mr. Darwin reached out to Donald Porterfield inquiring about consumer groups. Mr. Porterfield stated his impression that RSA would be more inclusive and transparent when communicating with the blindness community and the consumer groups. He noted the consumer groups would like the opportunity to offer feedback prior to decisions being made. Rich Sorey stated that he, RSA and DERS management agreed with the decision to revise the Introduction to Blindness Orientation. Mr. Sorey stated RSA continued to struggle with timeliness related to eligibility determination, IPE development and service delivery. He noted his role was to utilize the resources available to strengthen those areas and comply with the federal timelines. Amy Porterfield inquired regarding the time for placing clients into a plan. Diane McElmury stated the average number of days from eligibility to IPE was 82.5 days. Amy Porterfield inquired whether the timeline requirement was 90 days. Diane McElmury noted RSA did have 90 days, without an extension, to place clients into a plan. Amy Porterfield inquired regarding the staff that went on the vendors tours with the clients. Diane McElmury stated Joe Denado, attended the workshops and assisted with the transportation. She noted the transportation costs were quite high. Diane McElmury stated she reviewed the process and noticed that RSA staff was delayed in creating the IPE for clients. She stated her hope that RSA could move the clients through the process quicker and enroll clients in the IPE workshop once clients had identified the vendors they chose to work with. Amy Porterfield inquired how RSA provided transportation for the clients. Diane McElmury stated RSA would send the clients in groups to visit with the different vendors prior to the IPE process for the initial workshop.

Donald Porterfield stated his understanding that RSA was concerned with staff time, and inquired regarding the time saved by holding the condensed workshop. Rich Sorey stated that data was not available yet, although he anticipated the process would save significant staff time and allow clients to move through the process quickly. Mr. Porterfield inquired regarding what RSA would deem a significant amount of time saved. Rich Sorey stated his hope that clients could be placed into plan in about 30-45 days. Nikki Jeffords stated she was very proud of the Introduction to Blindness Orientation in Arizona, and inquired whether RSA had considered the benefits that clients received by experiencing the workshop in a group setting. Ms. Jeffords noted that clients gained powerful bonds with other clients, and received valuable information when visiting the different

vendors. Rich Sorey stated the cost of the orientation was a concern, although his primary concern was the timeliness of service delivery to clients. He added that he was open to feedback from the blindness community in providing services to clients quicker while still meeting the social needs of the individuals.

Kristen Mackey stated she would be interested in suggestions from vendors on how to reduce client service timelines, and noted that RSA did need to remain fiscally responsible while offering services to clients. Ms. Porterfield stated she appreciated that RSA was open to receiving feedback from providers, although she stated her concern that the providers were not included in the discussion to condense the Introduction to Blindness Orientation. Jeff Bishop suggested RSA consider modifying the Orientation agenda and ask that vendors go to the clients to provide their presentations. Rich Sorey stated he was interested in receiving vendor input although he hoped to empower the clients to become more independent in their VR process. Mr. Sorey noted RSA was also interested in taking individuals off the wait list and in providing services to more individuals. Sharonda Greenlaw stated each counselor's knowledge about vendors would vary and noted that clients would benefit from visiting each vendor. Rich Sorey stated he did not devalue the vendors or the vendor-client interaction. Dan Martinez stated the Introduction to Blindness Orientation had evolved through collaboration with the community and RSA and the blindness community was proud of that process. Dan Martinez stated the group dynamic was very important for newly blind individuals meeting other blind individuals. Kristen Mackey stated she appreciated the feedback and suggested that RSA meet with the providers to continue to discuss any concerns. Amy Porterfield thanked Ms. Mackey and suggested the consumer group leaders attend the meeting with RSA as well.

### **AZ Merit Test Accessibility Presentation**

Julie Urban stated she and Krista McAllister reviewed the AZ Merit test for accessibility. Krista McAllister stated she reviewed the AZ Merit test, administered online, and noted she found some significant issues (**NOTE: ATTACHMENT B**). Ms. McAllister stated the keyboard navigation did not include speakers, which would prohibit a student unable to use a mouse. She stated the instruction page did not have automatic text to speech. Krista McAllister stated the test would not allow a student to refer back to a certain portion of the test, but would read the whole passage again. Krista McAllister stated the math graphics were fuzzy and the zoom feature would only enlarge to 3 times. Krista McAllister stated the highlighter and the online calculator required the student to use a mouse. She noted the test did not indicate compatibility with JAWS, therefore blind students would require a hard copy of the test. Amy Porterfield inquired whether Krista

McAllister or Julie Urban had approached anyone regarding the accessibility issues with the AZ Merit test. Julie Urban stated she contacted the Directors of Special Education and noted that three Directors indicated they would bring the issue to the Director meetings. Julie Urban noted several students were unable to pass the tests due to the lack of accessibility. Amy Porterfield stated she had a meeting scheduled with Dawn Wallace, and she would request council representation from an individual from the Arizona Department of Education. Amy Porterfield stated the Education Committee and the AT Committee would potentially be interested in discussing the AZ Merit test accessibility.

### **Policy and Legislative Updates**

This item was tabled.

