

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

August 15, 2017

Members Present_

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

Members Absent

Cindi Robinson
Rich Sorey

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers, Admin. Assist
*Teleconferenced

Guests Present

Debbie Handlin, CART
Anne Levy, COPD
Cindy Walsh, VCD
Aimee Mousavie

Call to Order and Introductions

Ed Gervasoni, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:05 am in the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH) Conference Room, 100 N. 15th Avenue, Suite 104, Phoenix, AZ. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

Carmen Green introduced Amy Mousavi, ACDHH, to the Committee and noted that Ms. Mousavi was interested in attending future meetings when American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters were able to attend.

Approval of May 9, 2017 Meeting Minutes

Chris Desborough moved to approve the minutes of the May 9, 2017 Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues meeting. Mary Hartle seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

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

Anne Levy, Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD), stated 115 people had been served by the NDBEDP from July 2016-June 2017. Anne Levy stated COPD received referrals for individuals seeking services; the

individuals were assessed for eligibility and then trained to use the technology. Ms. Levy stated the COPD would propose the number of training hours, which would be approved by Perkins School for the Blind before proceeding with training. Anne Levy stated in Maricopa, 24 individuals were receiving services and 31 completed training. In Pima, 7 individuals were receiving services and 17 completed training. Anne Levy stated COPD also served individuals in Yuma, Yavapai, Mohave, Graham, and Gila counties. Ed Gervasoni inquired how many individuals from the 115 total had completed training, and how many individuals returned for services. Anne Levy stated 64 individuals completed training. Ms. Levy stated over the years, some individuals returned for services when new technology became available. Anne Levy stated COPD was currently serving 106 individuals, of which some individuals were new and some were returning for services. Cindy Walsh, Valley Center of the Deaf (VCD), stated a large number of individuals were not returning consumers, but had been waiting for services in July. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether individuals were on a wait list due to a lack of funds. Anne Levy stated the COPD could request additional funds, although the Perkins School for the Blind, put a hold on funds at the end of June, which could have led to a delay in services. Chris Desborough inquired whether the individuals waiting for services received services. Cindy Walsh stated VCD was able to serve everyone once Perkins School for the Blind made the funds available.

Ed Gervasoni inquired whether Arizona received the same funding amount. Anne Levy stated funds were allocated for outreach, equipment, and staff, and noted that Perkins School for the Blind was flexible in moving the funds around as needed. Ed Gervasoni inquired how Arizona compared to other states in serving clients. Anne Levy stated the program served clients in New Mexico and Arizona and there had been concern that both states did not receive adequate services. Ms. Levy stated there was now full time staff in each state to ensure adequate service delivery in both states. Cindy Walsh stated the Phoenix position served metro Phoenix and northern Arizona. Chris Desborough inquired whether an individual would be responsible for providing services in southern Arizona. Anne Levy stated the individual serving the Tucson area moved to Albuquerque, and an individual was temporarily covering the Tucson area. Ed Gervasoni suggested the COPD consider creating positions that each covered a specific area in the process rather than one or two individuals performing several duties. Ed Gervasoni stated some clients experienced confusion when their SSP also acted as the case manager, and held too many roles. Anne Levy inquired whether COPD would benefit from having three separate positions. Ed Gervasoni stated the case manager could provide intervention although the SSP was not an intervener. Anne Levy agreed that position boundaries should be clear,

although COPD did not have many Full Time positions, and the agency relied on several Part Time positions.

SSP Services in Arizona Follow-Up

Anne Levy stated the SSP program was funded through donations in Tucson and Phoenix. Ms. Levy stated most individuals were trained one-on-one to ensure that individuals could begin offering SSP services. Anne Levy stated COPD was serving approximately 50 clients in Phoenix and Tucson. Ed Gervasoni inquired out of the 115 individuals, how many individuals were in the NDBEDP program. Anne Levy stated the individuals in Tucson were served through the NDBEDP program. Cindy Walsh stated some individuals receiving SSP services were also receiving NDBEDP services, although the VCD was experiencing a lack of SSP hours due to funding limits. Ed Gervasoni stated the committee was interested in knowing how many individuals were receiving SSP services and the number of individuals receiving NDBEDP services as separate categories. Cindy Walsh stated her understanding that the majority of individuals using SSP services were not currently receiving NDBEDP services, although she could verify the actual numbers. Anne Levy stated COPD was offering a Companion Care Program for seniors in Tucson and volunteers were paid to provide services to seniors. Anne Levy stated COPD initiated limits on SSP services as the agency was unable to serve everyone seeking SSP services. Mary Hartle inquired whether the limit of SSP hours was due to a lack of funding or SSPs. Anne Levy stated the limit to SSP hours was largely due to a lack of funding.

