

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

August 15, 2019

Members Present

Ed Gervasoni, Chair
Sue Kay Kneifel
Megan Mogan
Virginia Thompson
Jonathan Pringle
Steve Wilson

Members Absent

Carmen Green Smith
Mary Hartle
Cindi Robinson

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Julie Stylinski, ACDHH
Anne Levy, COPD
Cindy Walsh, VCD
Larry Rhodes, COPD New Mexico
Andrew Cohen

Call to Order and Introductions

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

Approval of April 25, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Virginia Thompson moved to approve the minutes of the April 25, 2019 Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues meeting. Megan Mogan seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

Chair Report

Ed Gervasoni stated he had requested that another GCBVI council member be assigned to participate on the Deaf-Blind Issues Committee, although

none had been assigned. Ed Gervasoni stated the committee would hear updates regarding movement with interveners and the issues with the Support Service Providers (SSP)s.

Strategic Plan Review and Update

Ed Gervasoni stated the GCBVI Strategic Plan Mission did not include the deaf-blind population, and he hoped that could be modified under the new GCBVI leadership. Ed Gervasoni stated the Strategic Plan was broken into the categories: Education, Employment, Independent Living (IL), and Council Integrity and Function. Mr. Gervasoni stated the IL category included two tasks that included the Deaf-Blind Issues Committee. Ed Gervasoni stated the committee could request the Strategic Plan include more activities that surround the deaf/blind. Virginia Thompson inquired how the Independent Living Blind (ILB) under 55 population was served. Ed Gervasoni stated his understanding that there were no funds for under 55. He noted that there were very little funds for the Older Individuals Who Are Blind (OIB) and long wait lists to obtain services. Ed Gervasoni stated Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) received additional funds for ILB services several years prior, although the funds were swept before they could be used. Sue Kay Kneifel stated that when Federal RSA and the IL program split under different agencies, the IL funds went to the Independent Living Centers (ILC) and the funds went towards services. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether the individuals providing the services had background experience in deaf blindness. Sue Kay Kneifel stated that Direct in Tucson had a comprehensive contract with RSA, although she was unsure regarding the qualifications of the staff. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether there were funds for individuals 55 and under. Sue Kay Kneifel stated RSA received a small grant from Federal RSA as well as general funds, although the funds were limited compared to VR services. Sue Kay Kneifel stated that ILB was also short-staffed and was in the process of filling vacancies. Anne Levy stated her understanding that the comprehensive services provided general services and not just services to deaf-blind individuals. Sue Kay Kneifel stated the contract was for comprehensive blind services and included deaf-blind services. Anne Levy stated her understanding that SAAVI Services for the Blind also provided comprehensive services. Sue Kay Kneifel confirmed and stated the comprehensive blind services contracts in Tucson were SAAVI and Direct. Virginia Thompson stated the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI) also offered comprehensive services under RSA. Virginia Thompson stated she received calls from individuals seeking services and she inquired who to refer those individuals to. Sue Kay Kneifel stated that IL services for individuals under 55 now fell under the CILs and suggested that individuals be referred to the centers to show the need for the services. Virginia Thompson stated individuals requesting services had

to wait for a return call and might not have a SSP there to assist when the center returned the call. Sue Kay Kneifel suggested Virginia Thompson contact Phil Pengrazio or the SILC and express those concerns.

Ed Gervasoni stated the Strategic Plan included the goal that SSP services be offered statewide and he suggested that goal include intervener services. Megan Mogan inquired whether the Education Committee would consider tracking information other than student test scores. Lindsey Powers stated the Education Committee was interested in obtaining student test scores, although the committee was unable to obtain the information due to student confidentiality. Anne Levy stated the Employment category goals 1 and 2b did not include deaf-blind individuals either. Ed Gervasoni agreed and noted that was not a goal when developing the Strategic Plan. Ed Gervasoni stated that some outcomes would not be possible for the GCBVI to complete but could be collaborations with other agencies. Anne Levy inquired whether Ed Gervasoni would be able to share the committee's feedback with the GCBVI. Ed Gervasoni stated the Executive Committee would meet soon and he would share the committee's feedback.

