

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

August 18, 2023

Attendance

Members Present

Bob Kresmer
Bea Shapiro
John McCann
Ted Chittenden
Jonathan Pringle
Donald Porterfield
Nathan Pullen
Erin Pawlus
Brian Dulude
Annette Reichman

Members Absent

Amy Porterfield
David Steinmetz
Steve Tepper
Allan Curry
Andrew Cohen
Mike Gordon

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Lisa Yencarelli
Stephanie Johnson

Jordan Moon
Jami Parente
Joyceline Elliot
Frank Vance
Marc Marino
Taylor Port
Debbie Hanlon - CART
Sandra Solomon -ASL
Jennifer Key – 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 May 19, 2023 Meeting Minutes

John McCann moved to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2023 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 that he had been in several meetings representing the GCBVI and would appraise the council of his recommendations. Bob Kresmer stated the organizations had been busy with summer programs and the council would receive updates on their activities as well.

RSA Administrator's Report

Kristen Mackey stated the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) was able to increase the grades and wages of the Rehabilitation Technicians (RT)s and the agency would hold a hiring fair to fill some of the open positions. Ms. Mackey noted that most of the Rehabilitation Instructional Specialists had received raises as well. Kristen Mackey stated the Assistive Technology (AT) Employment and Independence Program with Northern Arizona University (NAU) had expanded to serve more clients. Kristen Mackey stated Stephanie Johnson had joined RSA as the new Strategic

Initiatives Coordinator and would identify areas for outreach and how to launch strategic projects. Ms. Mackey stated that Ms. Johnson would first focus on customized employment and would pilot a program that would be expanded statewide. Kristen Mackey supported approximately 100 staff in attending the IHD Conference. Kristen Mackey stated RSA continued to work on the implementation of the new case management system, Informed, with the projected launch date of October 24. She noted that RSA was testing the system internally to ensure that it was accessible for all staff. Kristen Mackey stated there was a gap in understanding between all the fiscal teams, and RSA was receiving technical assistance to ensure that everyone understood the funding. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA submitted a significant amount of data for clients, which needed to be entered correctly. She noted that RSA was previously averaging about 8000 errors and was down to under 1000 errors in data entry. Kristen Mackey stated that VR would receive a slight increase in Federal funding and the program was in a good place. Ms. Mackey stated RSA received a 107 monitoring, which requires RSA to spend 15% on Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). She noted that RSA reported spending 8.5%, although the program likely spent more, those services were not reported correctly. Ms. Mackey stated the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) had been in Federal court to preserve the Fort Huachuca services. Kristen Mackey stated BEP requested Federal arbitration and had been testifying in support of BEP and would participate in closing arguments shortly.

SBVID Program Manager Report

Brian Dulude stated SBVID received about 30 referrals per month, with the majority of individuals coming from Maricopa county, and some from the southern regions. Dr. Dulude noted his understanding that over 50 students had participated in the Summer Transition Youth program, and he would be holding meetings with the vendors to identify what went well during the program. Brian Dulude stated SBVID had recently hired Angela Dial as a new Supervisor for Phoenix, Rosa Ramos as a new Supervisor for Tucson and 3 new counselors in Yuma, Phoenix, and Flagstaff. Brian Dulude noted the comprehensive services contract had been extended to December 31st. Bob Kresmer inquired whether SBVID was able to provide services to individuals in northern Arizona and on the reservations. Brian Dulude stated SBVID had sufficient staff to provide services to individuals in northern Arizona. He added that SBVID was working with the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC)

to provide services for Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) clients with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss (CVHL).

Eve Sanchez stated there were currently 538 individuals on the OIB wait list, in which 114 were waiting for Rehabilitation Teaching, 140 for Orientation and Mobility, 112 for AT, and 62 for Orientation and Adjustment to Disability. She noted the majority of individuals were in Maricopa, Pima, and Yavapai counties. Eve Sanchez stated there had been issues with the vendor authorizations, although those issues had been resolved. Ms. Sanchez stated the AT outreach program that started last year, had not been widely used at the time, but had experienced more participation due to a collaboration with the Talking Book Library's outreach efforts. Sanchez stated OIB would also collaborate with the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA) and would offer cane walking instruction at the upcoming NFB State Conference. Bob Kresmer inquired whether OIB was able to offer services to individuals in rural areas. Eve Sanchez stated OIB continued to work with the vendors to provide services to individuals in rural areas. Ted Chittenden inquired how OIB provided transportation for individuals in rural areas. Eve Sanchez stated that it depended on the location, and some organizations offered transportation to clients, and some would travel to clients. She noted that most rural areas were made up of separate towns, which made transportation difficult as they were spread out throughout the regions.

BEP Program Update

Joyceline Elliot thanked everyone that had supported the BEP program and the Fort Huachuca hearings. Joyceline Elliot stated BEP had been awarded the Marana Base troop dining contract and an operator would be operating those services. Ms. Elliot stated BEP was able to fill the BEP Consultant position and a Technician would be starting in September. She added that BEP had new sites in Casa Grande, Chandler, Pima and Yuma.

