

**Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)**  
**Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues Meeting Minutes**  
May 9, 2018

**Members Present**

Ed Gervasoni, Chair  
Chris Desborough  
Cindi Robinson  
Mary Hartle  
Carmen Green

**Members Absent**

Steve Wilson  
Sue Kay Kneifel

**Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers

**Guests Present**

Kim Minard, ACDHH  
Anne Levy, COPD  
Cindy Walsh, VCD  
Dara Johnson, AHCCCS  
Kelle Peeplez  
Jennifer Key, ASL Interpreter  
Lee Bradley, ASL Interpreter

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**Call to Order and Introductions**

Ed Gervasoni, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:10 am in the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Video Conference Room, Phoenix, AZ. Introductions were made, and a quorum was present.

**Approval of February 13, 2018 Meeting Minutes**

Cindi Robinson moved to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2018 Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues meeting. Mary Hartle seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

**Committee Chair Report**

Ed Gervasoni reminded individuals to speak into the microphone that would transmit to the portable looping system. Mr. Gervasoni also requested that individuals refrain from having side conversations, and for individuals to identify themselves before speaking. Ed Gervasoni stated that he and Lindsey Powers had difficulty finding a meeting location that was large enough, had teleconference capabilities and was looped for the hearing impaired. Ed Gervasoni stated that the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH), the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP) and Ability 360 were the only locations with looped meeting rooms in the Phoenix area. He reminded the committee of the importance of collaborating with the deaf-blind community to provide the best services for deaf-blind individuals.

## **SSP Services in Arizona**

### **a. ACDHH SSP New Services Program**

Carmen Green stated the committee had requested a summary regarding the ACDHH's decision to move forward with an internal program for the Support Service Provider (SSP) program. Ms. Green stated she had informed the committee previously that one organization had submitted information to the Request for Information (RFI), although she was not permitted to disclose the name of that organization. Carmen Green stated the organization requested additional time during the bidding process, and the ACDHH decided not to wait, but to move forward with the internal program. Carmen Green stated the State Procurement Office (SPO) supported the ACDHH's decision to move internally, and the commission was currently reviewing similar programs in other states. Carmen Green stated that Julie Stylinski had provided feedback to ACDHH and focused more on the SSP services. Carmen Green stated ACDHH had partnered with the University of Arizona approximately three-four years prior as a subcontractor of the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD) to develop the SSP Training Curriculum. She stated the ACDHH provided the first SSP Training in mid-March.

Carmen Green stated the ACDHH would continue to review and modify the guidelines for the SSPs and the consumers for submission to the ACDHH Executive Team, and she anticipated offering services July 1, 2018. Carmen Green stated during the ACDHH's conversations with COPD and Catholic Community Services, the commission identified that transportation would be an issue. Ms. Green noted the ACDHH recognized that transportation would be an issue, although the goal of the program would be to foster independence, although some individuals not familiar with public transportation would experience difficulties. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH remained open to suggestions and feedback from the community. Chris Desborough stated that many individuals in the deaf-blind community

had very limited vision and hearing and would not be able to navigate using public transportation or Uber. Cindi Robinson inquired whether an Uber driver would pick up the SSP first, and then pick up the consumer to assist the deaf-blind individual. Ed Gervasoni stated he was aware of situations where an SSP met the individual at the individual's house and used public transportation to accompany the deaf-blind individual on errands. Mr. Gervasoni stated that some deaf-blind individual would require additional training to become familiar with traveling independently. Carmen Green stated she did recognize that transportation was a large issue and noted that the ACDHH would not be the only agency to provide services to the consumers. Carmen Green stated she recently became aware of the EyeKnow.AZ website, which offered resources to the community. She added that one of the resources included in the website offered vouchers to individuals to travel within the community. Carmen Green stated that the ACDHH welcomed feedback from the community, which would be documented and shared with the agency. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH inquired whether the Catholic Community Services could provide transportation to the consumers, although the agency was unable to provide transportation only. Carmen Green stated the commission would begin offering the program and continue to receive feedback and suggestions from the community. Carmen Green stated that ACDHH staff attended a deaf-blind event recently and that approximately eight individuals expressed interest in participating in the SSP program, as well as individuals interested in becoming SSPs.

