

**Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)  
Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues Meeting Minutes**

May 9, 2017

**Members Present**

Ed Gervasoni, Chair  
Chris Desborough  
Carmen Green  
Diane McElmury  
Mary Hartle  
Steve Wilson

**Members Absent**

Cindi Robinson

**Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers, Admin. Assist  
\*Teleconferenced

**Guests Present**

Karla Martin, CART

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**Call to Order and Introductions**

Ed Gervasoni, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:03 am in the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH) Conference Room, 100 N. 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 104, Phoenix, AZ. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

Steve Wilson stated he was excited to be part of the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues and noted he contributed to an online website, Vision Aware, part of the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB).

**Approval of March 21, 2017 Meeting Minutes**

Chris Desborough moved to approve the minutes of the March 21, 2017 Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues meeting. Diane McElmury seconded the motion. Mary Hartle requested that the minutes be corrected regarding her question about the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare of the Appropriations. Ms. Hartle also requested the minutes reflect the acronym of the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA) be corrected and a correction indicating that the NFBA attended their own Day at the Capitol. The amended minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

**National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP)  
Update**

Ed Gervasoni stated there had been some personnel changes and noted that Susan Hogan, who provided services in southern Arizona, would be moving to Albuquerque in June. Ed Gervasoni stated his understanding that James Rice would temporarily provide services for the whole state.

### **SSP Services in Arizona Follow-Up**

Ed Gervasoni stated he contacted Ann Levy, Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD) and stated he did not receive a response regarding SSP services. Mr. Gervasoni stated the Arizona Association for the Deaf-Blind in Tucson had difficulty meeting due to a lack of Support Service Providers (SSP) in Tucson. Ed Gervasoni stated several meetings had to be cancelled and rescheduled according to SSP availability. He stated some SSPs were deaf and required American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters in order to provide services. Mary Hartle stated her concern regarding the lack of SSP training and recruitment. Ms. Hartle suggested the committee send a letter to Ann Levy, encouraging the recruitment of SSPs. Ed Gervasoni stated he would work with Mary Hartle to develop a letter to be sent to Ms. Levy. Mr. Gervasoni stated a SSP should have specific skills. He stated the COPD, for instance, tended to hire individuals fluent in ASL, which might not necessarily be a requirement for all deaf-blind individuals requesting SSPs.

### **SSP Training Curriculum Update**

Ed Gervasoni stated he reviewed the SSP Training Curriculum briefly, although he would review the curriculum thoroughly and provide feedback. Ed Gervasoni stated he would recommend that the curriculum include information indicating that an individual might receive information better in a quiet office setting verses a loud outside environment. He noted that some environments were more challenging and would create fatigue for that individual when that individual did not have the right level of support. Ed Gervasoni stated SSPs should be cognizant of those environmental changes when providing services. Ed Gervasoni stated the curriculum was great overall and did include a lot of relevant information.

Carmen Green stated some items would vary according to the different instructors, although the teachers could be informed regarding those nuances. Carmen Green stated the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) would review the curriculum as well and would provide feedback. Ms. Green stated she anticipated the first instructor would be a deaf-blind individual and she would require the transcripts of the videos included in the curriculum. Carmen Green stated the initial SSP Training was scheduled to occur in September. Carmen Green encouraged all committee members to

review the curriculum and provide feedback to her, which could be shared with all committee members. Chris Desborough inquired whether the videos would include audio description. Carmen Green stated the videos did include audio descriptions and she encouraged committee members to inform her regarding any issues with accessibility. Ed Gervasoni suggested the curriculum include more information regarding bilateral and unilateral hearing loss. Mr. Gervasoni stated he would be interested in attending the initial SSP Training once a date had been confirmed. Carmen Green stated she would inform the committee members of the SSP Training date. Mary Hartle stated she would review the SSP Training Curriculum and offer feedback soon.

### **SSP Professional Development Discussion**

This item was tabled.

