
AVIT Minutes– June 10, 2021

In attendance:

Cyral Miller, Chair, Central TX Professionals for VI
Dr. Rona Pogrund, TTU, TX University Professors in Visual Impairment (TUPVI),
TAER Juanita Barker, Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)
Karissa Sanchez, HHSC Blind Children's Program
Mary Ann Siller, Treasurer, North Texas Professionals for Visual
Impairment Laura Hampton, TSVI, SFASU Adjunct
Nicholas Trotter, TEA VI Program
Administrator Susie Welch, DBMAT
Chris Tabb, AER O&M Division
Matt Daw, Sight Savers America,
Inc. Linda Jordan, TSVI/ COMS
DJ Dean, SFASU, COMS/TSVI
Jeanine Lineback, Austin Chapter Texas National Federation of the Blind
(NFB) Ann Phillips, East Texas Lighthouse for the Blind
Peggy Garrett, Texas ACB
Yolanda Shaw, TSBVI
Dr. Michael Munro, North Texas Professionals for Visual Impairment

Cyral Miller called the meeting to order on ZOOM.

Approval of minutes

Mary Ann Siller moved to approve the draft minutes; the motion was seconded by Rona Pogrund. The March 2021 meeting minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Report

Mary Ann Siller reported no deposits or withdrawals since the last meeting. Our balance is \$4,116.00.

New Business

Legislative Issues

Here is the link to "Texas Legislature Online": <https://capitol.texas.gov/MnuMyTLO.aspx>. At this website you can search legislation that has been introduced by title, subject, sponsor, and follow the history of action on bills. It also has a bill alert that can help you find out when bills are sent to or from committee.

Agency/Organization Updates

TEA, Nicholas Trotter

The following was an update about the deafblind certification :

- Texas and TEA are 2 to 3 years from having a test to put out for certification
- No decisions have been made regarding who will be eligible to sit for the exam
- Educator standards are still working through that process
- Exam questions have been solicited from some in the field

TWC, Juanita Barker

Texas Workforce Commission's VR Program are providing many different PreEmployment Transition Services (PreETS) this summer for students ages 14 through 21. The biggest one is Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) and it is for any student with a disability and offers real paid summer jobs all over the state. There is a large variety of activities including STEM camps. There are also some activities for blind and visually impaired students that include:

- Summer Work Empowerment in Austin Texas (SWEAT) that is done in collaboration with TSBVI
- Working and Living in the Community (WALIC) that is done in collaboration with TSBVI
- Real World of Work in Dallas that partners with CVS for summer jobs all over the DFW metro area
- Jobs for Blind Students (JOBS) in Austin
- TWC's Criss Cole Rehab Center's College Prep program
- Criss Cole Rehab Center has been doing virtual classes through the pandemic and has provided every participant with a laptop so they can actively participate and also improve technological skills. As of June 1, the Center will be having a limited day program and then on Sept. 1 will offer residential training again.

- SB 1917 was passed this session that mandates that HHSC offer training and resources on its internet plus a toll-free number for older adults experiencing vision loss, caregivers, and community providers. TWC is working with HHSC on this initiative through the Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) program (age 55 and older).
- The OIB Program continues to expand and now has 16 workers in the field who cover all 254 counties. A Helpline has been established and the program has already served more individuals than it has in the past five years. The Helpline number is 512-936-3388.

AER O&M Division, Chris Tabb

SWOMA Conference 2021 is scheduled for November 4th - 6th and details can be found at <http://www.swoma.org>

AER Orientation and Mobility Division has position papers open for public comment, see below and more coming (O&M's Role in Low Vision Driving, Remote Instruction, **possibly more**). Folks who are not Division members can find details on the AER Orientation and Mobility Division Facebook page or this entry is from an email...

We are seeking your input during the next thirty days to comment and make suggestions to the draft or revised position papers listed below. Comments can be sent to aeromdivision@gmail.com and the comment period will end on June 21, 2021. We are looking forward to hearing from you.

