

Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)
Deaf-Blind Issues Committee Meeting Minutes
May 18, 2020

Members Present

Ed Gervasoni, Chair
Carmen Green
Virginia Thompson
Megan Mogan
Jonathan Pringle
Cindi Robinson

Members Absent

Steve Wilson
Sue Kay Kneifel
Larry Rhodes
Mary Hartle

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Julie Stylinski
Candis Gingras, ASL Interpreter
Sandra Soloman, ASL Interpreter
Karla Martin, CART

Call to Order and Introductions

Ed Gervasoni, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:15 am. Introductions were made, and a quorum was present.

Approval of March 9, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Cindi Robinson moved to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2020 Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues meeting. Virginia Thompson seconded the motion. Virginia Thompson requested that one of the attendee's names, Lissa be corrected in the minutes. Cindi Robinson requested the minutes to be clarified to indicate there were enough deaf-blind individuals in Phoenix to be able to provide interactions for intervener training. The amended minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

Chair Report

Ed Gervasoni stated he recently attended a meeting with the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH) addressing deaf-blind issues. Mr. Gervasoni stated that deaf-blind individuals needed to be a high priority and noted that social distancing was difficult for that population. Ed Gervasoni stated his understanding that some agencies serving blind and visually impaired individuals were able to offer training to individuals while observing social distancing measures, although those individuals were practicing Orientation and Mobility (O&M) in areas they were familiar with. Ed Gervasoni noted that many deaf-blind individuals were very isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic and inquired whether the committee should consider developing a position paper to be shared with the Governor regarding the needs of the deaf-blind population. Jonathan Pringle agreed that the council should bring awareness to the needs of the deaf-blind population and noted there had been several national stories regarding the impact of the pandemic on the deaf-blind population. Cindi Robinson agreed that there was a critical need to convey the needs of the deaf-blind population to the Governor. Carmen Green stated that committee members could forward any national stories to her and Julie Stylinski, so the ACDHH could develop strategies to bring more attention to the deaf-blind population. Ed Gervasoni stated he heard about a student in New York attending Gallaudet University, who had very limited interactions with others, although he was more interested in hearing how the deaf-blind population in Arizona had been affected by the pandemic. Ed Gervasoni stated he knew that many individuals were afraid to leave their homes and he hoped the community could develop methods to keep everyone safe, while moving forward. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether any committee members would be interested in joining a workgroup to discuss the development of a position paper to be shared with the Governor. Virginia Thompson, Jonathan Pringle, and Cindi Robinson expressed interest in joining a workgroup. Ed Gervasoni stated he would contact committee members and other community members that would be interested in developing a workgroup.

Services to Deaf-Blind Individuals During Pandemic

Julie Stylinski stated the ACDHH continued to connect with the deaf-blind population and to post accessible information for individuals with combined vision and hearing loss (CVHL) on the ACDHH website. Julie Stylinski stated the Commission also posted transcripts of the Governor's press releases so that deaf-blind individuals received the most current information. Ms. Stylinski stated the ACDHH held a Status of the State call in which several deaf-blind individuals indicated they were isolated without resources such as

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Julie Stylinski stated the ACDHH hoped to partner with stakeholders to be able to provide PPE to those individuals. She noted that many deaf-blind consumers and Support Service Providers (SSP) were hesitant to interact with other individuals or in groups. Julie Stylinski stated the ACDHH hoped to partner with the Catholic Community Services (CCS) to assist individuals in grocery shopping. She noted the Valley Center of the Deaf (VCD) and the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD) were purchasing groceries for individuals and delivering them to their homes. Ed Gervasoni stated Mary Hartle had mentioned that service, although the deaf-blind individual was still required to leave his/her home to obtain cash to give to the individual purchasing the groceries. Carmen Green stated the ACDHH had partnered with CCS for \$10,000, to provide the service of going to the grocery store, although the funds could not be used for the transportation costs. Cindi Robinson inquired whether the \$10,000 was to be used to pay for staff time of individuals purchasing groceries. Carmen Green confirmed the funds were to pay for staff time only. Carmen Green stated that during the Status of the State call, several deaf individuals indicated their willingness to support the deaf-blind community and noted that if the community was able to obtain PPE so that individuals could go into the deaf-blind individual's homes and offer assistance. Ed Gervasoni agreed and noted that many deaf-blind individuals were afraid to go to the hospitals and were unsure how they would communicate with hospital staff. Carmen Green noted the restrictions had been relaxed, although many individuals did not have the appropriate PPE to leave their homes safely.

Jonathan Pringle stated the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) in New York remained closed, although the center continued to offer some services. Mr. Pringle stated the HKNC was offering free training to deaf-blind individuals and providers, who could obtain CEUs from attending the trainings. He noted the HKNC had recently developed peer learning groups on different topics, such as the Deaf-Blind Support Group for ASL Users and a Deaf-Blind Support for Individuals that Function as Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Jonathan Pringle stated that all trainings or more information could be found on the HKNC website. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether the trainings offered ACVREP certifications. Jonathan Pringle stated that some of the CEUs offered CRC credits, although he was unsure whether they offered ACVREP credits.

Megan Mogan stated the Arizona Deaf-Blind Project addressed the crisis for families in the Navajo Nation. Ms. Megan stated the Deaf-Blind Project partnered with the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB) Early Learning Program to draft an application for a micro grant. Megan Mogan stated the program was awarded the micro grant, which would go towards grocery and gas cards for those families. Ed Gervasoni inquired

whether the micro grant included technology and hot spots for those individuals. Megan Mogan stated that ASDB provided technology to the families, although she was not aware whether the local school districts provided hot spot technology. Ed Gervasoni stated he was aware that many families in the Navajo Nation did not have sufficient Internet or the technology skills to set up their devices. Megan Mogan stated the Deaf-Blind Project had initiated a Parent Drop In Zoom for families across the state, which had been successful in engaging the families. She noted the organization heard that families and educators had been communicating with each other more during the pandemic, although she agreed there were many families without access to distance learning technology.