### **SSP Statewide Service Task Force Follow-Up**

Chris Desborough stated the SSP Statewide Services Task Force was no longer a task force, and was now a legal entity, the Deaf-Blind Connections in Arizona (DBCAz). Mr. Desborough stated the DBCAz would continue to advocate for a statewide SSP services program and would support any organizations with the same goal. Chris Desborough stated one of the goals of the DBCAz was to be able to provide services to deaf-blind individuals in the future. He noted he was the President of DBCAz, Mary Hartle was the Vice-President, Margaret Caulsen was the Director, Nancy Kimball was the Secretary and the Treasurer was Susan Martin. Chris Desborough stated the DBCAz continued to hold subcommittee meetings and to work towards establishing grants. He stated the organization would also work towards becoming tax-exempt, which required substantial paperwork. Chris Desborough stated he would forward the organization's Vision, Mission and Values to the committee. Mr. Desborough stated DBCAz was in the process of developing the fully accessible website, [www.dbcaz.us](http://www.dbcaz.us). Chris Desborough stated the Facebook page would be changed to indicate the new name, and the organization would include Twitter and Instagram accounts as well. Chris Desborough stated he anticipated that the Board would expand and the organization would potentially develop a Business Plan. He stated the organization wanted to be the voice for deaf-blind individuals in Arizona and to ensure that deaf-blind Arizonans were aware of the resources available. Mary Hartle stated Chris Desborough was a dynamic leader and worked diligently to develop DBCAz. Ed Gervasoni stated the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues worked hard to develop the SSP Statewide Services Task Force, and stated the task force determined their goal of developing the DBCAz. Chris Desborough stated the DBCAz would continue to support a statewide

services program, and noted the organization would hold Town Halls and focus groups in an effort to reach out to the deaf-blind population in Arizona.

### **RSA Deaf-Blind/CVHL Services Update**

Diane McElmury, Services for Blind Visually Impaired and Deaf (SBVID) Operations Manager, stated six years prior, RSA developed a Task Force to connect with Deaf-Blind individuals and individuals with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss (CVHL) in Arizona. Ms. McElmury stated RSA staff was able to reach many individuals, who were able to enter into Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) or receive Independent Living (IL) services. Diane McElmury stated she was able to complete the RSA DB/CVHL Needs Assessment and identify the need for a SSP Training. Diane McElmury stated Cathy Kirscher, HKNC, contacted her regarding developing a program for individuals 55 years and older. Ms. McElmury noted she would introduce Cathy Kirscher to Rich Sorey, SBVID Program Manager, to continue with the program as Ms. McElmury would be retiring in June. Diane McElmury stated that she and Cathy Kirscher met with Amy Porterfield, SAAVI Services for the Blind, and Virginia Thompson, Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI) regarding a pilot program for individuals 55 years and older. Mary Hartle inquired whether Diane McElmury had been able to hire counselors that would work with Hard of Hearing (HOH) individuals. Diane McElmury stated she hired two HOH counselors, although one counselor rescinded the job prior to starting. She stated the HOH counselor position would be reposted. Ms. Hartle inquired whether the HOH counselor positions would be under Sue Kay Kneifel, Statewide Coordinator for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHOHH). Diane McElmury stated the counselors would be under the supervisors at those offices. She added the Phoenix HOH counselor would be under PV Jantz and the HOH counselor in Tucson would be under Jonathan Pringle.

Ed Gervasoni inquired whether RSA had identified an individual that would replace Diane McElmury's position on the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues. Diane McElmury stated Rich Sorey agreed to participate on the committee. Mary Hartle inquired whether RSA intended to replace Diane McElmury's position. Diane McElmury stated she was unsure whether RSA would replace her position and she noted that she had involved Mr. Sorey in many of her projects in preparation for her retirement. Mary Hartle thanked Diane McElmury for all of her hard work and assistance to the deaf-blind population, and in developing the RSA DB/CVHL Needs Assessment. Chris Desborough stated he was thankful to Diane McElmury for all of her work also. Ed Gervasoni stated he appreciated Diane McElmury's integrity with the process and his hope that Ms. McElmury would have an opportunity to share what she learned during the process. Steve Wilson stated he met

Diane McElmury when she traveled across the state in an effort to connect with deaf-blind individuals. Mr. Wilson thanked Diane McElmury for all of her help in entering VR and in offering many opportunities. Diane McElmury stated RSA staff provided assistance to Steve Wilson, but Mr. Wilson was responsible for his success.

