

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

Full Council Meeting Minutes

August 15, 2025

Attendance

Members Present

Bob Kresmer
Amy Porterfield
Erin Pawlus
Mike Gordon
Bea Shapiro
Annette Reichman
Donald Porterfield
Nathan Pullen
Jonathan Pringle

Members Absent

Steve Tepper
Allan Curry

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Kristen Mackey
Stephanie Johnson
Joyceline Elliot
Maria Bravo
Adam Bevell

Minutes

Call to Order

Bob Kresmer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m.

Roll Call

Lindsey Powers called roll and established that a quorum was present.

Call to the Public

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

Approval of Minutes

Amy Porterfield moved to approve the minutes of the May 16, 2025 GCBVI Full Council meeting as written. Donald Porterfield seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved by majority voice vote.

Member Reports

Chair Report

Bob Kresmer stated that he had been in communication with students, teachers, and had attended Legislative Town Halls regarding the needs of blind and visually impaired individuals. He noted that he also answered calls for a 1-800 number, and he noticed a decline with individuals having issues with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services.

RSA Updates

Kristen Mackey stated that Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) had launched the new case management system, InFormed on July 1st, although it took a couple of weeks to transfer information to the new system. She noted the pre-work to implement the system, especially regarding accessibility had been invaluable. Bea Shapiro stated that she reviewed approximately 800 different screens and all of the fields on them. Kristen Mackey stated RSA continued to work through case load assignments, loading contracts into the system, and reporting. She stated that over 500 authorizations had been sent out and 53 payments were made. Ms. Mackey stated there had been some changes to the Independent Living Blind (ILB) program involving fiscal, data, and reporting processes. She added the CORE training for new VR staff was also updated to reflect InFormed as the new case management system. Kristen Mackey stated RSA would be moving to

Phase 2 of InFormed implementation in which the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) would move to the new system. She added that she would also like to include direct deposits for vendors and client electronic payment cards. Amy Porterfield stated that she was impressed with how fast the process was moving and that it was quite a feat. Ms. Porterfield inquired whether there was a method for vendors to provide feedback regarding the system. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was planning to develop a spreadsheet where vendors could provide feedback regarding the system. She noted the overall feedback from team members was positive as staff could enter data easily into the system. Amy Porterfield noted that it was easier to amend authorizations also. Kristen Mackey agreed and noted that with Libera, staff would try to know a client's plan from the beginning stages, which was difficult and InFormed allowed for easier amendments if needed. Kristen Mackey stated InFormed used words to identify case statuses rather than numbers, which was easier for staff and clients to understand. Ms. Mackey stated that VR and ILB received level funding, although the additional funds for the ILB program were not included in the budget. She noted the Federal funding for 2024 did not include a cost-of-living increase, although the funding for 2025 included 2024 and 2025, which made it challenging to obtain match funds. She noted that if RSA returned funds early, the funds would stay within the disability program, but if RSA waited to return funds, it could skew the set aside for Pre-Employment Transition (Pre-ETS). Bob Kresmer inquired whether the new vendor contracts had been updated to reflect transportation costs. Kristen Mackey stated the contracts did include transportation reimbursement. Kristen Mackey stated the DERS Strategic Plan included the goals of improving the exits with employment and the participation of clients in services. She noted that RSA submitted their first report from the Federal monitoring visit and was waiting for a response. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA would be holding another staff conference on September 30th at We-Ko-Pa and the GCBVI would be pleased to have an information table at the event. Bob Kresmer inquired whether RSA was continuing to work on public relations. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA was in the process of developing videos on all of the programs. Stephanie Johnson stated the goal was to have the videos completed by the end of October.

Kristen Mackey stated there was a leadership staff vacancy in Region 3 and Region 1 and 2 supervisors were covering that unit. She noted that she was

working with HR to fill that position as well as the ILOB supervisor. Maria Bravo stated that ILB staff continued to work on learning how to use InFormed and that it was going well with minor challenges. Amy Porterfield stated that with all the recent process changes, what was the process for informing consumers and providers of those changes. Maria Bravo stated that consumers attended an orientation prior to receiving services and were informed about the process. Bob Kresmer inquired whether the ILB wait list had been impacted by the recent changes. Maria Bravo stated that she was trying to get all records transferred to InFormed so she would have an accurate number of individuals on the wait list.

Joyceline Elliot stated BEP was working with RSA on the implementation of InFormed. Ms. Elliot noted the contract with Fort Huachuca was for 6 more months. Joyceline Elliot stated BEP had new sites in Florence, Casa Grande, the Marana Unified School District, and 3 sites in Auto Zones and the Arizona Historical Society. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding any future projects with the Arizona Participating Operators Committee (APOC). Adam Bevell stated that BEP continued to spread the word about the BEP program and noted that it required a specific individual to be an operator. He noted that times had changed nationwide, and many operators shut down their cafeterias due to a decrease in business. Mr. Bevell stated that BEP needed to be creative and explore other vending opportunities for vendors, although Arizona was at the forefront of BEP programs and other states looked to Arizona for inspiration.