Ed Gervasoni inquired regarding COPD's recruitment efforts of SSPs. Anne Levy stated COPD provided presentations to University of Arizona students to encourage students to become SSPs as well as newspaper advertisements. She noted COPD experienced a constant influx of new SSPs that required training. Cindy Walsh stated due to the number of SSP hours available, VCD had a sufficient number of on-call SSPs, who were recent Phoenix College graduates, or former employees that had been trained as SSPs. Ms. Walsh stated due to the small office, the VCD staff were trained to hold multiple roles. Chris Desborough inquired regarding the optimum number of SSPs in Tucson. Anne Levy stated COPD would benefit from having eight SSPs, and the agency had five SSPs currently. Chris Desborough stated as a consumer of SSP services, he was sometimes matched with an SSP that did not meet his needs. Mr. Desborough stated, for example, he was paired with a deaf SSP who could only communicate through text messages, and could not provide information while driving, which Chris Desborough preferred. Anne Levy inquired whether Chris Desborough expressed his concerns regarding his communication

preferences. Chris Desborough stated he informed the coordinator regarding his communication preferences, and he was told to find a creative solution to communicating with the SSP. Anne Levy stated there were situations where SSPs were hired with some communication limits. Ms. Levy inquired whether Chris Desborough would benefit from knowing in advance regarding any communication barriers. Chris Desborough stated he was able to identify communication methods, although it was an obstacle to receiving services, and created fatigue. Ed Gervasoni suggested that some populations work with certain SSPs that were knowledgeable in working with those populations. Anne Levy stated the agency also faced challenges when hiring enough SSPs, although the agency could consider identifying two or three SSPs that would be a good match with each individual. Ed Gervasoni noted the benefit with working with the same SSP, as that individual was familiar with the needs of the deaf-blind individual and did not need to be trained. Mr. Gervasoni stated Minnesota offered SSP vouchers, where the individual was responsible for identifying a SSP, the number of SSP hours, and would contact the SSP directly. Anne Levy stated the COPD could consider offering vouchers to individuals that preferred to make arrangements for their own SSPs and make the arrangements for individuals that did not want to do it for themselves. Mary Hartle stated she would prefer to contact an SSP directly rather than communicating with a third party.

Chris Desborough inquired whether the SSP Coordinator in Tucson was vacant due to funding. Anne Levy stated COPD did not currently have a Full Time SSP Coordinator in Tucson, although the agency did have a Part-Time position filling that role. Anne Levy stated COPD did not have an individual knowledgeable with deaf-blind individuals however. Ed Gervasoni stated technology had allowed for greater communication and new transportation options, which allowed for changes in service delivery. Anne Levy stated the COPD could consider reviewing the current service delivery methods and modifying them to better meet the needs of clients. Mary Hartle stated she received SSP services from the VCD and was pleased with the services, the response time of the Program Director, and wish that more SSP hours were available.

Steve Wilson stated he experienced a breakdown in trying to obtain SSP services in Tucson. Mr. Wilson stated he was told that he qualified for services but did not receive follow up responses from the agency due to staff changes. Anne Levy inquired whether Steve Wilson was able to reach a staff member or whether the process was not moving forward. Steve Wilson stated he received different answers from different individuals and did not receive responses. Chris Desborough stated when he applied for SSP services; he completed the COPD form, and had to complete the intake

process as well. Anne Levy stated individuals requesting SSP services should not have to complete the intake process. Steve Wilson stated he had tried to obtain SSP services for four-five years. Anne Levy stated she would give Steve Wilson her contact information because Mr. Wilson should not have received such difficulty requesting SSP services. Ed Gervasoni stated part of the problem could be due to transitioning staff at COPD. Anne Levy stated she wanted to address the issue and there should be no reason that Steve Wilson did not receive a response.