## **ACDHH Budget Request Update**

Carmen Green stated she was thankful for the RSA DB/CVHL Needs Assessment, which was an integral part of ACDHH's budget request. Ms. Green stated Sheri Collins, ACDHH Executive Director, indicated that the \$192,000 additional funding was approved in the Governor's budget, although the final budget had not been approved yet. Carmen Green stated the organization anticipated that the additional funding would be included in the final budget. She noted the additional funding would be used to support SSP services to deaf-blind individuals. Carmen Green stated if the budget was approved, the commission would need to identify whether to use internal or external staff. Mary Hartle inquired whether the additional funding request had been approved by Legislation or was the budget on the Governor's desk. Carmen Green stated she was unsure regarding where the budget was in the process, although Sheri Collins was hopeful that the budget would be approved. Ms. Green stated she would inform the committee regarding the outcome of the budget request. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether the Joint Budget Legislative Committee (JBLC) would recommend the additional funding to the ACDHH. Carmen Green stated her understanding that the JBLC was in favor of the additional funding. Mary Hartle inquired whether the additional funding request included the additional funding request for \$300,000 as well. Carmen Green stated the request for the additional funding did not include the \$300,000, although the additional \$192,000 would be reoccurring for the next five years.

Carmen Green stated Sheri Collins met with representatives from the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) and Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS). Carmen Green stated AHCCCS intended to identify a method for making deaf-blind individuals eligible for ALTCS services. Ms. Green noted ALTCS typically provided services for individuals inside their homes, although deaf-blind individuals required services outside of their homes as well. Carmen Green stated she anticipated that the issue could be resolved at the state level, and would not need to go to the federal level. She stated the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues would be included in the discussions in identifying the criteria for making deaf-blind individuals eligible for ALTCS services. Carmen Green stated she was unsure regarding the timeline of the overall process. Ed Gervasoni stated his understanding that AHCCCS was interested in including interveners in the ALTCS services.

Carmen Green stated Sheri Collins would continue to review ACDHH's funds to be used in a joint effort of service provision to deaf-blind individuals.

### **Conference Updates**

Ed Gervasoni stated the Western Regional Early Intervention Conference for Sensory Disabilities would take place in June in Scottsdale from June 14- June 16, 2017. Carmen Green stated the Deaf-Blind Awareness Week was the last week of June, and noted the ACDHH Newsletter would include Spotlights of different deaf-blind young adults. Mary Hartle stated the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA) would hold their State Convention in September at the Hyatt Regency.

### **GCBVI Strategic Planning Discussion**

Ed Gervasoni stated the GCBVI developed a Strategic Plan in 2011, which included some committee goals regarding deaf-blind activities. Mary Hartle stated the GCBVI had identified the goals of obtaining funds for a statewide SSP program, and a mechanism for offering resources to individuals with CVHL. Ms. Hartle stated the SSP Task Force had been developed, and changed to the DBCAz, and would continue to focus on SSP services. Mary Hartle stated the GCBVI had developed the online database, EyeKnow.AZ in collaboration with the Arizona Braille and Talking Book Library and the Arizona Secretary of State Office, which offered resources for blind, visually impaired and individuals with CVHL.

Ed Gervasoni reviewed the GCBVI Strategic Plan goals surrounding deaf-blind activities:

#### **Four to Six Year Outcome**

Develop a Single Point of Contact of Information and Referral.

