

Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)

Full Council Meeting Minutes

November 17, 2023

Attendance

Members Present

Bob Kresmer
Amy Porterfield
Ted Chittenden
Nathan Pullen
Erin Pawlus
Brian Dulude
Mike Gordon
Annette Reichman

Members Absent

Bea Shapiro
Jonathan Pringle
David Steinmetz
Steve Tepper
Allan Curry

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Kristen Mackey
Stephanie Johnson
Jami Parente
Joyceline Elliot
Julie Oliver
Jordan Moon
Jeff Bishop

Paul Saunders
Michelle Hargreaves
Karla Martin - CART

Minutes

Call to Order and Introductions

Bob Kresmer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m. Introductions were made, a quorum was present, and the procedural meeting rules were explained.

Approval of August 18, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Ted Chittenden moved to approve the minutes of the August 18, 2023 GCBVI Full Council meeting as written. Nathan Pullen seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved by majority voice vote.

GCBVI Chairperson's Report

Bob Kresmer stated that Andrew Cohen had notified him that he would have to step down from the council. Mr. Kresmer noted that Jeff Bishop had applied for one of the Arizona Council of the Blind of Arizona (AzCB) positions. Jeff Bishop stated that he had previously served on the GCBVI until he moved, but he had returned and was interested in participating on the council again. Mr. Bishop stated that he had also been the Chair of the Assistive Technology (AT) Committee previously and had recently joined the committee again. Bob Kresmer stated that Jordan Moon had applied to be the parent of a blind child representation. Jordan Moon stated that he was a parent of a blind child and currently worked at SAAVI Services for the Blind. Mr. Moon stated that he had also previously served on the Employment Committee and had assisted with the implementation of the E75 Diversity Event.

GCBVI Annual Report

Ted Chittenden stated that he had compiled the draft GCBVI Annual Report with Committee reports and client success stories. He noted that council members should have had time to review the report for submission. Bob

Kresmer agreed and stated the council had voted to approve the Annual Report once Ted Chittenden determined that it would be ready to submit.

RSA Administrator's Report

Kristen Mackey stated the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) would be Federally monitored from February 26-29 and she would keep the council informed regarding any potential focus groups. Ms. Mackey stated RSA was beginning to attend virtual meetings to prepare for the visit, which would focus on fiscal activities. Kristen Mackey stated that on the previous 107 monitoring reports, RSA fell short of expending the 15% required Pre-Employment Transition (Pre-ETS) and she was pleased to announce that the agency had met that requirement for FY 2022. Bob Kresmer inquired whether RSA had considered applying for innovation grants. Kristen Mackey stated those grants required a lot of documentation including the current CSNA report. She noted that RSA was waiting on the final CSNA report and could consider alternate grants. Kristen Mackey stated the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan would be due in March or April and would go out for a public comment in January. She noted the VR portion of the plan had been modified significantly in terms of where the information was found although the information was mostly the same. Kristen Mackey stated the Division of Employment and Rehabilitation Services (DERS) had undergone some reorganization, which resulted in Tim Stump and Terell Welch coming back to RSA and to assist with creating connections with employers.

Kristen Mackey stated the agency had about 25 open Rehabilitation Technician (RT) positions open, which was half of the current vacancies due to a job fair. She noted that Purchasing Technicians (PT)s would be part of a centralized unit to help with procurement needs. Kristen Mackey stated the RIS BVI contracts had been extended. She added that RSA continued to focus on the strategic priorities for outreach and supported employment. She added the agency was on track for the implementation of Informed, the new case management system, and continued to review the system to ensure that it was accessible for all staff.

SBVID Program Manager Report

Bob Kresmer stated the overall number of VR clients had increased and inquired regarding the number of individuals that attended the Introduction to Blindness workshops. Brian Dulude stated that SBVID continued to hold the workshops every month, which experienced a varying number of participants. He noted that different vendors and consumer group representatives would attend the orientations as well. Brian Dulude stated there were currently 4 open Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind (RCB) positions, and that SBVID had hired a Supervisor for Chandler and Tucson. He added that SBVID would begin preparing for the Transition roadshow and would offer presentations in December and January. Ted Chittenden stated he had heard that some representatives attending the workshops were never introduced. Brian Dulude noted it was a long day of presentations and SBVID tried to accept individuals into the meeting prior to provide an overview of presentation schedule. Brian Dulude stated SBVID continued to make efforts to make clients eligible for services in less than 90 days and noted that counselors would be in the office 2 days a week. Mike Gordon inquired why staff were not back in the office full time. Brian Dulude stated that RSA had provided laptops and the technology needed for VRCs to meet with clients virtually as well as meeting clients in the office. Kristen Mackey stated RSA performed focus groups in which about 1/3 of individuals indicated their preference for virtual meetings, 1/3 preferred a hybrid of virtual and in-person, and 1/3 preferred in person meetings. She added that she encouraged VRCs to meet clients in the community if that was the clients' preference.

Brian Dulude stated there had been a significant increase in successfully closed Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) cases through the help of staff and vendors. Dr. Dulude stated that he attended the NFBA State Conference, which included a breakout session of Orientation and Mobility (O&M) instruction, which he hoped to be a part of in other events. Brian Dulude stated the OIB wait list numbers had not changed significantly, and SBVID had started offering the Jump Start program again, which was a day-long introduction of the classes offered. He noted that individuals attending the classes reported that they were informative and helpful.

