

**Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)  
Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues Meeting Minutes**

December 7, 2016

**Members Present**

Mary Hartle, Chair  
Chris Desborough  
Cindi Robinson  
Carmen Green  
Ed Gervasoni  
Diane McElmury

**Members Absent**

**Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers, Admin. Assist  
\*Teleconferenced

**Guests Present**

James Rice, COPD  
Sheri Collins, ACDHH  
Candis, ASL Interpreter  
Audrey, ASL Interpreter

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**Call to Order and Introductions**

Mary Hartle, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:20 am in the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH) Conference Room, 100 N. 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 104, Phoenix, AZ. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

**Approval of August 16, 2016 Meeting Minutes**

Chris Desborough moved to approve the minutes of the August 16, 2016 Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues meeting. Ed Gervasoni seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

**National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP)  
Update**

James Rice, Valley Center for the Deaf (VCD) clarified that the VCD handled clients in northern Arizona and the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD) handled clients in southern Arizona. Mr. Rice noted he worked for the VCD, working with clients in northern Arizona. James Rice stated he currently had 30 deaf-blind clients in northern Arizona and had added new clients in Show Low and Payson. He stated 52 individuals total had completed training in Phoenix and Tucson. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether

52 individuals had completed training within the current year. James Rice stated 52 clients had completed training since the NDBEDP began five years prior. He added from 2015-2016, 14 individuals had completed training in Phoenix and Tucson. Ed Gervasoni stated he received information from Suzanne, COPD, that 108 clients received assessments. Mr. Gervasoni inquired regarding the number of clients that were not eligible for the program. James Rice stated six individuals were not eligible for services due to not meeting the poverty level, or they did not complete the referral form, and had been placed in a hold category. James Rice stated some clients were overwhelmed with new technology, and required additional training, which needed to be approved by the Perkins School for the Blind. He noted he received approval, for example, for a client to receive an additional hours of training on new equipment. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether clients were able to learn new technology quickly if they had previously used assistive technologies. James Rice stated some clients were able to use new technologies easy, while some clients, for example, struggled with the Braille Sense Qwerty. Ed Gervasoni inquired regarding the number of clients that used Braille displays. James Rice stated 4 clients were Braille users and readers and 5 clients used audio technologies.

Cindi Robinson suggested the committee determine the information that James Rice should report on. James Rice stated he would be pleased to offer the information the committee would like to receive. Chris Desborough inquired whether James Rice could provide information regarding the age groups of the clients. James Rice inquired whether committee members were aware of any upcoming community events that he could attend and provide outreach. Mary Hartle inquired whether the community events had slowed due to the holiday season. James Rice stated his training slowed down due to the holiday season, although during previous years, he attended several community events. Mary Hartle suggested James Rice attend the Arizona Association for the Deaf-Blind in Tucson, or the Arizona Deaf-Blind Community in Phoenix meetings. James Rice stated he had attended the Arizona Deaf-Blind Community meetings in Phoenix. Cindi Robinson suggested James Rice attend the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) in the future, as the event was a statewide event. James Rice stated he would have attended the event, although VCD was only able to send one individual to the event. Ed Gervasoni suggested committee members attend events where Haben Girma was speaking, as she was a fantastic speaker. Sheri Collins stated she might be able to contact Haben Girma and request that she speak to the Legislature in support of the Arizona Commission of the Hard of Hearing (ACDHH) budget request. Mary Hartle thanked James Rice for attending the committee meeting and inquired whether James Rice could distribute the information he would be reporting on prior to the next meeting for

committee members to review. James Rice stated he would be pleased to provide any information prior to the next committee meeting.

### **SSP Services in Arizona Follow-Up**

This item was tabled.

### **SSP Training Curriculum Update**

Carmen Green stated she contacted Phoenix College and Pima Community College regarding the implementation of a SSP training program. Carmen Green noted Phoenix College expressed interest in offering a three-day SSP training during the summer. Ms. Green stated she also contacted the Helen Keller National Center for the Deaf-Blind (HKNC) and hoped to receive an endorsement from the HKNC. Cindi Robinson suggested Carmen Green contact the community college in Flagstaff, as a potential partner in offering the SSP training. Carmen Green stated Glendale Community College might also be interested in offering SSP training and she would reach out to several community colleges. Cindi Robinson inquired who would offer the SSP training, and how those individuals would be qualified to offer instruction regarding deaf-blindness. Carmen Green stated Phoenix College indicated a current instructor was already an instructor for interpreting for the deaf-blind, and could potentially provide the SSP training. Ms. Green noted the ACDHH and Phoenix College would identify how each agency could provide funds for a subject matter expert to speak to the students in the SSP training classes. Carmen Green noted the curriculum would offer information to the instructors teaching the classes, although the ACDHH would request feedback from current SSPs regarding the information included in the curriculum. Cindi Robinson inquired whether the SSP Statewide Services Task Force members would receive a copy of the SSP training curriculum. Carmen Green stated she would distribute the SSP training curriculum to the Task Force once the curriculum language had been finalized. Sheri Collins stated she did intend to share the SSP training curriculum with the Task Force, although she wanted to receive feedback regarding the training prior to sharing the curriculum.

