

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

**Full Council Meeting Minutes**

August 19, 2022

**Members Present**

Bob Kresmer  
Amy Porterfield  
John McCann  
Andrew Cohen  
Donald Porterfield  
Nathan Pullen  
Steve Tepper  
Annette Reichman  
Erin Pawlus  
Bea Shapiro  
Mike Gordon  
Brian Dulude

**Members Absent**

Allan Curry  
David Steinmetz  
Ted Chittenden  
Jonathan Pringle

**Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers

**Guests Present**

Eve Sanchez  
Mike Feeney  
Joyceline Elliot  
Candis Gingris  
Sandra Solomon

## **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 May 27, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

John McCann moved to approve the minutes of the May 27, 2022 GCBVI Full Council meeting as written. Nathan Pullen seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved by majority voice vote.

## **GCBVI Chairperson's Report**

Bob Kresmer stated that he received calls from community members seeking resources for blind and visually impaired individuals, especially older individuals who had lost their vision. Mr. Kresmer stated he referred those individuals to the Older Individuals Who Are Blind (OIB) unit. Bob Kresmer that he met with Kristen Mackey and Brian Dulude monthly to discuss issues brought forth during previous council meetings, progress that the consumer groups had made, and any recent policy changes.

## **Council Membership Discussion**

Bob Kresmer stated there was a new President of the Arizona Council of the Blind (AzCB) and inquired whether he would be willing to serve on the council. John McCann stated that he worked as an Assistant to a Councilman and was unsure whether it would be a conflict of interest for him to serve on the council. Bob Kresmer stated that other AzCB Board members would be welcome to participate on the council. Bob Kresmer stated there were also positions open for the Blinded Veterans of Arizona (BVA) representations if anyone knew of a veteran interested in serving on the council. Bob Kresmer inquired whether any members of the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA) would be interested in serving on the council. Donald Porterfield stated he knew of a NFBA member that was interested, although he was dealing with some family matters at the time. Bob Kresmer stated he spoke to a parent of a blind child and had invited them to attend a meeting.

## **RSA Administrator's Report**

Brian Dulude stated that offices had reopened to the public on July 5<sup>th</sup>, although some offices remained closed due to low staff mostly in the rural areas. Brian Dulude stated that the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) would have to return some Federal funds, which was largely due to an inability to spend all of the 15% Pre-Employment Transition (Pre-ETS) funds and a reduction in overall Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients. Dr. Dulude stated that RSA had a tentative start date for the

new case management system for October. He noted that Kristen Mackey hoped to hire a Change Management Specialist as a contractor to ensure adoption of the new system. Brian Dulude stated that staff would have to dedicate significant time in implementing the new system for the next 3 years. Brian Dulude stated that all staff received a 10% raise, and some staff classifications received an additional pay increase. Amy Porterfield inquired whether RSA was concerned regarding not being able to use all of the grant funds. Brian Dulude stated RSA had not received any directives that the agency would not be able to continue to provide services in the same way. Amy Porterfield stated the Pre-ETS contract did not lend itself to providing services to blind and visually impaired students and inquired whether RSA had considered revisiting those contracts. Brian Dulude stated he had been involved in Transition and Pre-ETS meetings, and there would be some revisions to the services. Bob Kresmer inquired whether there was a target date for when the funds would need to be expended. Brian Dulude stated he was unsure regarding the exact date, although the end of the FFY was in September.

### **SBVID Program Manager Report**

Eve Sanchez stated that SBVID continued to focus on completing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) in a timely manner and noted the median number of days from eligibility and implementation goal was 90 days, and SBVID was at 75 days. Brian Dulude stated the compliance rating goal was 95% and SBVID was at 100%. He noted that SBVID aimed to provide excellent customer service, and to get individuals into the system quickly so they could begin receiving services. Brian Dulude stated there were several staff vacancies and noted that Sue Kay Kneifel had accepted a position with the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH), and he would be taking on her position duties until her position was filled. Amy Porterfield stated that SBVID used to have 2 separate Program Manager positions, and then that position had been combined to include deaf and blind services. Ms. Porterfield inquired whether SBVID would fill Sue Kay Kneifel's position with an individual with blindness experience to ensure that blindness services were a priority. Brian Dulude stated that he would continue to oversee the position and the hiring of the individual that would fill that position. Steve Tepper inquired whether there would be a Request for Proposal (RFP) for services for individuals with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss (CVHL). Brian Dulude stated the Scope of Work (SOW) had been created, and he anticipated receiving an update regarding that RFP. Mike Gordon inquired whether there was an update regarding the blindness comprehensive services contract. Brian Dulude stated that RSA continued to make efforts to complete the contracts and vendors should have received a notice regarding the contracts. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the staff that would be able to work with Transition age youth. Brian Dulude stated that Steve Wilson

had been recently hired to work with Transition youth in Tucson, and he expected to be able to fill another open counselor position.

