

# **Governor's Council on Blindness and Low Vision (GCBLV)**

## **Full Council Meeting Minutes**

November 21, 2025

### **Attendance**

#### **Members Present**

Bob Kresmer  
Amy Porterfield  
Erin Pawlus  
Mike Gordon  
Bea Shapiro  
Annette Reichman  
Donald Porterfield  
Nathan Pullen  
Jonathan Pringle

#### **Members Absent**

David Steinmetz

#### **Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers

#### **Guests Present**

Kristen Mackey  
Stephanie Johnson  
Joyceline Elliot  
Maria Bravo

### **Minutes**

#### **Call to Order**

Bob Kresmer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:32 p.m.

## **Roll Call**

Lindsey Powers called roll and established that a quorum was present.

## **Call to the Public**

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

## **Approval of Minutes**

Amy Porterfield moved to approve the minutes of the August 15, 2025 GCBLV Full Council meeting as written. Jonathan Pringle seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved by majority voice vote.

## **Member Reports**

### **Chair Report**

Bob Kresmer stated he had received confirmation that the council's name had been changed to the Governor's Council on Blindness and Low Vision and the council-related materials would be updated to reflect the new name. Kristen Mackey stated Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) could work with the council to update any council communications also.

### **RSA Updates**

Kristen Mackey stated RSA continued to work through challenges with the new case management system, InFormed, regarding contracts and authorizations. She noted that staff continued to figure out the new system and implement fixes to functions such as caseloads not being available to assigned counselors. Ms. Mackey added that not all reports were transferred to the new system and RSA was working to align all reporting functions. Kristen Mackey stated the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) was developing new modules and was able to offer more electronic services. She noted that RSA would repost the leadership position through paid recruitment and the position would be posted longer. Jonathan Pringle inquired whether RSA would consider having a Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHOH) Coordinator position again. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA would fill the Regional Program Manager and Assistant Regional Program Manager positions and could consider additional positions if the Scope of Work (SOW) allowed. Kristen Mackey stated that VR anticipated receiving the same level of funding for the next year and would use carryover funds to continue to fund the Independent Living Blind (ILB) program. Jonathan Pringle noted that some states were reverting back to an Order of Selection (OOS) process

and inquired whether Arizona would be also. Kristen Mackey stated that Arizona would not be going back to an OOS. Ms. Mackey stated RSA was in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) state revision year and would then undergo a new 4-year state plan. Amy Porterfield inquired whether the council would be part of the state revision plan. Kristen Mackey stated the revision would be minor data updates, although the council could participate in the new state plan which would also go out for public comment.

Kristen Mackey stated RSA held a Staff Conference on September 30<sup>th</sup> and thanked everyone that attended. She added that she also attended the 2025 Navajo Conference and that RSA was recognized as a state partner. Ms. Mackey stated she was able to attend part of the NCSAB Conference, which discussed the national landscape of BEP. Bob Kresmer inquired whether RSA would be returning funds back to the Federal government. Kristen Mackey stated RSA would be returning funds due to receiving two cost of living increases in one year. She noted that she was in discussions internally on how to prevent that again if the situation arose. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding RSA's working with a company to produce materials about the program. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA was working with a contractor to produce materials although she did not have the final products yet. RSA was deliberating working with another contractor potentially or moving forward with another contract for the next fiscal year. Mr. Kresmer inquired whether the materials would be broken down into specialty populations. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was starting with VR, ILOB and BEP and would then add information regarding specialty populations.

Joyceline Elliot stated the implementation of InFormed was going well and BEP was testing the scripts. Ms. Elliot stated two BEP operators had gone through training and had been awarded facilities. Joyceline Elliot stated that BEP had added sites at the Arizona Historical Society Museum, the Child Parent Center, a Mesa Police Station, an Avondale Post Office, the Surprise Civic Center, and the Mesa Gateway Library. Bob Kremer inquired regarding BEP's contract with Fort Huachuca. Joyceline Elliot stated the contract was until December 2025 and she would work with the Army to modify the contract end date. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding BEPs contract with a Marana School. Joyceline Elliot stated BEP had a contract with Marana and a Phoenix School and was reaching out to a hospital also. Bob Kresmer noted

that if BEP continued to look into other areas, the BEP program could expand greatly.