Deaf-Blind Committee Roles/Activities

Sue Kay Kneifel stated that Ed Gervasoni was the only GCBVI member on the Deaf-Blind Issues Committee and she inquired how the committee could participate and address issues. Ed Gervasoni stated the committee was able to make a greater impact when there were more council members on the committee. Mr. Gervasoni stated that he had requested the GCBVI Chair assign a member to the committee and Mr. Kresmer had asked one council member, although she was too busy to commit to the committee. Sue Kay Kneifel inquired whether the GCBVI Bylaws included representation from organizations such as ACDHH. Ed Gervasoni stated the GCBVI Bylaws required representation from consumer groups such as the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA), the Arizona Council of the Blind of Arizona (AzCB) as well as members from the community and Ex-Oficio representation such as from ACBVI and the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB) Superintendent. Sue Kay Kneifel stated that NFBA and AzCB provided advocacy and inquired whether the council should include representation from an organization such as ACBVI or the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) or participation from a general community member. Ed Gervasoni stated the Legislature would need to agree to any changes to the GCBVI Bylaws. Sue Kay Kneifel inquired whether the committee could develop a position paper to advocate for Legislative changes to the council bylaws. Ed Gervasoni stated the challenge in identifying deaf-blind individuals that would be willing to participate on the GCBVI as well as the Deaf-Blind Issues Committee. Sue Kay Kneifel stated the entities that

served deaf-blind population needed a larger voice within the council. Ed Gervasoni stated that some committee members could participate on a workgroup to develop a position paper. Sue Kay Kneifel, Virginia Thompson, Jonathan Pringle, Steve Wilson and Anne Levy agreed to participate on a workgroup.

National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) Update

Virginia Thompson stated that ACBVI had been busy following up with requests and in providing outreach. Virginia Thompson stated she brought up the IL services because there was a limit to what the NDBEDP could provide and she had received several questions regarding IL services. Ed Gervasoni inquired how many individuals were enrolled in the program currently. Ms. Thompson stated there were over 24 individuals active, approximately 5-10 individuals were switched from inactive to active, and 10 individuals were not pending and were now pending. Steve Wilson inquired who was providing the Assistive Technology (AT) training. Virginia Thompson stated that Andrew Cohen, Richard Vanover, Mike Perry and she were providing the AT training. Steve Wilson inquired whether the 4 AT trainers had experience using equipment such as refreshable Braille equipment. Virginia Thompson stated that Richard Vanover had experience working with clients with combined vision and hearing loss (CVHL) at ACBVI and was responsible for setting up refreshable Braille. She noted that Mike Perry specialized in working with blind and visually impaired individuals and was familiar with the equipment also.

SSP Services in Arizona Follow-Up

Ed Gervasoni stated there was extensive discussion at the previous committee meeting regarding the SSP licensure laws and what types of communication SSPs could provide. Julie Stylinski stated for the month of July, there were 38.75 hours of service and she anticipated similar hours for August. Ms. Stylinski stated that she and Carmen Green attending a Deaf-Blind National Community of Practice (NCOP) Convention and saw the great benefit to having that connection nationwide. Ed Gervasoni inquired regarding the location of that meeting. Julie Stylinski stated the meeting was an online conference call. Julie Stylinski stated the statewide SSP contract was submitted to the State Procurement Office (SPO) and the final Request for Proposal (RFP) should be released by the end of the month. Ed Gervasoni inquired regarding the number of clients signed up for SSP services. Julie Stylinski stated that 30 individuals were signed up for the services, although not all individuals were using SSPs. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether there had been progress towards solving the transportation