Ed Gervasoni inquired whether the Arizona Association for the Deaf-Blind could pilot the SSP training curriculum. Carmen Green stated she could request a member of the Arizona Association for the Deaf-Blind attend the SSP training, speak as a subject matter expert, and offer any feedback on the training.

### **SSP Professional Development Discussion**

Cindi Robinson inquired whether the ACDHH had considered partnering with agencies or organizations in addition to community colleges. Carmen Green stated the funding portion required the ACDHH partner with a college or university, although the ACDHH could consider partnering with agencies at a later date if the funding allowed. Ms. Robinson inquired whether community colleges offered credentialed SSP training, rather than SSP certifications. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH and the community colleges would consider the type of credential or certification offered. Ed Gervasoni stated some organizations, such as the HKNC, might be able to offer endorsements on the SSP training. Mary Hartle thanked Carmen Green and the ACDHH for working towards a SSP training program and noted the committee would be pleased to assist the ACDHH in that goal.

### **SSP Statewide Services Task Force Report**

Chris Desborough stated the SSP Statewide Services Task Force continued to meet regularly and had developed a Task Force website and a Facebook page. Mr. Desborough thanked the Task Force members for all their hard work in the achievements thus far. Chris Desborough stated the Task Force would continue to recruit members. He noted the Task Force was willing to offer assistance to the ACDHH in the commission's efforts in implementing a SSP Statewide Services Program. Chris Desborough stated the Task Force would be developing an information packet to be used when speaking to the Legislature and inquired regarding the specific information to be included in the packet. Mary Hartle inquired whether the Task Force could receive a copy of the ACDHH's budget request that would be submitted to the Governor. Sheri Collins stated the Governor would develop the State Budget in January; therefore, the ACDHH was waiting to see the actual State Budget, which would include the budgets for all of the state agencies. Ms. Collins stated that she would assist the Task Force in developing a Fact Sheet, which included the total budget request, and statistics on the total number of deaf-blind individuals in Arizona. She noted she reached out to several agencies, and would compile an Infographic, which could be used by the Task Force when speaking to the Legislature. Sheri Collins stated she would like to have the Infographic completed by January, and suggested the Task Force send any statistics to Carmen Green, to be included in the document. Sheri Collins suggested the Fact Sheet be concise and only one page, and includes talking points such as the need for other services.

### **RSA Needs Assessment Update**

Diane McElmury, Services for Blind Visually Impaired and Deaf (SBVID) Operations Manager, stated in an effort to follow up with different groups of individuals, she reached out to homeless veterans in an effort to reach

veterans with combined vision and hearing loss (CVHL). Ms. McElmury stated she attended various events and was able to reach about fifteen individuals willing to participate in the focus groups. She stated about three individuals showed up, and spoke about the need for services in northern Arizona. She stated one veteran indicated he could get about 25 individuals together if Ms. McElmury was able to provide lunch. Diane McElmury noted after some leadership changes at RSA, she was unable to make the trip to northern Arizona by herself. She stated she attempted to reach veterans through the Phoenix VA hospital, although she was unable to reach individuals due to client confidentiality. Mary Hartle suggested Diane McElmury reach out to the Blinded Veteran's Association (BVA) regarding the RSA Needs Assessment focus groups.

