

**Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)**  
**Full Council Meeting Minutes**  
December 1, 2017

**Members Present**

Amy Porterfield\*, Chair  
Ted Chittenden  
Bob Kresmer\*  
Sharonda White  
Dan Martinez  
Janet Fisher\*  
Donald Porterfield\*  
Nikki Jeffords  
Mike Gordon\*  
Jim LaMay\*  
Ed Gervasoni\*  
Annette Reichman\*

**Members Present**

Mike Kanitsch  
Bea Shapiro  
Larry Wanger  
Allan Curry  
Nathan Pullen  
Rich Sorey

**Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers, Admin. Assistant  
Teleconferenced\*

**Guests Present**

Carlos Paraskevas  
George Martinez  
Milly Martinez  
Sue Kay Kneifel  
Doris Woltman  
Wyatt Rankey

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**Call to Order and Introductions**

Amy Porterfield, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:08 p.m. at the RSA Video Conference Rooms located in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona. Introductions were made, a quorum was present, and the procedural meeting rules were explained.

**Approval of September 22, 2017 Meeting Minutes**

Bob Kresmer moved to approve the minutes of the September 22, 2017 GCBVI Full Council meeting as written. Ted Chittenden seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by majority voice vote.

**GCBVI Chairperson's Report**

Amy Porterfield thanked all council members that participated in the development of the GCBVI Strategic Plan and noted the Executive Committee developed a plan that could be used to guide the council's activities. Amy Porterfield stated the blindness community was facing some significant Legislative issues on the federal level. Ms. Porterfield stated the Senate tax reform bill included a mandatory cut option, which would impact Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) funding, as well as specialized services funding. Amy Porterfield stated in the previous and current year, RSA met the federal allocation and was able to draw down funding that was not spent by other agencies. She stated the goal was to draw down federal funding, which would allow for RSA to open the Order of Selection (OOS) and to serve all of the clients on the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) wait list. Amy Porterfield stated that RSA received additional federal funding, although the agency could potentially lose that funding in the future. Amy Porterfield stated the importance of consumer groups advocacy efforts and noted that SAAVI Services for the Blind partnered with the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA) to make over 200 calls to Senators. Donald Porterfield stated the tax reform bill was passed by the Senate, and suggested that consumer group members contact members of the House of Representatives that represented Arizona. Amy Porterfield stated that when the GCBVI was unable to advocate for issues, members of the consumer groups could advocate for issues that would impact VR services. Nikki Jeffords inquired when the tax reform would go into effect. Donald Porterfield stated certain provisions would go into effect in 2018, although some provisions would go into effect in 2020. Mr. Porterfield stated the tax reform included spending cuts of 1.4 or 1.5 trillion on Medicare, VR and services that were important to disabled individuals. Amy Porterfield encouraged consumer group individuals to continue to reach out to their representatives through calls and emails. Dan Martinez inquired whether any Democrats were backing the bill. Donald Porterfield stated the vote was previously split and stated if the bill passed; it would pass on party lines. Amy Porterfield stated the blindness community did have good relationships with Republicans in the past and encouraged the consumer groups to continue advocating.

### **RSA Administrator's Report**

Amy Porterfield stated that Sue Kay Kneifel would be providing the RSA Administrator report on behalf of Kristen Mackey, who was unable to attend the meeting. Sue Kay Kneifel stated she had been with RSA for seven years and her most recent position was the Statewide Coordinator for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Ms. Kneifel stated she had a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, with a focus on deaf and hard of hearing services.

She noted that she received training from the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) and currently served on the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB) Board and was the Chair for the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH). Sue Kay Kneifel stated she had about ten years' experience in the Independent Living community and approached services from a holistic view. Sue Kay Kneifel stated when she became the Statewide Coordinator for the Deaf and Hard and Hearing (DHOH), the DHOH counselors had a mixed caseload of general VR caseloads and clients with hearing loss. She stated that she made certain that all clients with hearing loss were assigned to the DHOH counselors. Dan Martinez inquired regarding how Ms. Kneifel came to work in DHOH services. Sue Kay Kneifel stated she transferred from one school to another school with an accredited audiology program that included the counseling program and felt it was a good fit for her. Amy Porterfield stated she looked forward to working with Sue Kay Kneifel and that she appreciated her consumer focused philosophy.

