

**Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)**  
**Full Council Meeting Minutes**  
May 27, 2022

**Members Present**

Bob Kresmer  
Ted Chittenden  
John McCann  
Andrew Cohen  
Jonathan Pringle  
Amy Porterfield  
Donald Porterfield  
Nathan Pullen  
Steve Tepper  
Erin Pawlus

**Members Absent**

Bea Shapiro  
Mike Gordon  
Allan Curry  
David Steinmetz  
Annette Reichman

**Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers

**Guests Present**

Kristen Mackey  
Eve Sanchez  
Mike Feeney  
Jennifer Key  
LaDonna

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**Call to Order and Introductions**

Bob Kresmer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:32 p.m. Introductions were made, a quorum was present, and the procedural meeting rules were explained.

## **Approval of February 18, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

Ted Chittenden moved to approve the minutes of the February 18, 2022 GCBVI Full Council meeting as written. Jonathan Pringle seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved by majority voice vote.

## **GCBVI Chairperson's Report**

Bob Kresmer stated the Legislature was still in session and inquired whether Donald Porterfield had any updates. Donald Porterfield stated the Legislative and Policy Committee was working with the Legislature regarding making the absentee mail in ballot more accessible and would follow up with the Secretary of State's office. Mr. Porterfield noted that bill would not go into effect until 90 days after the Legislative session. Donald Porterfield stated added that the Legislative session was not over, and more bills could be passed. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the potential increase for the Older Individuals Who Are Blind (OIB) program. Donald Porterfield stated that a line item for an increase in funds for the OIB had not been added yet and he did not anticipate that it would be added.

## **Council Membership Discussion**

Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the council members whose terms had ended, as well as any open positions within the council. Lindsey Powers stated the Arizona Council of the Blind (AzCB) and the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA) had one open position in each. She noted there were 3 open positions for a Blinded Veteran's representation as well as a parent of a blind child. Ms. Powers stated that John McCann, Allan Curry, and Bob Kresmer's terms had ended, and they could apply for reappointment.

## **RSA Administrator's Report**

Kristen Mackey stated that offices would reopen to the public on July 5<sup>th</sup>, although staff would not have designated offices and were encouraged to meet clients in the community. Ms. Mackey noted that counselors and rehabilitation technicians would be in the office or community at least 2 days a week. Kristen Mackey stated a staff member's post of duty might be in one office, although staff were encouraged to meet clients where they were. Amy Porterfield inquired regarding the location of the Tucson office. Kristen Mackey stated the Stone office had moved to the Park Avenue office and noted that some staff would be relocated to other offices in the area. Jonathan Pringle stated that before the pandemic, vendors were able to meet with clients in the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)

Resource Rooms and inquired whether that policy had changed. Kristen Mackey stated that vendors could not use RSA space to serve the clients unless Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff were attending that meeting also. Kristen Mackey stated that vendors could use Resource Rooms to assist clients to create resumes or search for employment, as a client would use that space for that reason.

Kristen Mackey stated the VR client numbers and number of clients served had decreased and staff had been asked to balance caseloads, rather than filling all open positions if not necessary. Ms. Mackey stated that wages were low, and she continued to work with HR regarding increasing wages for staff. Kristen Mackey noted that some staff did receive a 5% raise, although those were based on certain classifications of positions. Amy Porterfield inquired whether the job classifications were part of the Legislative budget. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA was provided a list of classifications by DES, in which the classifications would need to meet specific criteria to be eligible for a wage increase. Kristen Mackey noted the Legislature would potentially include certain classifications of positions in the upcoming budget. Amy Porterfield stated the council could potentially advocate for wage increases for VR staff if was included in the budget. Ms. Porterfield inquired whether RSA would consider adding a position dedicated to outreach for VR and noted that Coordinators would conduct outreach for SBVID in the past. Kristen Mackey stated that she would consider that.

Kristen Mackey stated that RSA negotiated all 5 common performance measures for the VR State Plan as part of the 2-year review. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA would also work on 5 Strategic Plan goals of: common performance measures, HR work, implementation of the new case management system, supported employment, and marketing outreach. Bob Kresmer stated the blindness community had been able to participate in the interview panels for blindness related staff in the past, in inquired whether that would be possible in the future. Kristen Mackey stated the HR interpretation was that non-state staff would not be permitted to sit on interview panels for state funded positions and could be seen as a conflict of interest. Bob Kresmer inquired whether that decision would be under the Arizona Department of Administration (ADOA). Kristen Mackey stated the ADOA would oversee HR, and she was not aware of any advisory boards participating in the interview process. Bob Kresmer stated his understanding that funds for blindness services had been returned and inquired whether RSA had identified how to utilize those funds more effectively. Kristen Mackey stated that all VR entities struggled to expend their funds. She noted that Federal RSA had developed a new competitive grant that VR entities could compete for, although the process was quite extensive. Kristen Mackey stated VR entities had requested no cost waivers, although they had not

been granted waivers thus far. Bob Kresmer inquired whether RSA had a position that only applied for grants, or whether a position could be created. Kristen Mackey stated RSA did not have a dedicated position for applying for grants, and the new case management system would require significant time to implement.