Eve Sanchez stated that 455 total services had been assigned in the Older Individuals Who Are Blind (OIB) program and there were 569 individuals on the waitlist. Eve Sanchez stated that 27 services were assigned in June, 31 in July, and 18 so far in August. John McCann inquired whether OIB was concerned with the number of individuals on the waitlist. Eve Sanchez stated the majority of individuals on the waitlist had received some services. Ms. Sanchez noted that many individuals in the OIB program had medical conditions and were not able to receive all services at once, although most were able to begin receiving some services quickly depending on the services they were requesting and instructor availability. Eve Sanchez stated that OIB had hired 2 new instructors, in which 1 could help with Assistive Technology (AT) training, and she hoped to hire 2 new positions, an Orientation and Mobility (O&M) instructor. Bob Kresmer inquired whether the OIB program still hoped to be able to offer 50% of services in house. Eve Sanchez stated that it would depend on the services requested, although the vendors had been instrumental in providing OIB services. Eve Sanchez stated that of the individuals on the waitlist, there were 211 in Maricopa, 42 in Pima, 13 in Pinal, 14 in Yavapai, 8 in Mohave, 3 in Gila, 3 in Apache, 3 in Cochise, 1 in Navajo, 2 in Graham, and 4 in Coconino County. Ms. Sanchez stated that she would be pleased to hear how individuals were referred to the OIB program if council members had any information to share.

### **BEP Program Update**

Joyceline Elliot stated there was 1 open Business Enterprise Program (BEP) consultant position, the Contract Manager, and the Program Manager position. Joyceline Elliot stated that 2 individuals would be participating in the next BEP training, which would include warehouse experience for individuals to learn about vending machines. Ms. Elliot stated there were open contracts in Fort Huachuca and the National Guard in Tucson. Joyceline Elliot noted there were awarded contract sites in Coolidge, Scottsdale, Eloy, Goodyear, Lavine, and an Aquatic Center in Chandler. John McCann inquired whether those sites were vending machine locations. Joyceline Elliot stated those sites did have vending machines. Bob Kresmer inquired whether there were any new sites that BEP would consider. Joyceline Elliot stated BEP was considering 2 new sites for vending machines. Bob Kresmer inquired whether there was an update regarding the rest stops. Ms. Elliot stated BEP was working with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to resolve that issue.

Bob Kresmer inquired how the BEP operators were doing. Mike Feeney stated that BEP operators working the larger routes were doing well, although some operators were struggling in the smaller rural areas. Bob Kresmer inquired whether individuals were

dropping out of the BEP program. Mike Feeney stated there were about 24 individuals in the BEP program and there were about 20 currently.

### **ASDB Report**

Annette Reichman stated the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB) had recently hired a new Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, a new Principal for the Tucson campus, and a Regional Director position. Annette Reichman stated ASDB would hold Town Halls in October and individuals could RSVP on the agency webpage. Annette Reichman stated ASDB schools were back in person offering instruction while adhering to some social distancing practices. Ms. Reichman stated there were 40 students on the Tucson campus, 47 in the Foundation for Blind Children (FBC) Pre-School, 169 in the Early Intervention Program, and 367 students receiving itinerant services. She noted the request for Braille materials had increased, and there was a shortage of Braille lists in Maricopa County. Bob Kresmer inquired whether there were any staff vacancies. Annette Reichman stated there were about 7-8 teacher vacancies in Maricopa for visually impaired students. Bob Kresmer inquired whether Lisa Yencarelli could share her demographic report with the council. Annette Reichman stated she would request that Lisa Yencarelli share that information.

### **GCBVI Committee Reports**

#### ***AT Committee***

The AT Committee had not been able to meet recently, although the committee was discussing potential future activities and goals. Ms. Shapiro stated the committee would not be able to provide a presentation for the Vision Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Expo (VRATE) in the Fall. She noted the committee continued to work with Sun Sounds in creating podcasts about different AT topics. Bob Kresmer inquired whether the next VRATE would be held in the Spring and would be hybrid. Bea Shapiro stated she had not heard any details regarding the next VRATE event.

#### ***DeafBlind Committee***

Andrew Cohen stated the DeafBlind Committee met recently, in which representatives from different organizations attended and provided updates on DB services. Mr. Cohen stated the next meeting would be in November, and committee members would discuss the goals and activities for the committee. Bob Kresmer stated he was glad that many organizations were participating in the committee meetings.

