

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

Full Council Meeting Minutes

November 18, 2022

Attendance

Members Present

Bob Kresmer
Amy Porterfield
Ted Chittenden
John McCann
Andrew Cohen
Donald Porterfield
Nathan Pullen
Erin Pawlus
Mike Gordon
Bea Shapiro
Brian Dulude

Members Absent

Allan Curry
Steve Tepper
Annette Reichman
David Steinmetz
Jonathan Pringle

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Kristen Mackey
Eve Sanchez
Lisa Yencarelli
Frank Vance
Joyceline Elliot
April Welch

Lee Bradley

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 19, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Ted Chittenden moved to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2022 GCBVI Full Council meeting as written. Bea Shapiro seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved by majority voice vote.

GCBVI Chairperson's Report

Bob Kresmer stated that he had been busy attending various conferences and events in the community. Mr. Kresmer thanked Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) for sharing the RSA scorecard with the council prior to the meeting so that members could review the information. Bob Kresmer noted that most of the work was done in the committees, and they would then report to the full council.

GCBVI Annual Report

Bob Kresmer inquired whether the Public Information Committee had any updates regarding the GCBVI Annual Report. Ted Chittenden stated that he had not been able to review the Annual Report yet. Bob Kresmer stated that he would meet with Ted Chittenden and David Steinmetz to discuss the report.

GCBVI Officer Elections

Bob Kresmer stated the Executive Committee had developed a slate of candidates for the Officers: Bob Kresmer for Chair, Amy Porterfield for Vice Chair and David Steinmetz for Secretary. Bob Kresmer inquired whether there were any additional nominations for the Chair position. John McCann moved that nominations cease, and Bob Kresmer be elected as Chair. Ted Chittenden seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous

voice vote. Bob Kresmer inquired whether there were any additional votes for the Vice Chair position. John McCann moved that nominations cease, and Amy Porterfield be elected as Vice Chair. Ted Chittenden seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. Bob Kresmer inquired whether there were any additional votes for the Secretary position. Amy Porterfield moved that nominations cease, and David Steinmetz be elected as Secretary. John McCann seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

RSA Administrator's Report

Kristen Mackey stated she had attended the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) conferences. Ms. Mackey stated that she heard from OSERS, about different collaborations, how things such as COVID and inflation affected VR, and the barriers to spending Federal grant funds. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA and the Older Individuals Who Are Blind (OIB) program would be implementing the new case management system, Informed, and the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) would begin using the system later. She noted the new system would have the option for client and vendor portals as well. Bob Kresmer inquired whether other states used the case management system, and whether they were successful. Kristen Mackey stated that one state had experienced difficulties, although another state had a seamless implementation. Amy Porterfield inquired regarding the client portal. Kristen Mackey stated that clients would be able to go into the system and change their information, and vendors would be able to make changes in real time also. Kristen Mackey stated that some of the blindness services contracts had been delayed, and she was working with staff internally to ensure those were a high priority. Kristen Mackey stated RSA had developed a transition document for the new Governor's team, and she anticipated minimal changes. Kristen Mackey stated RSA had a 20% vacancy rate currently, although the agency was now able to post positions on external job sites, and she hoped to widen the job announcements. Bob Kresmer inquired whether RSA could recruit students from universities. Kristen Mackey stated RSA could share their job announcements with universities.

Kristen Mackey stated there were conversations at the CSAVR conference regarding the national trend of returning Federal grant funds, and how to

keep the funds within the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) system. She noted the challenge was to expend the 15% set aside for Pre-Employment Transition (Pre-ETS) services, especially with an overall decrease in students participating in Transition services. Amy Porterfield inquired whether RSA had considered applying for establishment grants and noted the Pre-ETS contact did not fully address blindness services. Kristen Mackey stated the agency was in the process of developing a contract for the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which would identify the gaps, which could include grant options. Bob Kresmer inquired if RSA could use some of the Federal grant funds for developing marketing and outreach programs. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA was limited in what the agency could use Federal funds for regarding marketing and outreach. Ted Chittenden inquired whether RSA expected to receive more clients in the VR program, which would trigger an increase in Federal grant funds. Kristen Mackey stated the Federal grant funds were based off of a formula, which would increase slightly each year, although most agencies were struggling to expend the full funds. Ted Chittenden inquired whether RSA anticipated an increase in VR clients in the future. Kristen Mackey stated the number of VR clients fluctuated, and would decrease with an increase in COVID cases, and then increase once the cases had lowered.