Mary Hartle stated was dismayed to hear that transportation would not be provided to consumers. Ms. Hartle noted that she used an SSP to accompany her when shopping at stores that did not provide great service. Chris Desborough inquired how a deaf-blind individual would be able to travel independently. Carmen Green stated the process would vary depending on the consumer's abilities. Carmen Green stated in some situations, the SSP would meet the consumer at the consumer's house. Ms. Green stated the commission would continue to explore other resources, such as the resources included in the EyeKnow.AZ website. Carmen Green stated the commission would also consult other states that offer SSP programs and do not provide transportation. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH used the feedback from the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues in determining that the commission would move forward with the program. Carmen Green stated the commission would continue to welcome feedback as well as suggestions for possible solutions. Carmen Green noted the commission investigated possible volunteer driver programs as a possible solution. Ms. Green stated the SSPs would be subcontractors of a state agency and would not be permitted to have a non-state employee in their vehicle.

Cindi Robinson inquired where the SSP program would begin, and whether the ACDHH planned to subcontract with another agency. Ms. Robinson inquired whether one individual would coordinate the SSP services with the SSPs and the consumers in Phoenix and Tucson. Cindi Robinson inquired whether EyeKnow.AZ was provided in Phoenix and/or Tucson. Mary Hartle stated that EyeKnow.AZ was a website that included resources for blind individuals or individuals with low vision or CVHL. Cindi Robinson inquired whether the website served individuals statewide. Ed Gervasoni stated the Public Information Committee developed the website, which included resources statewide. Carmen Green stated the SSP program would be offered statewide and noted that approximately three individuals expressed interest in working as SSP's under the ACDHH. Ms. Green stated the commission would consider subcontracting with other agencies as the program grows, and as the commission identified the needs of the community. Mary Hartle stated if she participated in the SSP program, would she be required to pay for Uber services. Carmen Green stated that currently, the deaf-blind consumer would be responsible for their own transportation.

Cindy Walsh, Valley Center of the Deaf (VCD) clarified that individuals that relied on disability based low-income transportation systems within the Phoenix metro area faced difficulties traveling between cities. Cindy Walsh noted that VCD could not provide transportation only, as the agency was not a transportation provider, although individuals that met the guidelines for services through VCD, could receive transportation services. Mary Hartle inquired whether an individual would be eligible for transportation under a subcontracted agency. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH would review all potential options and identify whether individuals were unable to participate in the program due to a lack of transportation. Carmen Green noted that the commission reviewed other states that were unable to provide transportation, but still delivered successful SSP services. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH would provide coordination of SSP services internally. Carmen Green stated as the commission continued to offer the program, the ACDHH would identify additional challenges and would also learn how to handle those challenges. Cindi Robinson encouraged the ACDHH to consider subcontracting with other agencies in order best use the limited resources in the community. Chris Desborough stated his understanding that the program would be modified as needed, although he was concerned that many deaf-blind individuals would be unable to leave their homes. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH recognized that challenge and that the commission was open to receiving feedback and comments in the past and the future. Ms. Green noted the next ACDHH meeting would be May 17, 2018 and individuals from the public were welcome to attend and discuss their

concerns during the Public Comment portion of the meeting. Mary Hartle stated that transportation was the biggest issue that she faced as a deaf-blind individual and that she, like others, did not have resources to pay for transportation. Cindi Robinson congratulated the ACDHH for obtaining the funding for the SSP program and thanked all individuals that worked diligently to obtain the funds.

#### **b. COPD/VCD Transition and Continued Improvement**

Anne Levy, COPD, clarified that Catholic Community Services, COPD, and VCD were the same agency. Anne Levy stated the state inquired regarding what an SSP program would look like, and the COPD responded. Anne Levy stated the COPD received an email from the SPO, in which she responded inquiring about the deadline. Ms. Levy stated she inquired again to SPO, and later heard that the contract deadline had ended. Anne Levy stated she wanted to clarify the transportation issue. Anne Levy stated that all COPD funds were donated funds and the agency had to manage those funds. Ms. Levy stated the COPD would welcome other agencies that would be able to provide similar services. Anne Levy stated the COPD listened to the concerns of the deaf-blind community and tried to address those issues. Anne Levy stated the COPD did not have county funds and were reducing staff until the end of the fiscal year. Anne Levy stated the COPD discussed different options for deaf-blind individuals interested in the SSP program, such as vouchers. Ms. Levy noted the COPD could not provide transportation due to liability, and because the COPD was not a transportation program. Anne Levy stated the COPD met with the deaf-blind consumers and the SSPs as groups and individually to address any concerns.

