

Draft

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

Full Council Meeting Minutes

February 16, 2024

Attendance

Members Present

Bob Kresmer
Amy Porterfield
Nathan Pullen
Erin Pawlus
Brian Dulude
Mike Gordon
Donald Porterfield
Bea Shapiro
Annette Reichman

Members Absent

Jonathan Pringle
David Steinmetz
John McCann
Steve Tepper
Allan Curry

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Kristen Mackey
Stephanie Johnson
Jami Parente
Eve Sanchez
Joyceline Elliot

Jeff Bishop
Scott Weber
Kathy
Mark Marino
Michelle Hargreaves
Debbie Hanlon - CART
Karla Martin - CART

Minutes

Call to Order and Introductions

Bob Kresmer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:33 p.m. Introductions were made, a quorum was present, and the procedural meeting rules were explained.

Approval of November 17, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Amy Porterfield moved to approve the minutes of the November 17, 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 the Legislative and Public Policy Committee had been busy, and he looked forward to their report. He also thanked Brian Dulude for sending the SBVID scorecard prior to the meeting for members to review.

RSA Administrator's Report

Kristen Mackey stated the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) would be Federally monitored from February 26-29, which would largely focus on fiscal activities, and she would keep the council informed regarding the results from that visit. Ms. Mackey stated RSA continued to hire purchasing specialists, who would be part of a centralized purchasing unit to increase the turnaround of authorizations. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was also continuing with the development of the new case management system, Informed, which would be tested by staff to ensure its accessibility. Kristen Mackey noted that 2 Employment Coordinators that had been moved from RSA, would return to the program and would be part of a new Employer Engagement Unit with 6 additional staff. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA was on track to begin implementing Informed in October and would be offering training to staff members prior to launching the program. She added that as part of one of RSA's strategic activities, the agency was

developing outreach and marketing activities within the guidelines of DES. Amy Porterfield inquired whether the centralized purchasing unit would address the needs of comprehensive blindness services. Kristen Mackey stated the centralized purchasing unit would increase the number of individuals that were able to enter blindness services authorizations. She added that Knowledge Services managed the authorizations and matched the required information, which would then go to the Managed Service Provider (MSP). She noted the process ensured accuracy and was a single point of contact for the vendors. Amy Porterfield expressed her concern that the process required an additional step, and her hope that staff would be appropriately trained. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was considering training for staff and would ensure that all staff would be able to access the training equally. Bob Kresmer stated he was pleased to hear about an increase in marketing efforts and inquired whether those efforts were all under DERS. Kristen Mackey stated the marketing and outreach focused on all programs under RSA, and included flyers, electronic information, and social media posts.

SBVID Program Manager Report

Brian Dulude stated that SBVID continued to meet with the comprehensive blindness training centers to discuss any questions and ongoing training. Jami Parenti stated SBVID had staff vacancies, although the unit had just hired 2 counselors. She noted the unit also continued to focus on providing quick services to clients. Ms. Parenti stated that many client cases had been inactive, and staff were working to review and close any cases that remained open. Jami Parenti stated SBVID was planning for the upcoming youth Transition Summer program, which would include presentations from the comprehensive blindness programs that participated. Bob Kresmer inquired how SBVID planned to train new staff. Brian Dulude stated that SBVID was creating pathways and training for new staff.

Eve Sanchez stated the intakes for Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) services averaged about 16 per month, and individuals would be assigned according to vendor availability. Eve Sanchez stated 6 services had been assigned in October, 44 in November, 5 in December, 37 in January, and 34 so far in February. Ms. Sanchez stated the unit had hired 2 new instructors and she hoped to fill the Assistive Technology (AT) Specialist position as well. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the number of open staff positions. Eve Sanchez stated that she would like to hire 5 more instructors, as well as create a statewide position that would supervise staff.

BEP Program Update

Joyceline Elliot stated BEP had filled the Fiscal Manager position and had a new class with 1 new applicant and 3 licensees. Ms. Elliot stated BEP had new vending sites in Phoenix, Tucson, Show Low, San Luis, Tempe, Mesa, Marana, and Avondale. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the number of active BEP operators. Joyceline Elliot stated there were currently 17 operators, and 2 more in March. Scott Weber stated BEP had tried negotiating with the Army regarding the Fort Huachuca base and would be going through arbitration in March. Scott Weber stated the Department of Economic Security (DES) had decided not to pursue arbitration regarding Luke Air Force base, and BEP would consider potentially pursuing vending machines to the routes rather than facilities. Scott Weber stated BEP was trying to work with California on a Yuma facility, although it was not out for bid yet. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding Arizona Participating Operators Committee (APOC)'s plans to market the BEP program. Scott Weber stated APOC tried to reach out to the blinded veterans to recruit more operators, although many operators were not willing to relocate where facilities were available. Bob Kresmer inquired whether BEP had considered offering electricity for electric vehicles in buildings. Scott Weber stated BEP was considering offering electricity as a vending item in government buildings. He noted that rest stop electric charging was more expensive to install, as they would charge vehicles quicker. Kristen Mackey clarified that DES had reached out to Federal RSA regarding Luke Air Force base. She noted that because Luke had an Ability One contract, the Randolph Sheppard Act would not apply. Ms. Mackey added that DES had shared some success stories surrounding low vision awareness month as well.

