Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)
Deaf-Blind Issues Committee Meeting Minutes
March 9, 2020

Members Present
Ed Gervasoni, Chair
Carmen Green
Virginia Thompson
Megan Mogan
Jonathan Pringle
Mary Hartle
Cindi Robinson
Larry Rhodes

Members Absent
Steve Wilson
Sue Kay Kneifel

Staff Present
Lindsey Powers

Guests Present
Betty McEntire, ACDHH
Caroline L., ASL Interpreter
Kelly Figueroa, ASL Interpreter
Brian Dulude
PV Jantz
Andrew Cohen
Brenda Rodriguez
Kelle Peeplez
Lissa Gilbert

Call to Order and Introductions

Ed Gervasoni, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:12 am in the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH) Conference Room, Phoenix, AZ. Introductions were made, and a quorum was present.

Approval of December 5, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Cindi Robinson moved to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2019 Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues meeting. Mary Hartle seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

ACDHH Legislative Report

Betty McEntire stated the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH) was monitoring several bills that could have an impact on deaf-blind consumers. Betty McEntire stated the commission was monitoring SB 1055, which was a continuation of an additional 8 years. She noted that every state agency underwent a Sunrise and Sunset Audit process, and SB 1055 was ACDHH's Sunrise Audit, which had gone through the Senate, and passed through the Health and Human Services Committee. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether the typical Sunset Audit time period was 10 years. Betty McEntire stated that all state agencies would undergo an audit every 4 or 8 years and in 2018, and the Committee of Reference would determine whether the agency's audits would be 4 or 8 years. Betty McEntire stated ACDHH was also monitoring SB 1056, which was an extension of the continuation. She noted that ACDHH had the opportunity to continue for an additional 8 years and requested that deaf blind be added to the constituents the agency served in the statutory duties. Betty McEntire stated the commission also requested the additional duty of making recommendations to the Legislature as it related to language and acquisition and literacy readiness for deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind children. Betty McEntire stated that bill passed through the Senate and would go to the Committee of the Whole for a technical correction and would then go back to the Senate for a final vote before submission to the Governor. Ms. McEntire stated that SB 1056 brought awareness to issues related to deaf blindness in Arizona, particularly to long-term changes and education. Betty McEntire stated ACDHH was also monitoring SB 1593, which was a Braille literacy bill that was being heard in the House Education Committee, and required certification of UEB Braille. She noted the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) was supporting the bill, which used similar language as other states. Betty McEntire stated the commission was also monitoring SB 1503, which was related to the conversations around vulnerable adults and children, and any misconduct from school personnel. She noted the bill would require that school districts establish policies as related to how to communicate with a student. Betty McEntire stated the bill would mandate that the State Board of Education create a parent resource for parents that needed to file a complaint against school personnel. Betty McEntire stated that ACDHH requested the parent resource include ASL videos with full captioning on the State Board of Education website. Betty McEntire stated the bill passed through the Senate narrowly and was waiting to be read by the Committee in the House. Betty McEntire stated ACDHH was also monitoring HB 2536, which was a telemedicine bill, which added audiologists, speech pathology and hearing aid dispensers to eligible health care providers to telemedicine. She noted the bill would require that deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind consumers have the right to full access to

telemedicine. Betty McEntire stated the commission was also monitoring SB 1060, which was a funding formula bill related to Group B for Special Education services. She noted the ACDHH was monitoring the bill because it would change the funding that would go towards special education services. Betty McEntire stated the ACDHH sent out weekly emails with Legislative updates for anyone that would be interested. She noted the ACDHH was waiting for the State Budget to be released, which would indicate the priorities and how the funding would be spent for the upcoming fiscal year.

Chair Report

This item was tabled.

