

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

**Full Council Meeting Minutes**

May 17, 2024

**Attendance**

**Members Present**

Bob Kresmer  
Amy Porterfield  
Nathan Pullen  
Erin Pawlus  
Brian Dulude  
Mike Gordon  
Donald Porterfield  
Bea Shapiro  
Annette Reichman  
Jonathan Pringle  
David Steinmetz  
John McCann

**Members Absent**

Steve Tepper  
Allan Curry

**Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers

**Guests Present**

Stephanie Johnson  
Jami Parente  
Sara Zapotocky  
Joyceline Elliot  
Jeff Bishop  
Kathy Zweld  
Karla Martin CART

## **Minutes**

### **Call to Order and Introductions**

Bob Kresmer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m. Introductions were made, a quorum was present, and the procedural meeting rules were explained.

### **Approval of February 16, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

John McCann requested the minutes be corrected to identify the correct next meeting date. John McCann moved to approve the amended minutes of the February 16, 2024 GCBVI Full Council meeting as written. Bob Kresmer 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. Mr. Kresmer noted that if any Committee Chairs were unable to continue Chairing a Committee, let him know. Bob Kresmer stated that some council members' terms would end at the end of the year, and they would be welcome to apply for reappointment if they chose to do so. He added that individuals that had applied for council membership were encouraged to attend meetings as they waited for appointment.

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

Stephanie Johnson stated Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) had finalized their performance indicators of employment (second quarter after exit), employment (fourth quarter after exit), median earnings (2 quarters after exit), credential attainment rate), measurable skills gain and retention with the same employer. Ms. Johnson noted that RSA had also finalized the State Plan, which focused on students, youth, Transition services and an increased awareness of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). She noted that VR had increased outreach efforts to reach a broad spectrum of populations through social media, PSAs and public outreach at events. Stephanie Johnson stated RSA would also be working with a marketing firm to provide a consistent message on outreach materials. Stephanie Johnson stated that in order to identify barriers to services, counselors could meet clients in the office, virtually or through hybrid measures. She noted that RSA would also offer distance rates for vendors that had to travel farther to meet clients. Stephanie Johnson stated RSA would not be applying for supported employment grant funds, as the funds had specific requirement for youth.

Ms. Johnson stated the State had initiated a head count cap, which had determined the number of staff members. She noted there would be an evaluation list of priority positions and how/when they could be filled. She added there would not be any pay adjustments and RSA would need to reduce the budget by 4% by the end of the year, and by 2% for the next 2 years. Stephanie Johnson stated that it should not affect VR, which received mostly Federal funds. Stephanie Johnson stated RSA had completed their Federal monitoring visit, which mostly focused on fiscal management, controls, data integrity, TSW contracts, and the distinction between Pre-Employment Transition (Pre-ETS) and Transition services. Ms. Johnson stated RSA was able to develop a centralized purchasing unit by hiring staff internally, although the unit would not be able to hire more positions. She added that RSA was also able to hire a Supervisor for the Employment Outreach Specialists and would continue to grow the team when able. Stephanie Johnson stated the customized employment application went out to prospective individuals under VR and DDD. She noted that 3 individuals met the criteria and would begin the pilot program. Stephanie Johnson stated RSA would be holding an all-staff conference in October and was working on planning for that event in Phoenix.

### **SBVID Program Manager Report**

Brian Dulude stated that RSA was moving to the new system, Service Now, which would allow staff to submit service tickets. He noted the current system was not accessible, and required staff to call the main number and could potentially wait for a long period of time. Brian Dulude stated that he had shared the SBVID scorecard with the council and the noteworthy statistics were the number of placements and the reduced time in getting individuals into a plan. Jami Parente stated SBVID had onboarded 3 new counselors, although the program still had 5 vacancies. Ms. Parente agreed that she was excited SBVID was able to get individuals into a plan sooner. Jami Parente stated that some client data was not being entered into the system correctly, therefore SBVID provided training to staff to ensure the data was correct. Jami Parente stated SBVID had developed an immersion training for new counselors. Bob Kresmer inquired whether the program had been able to hire any supervisor positions. Jami Parente stated they had hired 2 supervisors in Phoenix, who would start in June.

Brian Dulude stated SBVID held the roadshow for the upcoming youth Transition Summer program, in which several individuals had signed up to participate. Bob Kresmer inquired whether SBVID had found anyone to fill Eve Sanchez's position. Brian Dulude stated he would work to find someone qualified to fill the position and would let the council know when the position had been posed. Erin Pawlus inquired who would be the contact person in the meantime. Brian Dulude stated that he would be the contact person until

her position was filled.

Brian Dulude stated there were 113 individuals on the Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) wait list in which 323 individuals were waiting for services for rehabilitation teaching, Orientation and Mobility (O&M), Assistive Technology (AT), and adjustment to disability. He noted that vendors and internal staff continued to provide services to individuals in the OIB program. Bob Kresmer inquired whether OIB had reached out to recent graduates with O&M instruction experience. Brian Dulude stated SBVID was working with a new vendor in the Maricopa area and would also be working with the Helen Keller National Center to assist deafblind clients as well. Bob Kresmer inquired whether the OIB wait list remained due to a lack of funding or staff availability. Brian Dulude noted that it was likely both, although he was working to increase staff capacity.

