

**Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)**  
**Full Council Meeting Minutes**

May 19, 2023

**Attendance**

**Members Present**

Bob Kresmer  
Amy Porterfield  
John McCann  
Ted Chittenden  
Jonathan Pringle  
Donald Porterfield  
Nathan Pullen  
Erin Pawlus  
Brian Dulude  
Steve Tepper  
Annette Reichman  
David Steinmetz

**Members Absent**

Bea Shapiro  
Allan Curry  
Andrew Cohen  
Mike Gordon

**Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers

**Guests Present**

Lisa Yencarelli  
Joyceline Elliot  
Trisha Waddell  
Adam Bevell  
Frank Vance  
Marc Marino

Candice -ASL  
Lee – ASL

## **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 17, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Ted Chittenden moved to approve the minutes of the February 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 he had conversations with Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) leadership regarding RSA's marketing strategies and how the council could assist with those efforts. Bob Kresmer stated the council requested additional fiscal information from RSA and if the agency could increase marketing funds. He noted that Kristen Mackey had submitted the request to the Department of Economic Security (DES) Public Information office and would share that information with the council.

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

This item was tabled.

### **SBVID Program Manager Report**

Brian Dulude stated SBVID continued to work on reducing the timeline for individuals applying for services and made eligible and for individuals receiving VR services. Mr. Dulude stated SBVID had hired a new counselor in the Gilbert/Chandler office and had interviewed for counselor positions in Flagstaff, Yuma, and Phoenix. Brian Dulude noted he also held interviews for Supervisors of the Blind and Visually Impaired and Deaf and

Hard of Hearing counselors. He noted the Supervisor position in Tucson had also been posted, and he hoped that position would begin in June. Brian Dulude stated that students from SAAVI Services for the Blind and Foundation for Blind Children (FBC) would be attending summer programs and he hoped that more students would participate in the summer Transition programs as well. Bob Kresmer inquired how SBVID kept track of students from ASDB and whether they signed up for VR services. Brian Dulude stated that he could review that information and noted the importance of knowing where students were. Jonathan Pringle stated that 2 students from Arizona would be attending the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) summer program through a hybrid model, which would allow for greater flexibility. Jonathan Pringle noted that some students might not have progressed much after 1 year, and suggested agencies follow up with students after 5 years, to allow those students more time to succeed. Ted Chittenden stated the Federal government was currently in discussions regarding the debt ceiling, and inquired that if it was not resolved, what would be the effect on VR services. Brian Dulude stated that Kristen Mackey was monitoring the situation nationally, although the government had until October 18th before there would be any impact to services.

Brian Dulude stated that he had statistics regarding the Older Individuals Blind (OIB) program also. He noted there were 251 individuals on the OIB wait list and were waiting for 512 services. Brian Dulude stated 130 individuals were waiting for rehabilitation teaching, 175 were waiting for Orientation and Mobility (O&M), 134 were waiting for Assistive Technology (AT) training, and 73 were waiting for Adjustment to Disability training. Mr. Dulude stated vendors and staff continued to struggle with Libera on creating progress notes, which allowed individuals to report on the services provided and the prices for those services. He noted this has caused a delay of payments to vendors and he will continue to address the issue. He noted the Jump Start program continued to be valuable as individuals could obtain classes while they waited for OIB services, although he hoped to hire more teachers to assist with classes also. David Steinmetz inquired whether RSA had heard if the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) had been reauthorized. Brian Dulude stated he had not heard about the reauthorization of WIOA, although that would affect VR services.

## **BEP Program Update**

Joyceline Elliot stated the National Association of Blind Merchants had rated the BEP programs nationally, and Arizona had been ranked 2nd. Joyceline Elliot stated that a BEP Consultant position had been posted recently and 1 trainee would begin in June. Ms. Elliot stated that new vending sites had been added in North Scottsdale, Tempe, and a DES building in Phoenix. She stated BEP would also be soliciting a bid for a

Phoenix aviation department also. Adam Bevell stated that some vendors worked within airports, although this would be a different contract, and would be for city of Phoenix employees only. Bob Kresmer commended BEP on the number of new sites.