### **GCBVI Membership Vote**

Amy Porterfield stated all council members that were up for reappointment, had been reappointed. Ms. Porterfield stated the GCBVI currently had one Consumer Position at Large, one member from the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), and two Community Member positions available. Amy Porterfield stated the Executive Committee met and approved moving Larry Wanger's application forward to the Full Council. Larry Wanger stated he was the Director of the State Independent Living Council (SILC) and was familiar with VR, and the blindness community, and had worked with the Independent Living (IL) for 20 years. Ted Chittenden inquired whether Larry Wanger's position with SILC would allow him to participate on the council. Larry Wanger stated he had attended Full Council meetings in past, and was also participating on the Legislative and Public Policy Committee.

Tom Hicks motioned that Larry Wanger's application be forwarded to the Governor's Office of Boards and Commissions for appointment. Bob Kresmer seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Amy Porterfield stated the Executive Committee also approved of moving Bea Shapiro's application forward to the Full Council. Bea Shapiro stated she was an Assistive Technology (AT) Specialist and a member of the AT Committee. Ms. Shapiro stated she worked for RSA and wanted to increase employment opportunities for blind or visually impaired individuals.

Bob Kresmer motioned that Bea Shapiro's application be submitted to the Governor's Office Boards and Commissions for appointment. Ted Chittenden seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

## **GCBVI Committee Reports**

This agenda item was tabled.

## **Ex-Oficio Member and Blindness Community Organization Updates**

This agenda item was tabled.

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

The next meeting of the GCBVI Full Council will be on May 19, 2017 from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm. in the Video Conference Room, at 515 N. 51st Avenue, Phoenix, AZ.

## **Announcements**

There were no announcements.

## **Call to the Public**

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

## **Adjournment**

Nikki Jeffords moved to adjourn the meeting. Ted Chittenden seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm.

FFY 2017 as of February 28, 2017 for BVI:

Total number of individuals in the VR program was 1215  
Total number of individuals in the OOS was 99  
Total number of individuals in Priority Two was 79  
Total number of individuals in Priority Three was 20  
Total number of VR applications was 113  
Average number of days from application to eligibility was 43  
Median number of days from application to eligibility was 36  
Eligibility Determination Compliance – within 60 days was 79.7%  
Number of new plans written was 107  
Average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 82.5  
Median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 76  
IPE Implementation Compliance – within 90 days was 79.3%  
Highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$25.48  
Average hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$13.34  
Number of clients placed was 17  
Number of clients closed successful was 19

The FFY 2017 statistics as of February 28, 2017 for D/B:

The total number of individuals in the VR program was 54  
The total number of individuals in the OOS was 1  
The total number of individuals in Priority Two was 1  
The total number of individuals in Priority Three was 0  
The number of VR applications was 2  
The number of new plans written was 4  
The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 160.8  
The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 164  
The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 50%  
The number of clients placed was 1  
The number of clients closed successfully was 0

## Accessibility problems with the AZ Merit Computer Based Test for Visually Impaired Students

- Keyboard navigation does not have speech attached (when navigating with the keyboard it does not say out loud what button or item you have landed on). A blind student would not be able to use either the mouse or keyboard navigation. Some low vision students need the speech with keyboard navigation as well.
- Some answer types require the mouse to click and drag items in place. Keyboard navigation does not work everywhere. A blind student would not be able to answer some question types. Also, some low vision students have difficulty using the mouse.
- Only two of the color contrast options are high contrast. The line highlighter is not high contrast. Some of our students are not able to see things well without high contrast.
- The reading test does not have text to speech. All blind students and some low vision students would not be able to read the print.
- The text to speech function does not have enough functionality built into it for blind students and some low vision students. It has only one mode, read all. It doesn't allow you to just read one paragraph or one sentence. For someone who can't read print and is relying solely on the speech, greater control over the speech function is needed in order to be able to comprehend the passage well.
- The instructions/help page is in regular print. There is no zoom feature on this page. In order to use the text to speech feature, the user has to use the mouse to highlight the text he/she wants to read out loud and then has to click on buttons that are only 1/8" in diameter to start or stop the speech. Blind students and some low vision students would not be able to use this page.
- Some of the math graphics are fuzzy when zooming in. This would make it harder for a visually impaired student to see the graphics well.
- A blind student would need any graphics in a hard copy tactile format. They would also need the reading passages in hard copy braille. This requires the paper based test in braille.

- In the writing test, the buttons for items like bold, cut, and copy do not get bigger when using zoom. Also, when you hover over the buttons, the name of the button appears in regular size print.
- In order to use the highlighter, the user has to highlight the text with the mouse and then click on two buttons. The online calculator also requires the mouse. Some of our visually impaired students don't have enough vision to use the mouse.
- For a student who is both visually and hearing impaired, the size of the captioning text may be too small for some students to read.
- The dictionary and thesaurus does not have text to speech.
- In the writing test, the larger text size for writing may not be big enough for some of our students to see well. In this case they would require a large print paper test or a CCTV to make the print even larger.
- A visually impaired student would need to be familiar with how to operate a computer and would also need a lot of training with the online practice test in order to be able to take the computer based test. Most of our students are not using computers regularly. A visually impaired student needs direct instruction from a VI teacher in order to learn how to use a computer.