

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

Full Council Meeting Minutes

May 15, 2026

Attendance

Members Present

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

Members Absent

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Kristen Mackey
Stephanie Johnson
Joyceline Elliot
Maria Bravo
Jordan Moon
Kimberly Fetterman
Rebecca Amador
Robert Stewart
Monica

Minutes

Call to Order

Bob Kresmer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m.

Roll Call

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

Call to the Public

Kimberly Fetterman stated that she had been trying to get ILOB services for 8 months and was unclear regarding where she was on the wait list. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA was looking into how they could implement services faster. Jordan Moon inquired regarding the RSA budget and how VR would provide services to clients. Kristen Mackey stated that she was not permitted to speak any further regarding the budget and that the consumer groups were welcome to advocate for services. Robert Stewart stated that he had applied for ILOB services and waited 2 years before receiving services. He noted that some individuals needed services quicker. Diane stated that she was told that she would have to wait 2 years to receive services, and she hoped to receive services quicker. Rebecca Amador stated that she contacted ILOB but was not informed regarding her position on the wait list. Bob Kresmer thanked the community members for addressing the council and their concerns were noted.

Approval of Minutes

Amy Porterfield moved to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2026 GCBLV Full Council meeting as written. Jonathan Pringle seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved by majority voice vote.

Member Reports

Chair Report

This item was tabled.

RSA Updates

Kristen Mackey stated RSA celebrated Rehabilitation Professional Day in March with swag bag giveaways. Ms. Mackey stated RSA also presented during the Department of Economic Security (DES) Lunch and Learn session

on Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services. Kristen Mackey stated she attended the CSAVR conference, which included a Day on the Hill, information regarding Able accounts, inclusive hiring and updates from current and former Federal staff. She noted there had not been any further discussion regarding whether RSA would move under the Department of Labor or the Department of Human and Health services. Kristen Mackey stated that Niraj Parikh had recently been hired as the Program Manager and RSA was in the process of posting the ILOB Program Supervisor position as well. Kristen Mackey stated the state budget for 2027 had not been released yet, although the Federal budget had been issued. Amy Porterfield inquired regarding the ILOB Program Supervisor position. Kristen Mackey stated that Niraj Parikh would be over all 3 programs, managing the strategic initiatives and projects and the Program Supervisor would report to Mr. Parikh. Amy Porterfield inquired regarding the market study regarding vendors' rates. Kristen Mackey stated that during RSA's monitoring visit, there was a question regarding vendors' rates and how RSA determined whether they were appropriate. Ms. Mackey stated RSA was comparing vendors' rates to other states in their review. Amy Porterfield agreed that it was good to review. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding RSA's marketing and outreach materials. Kristen Mackey stated the videos for ILB and BEP were done and the VR video and handbook were being reviewed to ensure they used plain language. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the last time the VR policy handbook had been updated. Kristen Mackey stated that certain policies were reviewed quarterly and were posted on the DES website. She added that Niraj Parikh would be involved in reviewing some of the ILOB policies starting in August. Amy Porterfield noted that when the VR Policy Manual was last updated, some of the policy language removed the blindness verbiage and inquired whether that could be included. Kristen Mackey stated those policies could be reviewed and noted the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) policy manual was under review currently. Bob Kresmer inquired whether RSA had identified ways to use up current funds before the current fiscal year ended. Kristen Mackey stated the 2026 funds had been returned and RSA was waiting to plan for 2027 once the budget was released.

Joyceline Elliot stated that BEP's contract with Fort Huachuca had been extended for 6 months. She noted that BEP was in the design phase of InFormed and would likely go live at the end of the year. Joyceline Elliot stated that BEP was working with APOC to update the BEP manual. She

noted there were 2 BEP trainees that would receive licenses for awarded facilities in June. Joyceline Elliot stated the new sites were at Mesa City Hall, the Cloisters in Tempe, an Auto Zone in Tucson, and sites in San Luis and Phoenix. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding BEP's plans to expand to provide services to prisoners in their stores. Joyceline Elliot stated the solicitation would go out to the concession services. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the program's expansion within hospitals. Joyceline Elliot stated the state statute had to be resolved before considering those options.

Maria Bravo stated the Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) program continued to clean up the case data and to ensure that clients receive services. She noted that ILOB was also working with partners and collaborators to provide services to clients. Ms. Bravo stated that ILOB continued to develop the team and to uptrain staff members. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding staffing in the ILOB program. Maria Bravo stated there was a vacancy for a Supervisor in Phoenix. Bob Kresmer inquired about how staff were able to be case managers as well as teachers. Maria Bravo stated it was going well and that clients were reaching their goals. Amy Porterfield inquired regarding the current wait list for ILOB services. Kristen Mackey stated that ILOB was working to clean up the data through InFormed to ensure the program had a tangible list of clients waiting for services. She noted that she hoped to have a list at the beginning of the next fiscal year. Amy Porterfield noted that some ILOB clients were told they would have to wait 2 years to receive services. She added the council would be willing to assist with any best practices to help the ILOB program to provide services to clients. Ms. Mackey stated that she was unaware of any timelines for the wait list, and she would notify staff regarding that. Kristen Mackey stated she anticipated starting the best practice conversations in August when the data would likely be more accurate. Mike Gordon stated that vendors continued to provide services to ILOB clients and inquired how the vulnerable population could receive services quickly. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was trying to reconcile the data and the correct list of clients waiting to receive services. Amy Porterfield inquired whether there was a delay in RSA receiving vendor information through Knowledge Services. Maria Bravo stated there were no system issues, but that it varied by vendor.