### **SBVID Program Manager Report**

Sue Kay Kneifel reviewed the Blind and Visually Impaired statistics for FFY2017:

Average number of days from application to eligibility: 50.1 days  
IPE implementation Compliance rating: 75.9%

The Deaf-Blind statistics:

The eligibility determination compliance: 100%

The IPE Implementation Compliance rating: 66.7%

Dan Martinez inquired whether eligibility was determined by the counselor or a separate unit. Sue Kay Kneifel stated typically each counselor made eligibility determinations, although some specialty units had dedicated counselors that made eligibility determinations. Amy Porterfield stated her understanding that new counselors were making eligibility determinations for the clients with vision impairments. Sue Kay Kneifel stated the DHOH unit went two years with six out of the eight positions vacant and noted there were delays in services. She added that counselors needed to understand the importance of continually remaining in contact with their clients in order to move cases forward. Nikki Jeffords inquired whether an extension counted against RSA's metrics. Sue Kay Kneifel stated if the extension was signed, RSA remained in compliance, although due to the way the reports were pulled, RSA had to manually change those cases in the report.

Amy Porterfield inquired whether RSA intended to continue moving to Salesforce, as the case management system. Sue Kay Kneifel stated that RSA would not be moving to Salesforce, although she did not know which

case management system the agency would use. Mike Gordon inquired whether there had been a change within RSA's hierarchy or whether Sue Kay Kneifel's position role was the same as her predecessor. Sue Kay Kneifel stated she currently supervised the two DHOH unit supervisors and would be transitioning to supervising the two Blind and Visually Impaired Unit supervisors. Ms. Kneifel stated that Diane McElmury, who was in the position previously, did not have supervisory duties, although she did have case sign-off capabilities. Sue Kay Kneifel stated the supervisory duties allowed for a hierarchy in case any clients requested Fair Hearing Trials. Sue Kay Kneifel added that she would be a member on the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues as well.

### **BEP Program Update**

Sue Kay Kneifel stated she received a Business Enterprise Program (BEP) update from Nathan Pullen, who was unable to attend the meeting. Sue Kay Kneifel stated that the RSA-15 report was nearly complete, and a highlight was that gross sales were up about 1.5 million and the median operator income was approximately \$80,000. She stated that BEP would open their first operator run micro market which would be part of a cafe in a private business. Ms. Kneifel stated that one of the BEP trainee graduates had relocated from Tucson and was awarded a vending route in the west valley. BEP was pursuing a new military dining facility in Marana and the BEP training program would begin on Monday with a class of three trainees. Sue Kay Kneifel stated that BEPs nationwide were facing a threat of rest area commercialization. She noted that in Arizona, BEP had two operators that derived their entire livelihood from rest area operations and another ten operators whose businesses were partially supported by rest area vending. Sue Kay Kneifel stated that BEP would appreciate council support in sharing these facts with the Governor's office. Amy Porterfield stated she spoke to BEP operators regarding the best way to convey the information to Christina Corieri, Senior Policy Advisor to Governor Ducey, who would inquire regarding the number of individuals that would be affected. Amy Porterfield stated that two full time operators and ten part time operators might not be a significant enough number to incite change. Amy Porterfield stated that because of the set-aside amount derived from all rest stops, that all operators and the entire program was impacted. Sue Kay Kneifel stated she would forward the information to Mr. Pullen. Amy Porterfield stated she would need a good justification for BEP when talking to the Governor's office. Dan Martinez stated that twelve BEP operators would be a large percentage of the operators, which would be a big impact on the program overall. Nikki Jeffords inquired whether there were any statistics regarding the number of individuals employed by BEP operators.

### **ASDB Report**

Annette Reichman stated that Governor Ducey had approved the request for an additional 1.6 million for the early childhood intervention program. Ms. Reichman stated that ASDB would work with the State Legislature to introduce the bill. Annette Reichman stated that Representative Paul Boyer and Senator Sylvia Allen stated they would support the bill. Annette Reichman stated she received approval from the ASDB Board of Directors to pursue the introduction of the bill during the upcoming Legislative session. Amy Porterfield inquired regarding how the additional funds would be used in the early childhood intervention program. Annette Reichman stated the funds would be used to hire 21 new teachers. Amy Porterfield stated that ASDB faced the challenge in recruiting qualified teachers and noted that the teacher preparation program in the University of Arizona did not require individuals to have a background in education before applying to become a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI). Amy Porterfield stated ASDB had hired regular education teachers that could teach subject matter to get around that issue. Ms. Porterfield inquired whether the TVI Master's program could include some general competencies in English, Math, and Science, that would be useful to ASDB in preparing the teachers. Ed Gervasoni stated his understanding that the ASDB co-operatives were different from the main campuses in that main campus teachers had to be certified in the subject taught. Mr. Gervasoni stated in public schools, the TVIs supported the students with needs related to their vision, while the general teachers provided the subject matter instruction. Doris Woltman stated that she felt that TVIs were able to teach core content at the Elementary level. Amy Porterfield stated the goal was to create prepared teachers for blind and visually impaired students and whether the teachers should have an education background beyond the preparation offered currently. Amy Porterfield stated as teachers retired and left the field, students were not receiving the support required at the district level. Ms. Porterfield stated the Education Committee could review how to support UA to create more prepared TVIs.