issue. Ed Gervasoni inquired regarding what ACDHH was proposing. Julie Stylinski stated that SSP services would include transportation. She noted that the entity that bids for the Release of Information (ROI) had expressed interest in bidding for the contract. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether the ACDHH would put out bids, so that agencies such as COPD, that could provide transportation, could bid on those contracts. Julie Stylinski stated that was correct. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether ACDHH would continue to provide SSP services, or whether the SSP services would be offered through other organizations. Julie Stylinski stated the other agencies would provide the SSP services. Ed Gervasoni inquired how the skill level and communication of SSPs would be addressed. Julie Stylinski stated ACDHH was finalizing the information through the SPO, although all SSPs would be required to complete training under ACDHH. She noted that any agency that bid on the contract would be aware of the requirements and qualifications of the SSPs. Ed Gervasoni inquired regarding the state date. Julie Stylinski stated she was unsure, although the RFP would likely be released at the end of the month. Ed Gervasoni inquired regarding Julie Stylinski's position. Julie Stylinski stated that she would continue to provide oversight on the program and training.

Larry Rhodes inquired regarding the entity that would provide the SSP training. Julie Stylinski stated the ACDHH would provide the training. Larry Rhodes inquired whether the SSP training time would be paid for. Julie Stylinski stated she was unsure regarding paid training. Larry Rhodes inquired whether an individual obtained certification and then applied for a SSP position or did the agency awarded the contract, hire the individual and then send them to attend training. Julie Stylinski clarified that ACDHH did not offer SSP certification, but individuals would receive a certification of completing the training. Ms. Stylinski stated she was unsure regarding the procedure, although she would share that information with the committee. Mr. Rhodes inquired whether the training curriculum would be reviewed prior to the new individuals going through the training. Julie Stylinski stated that she would review the training curriculum. Julie Stylinski stated ACDHH wanted to provide the best services to consumers and had developed a draft regarding copy signing, which should be completed by August 22nd. Julie Stylinski stated that SSPs would have clear guidelines regarding what was permitted. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether that information could be shared with the committee when the information was finalized. Steve Wilson inquired whether the SSP training would include a wide range of communication methods. Julie Stylinski stated ACDHH hired and trained any SSP that could provide a variety of communication methods to deaf-blind individuals or individuals with CVHL. Julie Stylinski stated ACDHH recently implemented new access to telecommunication for CVHL individuals. Ms. Stylinski stated the primary access had been through SSPs, which was a

violation of state licensure, because that function mirrored interpreting services. Julie Stylinski stated that ACDHH would provide 2 hours weekly of interpreting services to access video phones for deaf-blind individuals or individuals with CVHL.

Larry Rhodes inquired whether the ACDHH contacted the Attorney General (AG)s office to request clarification regarding whether copy signing was a violation of state law. Julie Stylinski stated ACDHH met with the AG, and the AG's advice would be presented to the ACDHH Board meeting. Larry Rhodes stated that some COPD consumers indicated that they would have to contact the Social Security office and would be on hold for up to an hour, which would take up a lot of the allotted interpreting hours. Larry Rhodes inquired who paid for the interpreting services and whether those funds came from SSP funds. Julie Stylinski stated the interpreting services came from the general funds. Ms. Stylinski stated that a consumer could inform her that he/she needed additional interpreting hours to complete calls and she would approve that. Larry Rhodes stated the deaf-blind consumer groups in New Mexico used SSPs that provided copy signing and inquired who would pay for the interpreting services to the consumer groups in Phoenix and Tucson. Julie Stylinski stated that anyone could volunteer without compensation at any deaf-blind meeting. Larry Rhodes inquired whether that individual would be in violation of the state law. Julie Stylinski stated that ACDHH would learn more information from the AG and would share that with the committee. Larry Rhodes inquired whether the current SSPs would be required to apply to the organization that was awarded the SSP contract, or whether the contract would require that the agency hire those SSPs. Julie Stylinski stated she was unsure because the RFP had not been released. Ed Gervasoni stated his understanding that the deaf-blind consumer group in Phoenix used volunteers, who were not paid. Mr. Gervasoni stated the deaf-blind consumer group in Tucson had not met in quite some time due to the SSP issue.