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

### **Arizona Talking Book Library**

Erin Pawlus stated the National Library Service (NLS) had launched a pilot program to offer a Braille hard copy of any book available through BARD to patrons. Ms. Pawlus stated that patrons could fill out the form online requesting Braille copies of books. Bob Kresmer inquired whether patrons were able to keep the Braille books. Erin Pawlus stated that patrons could keep the Braille books. She noted the NLS completed the e-reader pilot program with 2 devices, and the Talking Book Library could begin providing e-readers to patrons. Erin Pawlus stated that individuals could request to be put on the waitlist for the HumanWare e-reader, which was a 20-cell 8-key device, with a duplicate cartridge that could read multiple documents such as PDF and docx files. Bob Kresmer inquired whether the device could be connected to an individual's phone. Erin Pawlus stated the e-reader could be connected to iOS devices and paired with screen readers. Bob Kresmer inquired whether Christine Tuttle, Outreach Librarian, would discuss the e-readers during her outreach efforts. Erin Pawlus stated Ms. Tuttle would let individuals know about the e-readers. Eve Sanchez inquired whether the OIB program could obtain an e-reader to know how to use and to provide instruction to clients. Erin Pawlus stated that individuals on the wait list would receive e-readers first, although she would check on the institutional accounts. Erin Pawlus stated the Friends of the Talking Book Library would hold the Whine and Cheese event again at the Phoenix Art Museum on September 30<sup>th</sup>, and individuals could go to the [azfotb.org](http://azfotb.org) website to learn more about the event.

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

Steve Tepper stated that ACBVI hosted 40 students from Creighton University who were interested in learning about blindness and visual impairments. Mr. Tepper stated ACBVI would take 22 clients waterskiing, tubing and fishing at Bartlett Lake in September. He noted the center was moving forward with the renovations for adding additional buildings to the campus. Bob Kresmer inquired regarding the parking lot renovations. Steve Tepper stated the Lion's Club donated funds for the parking lot repaving. Mr. Tepper stated ACBVI also had 3 mobile clinics and were able to provide services to individuals in the building and in the community.

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

Mike Gordon stated SAAVI held an Open House in Phoenix, which was well attended by community members as well as the Phoenix Mayor. Mike Gordon stated that 50 staff and students attended the NFB National Convention, which included Kristen Mackey. Mike Gordon stated the next National Convention would be held in Houston the

following year. Mr. Gordon stated there would be another Open House for the Tucson building, which had recently been renovated. Mike Gordon stated SAAVI held the Transition Summer Camp residentially, which was not as well-attended as previous years due to COVID. Mike Gordon stated the organization would hold retreats for groups to provide blindness services to individuals as a type of early assessment. Mike Gordon stated SAAVI would be creating an Introduction to Blindness class to blindness professionals to learn about the resources and opportunities available to individuals.

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

Donald Porterfield stated the NFB National Convention was held in New Orleans in July and was well attended by individuals in person and virtually. Mr. Porterfield stated the State Convention would be held September 1-4 in person in Tucson, and anyone could register for the event online or at the event. Donald Porterfield stated that Secretary of State, Katie Hobbs, would be speaking at the Conference, to further discuss challenges with SB 1638, to ensure that it would be enforced. Donald Porterfield stated that a representative from the Pima County Recorder's Office and the Department of Elections would be speaking about the voter's registration process, distributing Braille ballots, maintaining the accessible voting machines, and an overall discussion on voting.

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

John McCann stated the AzCB 2022 Convention was held virtually, which was well attended. He noted that Chris Desborough had been elected as the new President and wanted to hold less meetings and more interactive events.

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

The next meeting of the GCBVI Full Council will be on November 18, 2022 from 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm.

### **Announcements**

Bob Kresmer reminded the Committee Chairs that the Public Information Committee would be developing the GCBVI Annual Report. Mr. Kresmer stated that if the Chairs did not have a report, to develop a description of the Committee's goals to Lindsey Powers to be included in the Annual Report.

### **Call to the Public**

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

## **Adjournment of Meeting**

John McCann moved to adjourn the meeting. Nathan Pullen seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:38.



**As of June 30, 2022, the statistics are:**

The total number of individuals in VR was 883  
The total number of veterans in the VR program were 26  
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 171  
The average number of days from application to eligibility was 45.9  
The median number of days from application to eligibility was 27  
The eligibility compliance was 84%  
The number of new plans written was 558  
The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 92.8  
The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 75  
The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 83.2%  
The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$62.50  
The lowest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$9.71  
The average hourly wage for successful employment outcomes was \$21.67  
The number of clients placed in employment was 55  
The number of clients closed successfully in employment was 58

**As of June 30, 2022, the Deaf Blind Population statistics:**

The total number of individuals in VR was 53  
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 26.4  
The median number of days from application to eligibility was 24  
The eligibility compliance was 100%  
The number of new plans written was 21  
The average number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 187  
The median number of days from eligibility to IPE implementation was 86  
The IPE implementation compliance within 90 days was 67%  
The highest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$75.18  
The lowest hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$13.46  
The average hourly wage of successful employment outcomes was \$34.04  
The number of clients placed in employment was 3  
The number of clients closed successfully was 3