ASDB Report

Annette Reichman stated that all students were back in school at ASDB. She noted that there were 40 blind and visually impaired students at the ASDB Tucson campus, 154 in the 0-3 years old program, and 45 in the Pre-school program at Foundation for Blind Children. Ms. Reichman stated there was a 1 staff vacancy in Tucson, northern Arizona, and Yuma. Annette Reichman stated ASDB partnered with SAAVI Services for the Blind to hold the Braille Challenge event. She added that ASDB was undergoing the 2026 Sunset Audit which included a forensic and programmatic audit. Annette Reichman stated ASDB was approved to offer a teacher training program to make teachers certified to teach at ASDB. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding who was teaching the certification teaching. Annette Reichman stated ASDB staff were providing the training to staff on Fridays. Amy Porterfield inquired whether staff were complying with the recent Braille certification bill that

identified teacher certificates as well as Unified English Braille (UEB) as the standard. Annette Reichman stated she was unsure regarding the certification training although she would look into the curriculum and would share with the council. Jonathan Pringle inquired regarding the number of ASDB students with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss (CVHL). Annette Reichman stated there were students with CVHL on campus and she could get those numbers. Donald Porterfield inquired whether there was a date for the completion of the Sunset Audit. Annette Reichman stated the audit would be completed in October 2026. Bob Kresmer inquired whether ASDB had considered methods for reaching students in rural areas. Annette Reichman stated the Joint Legislation preferred ASDB to focus on supporting students in local schools. Bob Kresmer inquired whether ASDB heard anything more regarding repairs of the ASDB building. Annette Reichman stated that any funding for building repairs would need to come from the Arizona Department of Administration.

Committee Reports

Legislative and Public Policy Committee

Amy Porterfield stated the committee had been tracking the President's budget, which included the removal of funding for the Client Assistance Program (CAP). She noted that other states were using state funding to fund their CAP programs, as there was a requirement for VR programs to have CAP programs. Amy Porterfield stated the Senate budget included a cost-of-living increase for the VR program, although it was unclear how the House of Representatives would rule. Amy Porterfield stated that the Committee had been working with the SBVID Program Manager to reinstate some of the blindness services language that was removed from the VR Policy Manual. She noted the committee would continue to review the policy language and would make any recommendations to RSA. Jonathan Pringle agreed with the importance of accurate policy language and noted that when VR staff would deny any services, it was helpful to reference the appropriate policy.

Deaf-Blind Committee

Jonathan Pringle stated the previous co-Chair of the Deaf-Blind Committee had resigned and he was in the process of finding a deaf-blind individual to co-Chair the committee with him.

Ex-Officio Member and Blindness Community Organization Updates

Arizona Talking Book Library

Erin Pawlus stated the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) had released an updated BARD system, BARD 2, which allowed more a more advanced search and filter options. She noted the library would receive some of the sDA2, digital advanced player, although they would be slow to roll out with the priority going to veterans. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the current funding for the library. Erin Pawlus stated there was still uncertainty regarding the Federal funding and how funding would be appropriate. Bob Kresmer inquired about how the library was handling outreach efforts. Ms. Pawlus stated the library had a staff member that could perform outreach, although she did have further information. Donald Porterfield inquired whether the library had to reduce staff or hours of service. Erin Pawlus stated that some staff members had decided to leave, and she hoped that services had not been impacted.

SAAVI Services for the Blind

Amy Porterfield stated SAAVI hosted the Bell Academy and held the STEM to You program, where middle schoolers were able to build robots, practice Orientation and Mobility (O&M), and other skills. She noted that SAAVI also offered the Ready Set Go program for kindergarten-high school students. Amy Porterfield stated that SAAVI took 12 students to the National Federation of the Blind conference, which was a great experience and finished the youth programs. Amy Porterfield stated the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona State Conference was coming up and many seniors and families had offered to volunteer.

National Federation of the Blind

Donald Porterfield stated the NFBA started the summer with the Bell Academies and that 42 individuals had attended the Stem To You program. He noted that members attended the NFB National Conference, in which Arizona was the third state for participation at the conference. Donald Porterfield stated the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona State Conference would be held August 21-24 at the Hyatt in Phoenix and the conference focus was on reclaiming the narrative. Donald Porterfield stated

the conference would include an exhibit hall, many great presentations and attendees.

Council Meeting Dates and Adjournment

The next meeting of the GCBVI Full Council will be on November 21, 2025 from 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Adjournment of Meeting

Donald Porterfield moved to adjourn the meeting. Amy Porterfield seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 pm.