### **SBVID Program Manager Report**

Eve Sanchez stated that in the last quarter for the OIB program, the number of individuals assigned to services had increased 12%, the total number of individuals on the wait list increased 6%, there was an 8% increase of services requested on the wait list, and there was a 1% decrease to individuals on the wait list. Eve Sanchez stated 53 individuals had been assigned services in Pima, Yuma, Yavapai, Coconino, and Maricopa. Ms. Sanchez stated a new instructor would begin on Monday, and she would post other positions as well. Bob Kresmer inquired whether 90% of the referrals continued to be served in house. Eve Sanchez stated that about 50% of referrals were being served in house, and she was grateful for the collaboration with community organizations.

### **BEP Program Update**

Nathan Pullen stated the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) recently put in a bid for the Fort Huachuca food service location, which was an open solicitation. Mr. Pullen stated BEP partnered with Sydexo regarding that bid, which was such a large entity and required outside assistance. Nathan Pullen stated BEP had also previously put a bid on the Marana Base and would potentially bid on the Air National Guard Base in Tucson. Nathan Pullen stated most BEP facilities were open in some capacity, and all food service entities were open a couple days a week for lunch. He noted BEP had 10 FTEs and 1 open consultant position. Ted Chittenden inquired regarding the food trucks that were operating out of rest stop areas. Nathan Pullen stated the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) had received the directive from the Governor's Office to offer those services, and BEP continued to work with DES Leadership regarding that issue. Bob Kresmer inquired whether all BEP locations had been able to open as the pandemic was ending. Mike Feeney stated the prisons were still operating below 50%, and he did not believe the DES Central Office was producing food. Mr. Feeney noted that 2 cafeterias had closed as well. Nathan Pullen stated the AHCCS and the DEQ offices had closed, and BEP operators were removing their equipment from those locations. Mike Feeney stated the BEP operator numbers were low, and BEP appreciated the continued support from the council.

## **ASDB Report**

This item was tabled.

## **GCBVI Committee Reports**

### ***AT Committee***

The AT Committee arranged a presentation on Low Vision Rehabilitation that was scheduled to be presented at the VRATE conference in November of 2021, which was canceled. The AT Committee then had an opportunity to partner with the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP) and AT Arizona and offered the presentation in two parts. 73 individuals attended Part 1 and 62 attended Part 2 of the AzTAP presentations, and 47 individuals attended Part 1 and 44 attended Part 2 of the AT Arizona presentations. The Committee was able to offer CRC credits to individuals who attended the AT Arizona presentation, in which Services for the Blind Visually Impaired and Deaf (SBVID) staff, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselors, and individuals from other agencies were in attendance. The presentation was also offered at the VRATE conference on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, although the Committee does not have the number on how many people attended the presentation. The AT committee has also partnered with Sun Sounds of Arizona to offer a podcast regarding assistive technology and three podcast have been aired thus far.

### ***Independent Living Committee***

Ted Chittenden stated that Brian Dulude was the Chair of a workgroup that was reviewing Best Practices for providing services virtually and was scheduled to meet again soon.

Ted Chittenden stated he was also a member of the Public Information Committee, and he was requesting that all Committee Chairs submit their reports for the GCBVI Annual Report by the next Full Council meeting in August. Mr. Chittenden stated he would also like to receive client success stories from VR, OIB, SAAVI, ACBVI and any other organizations. Ted Chittenden stated that Lindsey Powers would be welcome to send reminders to Committee Chairs to submit their reports from the end of June until the August meeting.

### ***DeafBlind Committee***

Andrew Cohen stated the DeafBlind Committee held their first meeting recently which included many key stakeholders. Mr. Cohen stated the

committee was interested in receiving updates from community members and to learn about the increase in the request for deafblind services. Jonathan Pringle agreed and stated that he was looking forward to hearing from all of the individuals that had been invited to attend. Andrew Cohen stated he had identified some individuals to attend the next meeting, and he would follow up with additional community members.