National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) Update

Virginia Thompson stated the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI) was currently serving 36 consumers and had 11 applications that would be determined for eligibility. Ms. Thompson stated ACBVI struggled the most in obtaining disability verification for vision or hearing loss. Carmen Green inquired when ACBVI began offering the NDBEDP program to consumers. Virginia Thompson stated ACBVI began the program in May of 2019. Carmen Green inquired regarding the number of consumers that were determined ineligible for services. Virginia Thompson stated the number of ineligible consumers was about 1-2 individuals. Carmen Green inquired whether ACBVI referred the consumers ineligible for services to other agencies. Virginia Thompson stated ACBVI did refer individuals to other agencies. Carmen Green stated she wanted to ensure that the agencies were able to work together, and the ACDHH would offer services to deaf-blind individuals ineligible for Federal services. Ed Gervasoni stated his understanding that most of the individuals found ineligible would be due to the income requirements. Mr. Gervasoni noted the importance of technology for individuals with vision impairments, which would be essential for those individuals. Virginia Thompson stated she was in the process of recruiting subcontractors that would be able to work with consumers, which would allow her to address the gaps in services. Cindi Robinson inquired whether the 11 applications that were waiting for eligibility were part of the 36-total number of consumers. Virginia Thompson stated there were 36 active consumer cases and 11 pending eligibility. Cindi Robinson inquired whether most consumers were in Phoenix, Tucson, or rural areas. Virginia Thompson stated most consumers were in Maricopa, and Tucson, although she did receive applications from individuals in Payson, Prescott, and Camp Verde. Larry Rhodes stated the Veteran's Administration (VA) would be another resource for veterans that

were ineligible for the iCanConnect program. Mr. Rhodes stated in New Mexico, veterans would be referred to a Visual Impairment Service Team Coordinator at the VA, who would serve as a case manager within the VA system. Virginia Thompson stated she had a contact with the VA in Arizona, and noted another resource was technology scholarship funds offered by some cities. Ed Gervasoni inquired regarding the number of Visual Impairment Service Team Coordinators in Arizona. Larry Rhodes stated there were 3 in Tucson. Cindi Robinson inquired whether Virginia Thompson had been successful in recruiting subcontractors to provide services to consumers. Virginia Thompson stated she had just started recruiting subcontractors, and she hoped to recruit individuals in different areas of the state.

SSP Services in Arizona Follow-Up

Carmen Green stated that she would appreciate if any committee members or SSPs could let her know about situations involving SSPs and interpreting for consumers. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH would begin to see more activity from SSPs, and she anticipated there would be an increased demand for SSP services. She noted the agency wanted to continue to learn about situations that could arise to be better informed.

Carmen Green stated that ACDHH provided 50 SSP hours in January, and 51 SSP hours in February. Ms. Green noted the agency provided 12-15 hours in March, although she anticipated providing approximately 100 SSP hours. She added there had been an increase in attendance at the ACDHH Board meetings by deaf blind individuals, which was very helpful to the Board. Ed Gervasoni agreed and noted that he would like to see a deaf blind individual on the ACDHH Board as well as on the Deaf Blind Issues Committee. Carmen Green stated Bob Kresmer, GCBVI Chair, contacted her regarding the SSP services program, and inquired regarding the transportation issue. Carmen Green stated Mr. Kresmer also inquired regarding the agency's outreach efforts to reach the deaf blind community and indicated that he would contact her regarding ways in which the GCBVI could partner with ACDHH. Ed Gervasoni stated he had encouraged individuals to use Uber to be more comfortable using ride services. Carmen Green stated that Bob Kresmer mentioned the challenges with transportation and that some individuals waited for long periods for their ride services. Ms. Green stated Bob Kresmer mentioned an opportunity for Orientation and Mobility (O&M) instructors to have insurance coverage and be able to travel with the individual in the vehicle. Ed Gervasoni stated the O&M instructor or SSP would be required to have a special type of insurance, which was quite costly. Carmen Green stated that temp service providers would not allow SSPs to use their own vehicles to transport consumers. Larry Rhodes stated

that SSPs in New Mexico were also not allowed to transport consumers in their vehicles. Mr. Rhodes stated that if a SSP used Uber to assist a consumer, who would pay for the Uber. Ed Gervasoni stated the goal was to have a funding source to pay for transportation. He noted the SSP could meet a client at the client's location, and the client would pay for the Uber. Larry Rhodes stated that clients did use Uber to meet a SSP at a determined location, and the SSP would pay for the Uber. Carmen Green stated the agency was hopeful to have a contract that would allow the consumer to retain independence and use the ride service of their preference. Mary Hartle stated that it was difficult for blind or deaf blind individuals to use Uber or Lyft because the drivers did not look for the individuals they were to pick up. Ms. Hartle stated she used Ride Choice, and only had to pay $3.00 for a ride one way. She noted that she did not use Uber alone, because the drivers did not look hard for the individuals requesting the ride. Brian Dulude agreed that it was difficult to get the driver's attention and noted that he would contact the driver to let him or her know that he would standing on a certain street with a white cane and that the color of his clothing. Mary Hartle stated that when she scheduled trips, she was not given the driver's contact information, but was given the model and color of the driver's car. Brian Dulude stated the Uber or Lyft app would allow him to contact the driver or give a note to the driver. Kelle Peeplez stated she used Uber and noted that in her experience, most drivers did not read the notes. Mary Hartle stated she did not take Uber because it was too expensive, and used Ride Choice, which was a reduced cost.