Nikki Jeffords inquired whether data had been collected regarding the number of students in schools for the blind and visually impaired versus public schools. Annette Reichman stated ASDB had 45 blind students and there were approximately 400 students in public schools. Doris Woltman stated the Southeastern Regional Co-operation had about 120 students. Doris Woltman stated the additional ASDB funding would be used to increase home visits and hire 21 staff to serve children from birth to three years old. Amy Porterfield inquired regarding the certification required for the early intervention specialists. Annette Reichman stated the additional 21 teachers would work as early intervention specialists for children from birth the three years old and would have certifications in hearing impairments and vision

impairments. Amy Porterfield inquired who would prepare those teachers. Annette Reichman stated ASDB currently had 17 teachers in which the teachers had experience in hearing and vision impairments and deaf-blindness or combined vision and hearing loss (CVHL). Ms. Reichman stated most teachers had a general education background, received their TVI Master's degree, and received training at ASDB on early intervention services. Annette Reichman stated ASDB would recruit from graduate schools nationwide and develop a recruitment plan to encourage students to perform their internships at ASDB and then obtain employment. Annette Reichman stated ASDB had developed assessments to assess the progress of students compared to their sighted and hearing peers. Ed Gervasoni stated the importance in early intervention and in providing services to students increased their opportunities. Amy Porterfield stated ASDB would assess students' progress and provide proof that students were receiving a quality education. Ms. Porterfield stated that Bachelor's Degree students or paraprofessionals could potentially provide the teaching to the students as well. Annette Reichman stated the additional funding would serve as an opportunity to align all agencies and improve the early intervention program. Amy Porterfield stated the GCBVI had tried to collect data from the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), but had been unsuccessful. Ms. Porterfield noted that RSA had an agreement with ADE and noted that the council could potentially use the connection to RSA to gather that data.

### **GCBVI Council Officer Vote**

Amy Porterfield stated the Executive Committee put forth the nomination for Nikki Jeffords as the Secretary of the GCBVI, and she would also accept nominations from the floor. Dan Martinez motioned that nominations cease and that Nikki Jeffords be elected as the Secretary of the GCBVI. Sharonda White seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

### **GCBVI Strategic Plan Discussion**

Amy Porterfield stated the council had developed a three year Strategic Plan and the Executive Committee had assigned specific activities and outcomes under the key areas of Education, Employment, Independent Living, and Council Integrity and Function. Amy Porterfield stated the Executive Committee made general committee assignments and that the committees would work together to complete the outcomes and would report back to the council. Amy Porterfield stated the council always had a Strategic Plan, although the council did not always hold committees accountable for completing tasks. Dan Martinez stated his concern that the Legislative and Public Policy Committee was responsible for several outcomes and stated the

importance for ensuring that all committees were engaged in the Strategic Plan and not to overwork the same council members. Amy Porterfield agreed and noted that some committee members might not want to continue to serve on committees. Dan Martinez stated the Strategic Plan indicated that committees would report quarterly, although the GCBVI Full Council met six times a year. Ted Chittenden suggested the Strategic Plan indicate that committees report bi-annually.

Ted Chittenden motioned that the Strategic Plan Accountability Reports be due biannually. Nikki Jeffords seconded the motion. Dan Martinez inquired whether the committees should report more frequently, or whether the Strategic Plan should be extended. The council agreed by majority voice vote.

Nikki Jeffords inquired whether the committees would continue to provide committee reports and whether the Strategic Plan reports would be separate. Amy Porterfield stated the committees would be required to report at least twice a year on the progress of the Strategic Plan outcomes using the Strategic Plan report form that would be developed. Dan Martinez inquired whether the lead committees would be required to report or whether all committees would report. Amy Porterfield stated that all committees identified would be required to report. Nikki Jeffords suggested that committees be encouraged to provide reports more often. Amy Porterfield stated that committees could be asked to provide a status update at each meeting. Nikki Jeffords stated the committees could provide status updates at each meeting, and the formal written updates biannually. Ted Chittenden stated his concern that the meeting times would not allow enough time for each committee to provide an update. Dan Martinez stated the council Chair would be responsible for monitoring the time of the meetings. Bob Kresmer clarified that committees would provide a written report biannually, and provide status updates at each GCBVI Full Council meetings.