Ed Gervasoni stated his understanding that the State Independent Living Council (SILC) was also interested in developing a resource guide for blind, visually impaired individuals and individuals with CVHL. Ed Gervasoni stated those goals had been met through the implementation of the online database, EyeKnow.AZ.

Ed Gervasoni stated the Strategic Plan included the recommendation of surveying deaf-blind individuals, which had been completed through Diane McElmury's efforts in developing the RSA DB/CVHL Needs Assessment.

Mary Hartle stated the IL section of the GCBVI Strategic Plan included items regarding deaf-blind individuals. Ed Gervasoni stated the Strategic Plan included:

Informed blind Arizonans, regardless of age, gain increased independence through access to adjustment and IL services, provided by a combination of public and private partnerships.

Diane McElmury stated she and Karin Grandon, former SBVID Deputy Manager, reached out to veterans and Native Americans with CVHL as part of the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) objectives. Ms. McElmury noted RSA experienced changes in leadership, and she was unable to travel to those areas without staff support.

- A. All deaf/blind Arizonans know about, and have access to, the services and resources specific to their needs that increase their level of communication, independence, and quality of life.

#### Four to Six Year Outcome

- Individuals with combined vision and hearing loss have Support Service Provider services if needed and wanted.

#### One to Three Year Outcome

- Statewide Support Service Provider (SSP) program is established and SSPs are trained.

Ed Gervasoni stated the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues had made great progress towards that goal through the development of the SSP Statewide Services Task Force, which was now the DBCAz. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether the committee had identified any long-term goals for deaf-blind individuals. Mary Hartle stated the GCBVI still had the goal of developing a statewide SSP services program, and suggested that goal remain on the Strategic Plan. Ms. Hartle suggested the council be involved in outreach activities to inform individuals with CVHL about SSP services, Assistive Technology (AT), and the I Can Connect program. Ed Gervasoni suggested the council support a certification process for individuals interested in becoming SSPs. Chris Desborough inquired regarding the number of SSPs in Arizona. Ed Gervasoni stated there was a high turnover rate of SSPs, and noted that more individuals were trained as interveners than actually worked as interveners. Chris Desborough suggested the Strategic Plan include a measurable goal, such as increase the number of SSPs by a certain percentage. Mr. Gervasoni stated that approximately 30 individuals were receiving SSP services statewide. Carmen Green stated she did not have the

exact numbers, although that number did sound right. Carmen Green suggested the council partner with organizations that provided SSP services and offer feedback to those organizations. Ms. Green stated if the ACDHH subcontracted SSP services to another organization, the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues could offer feedback regarding those services. Chris Desborough agreed with those suggestions, although the council should still include measurable goals. Ed Gervasoni stated a small workgroup could discuss potential goals surrounding deaf-blind activities for the GCBVI Strategic Plan.

Ed Gervasoni stated the council could recommend more collaboration between the agencies that served the deaf and the agencies that served the blind, in an effort to better serve the deaf-blind. Mr. Gervasoni suggested the Strategic Plan include an item including services to deaf-blind children. Carmen Green stated the council could hold annual forums, where different agencies could convene and discuss their internal goals for deaf-blind individuals. Ms. Green stated the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues could offer feedback on those agencies' goals. Ed Gervasoni stated the workgroup of himself, Chris Desborough, and Mary Hartle could meet and discuss potential council goals for deaf-blind individuals to be forwarded to the committee for review.

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

The next meeting of the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues was scheduled for August 15, 2017 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. 15<sup>th</sup> 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
- Deaf-Blind Connections in Arizona Update
- Conference Updates
- ACDHH Budget Request
- Intervener Training Update
- AHCCCS/ALTCS Services Update

### **Announcements**

There were no announcements.

### **Public Comment**



There was no public comment.

### **Adjournment of Meeting**

Mary Hartle moved to adjourn the meeting; Chris Desborough seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting stood adjourned at 11:55 a.m.