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

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

Erin Pawlus stated the Library would start the summer reading program from May 31<sup>st</sup>-July 31<sup>st</sup>, with the theme "Oceans of Possibilities", and individuals were encouraged to participate. Ms. Pawlus stated the Library would have a children's program based on the time spent reading, and adults were encouraged to read outside of their usual reading interests. Erin Pawlus stated the Talking Book Topics large print publication had historically been popular with patrons, although the National Library Service (NLS) had received notification that those publications would no longer be available due to the nationwide paper shortage. Erin Pawlus stated that patrons could still access the publication through cartridges or via download from BARD. Bob Kresmer inquired whether the Braille e-reader pilot project was still ongoing. Erin Pawlus stated that pilot program had ended, and all libraries would receive the devices for general distribution, although she did not have an anticipated date yet.

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

Steve Tepper stated that ACBVI had purchased 6 additional buildings in the campus area, and the center would be able to offer primary care, behavioral health, case management, social work, and a small pharmacy that would administer medications. Steve Tepper stated that in January/February of 2023, ACBVI would also offer affordable housing to clients as well. Bob Kresmer inquired whether ACBVI staff had transitioned to offering in-person services. Steve Tepper stated ACBVI continued to offer in-person services during the pandemic, while adhering to safety precautions and quarantining as required.

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

Amy Porterfield stated the Phoenix location had moved to 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Thomas, which was a larger space with kitchens and a computer lab. Ms. Porterfield stated the Open House for that location would be on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, and all council members were welcome to attend. She noted that SAAVI also

received a grant to include a walking track under the parking garage and a playground. Amy Porterfield stated the Tucson location had moved to the previous Pima Medical Institute and had 2 training kitchens, a children's and youth wing, and a huge parking lot for a future playground. Amy Porterfield stated Phoenix added 2 summer programs, which would be a continuation of the COVID learning loss program and a playtime for toddlers on Fridays. Amy Porterfield stated SAAVI would also offer the Bell Program and the Ready Set Go program.

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

Donald Porterfield stated the NFB National Convention would be held in New Orleans July 5-10 and would be in person with some streaming opportunities for individuals attending remotely. Mr. Porterfield stated the State Convention would be held September 1-4 in person in Tucson. Donald Porterfield stated the NFBA would continue to work with the Secretary of State regarding accessible voting for blind and visually impaired voters and to ensure that it remained a priority.

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

John McCann stated the AzCB 2022 Annual Convention was held the previous Friday, and he thanked the council for rescheduling the Full Council meeting to accommodate the convention date. Mr. McCann stated that 75 individuals had registered for the convention and Chris Desborough had been appointed as the new President of the AzCB. John McCann stated the National Convention would be held in Omaha July 1-8 and would be a hybrid event. He noted that more information could be found on the AzCB website, and all council members were invited to attend.

### ***Helen Keller National Center***

Jonathan Pringle stated that HKNC had re-opened in New York, in which 3 individuals were attending from Arizona, and 2 were previous Summer Youth candidates. Jonathan Pringle stated HKNC would like to serve up to 30 students by September and was in the process of hiring additional staff. He noted that he had accepted a promotion and was now the Regional Representative for Region 8, which had modified the regional lines.

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

The next meeting of the GCBVI Full Council will be on August 19, 2022 from 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm.

## **Announcements**

Ted Chittenden announced that Dan Martinez had been elected to the AzCB and was also the head of the Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE), which would be held as a hybrid event in March/April of 2023.

## **Call to the Public**

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

## **Adjournment of Meeting**

Ted Chittenden moved to adjourn the meeting. Nathan Pullen seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:32.



As of March 31, 2022, the statistics are:

The total number of individuals in VR was 773  
The total number of veterans in the VR program were 25  
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 119  
The average number of days from application to eligibility was 47.7  
The median number of days from application to eligibility was 31  
The eligibility compliance was 81%  
The number of new plans written was 378  
The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 74.3  
The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 56.5  
The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 73.7%  
The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$62.50  
The lowest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$12.15  
The average hourly wage for successful employment outcomes was \$21.67  
The number of clients placed in employment was 41  
The number of clients closed successfully in employment was 42

As of March 31, 2022, the Deaf Blind Population statistics:

The total number of individuals in VR was 46  
The total number of veterans in VR program was 1  
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 0  
The average number of days from application to eligibility was 49.4  
The median number of days from application to eligibility was 48.7  
The eligibility compliance was 100%  
The number of new plans written was 21  
The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 160.9  
The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 146.2  
The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 75%  
The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$13.48  
The lowest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$12.46  
The average hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$13.47  
The number of clients placed in employment was 3  
The number of clients closed successfully was 2