Ted Chittenden motioned that the motion be amended to include that all committees provide a status update at each GCBVI Full Council meeting. Nikki Jeffords seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Dan Martinez noted that a three year plan would be ambitious and suggested that the Strategic Plan be extended to a four year plan.

Dan Martinez motioned that the GCBVI Strategic Plan be extended to a four year plan from 2017-2021. Ted Chittenden seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Nikki Jeffords motioned that the GCBVI Strategic Plan be adopted as amended. Sharonda White seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

## **GCBVI Committee Reports**

### ***Employment Committee***

Nikki Jeffords stated the Employment Committee helped organize the American Council of the Blind (AFB) Breakfast on November 16, 2017 and noted that 20 employers and RSA management attended. Nikki Jeffords stated the Department of Economic Security (DES) created a video regarding blind and visually impaired individuals that obtained employment. The DES video can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/240241936>. Nikki Jeffords stated that Terell Welch and Tom Hicks played the video during their presentation at the Arizona Summit on Volunteerism and Civic Engagement. Nikki Jeffords stated the Employment Committee would hold the E75 Diversity Builder Award Event on January 26, 2017 and she encouraged all council members to forward any contact information on individuals with hiring authority. Dan Martinez inquired regarding who had been invited to the event. Nikki Jeffords stated the Employment Committee would invite past participants, employers that attended the AFB Breakfast and representatives from businesses such as American Airlines and Bank of America.

### ***Public Information***

Ted Chittenden reviewed the EyeKnow.AZ database statistics:

September 1 – 30, 2017

Number of sessions (visits) - 143

Number of individuals visiting website- 132

Pages viewed per visit- 3.54

Time spent visiting the database (minutes) - 2:17

New visitors- 86%

Returning Users- 14%

October 1 – 31, 2017

Number of sessions (visits)-143

Number of individuals visiting website- 116

Pages viewed per visit- 3.49

Time spent visiting the database (minutes) - 1:59

New visitors- 72.7%

Returning Users- 27%

November 1 – 30, 2017

Number of sessions (visits) - 122

Number of individuals visiting website- 99

Pages viewed per visit- 4.71

Time spent visiting the database (minutes) - 2:28

New visitors- 73%

Returning Users- 27%

Ted Chittenden stated the EyeKnowAZ database included a Best Practices page, which included accessibility resources as suggested in the Strategic Plan. Ted Chittenden encouraged council members to visit the GCBVI Facebook page, which was updated weekly. Dan Martinez encouraged council members to visit the EyeKnowAZ database and offer any recommendations for additions or deletions as necessary.

### ***Assistive Technology Committee***

Sharonda White stated that AT Committee members presented on a panel at the Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE). Sharonda White stated that the committee had several outcomes and goals as indicated in the GCBVI Strategic Plan. Amy Porterfield noted that the AT Committee's VRATE presentation was well attended. Dan Martinez stated that Sharonda White had taken on the role as the AT Committee Chair and facilitated committee meetings with grace and control.

### ***Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues***

Ed Gervasoni stated the ACDHH received \$180,000 for the next five years to provide Support Services Providers (SSP) statewide. Mr. Gervasoni stated that members of the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues attended Town Hall meetings in Phoenix and Tucson where the ACDHH was requesting information from the deaf-blind community in order to develop a Request for Proposal (RFP). Ed Gervasoni stated the deaf-blind community was diverse and noted that each individual had different needs. He added that sometimes the support services were not the best match for the deaf-blind individuals and agencies should consider that when developing SSP programs. Ed Gervasoni stated that he was the only GCBVI council member to serve on the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues and would welcome additional council support. Amy Porterfield inquired whether Ed Gervasoni would be willing to present on different SSP service methods at the next GCBVI Full Council meeting. Ed Gervasoni stated that a small group of committee members could present at the next council meeting. Nikki

Jeffords thanked Ed Gervasoni for presenting on a panel presentation at VRATE and noted that she received positive feedback.

### ***Education Committee***

Bob Kresmer stated the Education Committee continued to work on the current issue of infants through toddler services and the AZ Merit test accessibility issues. Mr. Kresmer stated the committee received information regarding AZ Merit test scores, although the test scores included students with all disabilities and were not separated out by disability. Bob Kresmer stated the committee received updates from a group, Eyes on Learning that was reviewing the current statute that required hearing tests at birth, and was exploring whether the statute could be expanded to include a mandatory vision test as well.

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

#### ***Arizona Council of the Blind (AzCB)***

Ted Chittenden stated the AzCB would hold a holiday social event on December 6, 2017 and that everyone was welcome to attend. Ted Chittenden stated the AzCB opposed the national tax reform and urged individuals to contact their Senators and Representatives.