Cindy Walsh stated that VCD had not met with the SSPs and the clients. Ms. Walsh noted that SSPs in Phoenix often had several jobs, and the agency had different funding and contracts the agency had to meet. Cindy Walsh stated that VCD had funds earmarked for individuals that met eligibility through another program, and those individuals would continue to receive services. Anne Levy agreed that COPD and VCD did operate on different funding. Anne Levy stated that COPD served individuals that were able to advocate for themselves, individuals that could learn to advocate for themselves, and individuals that required more support. Anne Levy stated COPD would not refuse services to any individuals but would identify what each individual needed. Ms. Levy stated COPD would assist individuals in going to doctors appointments or going grocery shopping. Anne Levy stated that COPD could also assist individuals with emergency funds. Cindi Robinson inquired regarding the term "non-directed" services. Anne Levy stated she wanted to use the term "self-directed". Cindy Walsh stated that VCD was almost out of the donated funds and she would like to see a short-

term solution that would allow individuals to receive a continuum of services. Cindy Walsh stated that VCD would like to see a Transition plan for the non-self-directed clients so that they would continue to receive services. Ed Gervasoni inquired regarding the funding that the COPD was operating on. Anne Levy stated the COPD received \$400,000, although the agency had to make the funds last as long as possible before city and county funds. Cindi Robinson inquired whether the COPD received that amount more than one time. Anne Levy stated the COPD received that amount once. Cindi Robinson stated her understanding that COPD and VCD were operating on about \$30,000 a year for both agencies. Anne Levy stated that both agencies were operating under that amount. Cindy Walsh stated the VCD applied for grants and requested funds frequently. Ms. Walsh noted SSP services were expensive and that each individual required one-on-one assistance, and not as many individuals could be assisted compared to other programs. Anne Levy stated the COPD was aware of issues in the community and tried to address those issues if possible.

## **SSP Certification and Professional Development in AZ**

### **a. Recent SSP Training**

Carmen Green stated that ACDHH held SSP training on March 15-17, and that approximately fifteen individuals received training by COPD. Carmen Green noted that some individuals received refresher training and some individuals received initial SSP training. Ms. Green noted ACDHH received some feedback of a potential issue of determining the difference between copy signing and interpreting. Carmen Green stated individuals received certifications of attendance and the commission would continue to review the certifications. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH would consider one-on-one trainings in the future, which would depend on the experience of the SSP. Mary Hartle stated she attended the training and suggested SSPs receive more training on guiding deaf-blind individuals. Ed Gervasoni noted that he had received that feedback from individuals regarding the etiquette of guiding deaf-blind individuals. Anne Levy stated that COPD used the SSP Training curriculum and would consider modifying some of the videos or expanding the information regarding guiding deaf-blind individuals. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH did not have any future trainings planned, although the commission was still interested in providing training for deaf-blind individuals to learn how to use SSPs. Ed Gervasoni stated he spoke to Annette Reichman, Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB), which was interested in potentially offering certifications to students or individuals seeking additional training. Carmen Green stated ACDHH had a meeting scheduled with Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) staff to discuss how the SSP curriculum could become stronger and a potential option for RSA clients.

## **b. On-going SSP Training Opportunities for Deaf-Blind and SSP**

This item was tabled.

### **AHCCCS/ALTCS Services Update**

Dara Johnson stated AHCCCS was able to elevate the conversation regarding Medicaid funded services for individuals with CVHL to the Executive Team at AHCCCS. Ms. Johnson stated a workgroup examined whether AHCCCS could provide an SSP service for the acute program, which was a program for anyone that meets the financial eligibility. Dara Johnson also reviewed the community intervener service for individuals in ALTCS, which included individuals with DD and individuals that were aging or had physical disabilities. Dara Johnson stated that AHCCCS did not have statutory authority to provide SSP services for the acute Medicaid population, and would seek guidance from the Governor regarding the issue. Dara Johnson stated that AHCCCS would require Legislative change for the agency to provide the SSP services. Dara Johnson stated that AHCCCS would have the authority with providing community intervener services for ALTCS. She noted that Cindi Robinson provided a list of providers and parents that would be willing to provide feedback. Dara Johnson stated AHCCCS needed assistance from the community in identifying the scope of services, and what would the community intervener do, who could provide intervener services, and what would the qualifications of the agencies that would employ the interveners. Dara Johnson stated AHCCCS would take that information and develop a policy.

