

Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)
Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2017

Members Present

Ed Gervasoni, Chair
Chris Desborough*
Cindi Robinson
Mary Hartle
Steve Wilson

Members Absent

Carmen Green

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers, Admin. Assist
*Teleconferenced

Guests Present

Karla Martin, CART
Aimee Mousavie
Cindy Walsh, VCD
Dara Johnson*, AHCCCS

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, 100 N. 15th Avenue, Suite 104, Phoenix, AZ. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

Approval of August 15, 2017 Meeting Minutes

Chris Desborough moved to approve the minutes of the August 15, 2017 Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues meeting. Cindi Robinson seconded the motion. Ed Gervasoni requested the minutes be corrected to reflect that Carmen Green introduced Aimee Mousavi and that the spelling of Ms. Mousavi's name be corrected. Mr. Gervasoni also requested a correction to his question regarding the number of individuals receiving NDBEDP services. The amended minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) Update

Cindy Walsh, Valley Center for the Deaf (VCD), stated at the previous committee meeting, the committee inquired regarding the number of individuals receiving NDBEDP services that were receiving Support Service Provider (SSP) services. Ms. Walsh stated that number was 20% and noted

that the majority of individuals received SSP services had already received technology training through the I Can Connect program or the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI). Mary Hartle inquired regarding which organization paid for the additional technology training for clients. Cindy Walsh stated she was unsure regarding which organization paid for additional technology training. Chris Desborough inquired regarding why ACBVI would provide technology training. Ed Gervasoni stated that ACBVI had funds that could be used to provide technology training to clients. Cindy Walsh stated VCD requested funds to provide technology training from Perkins School for the Blind, which would allocate funds for training. Ms. Walsh noted that some clients could be eligible for technology training through their Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services. Aimee Mousavi inquired whether there was a cap on services that could be provided to clients. Cindy Walsh stated that the Perkins School for the Blind would allocate funds for clients, although she was unaware of the funding allocated for VR clients.

Cindy Walsh stated that approximately 20-30 individuals were receiving SSP services, and that less than 20% were active in the I Can Connect program. Cindy Walsh stated that the majority of individuals had been served in prior years and had exhausted the funds allocated for their training. Steve Wilson inquired whether Cindy Walsh was referring to clients receiving training on technology. Cindy Walsh confirmed and added that some clients unable to receive additional training through the I Can Connect program, would be eligible for training through ACBVI. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether an individual had been hired to assist clients in southern Arizona. Cindy Walsh stated that an individual had been hired to serve clients in Tucson and southern Arizona. Cindi Robinson inquired how VCD and Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD) staff that were deaf or Hard of Hearing (HOH) were able to communicate with Deaf-Blind (D-B) individuals or individuals with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss (CVHL). Cindy Walsh stated the I Can Connect program allowed for interpreters to assist in communicating with clients. Mary Hartle stated some equipment was for blind or visually impaired individuals and inquired how a Deaf or HOH individual could provide training to a blind or visually impaired client. Ms. Hartle noted that she received training from a HOH individual and noted that he was not familiar with the equipment. Steve Wilson stated that a deaf individual would not be able to hear the screen reader programs that blind and visually impaired individuals used. Mr. Wilson suggested that the VCD be more cognizant of the needs of D-B individuals and individuals with CVHL. Cindy Walsh stated the agency did have the ability to hire individuals to assist with training on different equipment in order to ensure that clients received the best method of training.

Steve Wilson stated that the COPD oversaw the equipment distribution program and noted that the acronym was problematic in that it only addressed one population. Cindy Walsh stated that COPD had the contract with the Perkins School for the Blind, a blindness organization. Cindy Walsh stated that COPD was named 45 years prior by a grass roots effort of deaf individuals. Ms. Walsh noted that COPD and VCD were agencies that served the deaf, HOH and D-B. Steve Wilson stated that the COPD website included D-B services, although the services appeared to be listed as an afterthought. Cindy Walsh stated that the organization was not meant to be divisive but wanted to provide services to the different populations. Ed Gervasoni stated any organization providing services to D-B individuals should be aware of the communication barriers and frustrations that D-B individuals face. He noted that individuals should keep the consumers in mind when providing services.