## **ASDB Report**

Annette Reichman thanked everyone for their support and advocacy regarding the recent Legislation surrounding ASDB. Lisa Yencarelli stated ASDB's last day would be June 25th, and the school was already getting ready for the next school year. She noted that 5 students would graduate from Phoenix Day School for the Deaf (PDSD), 1 from the Tucson campus, 6 from Region 1, 12 from Region 2, 12 from Region 3, and 2 from the district program. Lisa Yencarelli stated ASDB would be holding an Open House training for staff on July 31st to get prepared for the next school year. Trisha Waddell thanked the council for inviting her to attend the meeting, although she would be leaving ASDB shortly. Amy Porterfield inquired whether ASDB would consider a combined position that would supervise the school for the deaf and the school for the blind. Annette Reichman stated that ASDB would hire a combined position, as well as an Assistant Principal for the Blind and an Assistant Principal for the Deaf. Trisha Waddell noted that she would assist the new staff in that transition process. Jonathan Pringle inquired whether ASDB had developed a committee that would monitor the post-school outcomes. Annette Reichman stated ASDB was actively collecting post-school outcome data. Amy Porterfield inquired whether ASDB would consider including members from the community in any of those committees. Annette Reichman noted that would be helpful, and noted that ASDB would be hiring a CTE Director, who would be responsible for Transition students' progress, and would reach out to stakeholders and the community. Bob Kresmer inquired whether ASDB had the ability to use VR for assessments for students. Lisa Yencarelli stated ASDB was working with VR to train itinerant teachers on the assessment process and how students could be referred to VR. Jonathan Pringle stated the DeafBlind Project staff had been great with encouraging students to apply and noted the benefit to educating parents also on that process. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the number of counselors devoted to Transition services. Brian Dulude stated there were 5 counselors statewide that worked with Transition students.

## **GCBVI Committee Reports**

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

Amy Porterfield stated the committee had been following recent Legislation surrounding the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB). Ms. Porterfield stated HB 2456 had been introduced, which would have changed the school's funding schedule from every 8 years to every 2 years. Amy Porterfield noted that the bill had been amended to be every 4 years. Amy Porterfield stated the audit findings from ASDB indicated concern regarding the safety of the buildings, the funds that were shared with the districts, and whether the school was following up with Transition students after 1 year. Amy Porterfield stated there was also a bill that would have allowed students with all disabilities to attend ASDB, although that bill had been removed after a large outcry from the community. Amy Porterfield stated the committee had also been following the potential increase in Independent Living Blind (ILB) funds, although that bill had never made it to Committee. She stated the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA) had been in support of a bill that would have requested an update to the Braille code of UEB, and would have included additional certifications for teachers, although that bill had been pulled. Donald Porterfield stated the NFBA had also been in support of a bill regarding accessible absentee ballots, although there was some confusion on who would submit the bill, and it did not make it. Amy Porterfield stated the committee was also interested in reviewing the last VR Policy Manual and the Administrative Codes, and identifying how those were interpreted and used by staff. Amy Porterfield stated she also met with the DES Director regarding the new employee recruitment and hiring efforts and would follow up on that process.

### **Independent Living Committee**

Ted Chittenden stated the committee had not met recently, although he planned to hold a meeting. Ted Chittenden stated the Public Information Committee would begin working on the GCBVI Annual Report and he requested Committee Chairs submit their reports prior to the next Full Council meeting. Mr. Chittenden noted that he had been on the council for 13 years and planned to go off of the council for a year. He added that John McCann would remain on the council and had agreed to Chair the Independent Living Committee.

### **Employment Committee**

Nathan Pullen stated the Employment Committee continued to plan for the next E75 Event on October 13th, which would be held virtually through Zoom.