- **Dani Noah Discussion Request**

Ed Gervasoni stated that Dani Noah was a member of the community that was interested in attending the meeting, although he was unable to connect via CART because his computer would freeze. Mr. Gervasoni stated that Dani Noah might benefit from some technical training on how to use CART. Ed Gervasoni stated that he encouraged Mr. Noah to attend the meeting and hopefully receive some training during the meeting. Ed Gervasoni stated that a previous council member, Roma Vandoozer, was able to access the meeting using CART through her Braille display. Ed Gervasoni stated that Julie Stylinski had some alternate ideas such as using C-Print typists. Steve Wilson stated that he was able to access CART through his refreshable

Braille. Ed Gervasoni stated that Dani Noah might benefit from education from an individual that could assist in using CART during a meeting. Larry Rhodes stated that if Dani Noah received a refreshable Braille device through, I Can Connect, he would be eligible for training on how to use refreshable Braille with CART. Virginia Thompson agreed and stated that training was in process. Larry Rhodes stated that C-Print and Real Time Texting (RTT) would appear as refreshable Braille. Julie Stylinski stated that she did investigate different resources to try to come with a solution for Dani Noah. Ed Gervasoni stated that Dani Noah might not have the highest reading speed. Mr. Gervasoni stated there were no typists on the state contract and noted that a C-Print typist would summarize the information, which could be problematic. Steve Wilson stated that when using a refreshable Braille display, the individual needed to control the cursor and the focus. Ed Gervasoni stated that he would facilitate a meeting with Steve Wilson and Dani Noah to discuss those technical issue.

Ed Gervasoni stated that Dani Noah submitted the following statement:

"ACDHH has started providing 2 hours interpreting services for those who use video phones and such device. I use a Braille display and laptop to communicate with people so they told me that it will not include typing for me when I need to have someone to type for me to let me know what is spoken around. I really wonder why the interpreting service shouldn't they are offering include typing for me as well to let me know what is going around as it really does not need any certified person and any SSP can just do it?"

Ed Gervasoni stated he referred Dani Noah to the minutes of the previous committee meeting so he could understand the discussion surrounding interpreting, although Mr. Noah's statement did not change. Steve Wilson inquired whether CART would be considered interpreting. Virginia Thompson inquired whether Dani Noah was referring to pro-tactile interpreting. Ed Gervasoni stated that Dani Noah preferred that all information be presented to him through typing and would like someone to type what was occurring and he would read through Braille. Steve Wilson stated that environmental information was important. Julie Stylinski stated that SSPs were not provided to type and that the entity holding the meeting was responsible for providing the information. Ms. Stylinski stated that a SSP would not provide auxiliary information but could provide environmental information. She noted the ASL interpreter or CART would then take over. Ed Gervasoni agreed that everyone was different in how they access and process information. Steve Wilson stated that environmental information was important and noted that a typist could not provide information as quick as CART. Ed Gervasoni stated that CART might be too fast for Dani Noah to access, although he and Steve Wilson could discuss that during a meeting

with Dani Noah. Steve Wilson stated that reading speed should not be an issue and Dani Noah should be able to read as fast as he likes. Mr. Wilson stated the CART provider would continue to type and the Braille reader would read as fast as he/she is comfortable.

SSP Training Curriculum Update

Julie Stylinski stated the SSP Training Curriculum would be finalized within the next month. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether anyone was assisting Julie Stylinski. Julie Stylinski stated that she was updating the curriculum. Ed Gervasoni stated the committee would like to review the curriculum prior to implementation.

SSP Professional Development and Certification Discussion

Ed Gervasoni stated the committee had discussed developing a workgroup to discuss SSP certification and professional development, although he was unsure where to start. Larry Rhodes stated he had joined a HKNC Deaf-Blind NCOP committee to discuss SSP certification on a national level, although the committee had not met yet. Larry Rhodes suggested the committees in Arizona wait until the issue was addressed at a national level. Ed Gervasoni agreed and stated that committee was waiting to hear about the intervener services as well. Ed Gervasoni stated his understanding that one day of the Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE) would be dedicated to deaf blindness. Sue Kay Kneifel stated that VRATE would be 2 days and on Saturday, VRATE hoped to attract more youth and families. She noted that this year's VRATE would have more exhibitors offering services to deaf-blind individuals.