Diane McElmury stated she met with Cathy Kirscher, HKNC, regarding the development of a three-year plan. Ms. McElmury stated the largest population of individuals with CVHL was individuals 55 and older. She stated they also discussed the Developmentally Disabled (DD) population and veterans. Diane McElmury stated they discussed the HKNC program, Confident Living, which would offer five-day workshops for small groups of individuals 55 years and older. She noted the workshop would include discussion on assistive technologies, independent living skills, emergency preparedness, and leisure activities. Diane McElmury stated the workshop would also include presentations from elder lawyers, ophthalmologists, audiologists, and allow participants to interact with other individuals 55 years and older. Diane McElmury stated the course should be able to support individuals to understand vision and hearing loss, communication, Orientation and Mobility (O&M), leisure activities, and self-advocacy. Chris Desborough inquired whether the workshop would take place in the Phoenix area, or be offered statewide. Diane McElmury stated the workshop would initially start in Phoenix, although the program could be implemented in other areas or cities. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether the workshop would include funding to house the individuals during the course. Diane McElmury stated due to funding, the participants would likely need to attend the workshop each day. Mr. Gervasoni inquired regarding the organizations that Diane McElmury and the HKNC would partner with. Diane McElmury stated she and the HKNC would likely partner with the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI), or SAAVI Services for the Blind. Mary Hartle stated the committee would assist Diane McElmury and the HKNC in their efforts to develop the workshop.

### **ACDHH Budget Request Update**

Cindi Robinson inquired whether the current State Budget could be subject to change. Sheri Collins stated until the budget was finalized, the budget

could change, although the ACDHH developed their budget request based on the Governor's vision for Arizona.

Chris Desborough stated the Task Force would develop case studies and videos of deaf-blind individuals to demonstrate the need for SSP services. Mary Hartle commended the ACDHH for the commission's work in developing a SSP training curriculum, working towards a SSP training pilot program, and developing a budget request for additional SSP funding. Ms. Hartle inquired whether the ACDHH budget request would be to supplement current SSP funding, or to develop a statewide SSP program. Sheri Collins stated the ACDHH would request about \$265,000 to provide more SSP hours to serve deaf-blind individuals. Ms. Collins noted the once the additional funds had been exhausted, the ACDHH could demonstrate the need for SSP services. She stated currently, there was a gap in services, and deaf-blind individuals did not receive adequate services, which would help individuals to live a quality life. Sheri Collins stated the state did not currently support services to assist deaf-blind individuals outside of their homes, which deaf-blind individuals needed. Ms. Collins noted the additional funding would be used for deaf-blind individuals statewide, ages 18 and older. Mary Hartle stated Diane McElmury had developed the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Needs Assessment, and could offer statistics that demonstrated the need for SSP services and the demographics of individuals surveyed.

### **Conference Updates**

Ed Gervasoni stated he presented at the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) Conference November 3-4, 2016 regarding the Deaf-Blind community, the RSA Needs Assessment, the SSP Task Force, and the need for SSPs.

Cindi Robinson stated the Western Regional Early Intervention Conference for Sensory Disabilities would take place in June in Scottsdale. Ms. Robinson stated the conference would focus on service providers for youth from birth through five years old, and on self-advocating.

Mary Hartle stated Chris Desborough presented at the Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE) on September 30, 2016 at the Glendale Civic Center, regarding the need for a statewide SSP program. Mary Hartle stated Mr. Desborough also presented at the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Conference and at an Americans with Disability Act (ADA) event.

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

The next meeting of the Deaf/Blind Committee was scheduled for March 21, 2017 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. 15<sup>th</sup> 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
- SSP Statewide Services Task Force Report
- Conference Updates
- RSA Needs Assessment Update
- ACDHH Budget Request
- Day at the Capitol

Ed Gervasoni suggested the committee invite Annette Reichmann or a representative from the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB) to offer an ASDB update.

### **Announcements**

Mary Hartle announced she had decided not to reapply for GCBVI membership when her membership ended in December 2016. Ms. Hartle noted Ed Gervasoni, as a member of the council, would be the Chair of the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues. Mary Hartle stated she would try to continue to serve as a member of the committee. She noted she was very proud of the work of the committee in achieving a SSP Task Force and thanked the members for their hard work.

Sheri Collins announced the Day at the Capitol would be on March 7, 2017 and she encouraged the committee members to plan ahead for the event. Ms. Collins noted if individuals RSVP'd, she would ensure individuals had SSP's or any accommodations necessary to attend the event. Sheri Collins stated the ACDHH would have an exhibit table outside and would offer free lunch to attendees that registered for the event online, which would run from 10:00-2:00 pm.

Sheri Collins announced the ACDHH Board had vacancies for two Hard of Hearing representatives and three Deaf/Deaf-Blind representatives.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

## **Adjournment of Meeting**

Cindi Robinson moved to adjourn the meeting; Chris Desborough seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting stood adjourned at 12:40 p.m.