SSP Training Curriculum Update

This item was tabled.

SSP Professional Development and Certification Discussion

Larry Rhodes stated the American Association of Deaf-Blind (AADB) was developing a White Paper that could have an impact on the SSP training and certification. Mr. Rhodes stated he checked the website, but the White Paper was not posted yet.

SSP RFP Status Update

Carmen Green stated the ACDHH was currently working with the State Procurement Office (SPO) regarding the SSP contract and she expected to receive an update soon. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether the Request for Proposals (RFP) had been distributed. Carmen Green stated the RFP had been released, and agency had received responses to the RFP. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether a contract would be granted to more than one agency.

Carmen Green stated she was hopeful that more than one agency would respond to the RFP. Cindi Robinson inquired whether the SSP contract would be evaluated by the SPO, who were not familiar with deaf blindness. Carmen Green stated SPO requested assistance from agencies with knowledge of deaf blindness, such as Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

ACDHH Budget Request Update

Carmen Green stated ACDHH was approved for $192,000 for five years and noted that the agency would ensure that those funds had been exhausted before requesting additional funds again. She noted that in the past, if the agency had not used funds, the agency would continue to provide services under the fund balance based on service requests. Carmen Green stated that if the agency used funds over that, the agency would request additional funds to cover those costs. Cindi Robinson inquired whether any part of the $192,000 went towards staff positions. Carmen Green stated the decision package did not include staff positions, such as Julie Stylinski's, and that all the funding would go towards services. Cindi Robinson inquired whether transportation would be included in the current SSP contract. Carmen Green stated her hope that the agencies that bid on the contract would include transportation services, which was requested in the RFP. Larry Rhodes inquired regarding the timeline of receiving $192,000. Carmen Green stated her understanding that ACDHH was in its fourth year of receiving those funds.

AHCCCS/ALTCS Intervener Services Update

Ed Gervasoni stated that he had not received an update from Dara Johnson regarding the status of intervener services.

SBVID Report

Brian Dulude, Region 3 Program Manager, stated that Sue Kay Kneifel was unable to attend the meeting, although he was glad to attend the meeting and to introduce himself. Brian Dulude stated he had been in the blindness field for about 19 years and supervised the Vocational Rehabilitant Program for the Blind in Utah for 4 years, and recently worked as the Director for Blind Inc, a training center for the blind in Minnesota. Dr. Dulude stated he had high expectations for the VR clients and the VR staff. He noted that he intended to be fully staffed on the blind, visually impaired and deaf and hard of hearing side. PV Jantz, Supervisor for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing services in Northern Arizona, stated there were 3 vacancies for Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD)s, in which 2 were for adult

services, and 1 one was for transition age youth services. PV Jantz stated he had finished interviews and HR was performing background checks. Brian Dulude stated he appreciated the Deaf-Blind Issues Committee for raising awareness for services for the deaf blind population and he would work with the committee to ensure that individuals achieved their independence or employment goals. Ed Gervasoni congratulated RSA for closing the Order of Selection (OOS) wait list and to be able to serve clients. Brian Dulude stated the OOS wait list was implemented in 2009, and RSA was still under an OOS, and could use the wait list if funds became limited, although the agency was currently able to serve all clients that applied for VR. PV Jantz added that RSA had not received a budget increase since 2009 and was still able to close the wait list with staff vacancies, which showed the commitment of the VR staff and the individuals in the field.