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

### **Arizona Talking Book Library**

Erin Pawlus stated that Newsline would provide training to new staff on how to utilize the service, such as searching for job listings, receiving local and national publications, and weather updates. She noted that last quarter, Newsline had been accessed 132,037 times, which was great. Bob Kresmer inquired whether there had been any discussions on accessing Newsline through a smart speaker. Erin Pawlus stated there had not been, although there had been improvements on the text to speech function. Ms. Pawlus stated she was excited to have staff tour Sun Sounds and noted that any individual could request a tour of the Talking Book Library also. Erin Pawlus stated the library was preparing for the Summer Reading Program from May 29th-July 31st for youth and adults. Erin Pawlus stated the National Library Service (NLS) would be offering a summer reading program also from June 29th-August 11th. Erin Pawlus stated the Friends of the Talking Book Library would hold the Whine-a-Thon virtually and individuals could sign up or donate through the website: [www.azfotb.org](http://www.azfotb.org). Ted Chittenden inquired whether the potential Federal debt ceiling issue could affect the Talking Book Library or BARD. Erin Pawlus stated she had not heard of any potential issues with the library's services.

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

Frank Vance stated the construction on a new health center had been completed and individuals would have access to medical services. Mr. Vance noted the organization continued to offer services to OIB clients as well. Frank Vance stated the social recreation programs were back up either as hybrid or in person classes. Bob Kresmer inquired whether ACBVI was still considering the development of housing for individuals. Frank Vance stated ACBVI had considered some different housing options, such as a building for less than 40 or more than 65 individuals and was still considering the options. Frank Vance stated ACBVI had planned to take individuals on a rock-climbing trip, although there had not been enough instructors. He noted the organization was planning a kayaking trip to Lake Mary as well as an adaptive water sports day at Bartlett Lake.

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

Amy Porterfield stated SAAVI would host the NFB Bell Academy in Phoenix and Tucson and would explore transportation options. She noted the Tucson Ready Set Go Summer

Camp would be starting soon with lots of activities. Amy Porterfield stated SAAVI was also exploring ways to increase residential opportunities in Phoenix.

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

Donald Porterfield stated the NFBA state conference would be held August 24th-27th and the National Conference would be July 1st-July 6th in Houston. Mr. Porterfield stated that individuals could apply for NFB scholarships through the website. Donald Porterfield stated the NFBA was gearing up for the 2024 Legislative session and would continue to advocate for accessible absentee ballots and Braille certifications for teachers.

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

John McCann stated the AzCB had met recently and passed the Constitution as well as elected a new President. Mr. McCann noted the American Council of the Blind (ACB) convention would be coming up soon as well. Ted Chittenden stated that Jeff Bishop would be returning to Arizona and had expressed interest in applying for council membership again. Mr. Chittenden noted the AzCB held their recent meeting virtually, and were able to vote via computer attendance, which was convenient.

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

The next meeting of the GCBVI Full Council will be on May 19, 2023 from 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm.

### **Announcements**

There were no announcements.

### **Call to the Public**

Marc Marino stated that he had been invited to attend the meeting and was considering applying for council membership. He noted the council discussed a lot of important issues, and he could offer some insight to the council.

## **Adjournment of Meeting**

John McCann moved to adjourn the meeting. Ted Chittenden seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:30.

## Statistics

As of March 30, 2023, the statistics are:

The total number of individuals in VR was 2610

The total number of veterans in the VR program were 40

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 109

The average number of days from application to eligibility was 56.8

The median number of days from application to eligibility was 28

The eligibility compliance was 78%

The number of new plans written was 382

The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 112

The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 82

The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 68.8%

The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$41.00

The lowest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$13.75

The average hourly wage for successful employment outcomes was \$22.50

The number of clients placed in employment was 20

The number of clients closed successfully in employment was 15

As of March 30, 2023, the Deaf Blind Population statistics:

The total number of individuals in VR was 173

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 2

The average number of days from application to eligibility was 101

The median number of days from application to eligibility was 101

The eligibility compliance was 100%

The number of new plans written was 19

The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 169.75

The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 77.75

The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 80%

The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was N/A

The lowest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was N/A

The average hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was N/A

The number of clients placed in employment was 2

The number of clients closed successfully was 0