ASDB Report

Annette Reichman stated that ASDB would hold their Braille Challenge on campus with 32 students participating. Ms. Reichman stated that 4 teachers would be going to California for training on the new Monarch devices. Annette Reichman stated that SB 1011 had been introduced, which would change the school's contract from 4 to 10 years, although it had not gone through the first reading yet. She noted that similar bills were being introduced for other agencies as well. Bob Kresmer inquired how ASDB was serving students on the reservations. Annette Reichman stated the number of students on the Navajo Nation reservation had decreased, although ASDB continued to provide itinerant services to students. Amy Porterfield inquired whether the council could obtain a list of the open staff vacancies. Annette Reichman stated that she could share the open positions with the council. Jeff Bishop inquired whether the ASDB Board had any open positions. Annette Reichman stated the ASDB Board had 7 out of 9 positions filled.

GCBVI Committee Reports

Legislative and Public Policy Committee

Amy Porterfield stated the committee was following SB 1335, which supported an additional 1 million in funding for the ILB program, SB 1462, which would update Braille certifications and SB 1592, which supported accessible mail in ballots. She noted the committee had also discussed the need for accessible websites and software with the Governor's office. She added the committee was also advocating that state job postings remove the driver's license requirement and only require a state ID for state jobs.

Assistive Technology Committee

Bea Shapiro stated the AT Committee continued to work with Sun Sounds to provide podcasts on different AT topics and was considering expanding the podcasts to a wider audience. Ms. Shapiro stated the committee would also be discussing potential presentation topics for the next Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE).

Employment Committee

Nathan Pullen stated the Employment Committee had recently held the E75 Diversity Event and would be planning to participate in a Job Fair as well.

Ex-Officio Member and Blindness Community Organization Updates

Arizona Talking Book Library

Erin Pawlus stated the Library and NFB were coordinating to offer Zoom information sessions regarding the NFB Newline services on February 28th at 6 pm and March 7th at 11 am. Ms. Pawlus stated that anyone interested could attend and no registration was required. Erin Pawlus stated the National Library Service was also accepting feedback regarding the Revised Standards and Guidelines of Service for the Library of Congress Network of Libraries for the Blind and Print Disabled, and council members could contact her for more information. Erin Pawlus stated the Library was still exploring the Book Share program and had reached out to other libraries requesting information on how they offer the program. Jeff Bishop stated that he was developing a document that could be shared if any council members had any feedback for suggestions. Mr. Bishop stated the Book Share program would offer a million accessible book titles in Braille or speech, which was important for individuals to have access to accessible formats. Erin Pawlus stated Book Share did have an annual fee, and the Library was exploring how it could offer the program.

Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Kathy stated ACBVI was offering vocational programs such as wood turning and was working with the Foundation for Blind Children (FBC) to provide summer programs to clients. She noted that ACBVI continued to offer events such as skiing and kayaking to clients and would be expanding the AT program to seniors. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the clinic services to clients. Kathy stated ACBVI was able to provide medical appointments to individuals that needed healthcare services.

National Federation of the Blind

Donald Porterfield stated the NFBA held their Phoenix Legislative seminar, and focused on accessible electronic voting, additional Braille certifications for teachers and updated UEB certifications. Mr. Porterfield stated that 2 bills had been introduced regarding Braille certifications but had not been voted on. Donald Porterfield stated the NFBA was also advocating for an increase in funding for the ILB program, as well as accessible non-medical devices and website/software accessibility. Donald Porterfield stated the NFB would be offering 30 scholarships to students. Mr. Porterfield stated the NFBA was also planning for the next State Conference to be held in Phoenix.

SAAVI Services for the Blind

Amy Porterfield stated SAAVI was planning for 3 summer programs that would be offered. Ms. Porterfield stated the Tucson campus would be undergoing construction to increase accessibility within the building. She noted the Phoenix residential program continued to grow and that SAAVI had partnered with RSA to grow the program.

Arizona Council of the Blind

Jeff Bishop stated the AzCB was planning for the Leadership Conference in March and while members were spread out over the state, they were still able to get together for various events.

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

There were no announcements.

Call to the Public

Mark Marino expressed his hope that Braille ballots would still be offered to voters. Amy Porterfield clarified that the council was not advocating for the removal of Braille ballots, but for the option of electronic voting as well.

Adjournment of Meeting

Amy Porterfield moved to adjourn the meeting. Bea Shapiro seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:45.

Statistics

As of December 31, 2023, the statistics are:

The total number of individuals in VR was 1,508
The total number of veterans in the VR program were 42
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 111
The average number of days from application to eligibility was 44.3
The median number of days from application to eligibility was 29
The eligibility compliance was 75.2%
The number of new plans written was 478
The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 86.95
The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 66
The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 64.6%
The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$41.67
The lowest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$15.00
The average hourly wage for successful employment outcomes was \$29.88
The number of clients placed in employment was 16
The number of clients closed successfully in employment was 14

As of December 31, 2023, the Deaf Blind Population statistics:

The total number of individuals in VR was 106
The total number of veterans in VR program was 2
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 8
The average number of days from application to eligibility was 32.2
The median number of days from application to eligibility was 40.5
The eligibility compliance was 90%
The number of new plans written was 21
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 1

The number of clients closed successfully was 2