BEP Program Update

Joyceline Elliot stated BEP had hired a new BEP Specialist and an operator had recently started in Scottsdale and Tempe. She noted that BEP would also start a new training class with 3 prospective applicants to the program. Ms. Elliot stated BEP had new vending sites in Phoenix, El Mirage, Avondale, Scottsdale, and Tucson. Scott Weber stated that some BEP café locations would potentially close due to not enough staff working in the buildings to support the operator. He added that 8 facilities did not currently have a blind operator, and BEP was trying to create opportunities that could support operators. He added the Arizona Participating Operators Committee (APOC) was continuing to seek guidance regarding the Luke Air Force Base, which did not want to recognize the Randolph Sheppard Act.

ASDB Report

Annette Reichman stated that ASDB had hired Paul Saunders as the new Principal at the ASDB Tucson campus. Paul Saunders stated that he had expanded the curriculum at ASDB and looked where visually impaired, and deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHOH) students could work together. He noted that he had participated in the recent White Cane Safety Day events, which brought all students together. Bob Kresmer inquired whether Mr. Saunders was able to obtain training on services and education for blind and visually impaired (BVI) students. Paul Saunders stated he was working with Lisa Yencarelli and the Assistant Principal to learn as much as he could on providing education to BVI students.

Annette Reichman stated ASDB would hold their Braille Challenge event in person for the first time since COVID in January. She added the agency received notice that the Senate Bill regarding ASDB's funding had been modified to include funding for 10 years and the agency would continue to monitor any other Legislation.

GCBVI Committee Reports

Legislative and Public Policy Committee

Amy Porterfield stated the committee had been reviewing the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Policy Manual and noticed that some of the language surrounding blindness services had been condensed. She noted the

committee would share their recommendations with RSA Leadership. Amy Porterfield stated the committee continued to advocate for United English Braille (UEB) certification as well as clarifying language that would allow more certifications to be accepted. She added that the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA) would be reviewing current Legislation and identify areas to focus on as well.

Ex-Officio Member and Blindness Community Organization Updates

Arizona Talking Book Library

Erin Pawlus stated that library staff had attended the AER Conference and a new Readers' Advisory Book Discussion Group had started again. She noted that an author had attended a recent book discussion group, which was exciting for individuals attending. She added that 2 staff had attended and presented at the American Library Association (ALA) Conference, which was an honor. Jeff Bishop stated he had recently moved back to Arizona, and inquired whether the state would consider offering Book Share. Erin Pawlus stated that some states were able to offer that program, although Arizona was not currently. She noted that library patrons could give recommendations for the program, which could be useful in any future considerations.

Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Michelle Hargreaves stated ACBVI had recently hired an ASL interpreter to work with clients needing ASL interpretation. Bob Kresmer inquired whether ACBVI was offering medical services through the new medical campus. Michelle Hargreaves stated ACBVI had opened the medical campus in the Summer and was working with Terros Health to provide medical services to individuals.

SAAVI Services for the Blind

Mike Gordon stated that a team visited SAAVI in August and determined the organization could be a Structural and Discovery center, in which there were only 6 nationwide. He added that SAAVI wanted to increase professional protocols at the organization. Mike Gordon stated the Phoenix campus had expanded to include residential services and apartments 1 mile from the

center. He noted that SAAVI had also been recruiting new clients and had recruited individuals from other states as well.

Arizona Council of the Blind

Ted Chittenden stated the AzCB was in the process of planning for the next State Conference. He noted the previous event was virtual and the consumer group was trying to plan on the format for the next event.

Agenda Items and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the GCBVI Full Council will be on February 16, 2024 from 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm.

Announcements

Ted Chittenden stated that he would be going off of the council as he had participated for 13 years. He stated that he had enjoyed his time on the GCBVI and thanked everyone for their hard work.

Call to the Public

A call to the public was made with no response forthcoming.

Adjournment of Meeting

Nathan Pullen moved to adjourn the meeting. Ted Chittenden seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:00

Statistics

As of September 30, 2023, the statistics are:

The total number of individuals in VR was 748

The total number of veterans in the VR program were 20

The total number of individuals in OOS was 0

The total number of individuals in Priority 2 was 0

The total number of individuals in Priority 3 was 0

The total number of applicants for the VR Program was 53

The average number of days from application to eligibility was 46

The median number of days from application to eligibility was 30

The eligibility compliance was 73.1%

The number of new plans written was 237

The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 97.9

The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 72

The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 58.9%

The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$41.00

The lowest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$15.00

The average hourly wage for successful employment outcomes was \$35.42

The number of clients placed in employment was 6

The number of clients closed successfully in employment was 7

As of September 30, 2023, the Deaf Blind Population statistics:

The total number of individuals in VR was 54

The total number of veterans in VR program was 1

The total number of individuals in OOS was 0

The total number of individuals in Priority 2 was 0

The total number of individuals in Priority 3 was 0

The total number of applicants for the VR Program was 6

The average number of days from application to eligibility was 53.8

The median number of days from application to eligibility was 56

The eligibility compliance was 80%

The number of new plans written was 20

The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 109.75

The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 112

The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 50%

The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$25.54

The lowest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$25.54

The average hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$25.54

The number of clients placed in employment was 0

The number of clients closed successfully was 1