SBVID Program Manager Report

Brian Dulude stated that SBVID was challenged with staff turnover, although the program had hired new counselors in Tucson and Phoenix, as well as the Assistant Program Manager. Brian Dulude stated that he would like to begin offering the Introduction to Blindness workshops monthly, to be able to provide information to VR clients. Brian Dulude noted the Transition Roadshow would occur in the summer, and SBVID would have presentations on January 11, 12, and 14. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the contact individual for the Transition Roadshow event. Brian Dulude stated that he would be the appropriate contact individual. Amy Porterfield inquired whether more individuals could attend the Introduction to Blindness workshops, such as individuals that had not been made eligible for VR services yet. Brian Dulude stated that individuals that had been referred to VR services and individuals that had not been made eligible yet could attend the workshops. Bob Kresmer stated the council had discussed holding a Town Hall meeting to request feedback from the community and inquired whether VR would be involved in that effort. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA

could see which video conference rooms were operational for use in that meeting.

Eve Sanchez stated there were 287 individuals on the OIB wait list for 623 services. Eve Sanchez stated that 53 services were assigned in October, 42 in September, which was an overall increase each month. Ms. Sanchez noted that OIB was able to offer the first cluster group services with SAAVI Services for the Blind in Mohave County. Bob Kresmer inquired whether Eve Sanchez had contacted the Outreach Librarian at the Talking Book Library, who could spread the word regarding the cluster group services. Eve Sanchez stated she had not contacted the Talking Book Library, although she would consider all outreach opportunities. Ted Chittenden inquired how the clients were able to meet with OIB to receive services. Eve Sanchez stated that OIB was able to arrange transportation for all but 1 client. Bob Kresmer stated that he had not received any complaints regarding the OIB program lately, which was a testament to the program. Mike Gordon inquired whether the OIB offices were open for individuals to walk in and request services. Eve Sanchez stated that staff were rotating the office every day. Kristen Mackey noted that the offices were open, provided they had sufficient staff, and that staff were expected to be in the office or the community for 2 days a week, and the remaining services could be conducted remotely.

BEP Program Update

Joyceline Elliot stated that other BEP staff had attended the recent Arizona Participating Operators Committee (APOC) meeting and shared their Best Practices with the committee. Joyceline Elliot stated there was 1 new trainee and the training room was almost complete, which would include machines for individuals to obtain hands-on training. Ms. Elliot noted the Fort Huachuca contract had been extended and was still pending. Joyceline Elliot stated that BEP had added vending machines to 2 sites in western Arizona, and Maricopa county. Bob Kresmer inquired whether all of the BEP markets had reopened. Joyceline Elliot stated that not all markets had reopened, and sites such as DES were looking at the number of employees at that site when considering to reopen. Ted Chittenden inquired whether BEP operators were still receiving emergency funds. Joyceline Elliot stated that operators were not receiving emergency funds, although BEP was looking at additional

opportunities for operators. Mr. Chittenden inquired whether BEP had resolved the issue with the vending trucks at the rest stops. Joyceline Elliot stated that BEP continued to work with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) regarding the vending trucks at rest stops, which was a continuing issue.

ASDB Report

Lisa Yencarelli stated there were 40 students on the Tucson campus, in which 7 were in the residence halls, 17 were visually impaired without additional disabilities, 23 were visually impaired with additional disabilities, and 4 had combined vision and hearing loss (CVHL). Ms. Yencarelli stated that in Region 1 there were 76 students total in which 29 had visual impairments only, 47 had additional disabilities, and 4 had CVHL. She noted for Region 2, there were 206 students total, in which 65 had visual impairments only, 141 had additional disabilities, and 18 had CVHL. Lisa Yencarelli stated for Region 3, there were 139 students total, in which 39 had visual impairments only, 101 had additional disabilities and 13 had CVHL. Ms. Yencarelli stated for the distance program, there were 32 students total, in which 10 students had visual impairments only, 22 had additional disabilities and 1 had CVHL. Lisa Yencarelli stated the Phoenix Day School for the Deaf (PDSB) had 26 students with CVHL, in which 13 had CVHL only and 13 had additional disabilities. Ms. Yencarelli stated ASDB was still seeking staff in the Birth to 3 program, itinerant teachers and a Brailist in Phoenix. Amy Porterfield inquired whether the general teachers provided subject matter instruction and the teachers of the blind and visually impaired provided the specialized instruction. Lisa Yencarelli stated that some teachers were seeking visual impairment certifications. Amy Porterfield inquired whether ASDB had any data regarding test scores in relation to that teaching method. Lisa Yencarelli stated it was difficult to share test results due to the small population. She noted the overall test scores had improved, although she had not received the breakdown of scores for the visually impaired students. Lisa Yencarelli stated the ACT scores for Math and Geometry for ASDB students were better than the overall state scores. Ted Chittenden inquired regarding the number of residential dorms and whether there were still separate dorms for males and females at ASDB. Lisa Yencarelli stated there were separate dorms, although she was unsure regarding the numbers. John McCann inquired regarding the number of itinerant teachers and whether the school districts contracted with ASDB.

