

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

Legislative and Public Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

May 7, 2025

Attendance

Members Present

Amy Porterfield, Chair
Bob Kresmer
Ed House
Jonathan Pringle
Donald Porterfield

Members Absent

Guests Present

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Minutes

Call to Order and Introductions

Amy Porterfield, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:01 am. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

Call to the Public

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

Approval of April 3, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Bob Kresmer motioned to approve the April 3, 2025 minutes. Jonathan Pringle seconded the motion. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

Legislative Updates

Amy Porterfield stated her understanding that SB 1505 had been introduced into the Legislature, if any committee members were able to locate the bill on the Legislature website. Jonathan Pringle reviewed the history of the bill, which indicated the bill had been reviewed and signed by the Governor. He noted the bill stated that Unified English Braille (UEB) had been defined as well as the effective date. Jonathan Pringle inquired whether Brian Dulude had received any updates regarding the additional Independent Living Blind (ILB) funding. Brian Dulude stated that Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) continued to work with technical assistance to track the budget. Mr. Pringle noted his understanding that some states were not able to expend their Pre-Employment Transition (Pre-ETS) funds and inquired whether Arizona was experiencing the same issue. Brian Dulude stated RSA was working with technical assistance to try to expend the Pre-ETS funds and was continuing to offer services according to the budget. Amy Porterfield noted the latest State budget did not specify the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) budget and there was talk of the agency moving to the Department of Labor. Ms. Porterfield stated that was not necessarily a cause for concern, although the council would keep an eye on any changes.

Amy Porterfield stated the committee had also had discussions regarding the Introduction to Blindness orientation and inquired whether there had been any changes to the orientation. Brian Dulude stated SBVID continued to offer the Introduction to Blindness orientation monthly although only about 1-4 clients attended. He stated there had been discussions about vendors making brief videos about their facilities, which could be accessed by clients, who would then attend a question-and-answer meeting. Bob Kresmer noted that some clients might have difficulties accessing the vendors' videos as they might not be tech savvy. Brian Dulude stated that all of the videos could be on a webpage with different folders and VR staff could assist clients if needed. Bob Kresmer inquired whether the counselors were guiding clients towards attending the Introduction to Blindness orientations. Brian Dulude stated VR staff did let clients know about the orientations, although many clients indicated that 5 hours was a long time for individuals to be in a Zoom meeting. Amy Porterfield agreed that 5 hours was a long time and inquired whether the Introduction to Blindness orientation videos could be played

during a client's orientation to VR. Brian Dulude stated that SBVID could consider that and noted SBVID was following what other states had been doing as far as blindness orientation. Amy Porterfield inquired whether the blindness videos could be shared with clients in groups. Jonathan Pringle noted his experience that VR clients liked meeting with other VR clients in person in a relaxed atmosphere. Brian Dulude stated that all RSA offices were open to the public and SBVID could consider methods for offering orientations in groups. Amy Porterfield noted the committee had developed a letter previously to RSA and could draft another regarding the committee's recommendations. Bob Kresmer stated that he would work with Amy Porterfield to draft that letter.

Brian Dulude inquired whether the committee had any updates regarding the potential additional funds for the ILB program. Amy Porterfield stated the additional million dollars for ILB would not be introduced as a standalone bill but would potentially be built into the budget as a one-time allotment. Bob Kresmer inquired whether there had been any discussions regarding the potential increase in funds. Brian Dulude stated that SBVID had not discussed the potential increase in funding in detail yet. Amy Porterfield stated that she had gathered data to be shared with the Department of Economic Security (DES) regarding the additional funding. She noted they included an increase in outreach, more traveling teachers, offering assessments early in the VR process, and for providers and counselors to identify methods for expending additional funds. Brian Dulude stated he had identified the areas for an increase in staff and services, which could be utilized with additional funding as well. Amy Porterfield stated that when she met with DES, she would also mention a potential pilot program. Brian Dulude noted that when he mentioned performing more outreach, he was often asked how the agency would provide more services, when ILB had a wait list for services. Amy Porterfield agreed that was an issue. Ms. Porterfield stated that she and Bob Kresmer would draft a letter regarding the committee's recommendations and share them with the committee at the next meeting.

Policy Discussion

Amy Porterfield stated the committee had previously reviewed the VR Policy Manual and noticed that most of the language surrounding specialized services had been removed and suggested sharing a letter with RSA regarding the need for specialized services in policy.

Meeting Date and Adjournment

The next meeting of the Legislative and Public Policy Committee TBD.
Agenda items are as follows:

- Legislative Updates
- Policy Discussion

Bob Kresmer moved to adjourn the meeting. Jonathan Pringle seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:12 am.