ASDB Report

Lisa Yencarelli stated ASDB had recently hired an Interim Assistant Superintendent over curriculum and instruction, a Special Education Instructor, a CTE Director, a Region 1 Director, and a new Principle for the Tucson campus. Lisa Yencarelli stated ASDB was recently switching to a new system, and she did not have the current enrollment numbers, although she would share those with the council. Ms. Yencarelli stated that as of July 1,

the number of students enrolled agency-wide was 2178. Lisa Yencarelli stated ASDB would hold Superintendent Town Halls on October 10th in Phoenix and October 17th in Tucson, and October 24th on Zoom. Bob Kresmer inquired whether ASDB struggled to hire teachers also. Lisa Yencarelli stated the pool of applicants was small, and the school was conducting outreach efforts and offering opportunities for support staff that were interested in becoming teachers. Ted Chittenden stated that some school boards had challenged some curriculums regarding gender equality and LGBTQ and inquired whether ASDB had experienced any opposition. Lisa Yencarelli stated the ASDB Board was composed of Governor appointed members and had not experienced any challenges to curriculum.

GCBVI Committee Reports

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.

Public Information Committee

Ted Chittenden stated that he had received reports from the AT and Employment Committee and was still seeking the rest of the committee reports as well as a Chair report and client success stories by the end of the month. Ted Chittenden stated that Erin Pawlus had informed the committee that Sara Muth, who had assisted in development of the EyeKnowAZ database would be leaving the state, and she had educated Ms. Pawlus on some of the administrative duties of the database. Ted Chittenden stated that he would be attending the VA White Cane Safety Day on October 19th, and council members were invited to attend as representatives of the council.

Ex-Officio Member and Blindness Community Organization Updates

Arizona Talking Book Library

Erin Pawlus stated the library had completed the Summer Reading programs, in which 16 youth and 44 adults ranging from 4 to 96 years old had participated. She noted the theme of the program had been All Together Now and had focused on connections through gardening. Erin Pawlus stated

the library would invite individuals to visit a sensory community garden on October 20th in Glendale to commemorate the reading program. Ms. Pawlus stated the library had resumed the book program at the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI), in which individuals were discovering different books. She noted the library would also hold a Banned Books week in October and was accepting volunteers to read various challenged books during that week. Erin Pawlus stated she had visited a Talking Book Library in Washington and was interested in visiting libraries that were making more books available through Braille. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the books on demand program. Erin Pawlus stated the Readers' Advisory Librarians let individuals know about the program, and she could provide updates at the next meeting.

Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Frank Vance stated the new health center had been completed and individuals now had access to medical services. Mr. Vance noted ACBVI was working with Terros to be able to provide holistic services to individuals.

SAAVI Services for the Blind

Jordan Moon stated 3 individuals would be visiting SAAVI and would determine whether the organization could be a Structural and Discovery center, in which there were only 6 nationwide. He noted the Phoenix campus would be expanding to include residential services and would utilize apartments about 1 mile from the center, allowing students to walk to and from the apartments.

National Federation of the Blind of Arizona

Donald Porterfield stated the NFBA National Conference was held in July and the State Conference would be August 24th-27th at the Hyatt in Phoenix. He noted that over 200 individuals had registered and several agencies such as SBVID, AIB, and ASDB would be presenting at the conference.

Arizona Council of the Blind

Ted Chittenden stated the American Council of the Blind (ACB) National Conference was held in April, in which the first half was online, and the second half was hybrid. Mr. Chittenden stated 15 resolutions had been passed, and he would share those with the council. John McCann stated that

he would be taking Ted Chittenden's place as the Independent Living Committee Chair.

Helen Keller National Center

Jonathan Pringle stated the HKNC had completed their Summer Youth program in which 1 individual was from Arizona and one was from Colorado. He noted the Arizona participant had been featured nationally as well.

Agenda Items and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the GCBVI Full Council will be on November 17, 2023 from 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Call to the Public

Marc Marino stated that he had received an application to apply for council membership, and he would continue to attend meetings.

Adjournment of Meeting

Donald Porterfield moved to adjourn the meeting. Nathan Pullen seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:25

Statistics

As of June 30, 2023, the statistics are:

The total number of individuals in VR was 3350

The total number of veterans in the VR program were 61

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 174

The average number of days from application to eligibility was 58

The median number of days from application to eligibility was 29

The eligibility compliance was average

The number of new plans written was 647

The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 107.42

The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 77.38

The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 71.3%

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

The lowest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$13.00

The average hourly wage for successful employment outcomes was \$22.19

The number of clients placed in employment was 25

The number of clients closed successfully in employment was 27

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

The total number of individuals in VR was 221

The total number of veterans in VR program was 4

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 58.3

The median number of days from application to eligibility was 72

The eligibility compliance was 100%

The number of new plans written was 31

The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 143.72

The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 84.5

The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 75.6%
The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$14.05
The lowest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$14.05
The average hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$14.05
The number of clients placed in employment was 3
The number of clients closed successfully was 1