Maria Bravo stated the Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) program continued to provide outreach to new clients monthly, to build relationships with community partners and to clarify the services offered. Ms. Bravo stated staff were doing well working with InFormed and ILOB continued to offer training to staff weekly and to coach if needed. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding ILOB staffing. Maria Bravo stated ILOB currently had 7 teachers and she was unsure regarding filling any other positions. Kristen Mackey stated ILOB was able to fill the 7 teacher positions. She added that ILOB services were currently being pulled from other areas, and she was being cautious about adding additional staff.

### **ASDB Report**

Annette Reichman stated there were 79 ASD students, 36 ASB students, 192 PDSB students, 20 Tucson Pre-school, 21 Phoenix Pre-school and 35 FBC students. Ms. Reichman stated the total number of students on campus was 386 in which 71 were visually impaired and 315 were hearing impaired. She added the total number served by itinerant services was 1447 in which 1039 were hearing impaired, 408 were visually impaired. Annette Reichman stated ASDB was putting forth three Legislative bills to allow ASDB to incur debt to address the infrastructure needs of ASDB in Tucson and Phoenix. Ms. Reichman stated ASDB was also still undergoing the Sunset Audit by two audit teams who were looking into items such as classroom sizes, teacher pay, agreements with schools, institutional vouchers, performance evaluations, substitute teachers, ASDB operations and internal operations. Bob Kresmer stated that Annette Reichman could share any Legislative information with the council in the event the council could provide support.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Assistive Technology**

Bea Shapiro stated the AT Committee had provided a presentation at VRATE regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI), which was well attended. She noted her understanding that the VRATE conference had approximately 500 individuals in attendance.

## **Ex-Officio Member and Blindness Community Organization Updates**

### **Arizona Talking Book Library**

Erin Pawlus stated the library had received about 450 DA2 digital talking book devices and about 104 were checked out. She noted that preference went to veterans. Erin Pawlus stated that most patrons downloaded books through the BARD app, although patrons were allowed time to try the new devices and decide if they would like to continue using them. Erin Pawlus stated the library attended the Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE) and allowed attendees to try the new DA2 devices, the currency readers and offered information regarding the culture passes. Erin Pawlus stated the library was also embarking on a digitalization of paper applications and had a high-speed scanner to assist in the process. Ms. Pawlus noted that the Assistant Administrator and the Outreach Librarian had left the library, and she was not able to fill the positions currently. Bob Kresmer inquired about how the library was able to offer outreach to metro and rural areas. Erin Pawlus stated the library had some volunteer groups that were able to assist with outreach, and she was considering other methods for providing outreach. Bob Kresmer inquired whether patrons were using the culture passes. Erin Pawlus stated the program was new, although the patrons that used the culture passes were pleased as many museums could be costly.

### **SAAVI Services for the Blind**

Mike Gordon stated SAAVI began offering a rebranded senior program, Silver Canes, which was for 55+. He noted SAAVI was also offering Freedom Fridays, where individuals could learn wood shop, cooking or travel skills. Mr. Gordon stated that individuals attending classes at the center reported

feeling invigorated and passionate about their lives again. He noted that they became advocates for blindness as well as life. Amy Porterfield stated SAAVI was also partnering with the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) to provide abacus classes and equipment to students of ages that could help them learn STEM.

### **Helen Keller National Center**

Jonathan Pringle stated the HKNC had recently distributed a flyer regarding the Summer Youth Program. He added the HKNC in New York also held a session. Bob Kresmer inquired how individuals could learn more about HKNC. Jonathan Pringle stated that he would be the contact for anyone in Arizona and any questions could be referred to him. He noted the HKNC also sponsored 3 visits to the center for 3 days in New York.

### **National Federation of the Blind**

Donald Porterfield stated the NFBA was starting to plan for the Legislative advocacy session and would continue to try to secure the right for blind, visually impaired and print disabled individuals to cast an electronic ballot. Mr. Porterfield noted that at the NFBA State Conference, the NFBA learned more about the failed bill for additional funding for the ILB program and he hoped to reintroduce a bill. Donald Porterfield stated the NFBA held their State Conference in August in which about 300 individuals attended. He added the 2030 National Conference would be in Arizona in downtown Phoenix. Donald Porterfield stated the Braille Readers for Leaders online registration was also open.

### **Council Meeting Dates and Adjournment**

The next meeting of the GCBLV Full Council will be on February 20, 2026 from 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm.

### **Announcements**

There were no announcements.

### **Adjournment of Meeting**

Amy Porterfield moved to adjourn the meeting. Donald Porterfield seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 pm.