

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

DeafBlind Committee Meeting Minutes

August 17, 2022

Attendance

Members Present

Andrew Cohen, Co-Chair
Jonathan Pringle, Co-Chair
Megan Mogan
Sue Kay Kneifel
Mary Hartle
Virginia Thompson

Members Absent

Julie Stylinski

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Bradley Leprintess, ASL Interpreter
Jennifer Beaman, ASL Interpreter
Brian Dulude
PV Jantz
Joanne Williams
Julie Oliver
Cindy Walsh
Larry Rhodes

Minutes

Call to Order and Introductions

Andrew Cohen, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm. Introductions were made, and a quorum was present. Larry Rhodes stated that he would be interested in being a member of the Committee if that would be appropriate. Andrew Cohen stated that Larry Rhodes would be welcome to join the Committee.

Approval of June 8, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Megan Mogan moved to approve the minutes of the June 8, 2022 Committee on Deaf-Blind Issues meeting. Jonathan Pringle seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by majority voice vote.

Public Comment

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

Chair Report

Jonathan Pringle stated the committee was still trying to recruit members of the committee, focusing on individuals with combined vision and hearing loss (CVHL). Mr. Pringle noted the committee had just started to meet again and had invited representatives from different organizations to give updates to the committee. Jonathan Pringle stated that Larry Rhodes or Cindy Walsh would be welcome to join the Committee, and they could decide who would be the representative for the Valley Center for the Deaf (VCD) and the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD). Andrew Cohen stated that some social events had been put on hold, although he was planning fundraisers for September for the DeafBlind (DB) community. He noted the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) currently had an open position for a DB Employment Specialist for Arizona.

ACBVI Update

Virginia Thompson stated the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI) had hired an Assistive Technology (AT) Specialist, Steve Dougherty, who was highly skilled in Braille devices and would be working in the I Can Connect program. Ms. Thompson stated Mr. Dougherty would also work in the comprehensive services program and would serve individuals with CVHL. Virginia Thompson stated that Steve Dougherty would be taking 3 clients to Bartlett Lake for an adaptive water sports event, in an effort to offer more activities to clients. She noted there were 39 current clients in the I Can Connect program, and 1 pending application as ACBVI was trying to offer services to individuals quickly.

VR/SBVID/OIB Update

Sue Kay Kneifel stated the total number of individuals in SBVID was 1233, the total number of DB individuals was 62, the total number of individuals with CVHL was 143, the total number participating in the HKNC was 7, the total number of individuals in post-secondary education was 143, and the total number of Transition youth with CVHL. Cindy Walsh inquired whether Sue Kay Kneifel would be able to discuss her resignation from Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). Sue Kay Kneifel stated that she would be leaving RSA, and PV Jantz, Katie Sienko, and Zane Lambros would be assisting with covering her position until it was filled. She noted that SBVID had interviewed several candidates to fill several of the open positions within SBVID as well. Sue Kay Kneifel stated that Brian Dulude would be able to answer any additional questions regarding her position. Mary Hartle thanked Sue Kay Kneifel for all of her hard work with RSA and that it was a pleasure to work with her.

Brian Dulude agreed and thanked Sue Kay Kneifel for all of her work especially in the DB community and it would be difficult to fill her position. Brian Dulude stated the number of individuals in the Older Individuals Who Are Blind (OIB) at the end of June 2021 was 46 and was 53 in 2022. Dr. Dulude stated the average number of days from application to eligibility was 44 days in 2021, and was 26 in 2022, the eligibility compliance was 87% in 2021 and was 100% in 2022. Brian Dulude stated the number of individuals placed in employment was 3 in 2021, and was 3 in 2022, and 3 individuals closed in employment was 4 in 2021 and 3 in 2022.

Cindy Walsh inquired whether the OIB program was able to take new clients and noted that knew of several individuals interested in those services. Eve Sanchez stated the OIB program received requests for services from DB or individuals with CVHL and she tried to bypass the wait list for those individuals if instructors were available. Eve Sanchez inquired whether the committee had any suggestions to further streamline the services to individuals. She noted the OIB program had recently hired a Spanish speaking staff member to communicate with other populations. Cindy Walsh stated that VCD/COPD was not currently referring individuals to the OIB program because her understanding was that services were not available. Ms. Walsh noted that she knew of individuals that were fluent in ASL but were now needing services for low vision. Eve Sanchez inquired regarding the types of services that individuals were requesting. Cindy Walsh stated that VCD/COPD were able to provide Support Service Providers (SSP)s to assist with shopping and medical appointments, although some individuals needed an introduction to blindness training. Eve Sanchez stated that OIB staff would be able to receive all applications and do the intakes for individuals interested in OIB services. Virginia Thompson stated ACBVI was accepting new clients for OIB, and was able to offer adjustment to disability, AT training, and CVHL related services. Cindy Walsh stated her understanding that the referrals would go to Eve Sanchez, and then she would refer the cases to ACBVI. Ms. Walsh inquired whether ACBVI would be able to take 6 new cases. Virginia Thompson stated that ACBVI could try to take 6 new clients based on the services requested. Cindy Walsh inquired whether ACBVI would be able to offer group classes to individuals requesting the same services. Virginia Thompson stated ACBVI could offer group classes to individuals.