Lisa Yencarelli stated the majority of teachers were itinerant teachers, and the school districts contracted with ASDB for students with visual and hearing impairments.

GCBVI Committee Reports

Legislative and Public Policy Committee

Amy Porterfield stated the committee tried to meet with the Governor's Office regarding a potential increase in funding for the Independent Living Blind (ILB) program, although the Policy Advisor was no longer with the Governor's Office. She noted the committee would attempt to schedule a meeting with the new Governor's staff.

Employment Committee

Nathan Pullen stated the committee was tentatively planning a virtual or hybrid E75 event in October to be part of National Disability Awareness month.

DeafBlind Committee

Andrew Cohen stated the DeafBlind Committee met recently and discussed the committees' goals for the next year, which should be finalized soon.

Ex-Officio Member and Blindness Community Organization Updates

Arizona Talking Book Library

Erin Pawlus stated the library was able to provide Braille e-readers for the patrons on the waitlist, and was able to send devices to others that had requested them. Erin Pawlus stated that if anyone was interested in receiving an e-reader, they could apply to be a patron of the library. Amy Porterfield inquired whether the e-reader could connect to tablets. Erin Pawlus stated the e-readers could connect to iOS devices and screen readers such as JAWS. Ms. Pawlus stated the 2023 large print calendars were available for individuals in the community that would like to receive them. Erin Pawlus stated the National Library Service (NLS) was launching a new list serve nlspec@loc.gov, where individuals could receive updates to library services.

Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Frank Vance stated that ACBVI continued to fill staff vacancies, similar to other agencies. Frank Vance stated that 22 individuals participated in the water sports day with wakeboarding, tubing, and wake surfing. Mr. Vance noted that ACBVI offered a holistic approach to providing services and offered assistance with medical and food needs for instance. Mr. Tepper stated ACBVI would begin construction on a new building on January 1st for those additional services.

SAAVI Services for the Blind

Mike Gordon stated the Board of Directors had changed the organization's name to SAAVI Services for the Blind, to more accurately depict the organization's focus. Mike Gordon stated that SAAVI had also restructured the agency, and Amy Porterfield was now the President of SAAVI, and he and she would have shared authority of the agency. Amy Porterfield stated SAAVI held their Open House in Tucson, which was well attended by community members. Ms. Porterfield stated SAAVI had researched labor market information and had offered salary increases to staff to help with recruiting and retaining staff. Amy Porterfield stated the agency would begin offering a new program in January, which would be open to anyone in the community as an introduction to blindness.

National Federation of the Blind of Arizona

Donald Porterfield stated the NFB State Convention was held September in Tucson, which had a somewhat lower attendance rate compared to previous years. Mr. Porterfield stated the NFBA was in the process of planning the next event, which would take place in Phoenix. Donald Porterfield stated

that a bill had passed, which was related to accessible mail-in ballots, although the NFBA would continue to advocate for that bill to be attached to military voting methods. Donald Porterfield stated the NFBA was planning for the Phoenix seminar in January, which would include an email campaign and then a meeting with the House, Senate, and Governor's office. He noted the organization would likely focus on electronic return ballots. Donald Porterfield stated the NFB would also hold their Washington DC seminar at the end of January and would advocate for accessible websites, applications,

medical devices, and Legislation regarding accessible ballot marking devices to be used nationally.

Arizona Council of the Blind

John McCann stated the AzCB would be participating in the Disability Pride Day in December. He noted the organization was planning the March AzCB Conference, which would be a hybrid event. Ted Chittenden stated that a AzCB member would potentially be interested in joining the council, although it would depend on her potential employment.

Agenda Items and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the GCBVI Full Council will be on February 17, 2023 from 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm.

Announcements

Bob Kresmer stated the Executive Committee would be providing a short presentation at the upcoming Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE) and to provide outreach to the community.

Call to the Public

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

Adjournment of Meeting

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

Statistics

As of September 30, 2022, the statistics are:

The total number of individuals in VR was 1226
The total number of veterans in the VR program were 30
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 31
The average number of days from application to eligibility was 68.5
The median number of days from application to eligibility was 34
The eligibility compliance was 80%
The number of new plans written was 95
The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 119.8
The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 88
The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 70%
The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$15.00
The lowest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$41.00
The average hourly wage for successful employment outcomes was \$23.67
The number of clients placed in employment was 8
The number of clients closed successfully in employment was 3

As of September 30, 2022, the Deaf Blind Population statistics:

The total number of individuals in VR was 76
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 2
The average number of days from application to eligibility was 101
The median number of days from application to eligibility was 101
The eligibility compliance was 100%
The number of new plans written was 11
The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 161
The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 120
The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 60%
The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was N/A
The lowest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was N/A

The average hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was N/A
The number of clients placed in employment was 0
The number of clients closed successfully was 0