SSP Services in Arizona Follow-Up

Ed Gervasoni stated the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH) held two Town Halls in Phoenix and Tucson and requested feedback from D-B individuals and individuals with CVHL. Chris Desborough stated he attended both Town Halls and noted that more individuals attended the Phoenix Town Hall. Mr. Desborough stated that individuals appeared to be more pleased with services through VCD compared to COPD overall. Chris Desborough stated that several individuals reported issues with SSPs having poor hygiene, not enough SSP service hours, and that some SSPs had a limited scope of the services they could provide. Cindy Walsh stated she noticed that several individuals wanted to work with one or two SSPs and develop a rapport with those individuals. Mary Hartle stated each D-B individual had different needs and would benefit from working with one or two SSPs. Ms. Hartle added that clients would also like to have more SSP hours. Ed Gervasoni stated if a SSP works with the same client, that SSP learns the interests of that individual and was able to provide better service to that individual. He added that several individuals attending the Town Halls indicated that they were often mismatched to SSPs and had different communication methods. Cindy Walsh stated that unfortunately VCD and COPD had limited funding in order to hire and retain SSPs. Ms. Walsh noted the organization would like to have a variety of SSPs, although the organization often lacked sufficient funding to keep SSPs, whom would leave in order to find work.

Chris Desborough inquired whether the ACDHH considered changing the organization's name to the Arizona Commission for the Deaf, DB and Hard of Hearing. Aimee Mousavi inquired whether the organization's name was a concern. Chris Desborough stated the commission would receive additional funding for SSP services, and noted that the name did not coincide with

services to D-B individuals. Chris Desborough stated that the ACDHH website included resources for deaf and HOH, although the website did not currently include resources for D-B individuals. Mr. Desborough stated the website only included the service regions of nationwide and Phoenix. Aimee Mousavi inquired whether some Tucson services might be included under the Phoenix region. Chris Desborough stated he did not locate Tucson services. Aimee Mousavi stated she would forward Mr. Desborough's feedback to ACDHH.

SSP Training Curriculum Update

Ed Gervasoni stated at the previous committee meeting, there was discussion that the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) might potentially assist in training SSPs. Aimee Mousavi stated that the additional \$192,000 had been approved by the Legislature, and the ACDHH would work with the State Procurement Office (SPO). Ed Gervasoni stated after the ACDHH developed the SSP Training Curriculum, the organization had discussed developing a pilot training program with HKNC. Aimee Mousavi stated she was unsure but she would ask Carmen Green regarding an update.

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 pleased to partner with the ACDHH in holding the Town Hall meetings. Mr. Desborough stated DBCAz members would regularly contact State Legislative members, members of the House and Senate in order for D-B issues to remain in the forefront. Chris Desborough stated the organization had developed a list of radio and newspaper contacts that DBCAz could distribute press releases to regarding any issues the organization supported or disagreed with. He stated the organization would distribute monthly newsletters as well. Chris Desborough stated that DBCAz could potentially receive a significant funding source. Chris Desborough stated the organization intended to release an iOS phone app, which would offer direct access to consumers. Chris Desborough stated the DBCAz website was not completely accessible and would be corrected prior to releasing. Chris Desborough stated the organization had completed the tax exempt status application and would submit to the IRS. Chris Desborough stated he would speak on Sun Sounds and thanked Mary Hartle for creating that connection. Ed Gervasoni inquired how the DBCAz intended to develop a list of D-B consumers in Arizona. Chris Desborough stated he performed outreach

through the Arizona Association of D-B in Tucson as well as sign-up sheets at various events. Mary Hartle stated that DBCAz had developed a brochure, which did not include the slogan "Promoting Awareness for Inclusion".