Virginia Thompson stated the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI) had been on lockdown, which would tentatively remain until June 1st. Virginia Thompson stated the center continued to provide some training to individuals remotely. Ms. Thompson stated ACBVI hoped to obtain clear masks and gloves to be able to provide more services to individuals safely. Virginia Thompson stated that ACBVI staff were not going into individual's homes, and she would continue to monitor the situation. Julie Stylinski inquired regarding the name of the company that provided clear face masks. Virginia Thompson stated she found the clear masks on Amazon, and noted the masks covered the individual's nose and mouth. Cindi Robinson stated she had seen clear masks that covered the individual's forehead and below the chin and were completely clear. Virginia Thompson stated her concern with the full-face masks was that they would create a glare for some individuals, although the clear masks were reusable and could be cleaned. Carmen Green requested that committee members send information regarding clear face masks to her and noted that Sherri Collins had participated in several calls regarding the challenges to the deaf-blind population. Ms. Green stated that any additional information would increase attention towards that effort.

National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) Update

Virginia Thompson stated ACBVI continued to provide NDBEDP services. Virginia Thompson stated the center currently had 39 active cases, in which 3 were in Yuma/Lake Havasu, 5 in northern Arizona, and 3 in Tucson. Ms. Thompson stated the biggest challenge was in obtaining the disability verification. She noted that of the active cases, 15 individuals were under the age of 50, and suggested a partnership with the Arizona Deaf-Blind Project to meet the needs of the younger individuals, as well as individuals in the Navajo Nation. Megan Mogan stated the Deaf-Blind Project would be

pleased to partner with ACBVI and suggested a webinar or presentation to introduce Ms. Thompson to those families.

SSP Services in Arizona Follow-Up

Julie Stylinski stated that SSP hours had decreased significantly due to the Stay-at-Home directive and noted there were 74 SSP hours in March and 18 hours in April. Ms. Stylinski stated there were 10 SSP hours in May so far, and 14 hours had been scheduled. Julie Stylinski stated the ACDHH was trying to offer PPE to consumers so that SSP services could continue. Ed Gervasoni inquired whether the SSP services were related to medical appointments or for services in the consumers' homes. Julie Stylinski stated the SSP services were the same as previously, whether they were in the home or for medical appointments. She noted the number of SSP hours had declined as well as the number of SSPs that were working.

SSP Training Curriculum Update

Julie Stylinski stated there had been no changes to the SSP Training Curriculum.

SSP Professional Development and Certification Discussion

This item was tabled.

SSP RFP Status Update

Julie Stylinski stated ACDHH was waiting to hear back from the State Procurement Office (SPO) regarding the SSP contract. Ed Gervasoni stated that none of the state agencies could predict how or if the budgets would be affected, although the GCBVI Full Council received an update indicating that there were no intentions to sweep any of the budgets thus far.

ACDHH Budget Request Update

Carmen Green stated ACDHH had not received any indication that there would be budget sweeps, although the Arizona Department of Administration (ADOA) indicated that any employee incentive programs would be put on hold until after July 1st.

AHCCCS/ALTCS Intervener Services Update

Ed Gervasoni stated Dara Johnson had indicated that AHCCCS continued to move forward with the program and an evaluation tool and noted his

understanding that Ms. Johnson had scheduled a meeting with him and Megan Mogan. Ed Gervasoni stated that he was pleased the process was moving forward.

SBVID Report

This item was tabled.

AZ DeafBlind Project Update

a. Intervener Trainings

Megan Mogan stated the 1st cohort of 13 educators had graduated with 150 hours of module-based intervener training over 3 years. Megan Mogan stated the current cohort started with 33 participants, and 6 individuals had left the program. Ed Gervasoni stated he had been invited to study the Canadian Intervener Program and would participate in a study as well as to participate in the creation of an Intervener Exam for Arizona. He noted that he would focus mostly on the O&M perspective. Cindi Robinson commended Megan Mogan for the high retention rate of individuals in the Intervener Training program. Ms. Robinson inquired regarding the individuals that had just graduated and the individuals currently in the program, how many were teachers, other professionals, Teacher Aids, and already working as interveners. Megan Mogan stated the Intervener Training breakdown by "title/role" was Cohort 1 includes 1 teacher, 5 TVIs, 6 TODs, 0 paraprofessionals, 1 Intervener; Cohort 2 includes 1 teacher, 1 TVI, 0 TODs, 4 paraprofessionals, 1 Intervener; Cohort 3 includes 8 teachers, 1 TVI, 3 TODs, 4 paraprofessionals, 3 Interveners, 5 Interpreters, 1 O & M teacher, 1 Supervisor.

Conference Updates

Ed Gervasoni stated the Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE) and the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA) Conferences had been cancelled due to the pandemic, although some organizations were considering offering virtual presentations. Cindi Robinson inquired whether the DeafBlind Retreat of Arizona was still scheduled to occur in September. Ed Gervasoni stated he was unsure whether the conference was still scheduled, although there had been fundraising efforts for the event. Virginia Thompson stated her understanding the event had not been cancelled, although she would inform the committee of any updates.

Agenda and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues TBD. 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
- AHCCCS/ALTCS Services Update
- Conference Updates

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Public Comment

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

Adjournment of Meeting

Jonathan Pringle motioned to adjourn the meeting. Virginia Thompson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 p.m.