ACDHH Budget Request Update

This item was tabled.

AHCCCS/ALTCS Intervener Services Update

Ed Gervasoni stated that Dara Johnson was unable to attend the meeting, although she had been working with Megan Mogan. Mr. Gervasoni stated that Dara Johnson and Megan Mogan were working on developing a document that would help to determine if an individual qualified for intervener services. Megan Mogan stated that she met with Dara Johnson and reviewed the rough draft of the Community Intervener Needs Assessment, which was to determine the potential hours needed for a community intervener's support. Ms. Mogan stated the case manager would be trained to determine the potential hours of support. Megan Mogan stated

the document would include the domains such as an individual's need to access communication, information, environment, social-emotional support, and activities. Megan Mogan stated she would include a narrative under each example indicating how an individual would need support under each instance.

SBVID Report

Sue Kay Kneifel stated that she had been quite busy filling vacant positions. Ms. Kneifel stated that she interviewed for the Blind and Visually Impaired Supervisor position in Tucson, and for the Rehabilitation Counselor for the Hard of Hearing in Tucson. Sue Kay Kneifel stated she interviewed for 2 Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf in Phoenix and 1 in Prescott Valley. She noted that a Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind position in Tucson would post soon. Sue Kay Kneifel stated that Ellen Boyd was the only Deaf-Blind Specialist currently, although Kelly Scherf and Mike Crago had taken some of those cases also.

AZ DeafBlind Project Update

a. Intervener Trainings

Megan Mogan stated the DeafBlind Project was able to hire a Part-time staff member and a half-time Deaf-Blind Specialist position. Megan Mogan stated that she would be attending the Transition Conference and the Director's Institute. Ms. Mogan stated Linda Alsop would speak at the Director's Institute and she would also attend two DeafBlind Project events, in which she would speak to the role of the intervener. She noted that ASL interpreters would be present and the public was invited to attend. Megan Mogan stated the DeafBlind Project was in the third year of offering the Open Hands, Open Access, online deaf-blind intervener modules. She stated the DeafBlind Project was taking registrations for the third cohort and would offer blended training of online modules and face-to-face training.

Deaf-Blind Connections in Arizona Update

This item was tabled.

Feeling Through (Movie Premier October 16th, Phoenix)

Jonathan Pringle stated the movie, Feeling Through, was the first major film featuring a deaf-blind actor in a primary role. Mr. Pringle stated the actor was from Arizona and works at the HKNC. Jonathan Pringle stated the film story centered around a meeting between a young homeless man and a deaf-blind individual, who held a sign indicating that he needed assistance

crossing the street, and the two develop a relationship. Jonathan Pringle stated that individuals might have received emails requesting support such as SSP hours, although he would also welcome assistance in publicity or an offer to print programs regarding the movie. Jonathan Pringle stated the movie premier would be at the Ability 360 Conference Room on October 16, 2019 in the afternoon. Steve Wilson inquired whether the print materials could be distributed in electronic format as well. Jonathan Pringle stated that electronic materials could be distributed.

Conference Updates

Ed Gervasoni stated the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA) Conference would be on August 30, 2019 at the Hyatt Regency in Phoenix. Steve Wilson stated the NFBA was looking for volunteers to attend the NFBA Conference. Ed Gervasoni noted the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) would take place in November. He added that the VRATE Conference was scheduled for November 15 and 16, 2019 at the Glendale Civic Center.

Agenda and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues was scheduled for December 5, 2019 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:

- Chair Report
- National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) Update
- SSP Services in Arizona Follow-Up
- SSP Training Curriculum Update
- SSP Professional Development and Certification Discussion
- ACDHH Budget Request
- Deaf-Blind Project Update
- AHCCCS/ALTCS Services Update
- Deaf-Blind Connections in Arizona Update
- Conference Updates
- ILB Under 55 Services

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment of Meeting

Megan Mogan motioned to adjourn the meeting. Sue Kay Kneifel seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.