SSP Training Curriculum Update

Carmen Green stated she would meet with the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) to obtain feedback regarding the SSP Training Curriculum, which she would share with the committee and the University of Arizona. Ms. Green stated she hoped that the HKNC would offer feedback from a national level. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether the HKNC or the Perkins School for the Blind would act as a certifying body of the SSP Training Curriculum. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH had not contacted the Perkins School for the Blind, although the ACDHH did hope the HKNC would endorse the training. Carmen Green stated if the commission did not receive national endorsement, the ACDHH would consider other national organizations that endorsed curriculums as alternate methods. Ed Gervasoni stated an SSP would be required to have the appropriate certification in order to provide SSP services and would need to maintain a certain number of hours of education to remain certified. Carmen Green stated DES and other agencies would complete the process that identified the salary of SSPs. Ms. Green stated the ACDHH would ensure the commission offered similar pay as DES to remain consistent. Ed Gervasoni stated SSPs could potentially receive different pay according to that individual's skills and knowledge. Chris Desborough stated that each deaf-blind individual had different needs as well. Ed Gervasoni stated each deaf-blind individual would also have different needs according to the situation. He stated, for example, a deaf-blind individual might function well in a static or predictable environment, but require more assistance in a dynamic or noisy environment. Ed Gervasoni stated the skills of an SSP should match the skills of the deaf-blind individual in order to accommodate the needs of the individual. Carmen Green stated aging deaf-blind individuals would have different needs as well and the ACDHH would consider the needs of that population as well.

SSP Professional Development Discussion

This item was tabled.

Deaf-Blind Connections in Arizona Follow-Up

Chris Desborough stated the Deaf-Blind Connections in Arizona (DBCAz) was moving forward with a Strategic Plan and the development of a website, which would be completely accessible. Mr. Desborough stated the organization was advocacy driven and intended to provide services to deaf-blind individuals in the future. Chris Desborough stated the DBCAz would ensure that deaf-blind issues continued to be in the forefront of agendas and services and to ensure that services to deaf-blind individuals were delivered correctly.

RSA Deaf-Blind/CVHL Services Update

This item was tabled.

ACDHH Budget Request Update

Carmen Green stated the ACDHH budget request for an additional \$192,000 for the next five years was approved. Carmen Green stated ACDHH was working with the State Office of Procurement (OP) to identify the organization or agency that the ACDHH would work with. Ms. Green stated the OP would work with the ACDHH to determine the contract, which be distributed for bid by organizations that provide Support Service Provider (SSP) services for deaf-blind individuals. Mary Hartle inquired whether the funds would provide stop-gap funding or whether the funds would provide general supplemental funding. Carmen Green stated the funds would be available until the funds ran out. She stated ACDHH would work with OP to determine the parameters of services offered. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH intended to use as much of the funds as possible on the provision of direct services. She noted the ACDHH would review the bids from the different organizations and consider which organization offered the best bid. Chris Desborough inquired regarding the metrics that would be used to evaluate the providers. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH would review the agency's history, how long the agency has provided SSP services, and any information the ACDHH already knew about that agency.

Chris Desborough inquired whether the ACDHH would accept feedback from the community regarding the potential providers. Carmen Green stated some contracts required an evaluation process, although the ACDHH would be interested in receiving feedback from the consumers. Chris Desborough stated the importance of consumer feedback because the consumers were the individuals receiving the SSP services and could offer useful feedback to the ACDHH. Ed Gervasoni stated the population that used SSP services was small, although those individuals could offer valuable feedback regarding SSP service delivery. Mary Hartle agreed that consumers could offer valuable feedback and she encouraged the ACDHH to conduct evaluations of

SSP services. Chris Desborough stated the DBCAz would be willing to assist the ACDHH in obtaining feedback from the consumers. Carmen Green stated she and Amy Mousavi would be interested in attending any Deaf-Blind organization meetings to obtain feedback and announce that SSP services would be available. She noted the ACDHH would be holding a public meeting on August 23, 2014⁷ at the Double Tree in Tucson and invited any committee or community members to attend. Ed Gervasoni stated the committee could develop a survey to be distributed to consumers to obtain feedback. Carmen Green stated the committee members could send her any questions to be asked at community forums or a member of the DBCAz attend the meeting and moderate the meeting. Chris Desborough stated he would try to attend the public forum, although he experienced difficulties attending some events due to short notice in obtaining SSPs. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH Board Meetings were usually announced two weeks prior to the meetings, although the commission could consider announcing meetings directly to the DBCAz to allow time for individuals to obtain SSPs. Ed Gervasoni the Arizona Deaf-Blind Community in Phoenix had a long email list, which included SSPs and deaf-blind individuals. Carmen Green stated she would be in contact with Chris Desborough to coordinate future efforts to inform the community about public forums.