ACDHH Budget Request Update

Aimee Mousavi stated the ACDHH budget request for an additional \$192,000 for the next five years for SSP training. Ms. Mousavi stated ACDHH would request information from potential vendors and would develop the Scope of Work (SOW) that would reflect information gathered during the Town Hall meetings. Aimee Mousavi stated once the SOW was developed, SPO would send out the Request for Proposal (RFP) to the vendors. She stated that several individuals, including Chris Desborough, would evaluate the proposals once the RFP closed. Mary Hartle inquired whether an organization needed to be a current contractor with the state in order to reply to the RFP. Ed Gervasoni stated from previous experience, an individual would not see the RFP unless the individual was signed up with SPO. Mr. Gervasoni noted that he was a previous vendor with the state, although he continued to receive notices of bids. Ed Gervasoni inquired regarding when the RFP would be distributed. Aimee Mousavi stated the RFP would be distributed and then evaluated by a small group of individuals.

Conference Updates

This item was tabled.

AHCCS/ALTLCS Services Update

Dara Johnson, Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), stated that she was interested in identifying how to fund SSP services. Ms. Johnson stated she received approval to conduct research regarding other state Medicaid programs that cover SSP services and/or community intervener services as a Medicaid covered service. Dara Johnson stated AHCCCS would move forward in exploring how SSP and intervener services could be provided to individuals with CVHL. She stated several divisions within AHCCCS have met to discuss need for SSPs and the description of SSPs. Ms. Johnson stated AHCCCS needed to review the state statute regarding the covered Medicaid services, including services for individuals eligible for acute services versus individuals receiving long term care services. Dara Johnson stated AHCCCS was exploring whether SSPs could be provided as acute services and the option to provide interveners for individuals eligible for long term care services. Dara Johnson stated AHCCCS anticipated that the agency could offer interveners for individuals eligible for long term care although the agency might take a different path

towards offering SSPs to individuals receiving acute care. Dara Johnson stated she would like to develop an advisory group, although AHCCCS needed to ensure that the organization had the authority prior to moving forward. Ms. Johnson stated the advisory committee members would review the medical necessity criteria and determine the qualifications that a SSP and intervener should have. Dara Johnson stated AHCCCS does not have records of individuals with CVHL, although the organization did pull medical records used for diagnostics in order to obtain an approximate number of 300 Medicaid individuals that would benefit from SSP and/or intervener services.

Cindi Robinson inquired whether community interveners would include services to children and whether the services would only be provided outside of school. Dara Johnson stated that children would be eligible for intervener services outside of school, because the school should be offering services while the child was in school. Ed Gervasoni inquired regarding when AHCCCS anticipated learning regarding the organization's authority in offering services. Dara Johnson stated AHCCCS members were meeting frequently and she anticipated learning more by the first of the year. Cindy Walsh inquired whether AHCCCS would consider moving forward with offering intervener services sooner than the SSP services. Dara Johnson stated she could see the benefit of offering SSP and intervener services at the same time, although the organization did not want to hold back services to clients. Cindy Walsh stated agreed that clients should receive intervener services sooner, if those services could be offered quickly. Cindi Robinson stated that AHCCCS might experience difficulties making changes to the programs if one program was offered prior to the other, although she did agree that services should be offered quickly. Ed Gervasoni stated that clients would benefit from receiving services quickly. Mr. Gervasoni stated that the agency could consider developing a pilot program, which would offer important information as well. Dara Johnson stated she was also a member of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), which was interested in recruiting an individual with CVHL to sit on the council. Ms. Johnson stated if any committee members were interested, they could inform her or Larry Wanger, Director of SILC.

Agenda and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues was scheduled for February 13, 2018 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

Cindi Robinson stated there would be a Call to Action on November 15, 2017 regarding the Cogswell Macy Act, which designated intervener services, reflected the need for recognition and training of teachers of D-B, adapts the federal definition of deafblindness, and required each state to address deafblindness issues in development of state plans.

Mary Hartle stated the House of Representatives was expected to send new tax legislation to the floor for a vote, which would eliminate the blind tax exemption. Individuals were encouraged to contact their congressional representatives.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment of Meeting

Cindi Robinson moved to adjourn the meeting; Mary Hartle seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting stood adjourned at 12:43 p.m.