Mary Hartle inquired regarding which deaf-blind population would the community interveners serve. Cindi Robinson stated the community interveners would provide services to the non-self-directed deaf-blind individuals. Carmen Green inquired whether the individual would first need to qualify for ALTCS. Dara Johnson stated that AHCCCS would determine who would be eligible for services and would review the medical criteria that Texas and New Mexico offer for community intervener services. Cindi Robinson stated the meetings with AHCCCS were also with parents of children that would qualify for the services. Mary Hartle inquired regarding the purpose of the meetings in Phoenix and Tucson. Dara Johnson stated AHCCCS would not change the eligibility process for ALTCS, although the agency could offer a service to individuals with CVHL that met the medical necessity for the service. Ed Gervasoni stated the meetings in Phoenix and Tucson were for parents of children that would benefit from intervener services. Mr. Gervasoni stated the meetings were to provide information regarding the types of services an intervener provided and who would benefit from the services. Anne Levy inquired whether AHCCCS had

identified the qualifications for the community interveners. Cindi Robinson stated the meetings would help to determine the intervener qualifications. Ms. Robinson stated the meetings were preliminary meetings to discuss the scope of services, the qualifications of the interveners, to develop a draft policy. Dara Johnson agreed and noted that AHCCCS was interested in developing a small group that could help implement a program. Dara Johnson welcomed all committee members to participate or to offer feedback regarding how community interveners could provide services to adults. Mary Hartle inquired how self-directed deaf-blind individuals could receive SSP services. Dara Johnson stated the AHCCCS statutory authority identified the services the agency could provide and did not currently authorize SSP services to the acute Medicaid population. Dara Johnson stated AHCCCS would benefit from hearing from adults or older adults that would benefit from community intervener services.

### **Non-Directed Deaf-Blind Services (COPD/VCD)**

Ed Gervasoni stated that a non-self-directed deaf-blind individual required structure in their environment due to a lack of problem solving skills or the ability to make appropriate choices. Ed Gervasoni stated that conversely, a self-directed deaf-blind person was able to advocate for him/herself. Ed Gervasoni requested clarification regarding the possible intervener program through the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS). Dara Johnson stated the Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCSS) served the populations of individuals with Developmental Disabilities (DD) and individuals that were aging with disabilities. Dara Johnson stated an individual with a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) or other cognitive impairment would be served from birth to death. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether an individual had to be determined DD eligible before 18 years old. Dara Johnson stated the individual had to have a documented disability prior to the age of 18.

Anne Levy agreed that there was a population of deaf-blind individuals that were isolated and had problem solving skills that required services. Anne Levy stated that the individuals typically lived alone with the help of COPD and family members. Ms. Levy stated about 80% of individuals requesting SSP services fit into that category of non-self-directed deaf-blind individuals. Anne Levy stated the COPD met with the individuals requesting SSP services to identify the services each individual required. Cindy Walsh stated the demographics in Phoenix were different, and most deaf-blind individuals were seniors and the VCD was able to combine some of the senior funding. Cindi Robinson stated the national statistics indicated that 90% of deaf-blind children had additional disabilities and that 40% of those individuals had four or more disabilities. Anne Levy inquired why the funds earmarked for self-



directed services. Carmen Green stated the Legislature did not specify but did want the ACDHH to serve deaf-blind individuals. Carmen Green stated the commission did not anticipate the challenges with providing transportation. Ms. Green stated the commission was struggling to define "self-directed" and whether there were other ways to define the population. Carmen Green stated COPD had advised the ACDHH that transportation would be an issue, and noted the commission was informed that no staffing agencies or state agencies would be able to provide transportation. Cindi Robinson suggested the ACDHH use the term "self-advocating" to describe individuals that were more independent. Mary Hartle inquired whether the state government indicated that ACDHH could not provide transportation to clients. Carmen Green stated the state did not indicate that the commission could not provide transportation. Ms. Green stated that, Staffmark and a company Knowledge Services, which were similar to temp agencies, had no problem with individuals providing SSP services, although the resources would not allow the individuals to be liable for transporting clients in their vehicles. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH would be contracting with the temp services for the SSPs, and the agency could not be liable for those transporting the individuals due to the cost. Carmen Green stated that the highest car insurance increase would be about \$143.00 per month to add onto their car insurance. Carmen Green noted that most SSPs would not have enough SSP hours to make up for that additional cost. Anne Levy stated it was easier for the COPD and VCD as non-profits to provide transportation services compared to a state agency. Ed Gervasoni stated even when COPD provided transportation, the agency used vans and did not transport the client in their own vehicles. Mr. Gervasoni stated an SSP would still take an agency vehicle, and the agency would be responsible for the client and not the SSP. Anne Levy stated if the funds for deaf-blind individuals were only available to self-directed individuals, many individuals would not receive services.