Ed Gervasoni inquired regarding the anticipated start date of offering SSP services. Carmen Green stated she anticipated being able to offer SSP services at the beginning of the next year. Ms. Green stated the start date depended on the number of bids the ACDHH received, choose a vendor, and agree on a contract. Mr. Gervasoni inquired whether the ACDHH intended to use all of the funds during the last six months of the fiscal year, or whether the funds would carry over to the next year. Carmen Green stated her understanding that the funds would not carry over to the next year, and noted the ACDHH would need to determine the budget schedule with the vendor. Ed Gervasoni suggested the ACDHH use the funds for more training for SSPs and deaf-blind individuals and outreach during the first year, and focus on service delivery in the following years. Carmen Green stated the Legislation removed the outreach portion from the funds request and the commission would identify how the general budget could cover outreach efforts. Ed Gervasoni stated the ACDHH could potentially provide outreach to individuals participating in I Can Connect program.

Chris Desborough inquired whether the ACDHH intended to recruit SSPs, or whether the contractors would be responsible for locating SSPs. Carmen Green stated SSPs would be required to complete the SSP Training Curriculum, which would serve as a refresher for some individuals. Ms. Green stated the certification program would offer more credence to SSPs as paraprofessionals. She noted the ACDHH would encourage the vendor to

hire qualified SSPs as well. Chris Desborough stated in his experience, there was a shortage of SSPs and he agreed that the SSP certification would encourage individuals to become SSPs. Chris Desborough inquired regarding the status of ACDHH's discussions with the Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS). Carmen Green stated ALTCS agreed there were parameters where SSPs could be provided to individuals that qualified for Arizona Health Care Containment System (AHCCCS). Carmen Green stated Dara Johnson, AHCCCS, indicated that she would meet with the committee to discuss SSP services for individuals in the ALTCS program. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether the committee would prefer that he talk to Dara Johnson, or whether Ms. Johnson should be invited to attend the next committee meeting. The committee agreed that Dara Johnson should be invited to attend the next committee meeting to discuss SSP services within ALTCS/AHCCCS services.

Conference Updates

Chris Desborough stated the Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE) would be held on November 17, 2017 at the Glendale Civic Center.

Mary Hartle stated the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona State Conference would be held at the Hyatt Regency in Phoenix September 1-3, 2017.

Ed Gervasoni stated the National SSP Development Alliance was distributing a survey and requesting feedback from deaf-blind individuals until October 15, 2017. Ed Gervasoni stated in the fall, Perkins School for the Blind would hold a national conference for deaf-blind consumers and providers.

GCBVI Strategic Planning Discussion

Ed Gervasoni stated the GCBVI met recently to discuss the GCBVI Strategic Plan. Ed Gervasoni stated the committees would be responsible for identifying the activities that would align with the Strategic Plan goals.

Ed Gervasoni stated the GCBVI was also developing the GCBVI Annual Report, which would address some of the items discussed in the Strategic Plan meeting. Ed Gervasoni stated he and Mary Hartle developed a draft report to be included in the GCBVI Annual Report, and Ted Chittenden, Public Information Committee Chair, made some grammatical changes and requested a final report from the committee. Ed Gervasoni reviewed the report sent to Ted Chittenden. Mary Hartle stated the National Federation for the Blind should be National Federation of the Blind (NFB). Ed Gervasoni

stated that Ted Chittenden had corrected that in his edited version of the report. The committee agreed with the information submitted for inclusion in the GCBVI Annual Report. Mary Hartle stated Ed Gervasoni developed the majority of the report and thanked Ed Gervasoni for creating the report.

Agenda and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues was scheduled for November 14, 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. 15th 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
- ACBVI Service Delivery

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment of Meeting

Chris Desborough moved to adjourn the meeting; Mary Hartle seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting stood adjourned at 12:58 p.m.