### **BEP Program Update**

Joyceline Elliot stated BEP had a new trainee, who had been awarded the Swift facility. Ms. Elliot stated the Fiscal Manager position and 2 BEP consultant positions remained open and were on hold. She added that BEP had been working with Jami Parente on being involved in the Introduction to Blindness Workshops. Joyceline Elliot stated that BEP was working a post office in Rio Salado offering vending services. She added BEP was also working to offer vending services at an aquatic center in Phoenix, a hotel in Eloy, the Pima County Health Department in Tucson, a Library in Tucson, and a Mesa Animal Control Center. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the military dining facilities. Joyceline Elliot stated the Air National Guard contract would end in 4 years, and the Fort Huachuacha contract would be ending soon.

### **ASDB Report**

Lisa Yencarelli stated ASDB had completed the school year and was planning for graduation, in which the Phoenix Day School for the Deaf would have 25 graduates, and the Tucson ASDB campus would have 6 graduates. Ms. Yencarelli noted Human Ware had released a new 32-cell refreshable Braille display, and 4 AT teachers had received training on using it. She added the device would help with science and math classes. Lisa Yencarelli stated ASDB was under the same staff head count cap, although they were seeking clarification as the agency was a local education agency and might not fall under the same requirements. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the Tucson campus's renovations. Lisa Yencarelli stated that it would be more cost effective to build new construction rather than to renovate.

## **GCBVI Committee Reports**

### **Legislative and Public Policy Committee**

Amy Porterfield stated the committee had been advocating for an additional 1 million in funding for the ILB program. She noted the bill had been moving through, until it became a striker bill. Ms. Porterfield stated the community had advocated for the bill in person, and a Representative had indicated the bill could potentially be written into the budget. Amy Porterfield noted that would be unlikely with the new budget cut, although the Department of Economic Security (DES) could potentially identify ways to find funds for the ILB program. She noted that when the Legislative session ended, the committee would begin planning for the next session.

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

#### **Arizona Talking Book Library**

Erin Pawlus stated the Library was partnering with the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to offer the ibill bank note identifier, which would identify the denomination of a bill. She noted the library had previously sent out the devices as a pilot program, but now had devices to distribute. Ms. Pawlus stated that any organization that worked with the public could apply to be able to distribute the devices. Erin Pawlus stated the library would also be starting their summer reading programs for youth and adults. She noted that youth would read 20 minutes a day and adults could participate in online programs, which were available to anyone. Ms. Pawlus stated the library was renovating the space upstairs to include audio/visual capabilities, microphones, and receivers for hearing. She noted the library also welcomed the new Library of Congress Network of Libraries for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) Consultant, who had visited Arizona recently. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the Book Share program. Erin Pawlus stated there had not been any updates yet, and the library would need to identify a consistent stream of funding. John McCann inquired whether individuals could directly download books or whether they would still use the cartridges. Erin Pawlus stated that individuals could download titles like a Braille e-reader.

#### **Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

Kathy Zweld stated ACBVI was offering breakfast and lunch to individuals and would be holding an adventure trip involving watersports. Mike Gordon inquired regarding the number of individuals receiving meals. Kathy Zweld stated ACBVI was providing meals to approximately 25-30 individuals a day and had a chef on staff.

### **National Federation of the Blind**

Donald Porterfield stated the NFBA had been pursuing additional funds for the OIB program and clarification regarding Braille certifications. He noted there was some opposition to getting the bills passed. Donald Porterfield stated the scholarship applications for the state conference would be accepted until May 31<sup>st</sup>. He noted the state conference would be held in Phoenix from August 22-23 at the Hyatt. Mr. Porterfield added the national conference would be held July 3-8 in Florida.

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

Mike Gordon stated the residential program would begin and students would be moving in the following week. Mr. Gordon noted the Grant Road widening project continued in Tucson, which was long-term construction near the SAAVI building. Mike Gordon stated the summer camp, Ready Set Go would begin with 16 students for 6–8-week residential program, as well as the Bell Academy, with 15 students in Phoenix and Tucson. Mr. Gordon noted the Phoenix campus had extended their school year to allow students to continue with their learning. Mike Gordon stated SAAVI still had stimulus funds, which would be used to install a new fire system, install elevators, and renovate the lobby.

### **Arizona Council of the Blind**

John McCann stated AzCB held their annual meeting on April 13<sup>th</sup>, and he had been elected as the Treasurer. He added the organization and Jeff Bishop were offering Braille training to 52 members in which 25 were Arizonans. Mr. McCann noted the AzCB Convention would be held virtually in June, with voting in July and they would be considering constitutional changes to the bylaws.

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

The next meeting of the GCBVI Full Council will be on August 16, 2024 from 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm.

### **Announcements**

There were no announcements.

### **Call to the Public**

A call to the public was made with no responses forthcoming.

### **Adjournment of Meeting**

Amy Porterfield moved to adjourn the meeting. Nathan Pullen seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:55

## Statistics

As of March 31, 2024, the statistics are:

The total number of individuals in VR was 2,306  
The total number of veterans in the VR program were 66  
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 171  
The average number of days from application to eligibility was 40.7  
The median number of days from application to eligibility was 24  
The eligibility compliance was 80.7%  
The number of new plans written was 741  
The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 78.66  
The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 62.33  
The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 73.6%  
The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$56.25  
The lowest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$15.00  
The average hourly wage for successful employment outcomes was \$29.43  
The number of clients placed in employment was 47  
The number of clients closed successfully in employment was 27

As of March 31, 2024, the Deaf Blind Population statistics:

The total number of individuals in VR was 164  
The total number of veterans in VR program was 3  
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 15  
The average number of days from application to eligibility was 28  
The median number of days from application to eligibility was 34  
The eligibility compliance was 93%  
The number of new plans written was 30  
The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 152.96  
The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 143.25  
The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 41.75%  
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 3