AZ DeafBlind Project Update

a. Intervener Trainings

Megan Mogan stated there were 3 cohorts participated in online training, and noted that individuals took one module a month and 9 modules a year for a total of 54 hours of professional development. Megan Mogan stated the first cohort of 13 that started in 2017-2018 would graduate in April. Ms. Mogan stated the third cohort began with 33 individuals, and 10-15 would graduate at the end of year 3. She noted the challenge in retaining individuals to complete the intense training in intervention. Megan Mogan stated the other challenge of recruiting individuals interested and willing to complete the training. Megan Mogan stated the training was online, although individuals had expressed the desire for in person training as well or a blended in person and online training. Ed Gervasoni stated the importance of in person training and to have the opportunity to communicate with different deaf blind individuals and to learn about the varying communication methods. Megan Mogan agreed and noted that she benefited from that training. Cindi Robinson stated there would be enough deaf blind individuals in the Phoenix area that would be able to provide interactions for that type of training.

DeafBlind Retreat of Arizona Update

Andrew Cohen stated there had been an increase in exposure to deaf blindness in Arizona, which was great. Andrew Cohen stated the DeafBlind Retreat of Arizona had been established as a non-profit and was tax exempt. Mr. Cohen stated the goal was to provide an annual retreat in Scottsdale for 1 week for deaf blind individuals and SSPs. Andrew Cohen stated the retreat would allow individuals to meet, network, with appropriate accessibility. He noted the first year would be a pilot retreat from September 3-6, and if that

event was successful, the next retreat would be one week. Andrew Cohen stated the event was half full, and he wanted help to let individuals know about the event. Andrew Cohen stated the event was $250 for the deaf blind individual, which covered the room, food, and activities, and the SSPs could attend for free. He noted that he hoped to be able to provide CEUs and ACVRP credits to SSPs. Ed Gervasoni inquired how the committee could help with the development of the retreat. Andrew Cohen stated he was interested in establishing partnerships for financial support or training. Ed Gervasoni stated that individuals attending the event would benefit from learning with their peers such as different technologies or computer skills. Mr. Gervasoni noted that an agency could potentially sponsor an individual to speak at the event. He inquired whether there was an age requirement for individuals to attend the event. Andrew Cohen stated that individuals needed to be at least 18. Mr. Cohen noted there had been talk about establishing an event for high school students to learn about becoming independent. Cindi Robinson stated that $250 did not seem like sufficient funding to cover all expenses and inquired whether Andrew Cohen was seeking additional funds. Andrew Cohen stated the registration fees would cover about 1/3 of the costs, and the rest would be covered by grants and a few private donors, although he was seeking long-term funding. Andrew Cohen stated he wanted to respect the deaf blind community and individuals' budget and would potentially offer scholarships as well. Cindi Robinson stated she would be willing to sponsor a deaf blind individual to attend the event. Larry Rhodes inquired whether the retreat information had been shared with the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD) and the Valley Center for the Deaf (VCD). Andrew Cohen stated that he would begin contacting all of the agencies within the week.

Conference Updates

Ed Gervasoni stated the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) Conference was scheduled for March 27th in Phoenix at the Foundation for Blind Children (FBC). Ed Gervasoni stated the Arizona Council of the Blind (AzCB) Conference would be May 2nd at the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI).

Agenda and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues was scheduled for May 18, 2020 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. 15th Avenue, Suite 104, Phoenix, AZ**.** Agenda items are as follows:

- Chair Report
- National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) Update

- SSP Services in Arizona Follow-Up
- SSP Training Curriculum Update
- SSP Professional Development and Certification Discussion
- ACDHH Budget Request
- ACDHH Legislative Report
- Deaf-Blind Project Update
- AHCCCS/ALTCS Services Update
- Conference Updates

Announcements

Carmen Green stated that ACDHH would hold Outreach hours on March 26th in Yuma from 10:00-5:00. Ms. Green stated that any deaf blind consumers were welcome to contact Julie Stylinski to make an appointment. Carmen Green stated that ACDHH would also hold a Community Forum on May 13th, and a Board meeting on May 14th in Yuma.

Ed Gervasoni stated the Arizona Deaf Blind Group of Phoenix and the Arizona Association for the Deaf Blind would hold a joint picnic in Casa Grande from 11:00-3:00 on April 4th.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment of Meeting

Ed Gervasoni motioned to adjourn the meeting. Cindi Robinson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.