### **Intervener Education and Services Within the Schools**

This item was tabled.

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

This item was tabled.

### **ACDHH Budget Update**

Carmen Green stated the funds not used for the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) from July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018, would be returned the Fund Balance.

Carmen Green stated any funds not used in any FFY, would be returned to the Fund Balance, which was different from the General Fund. She noted the Legislature would then appropriate the funds to the ACDHH. Carmen Green stated when the ACDHH developed the budget for FFY2020, the commission would request the funds back. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH would receive \$192,000 for FFY19, which would run from July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019. Cindi Robinson inquired whether the ACDHH received funds for the SSP program for the current fiscal year. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH received funds for the current fiscal year, although the funds had not been used. She added that commission waited eight months for the SPO to include the ACDHH on their agenda, which caused the commission to lose time in moving the program forward. Mary Hartle inquired whether the ACDHH was accepting applications from individuals interested in the SSP program, and how individuals would learn about the program. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH was accepting applications. She noted that ACDHH staff attended a deaf-blind event recently and that nine deaf-blind individuals expressed interest in the SSP program. Carmen Green stated the commission would continue to attend community meetings and that individuals receiving services from the Catholic Community Services would receive information about the program as well. Mary Hartle stated she emailed Kim Minard recently and had not received a response. Kim Minard stated she had not received an email from Mary Hartle. Carmen Green noted that the state had recently changed to another email system, and staff did not receive all emails. Ms. Green stated if an individual did not receive a response from ACDHH staff within three days, to call that individual. Cindi Robinson inquired whether the SPO would undergo the same procurement process each year, delaying the process. Carmen Green stated if the ACDHH offered the services internally, there would be no delays, and if the commission subcontracted services, the commission would begin the process sooner to avoid delays. Cindy Walsh inquired whether the funds returned to the Fund Balance would be in danger of being swept for other programs. Carmen Green stated any funds in the Fund Balance could be swept by the Legislature.

### **Deaf-Blind Connections in Arizona Update**

Chris Desborough stated that Deaf-Blind Connections in Arizona (DBCAz) became tax exempt. Mr. Desborough stated DBCAz was currently advocating for one client, and another individual would become a client soon. Chris Desborough stated DBCAz would potentially take four clients, whom were not receiving services. Chris Desborough stated he was considering whether he would remain on the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues.

## **Arizona Deaf-Blind Project Update**

Cindi Robinson stated that she would be retiring from ASDB in August. Ms. Robinson stated the Arizona Deaf-Blind Project years run from October 1-September 30 and the Arizona Deaf-Blind Project was in the fifth year of five-year funding cycle. Cindi Robinson stated she worked for ASDB for 25 years and both ten years as a Deaf-Blind Specialist, offering technical assistance and training, and the Administrator of the project. Cindi Robinson stated that ASDB had agreed that an Administrator would become the Project Director and another individual would offer technical assistance and training. Cindi Robinson stated for 19 years, ASDB offered a two-year face-to-face intervener training. She noted that ASDB began offering online module training and noted that most individuals indicated their preference for a combination of face-to-face and online training. Cindi Robinson stated that Lisa Yencarelli would take the place of the Arizona Deaf-Blind Project Administrator and someone else would take the position of the Deaf-Blind Specialist.

## **Consumer Group Reports**

Ed Gervasoni inquired whether Kelle Peeplez had anything to share from the Phoenix Deaf-Blind group in Phoenix. Kelle Peeplez stated the Phoenix Deaf-Blind group would hold a meeting at the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI) on May 12, 2018.

## **Conference Updates**

Cindi Robinson stated the Deaf-Blind International Network of the Americas Conference was held in Cape Cod in April, which was the first time the conference was scheduled in the U.S. Cindi Robinson stated she did not attend the conference although she heard that it was one of the best conferences.

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

The next meeting of the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues was scheduled for August 14, 2018 from 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 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
- ACDHH Budget Request

- Intervener Training Update
- AHCCCS/ALTCS 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**

Mary Hartle motioned to adjourn the meeting. Cindi Robinson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 1:22 p.m.