#### ***National Federation of the Blind (NFB)***

Donald Porterfield stated the NFB of Arizona (NFBA) celebrated White Cane Safety Day in October and played the video, Do You Dream in Color, at the Capitol. Donald Porterfield stated the NFBA would hold a screening of the movie in Tucson on January 6, 2018. Mr. Porterfield stated the NFBA Annual Phoenix Seminar was scheduled for January 16, 2018 at the Capitol and 100-115 members would attend. Donald Porterfield stated from January 29, 2018-February 1, 2018, the NFBA would be at the Annual Washington DC seminar and would meet members of the Arizona Congressional Delegation, Senators and Representatives regarding issues important to blind and visually impaired individuals in Arizona.

#### ***Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI)***

Jim LaMay stated ACBVI would receive 50 computers to replace outdated computers for staff and clients. Jim LaMay stated the ACBVI filled several vacancies and began the annual campaign to raise \$100,000. Jim LaMay stated the agency continued to provide services in alignment with the new comprehensive services contracts.

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

Mike Gordon stated SAAVI Services for the Blind continued to move forward providing services and obtaining authorizations in order to provide services. Mr. Gordon stated the comprehensive services contracts had potential to provide services to clients. Mike Gordon stated SAAVI started an After School Program in which children and families were invited for support and remedial training. Mike Gordon stated SAAVI began researching methods for expanding the Emergency Preparedness Program to prepare for domestic attacks, cyberattacks, and local attacks. Amy Porterfield stated that SAAVI youth had been invited to walk in the Fiesta Bowl Parade on December 30, 2017.

### ***Foundation for Blind Children (FBC)***

Nikki Jeffords stated that FBC had added job placement and job development services in the new FBC contract. Ms. Jeffords noted that the 50 passenger FBC van was stolen from the parking lot.

### ***Arizona Braille and Talking Book Library***

Janet Fisher stated the library held a joint Open House with ACBVI on October 6, 2017, and approximately 100 individuals attended. Janet Fisher stated the library encouraged individuals to attend the Library Book Group over the phone to allow individuals to attend that could not travel to the library. Janet Fisher stated that she reported to the National Library Service (NLS) that the library's number of registered users was 8,106. She noted that she wanted to increase that number and would continue to advertise and provide outreach to increase awareness about the library.

### **Agenda Items and Date for Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the GCBVI Full Council will be on January 19, 2018 from 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm. in the Video Conference Room, at 515 N. 51st Avenue, Phoenix, AZ.

### **Announcements**

Nikki Jeffords announced that anyone could serve on the VRATE Board and noted that several members would not continue to serve on the Board. Ms. Jeffords stated that approximately 500 individuals attended VRATE in November.

Nikki Jeffords announced that Larry Wanger had accepted an Executive Director position for a Center for Independent Living in California and his last day would be December 22, 2017.

### **Call to the Public**

George Martinez stated he was an independent CPA and worked with Quick Books regularly. Mr. Martinez stated that the 2018 Quick Books version was quite accessible and he encouraged businesses and students to go into the accounting field now that Quick Books had been improved.

### **Adjournment of Meeting**

Sharonda White moved to adjourn the meeting. Nikki Jeffords seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 pm

As of September 30, 2017:

The total number of individuals in the VR program was 1,109  
The total number of Veterans in VR Program was 41  
The total number of individuals in the OOS was 106  
The total number of individuals in Priority Two was 84  
The total number of individuals in Priority Three was 22  
The number of VR applications was 287  
The average number of days from application to eligibility was 50.1  
The median number of days application to eligibility was 41.6  
The eligibility determination compliance within 60 days was 82.0%  
The number of new plans written was 317  
The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 82.3  
The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 71  
The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 75.9%  
The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$50.00  
The average hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$15.98  
The number of clients placed was 57  
The number of clients closed successfully was 44

As of September 30, 2017 the Deaf Blind Population statistics:

The total number of individuals in the VR program was 51  
The total number of Veterans in VR program was 1  
The total number of individuals in the OOS was 0  
The total number of individuals in Priority Two was 0  
The total number of individuals in Priority Three was 0  
The number of VR applications was 5  
The average number of days from application to eligibility was 21  
The median number of days from application to eligibility was 3  
The eligibility compliance within 60 days was 100%  
The number of new plans written was 10  
The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 145.5  
The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 155.5  
The IPE Implementation Compliance within 90 days was 66.7%  
The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$44.00  
The average hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$44.00  
The number of clients placed was 2