Bob Kresmer welcomed Niraj Parikh to RSA and inquired whether he would like to introduce himself. Niraj Parikh stated that he had worked in the

Assistive Technology (AT) field for 25 years, he was a previous vendor for the state and had worked for the American Printing House for the Blind and Foundation for Blind Children. He stated that he was learning a lot in his position and he valued hearing about the community needs through Joyceline Elliot, Maria Bravo, and community members.

Committee Reports

Legislative and Public Policy Committee

Amy Porterfield stated the committee had been following SB 1011, Appropriation for Older Individuals Who Are Blind, which would appropriate a one-time million in funds to expand services to senior experiencing vision loss. Ms. Porterfield stated the bill had been moving forward but had not been introduced into Committee. She noted that Jordan Moon had been advocating for the inclusion of the bill into the budget. Amy Porterfield stated the committee was excited to begin developing Best Practices regarding ILOB services and in welcoming Narij Parikh to RSA and the council.

Public Information Committee

David Steinmetz stated the committee continued to attend the VR New Client Orientations and to talk about the council. Mr. Steinmetz stated the committee also encouraged VR clients to advocate for themselves as well as understand their informed choice. David Steinmetz stated the committee also supported the upcoming Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE). He noted the expo would be held at Ability 360, although the VRATE Board was looking into a different venue for future events.

Ex-Officio Member and Blindness Community Organization Updates

ASDB

Annette Reichman stated ASDB was preparing for school graduations on the Phoenix and Tucson campuses. She noted the Tucson campus was also planning to move to the former Copper Creek school campus by mid-June/July. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding ASDB's audit. Annette Reichman stated the school was undergoing a performance and forensic audit and a 2026 Sunset audit. She noted the Attorney General gave an overview of the draft report that would be submitted to the school, which the school would

have time to review and then it would be published. Ms. Reichman stated the ASDB Tucson campus was on 15 parcels of land under different titles, although it was likely all parcels belonged to ASDB.

Arizona Talking Book Library

Erin Pawlus stated the library was somewhat slow to roll out the new DA2 digital talking book devices, and that priority would go to veterans and patrons with wifi access. Ms. Pawlus stated that patrons could download directly from BARD and use the cartridges to save 200 books on the devices. Erin Pawlus stated the library currently had 190 DA2 devices checked out and the library would offer in-person classes on using the new machines. Erin Pawlus stated the library's summer reading program, "Unearth a Story" would begin with encouragement that patrons read dinosaur-based books, or books related to fossils or archeology. Erin Pawlus encouraged individuals to participate in their local library summer reading programs also. Bob Kresmer inquired how the library was attempting to reach out to rural areas. Erin Pawlus stated the library did perform outreach through expos and events, although those efforts had slowed down with the absence of an outreach librarian. She added the NLS had provided some publications regarding library services that the library could share. Bob Kresmer inquired whether the library had access to any public service announcements. Erin Pawlus stated the library had not looked in PSAs due to limited staff capacity.

SAAVI Services for the Blind

Mike Gordon stated that summers were busy at SAAVI, which would be holding the Braille enrichment program in partnership with NFBA. He noted SAAVI had been offering the program for 7 years, which was a 2-week program. Mike Gordon stated SAAVI would also be offering the Ready Set Go program. Mr. Gordon stated individuals would be attending the upcoming NFBA Conference in Austin, which was a working conference and was very impactful for attendees.

Helen Keller National Center

Jonathan Pringle stated that HKNC had been in contact with the community to identify individuals, including Transition youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss (CVHL). He noted HKNC continued to listen to the needs of the community. Mr. Pringle stated that he continued recruitment efforts for

members to participate in the DeafBlind Committee on the council. Jonathan Pringle stated that some parents were reluctant to send their children to the Summer Youth Transition program, therefore HKNC was allowing youth to get an overview of services for 2 weeks.

National Federation of the Blind

Donald Porterfield stated the NFBA would be partnering with SAAVI in offering the Bell Academy in Phoenix and Tucson. He noted NFBA members would also be participating in the NFB Conference July 3-8 in Austin as well as the State Conference in August. Donald Porterfield stated NFBA was also in contact with the Senate and Congress regarding accessibility guidelines, which were going into effect, but were now allowing businesses 2 years to ensure accessibility.

AIB

David Steinmetz stated Arizona Industries for the Blind celebrated their 30-year anniversary of supplying active-duty personnel. Mr. Steinmetz stated AIB continued to look for community opportunities to add new products and create more jobs in Phoenix. David Steinmetz stated AIB held a Phoenix Brown Bag Lunch and Learn on accessible voting and how the machines worked. He noted that staff was down overall due to retirements.

Council Meeting Dates and Adjournment

The next meeting of the GCBLV Full Council will be on August 14, 2026 from 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Adjournment of Meeting

Amy Porterfield moved to adjourn the meeting. Jonathan Pringle seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 pm.