SAAVI Services for the Blind Update

Joanne Williams stated that both SAAVI Services for the Blind locations in Phoenix and Tucson had moved to new buildings, and staff were trying to ensure that all building systems were accessible. Ms. Williams stated SAAVI had a new OIB Coordinator that worked closely with Eve Sanchez. Joanne Williams stated SAAVI was starting the ASK classes for community members to come to SAAVI and ask questions about services. She noted there had not been many referrals recently, and SAAVI was trying to reach out to individuals that might not be aware of the organization. Joanne Williams stated the Phoenix location held an Open House in June, and the Open House for the Tucson location would be in October. Andrew Cohen thanked Ms. Williams for her report and inquired whether there were any updates regarding DB services. Joanne Williams stated that SAAVI worked with Jonathan Pringle regarding services to DB students, and ACBVI to assist with Braille display instruction. Ms. Williams noted that SAAVI did not currently have a wait list for comprehensive services, and the organization was able to offer training on Braille displays and AT, independent living, health and wellness, ILB, and job

readiness. Jonathan Pringle stated that HKNC worked with SAAVI, and he would be happy to attend the community classes to discuss CVHL services for individuals that were not familiar with the services available.

VCD Update

Cindy Walsh stated VCD/COPD had a contract to provide SSPs and was in the 2nd year of providing those services. Ms. Walsh stated VCD provided about 150 SSP hours and COPD provided about 300 SSP hours. She noted that in July, VCD/COPD provided over 100 hours of SSP services to DB individuals attending the DB Retreat in Arizona. Cindy Walsh stated the challenge was in recruiting and retaining SSPs due to the lack of hours. Mary Hartle commended VCD/COPD for their work in providing SSP services. Cindy Walsh stated VCD/COPD was working to offer an assisted living facility for Deaf or DB seniors in Phoenix and Tucson. She noted that individuals would need to be eligible for Arizona Long Term Care Services (ALTLCS), or for individuals that could pay privately. Ms. Walsh stated that once the deaf population had reached a certain level, the organization would hire a deaf caregiver to assist deaf residents. Cindy Walsh stated that if any committee members knew of anyone interested in being a resident of one of the facilities, they could contact Karen Kemp.

FBC Update

Julie Oliver stated the Foundation for Blind Children (FBC) offered programs in Phoenix for children, Blind and Visually Impaired (BVI) adults in retirement age, independent living, and orientation and adjustment to vision loss. Julie Oliver stated that Elementary and Pre-School classes had started with 35 Pre-School, and 42 Elementary school students, in which 4 were DB. Julie Oliver stated the goal of FBC was to get students into their school districts by 4th grade. Ms. Oliver stated FBC was working with Arizona State University (ASU) to offer training for Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and 12 TVIs graduated from the program in May. She noted that FBC was excited about the program and recognized the shortage of teachers with experience working with BVI students. Julie Oliver stated the adult comprehensive program had 19 clients, in which some students were enrolled in the program full time and some students were enrolled part time as they continued to work. Julie Oliver stated that FBC had participated in the Transition age youth program at ASU West, in which students learned about first time employment or about going to college. She noted that FBC was able to partner with ASU's Disability Resource Center and local employers to provide knowledge and training to those students. Julie Oliver stated FBC also held a Transition program in July in Flagstaff, where students learned about leadership, Orientation and Mobility (O&M), and communication and problem solving. She noted that FBC would also offer a year-round Transition program, SOAR, where students would obtain their first employment, internship, or volunteer opportunity. Ms. Oliver stated FBC would also offer a program Trailblazers Washington DC, where 8 Transition age students would go to DC to learn about advocacy, the Legislative process and meet with Legislative representatives. Julie Oliver stated the school would hold an educational event, Flight for Sight, where a student would learn to fly a plane non-visually and would take the necessary courses to become a trained pilot.

AHCCCS/ALTCS Update

This item was tabled.

Agenda and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the DB Committee was scheduled for November 8th. Agenda items are as follows:

- Committee Activities Discussion

Announcements

Jonathan Pringle stated that Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) had a comprehensive services contract with providers, which had been in flux. He noted the contract had been extended and would expire in 6 weeks, and he encouraged committee members to notify Dr. Dulude regarding any concerns.

Adjournment of Meeting

Jonathan Pringle motioned to adjourn the meeting. Megan Mogan seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:58 p.m.