- Teaching Street Crossing at Streets and Lanes Where There Is No Traffic Control
- Orientation and Mobility in Naturalistic Environments
- Teaching Street Crossing at Signalized Intersections
- Orientation and Mobility Assessments for Children

(See links to documents below)

Street Crossing with No Traffic Control,
https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001cHBpIIVJMWEA6Mj6hVj5R59uOoRyE3UFauyMz6ypPZ_wAWbO-9BeQ44txiF45Nx4BQ6ECppsmtQ1C0ns22ATEy2W0kgugYI17mTLZzu9emh3rNbjVipmYXBXWdU05io5spj-GYjwZEg3sS5f3c4HeKsbS_-yMlokBHFr0Q3_RrFrwPCB0x4B4dsSjsaYWSKTc6g0P-lwcfAskNSJXrC1-jztBy2Y3IGy1KoZEsi3ZM=&c=ITKgR7wUz0h0SwCx2hx2CitsaPrQl-JQVi7ZP2WYulGygv6D4mrd_g==&ch=eUnDLCvBn8RXXpwOG9The6D6Yg4ZpOA1c6Tj4ZlaCrQaBGgJW4RTYQ==

O&M in Naturalistic Environments,

https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001cHBpIIVJMWEA6Mj6hVj5R59uOoRyE3UFauyMz6ypPZ_wAWb O-9BeQ44txiF45Nx4AZfhYyG5YGtpSc_Zanoo3TzpnLxSXNmsP7Ie6BaLGQfmuYAQGuS7DXiFt3Aa9hd4y80w566q_R4eeFk-kAGtKVhzCxxBfDFj6J2U5SrwuRuFR7UYdyFeV-9V6RVhee1jqQO8bgEVK7O2JB1EnmRVT7tgmyRDKsRK-I-Im3IW9Tc=&c=ITKgR7wUz0h0SwCx2hxCitsaPrQI-JQVi7ZP2WYulGygv6D4mrd_g==&ch=eUnDLCvBn8RXXpwOG9The6D6Yg4ZpOA1c6Tj4ZlaCrQaBGgJW4RTYQ==

Street Crossings at Signalized Intersections,

https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001cHBpIIVJMWEA6Mj6hVj5R59uOoRyE3UFauyMz6ypPZ_wAWb O-9BeQ44txiF45Nx4T4Eq-sNR8AIGJAXIX8PAIvFO7e7cMxpxYA6QLZjqJ40dg2sSvIYFWFLAxGrfmSzspg4br_0Gp-HCh9Q5cq8Z7Ri4P9QKCVJUcDTySpqRWeJq2VhxgUiz0sFbleJI_Oes7tJlxbfBu1W--iW_mng91f7Ti560EwObUNuWe10ebA=&c=ITKgR7wUz0h0SwCx2hxCitsaPrQI-JQVi7ZP2WYulGygv6D4mrd_g==&ch=eUnDLCvBn8RXXpwOG9The6D6Yg4ZpOA1c6Tj4ZlaCrQaBGgJW4RTYQ==

O&M Assessments for Children,

https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001cHBpIIVJMWEA6Mj6hVj5R59uOoRyE3UFauyMz6ypPZ_wAWb O-9BeQ44txiF45Nx4yn-____2-YEqhwg_B97WAKRThP52fz2tN-aUYvkgjlbJDEN1mUcLSZ0VhX6gVDGz0_QVLWLeDkdtG-k2hxNG__ejFwRb539iQwz5quaTAB7peg4iXXsgtRAIN_xc_DI76p2VS6zDf8WaC-qvnQaoFI_X8iJXoy_16r3TWflePDx6c=&c=ITKgR7wUz0h0SwCx2hxCitsaPrQI-JQVi7ZP2WYulGygv6D4mrd_g==&ch=eUnDLCvBn8RXXpwOG9The6D6Yg4ZpOA1c6Tj4ZlaCrQaBGgJW4RTYQ==

HHSC BCP, Karissa Sanchez

The Blind Children's Program (BCP) is continuing to provide services to children and families to increase their overall independence and success. We support families throughout their journey until they feel confident and have the skills to tackle their challenges on their own. BCP is always available to assist families when a need arises and can provide follow up services through our post-closure process. Currently, all services are being provided virtually. BCP's Futures Planning 101 trainings (facilitated by the ARC) are continuing:

By the end of August, we will have hosted the sessions 72 times.

To date, we have had 122 families start the series, with another 25 signed up.

The training is being offered virtually and at varied times (such as evenings and weekends) to accommodate our working families and their busy schedules. They are offered in English and Spanish.

Training topics: person-centered planning, goal-setting, financial planning, decision-making (including guardianship and alternatives to guardianship) and building community for the future.

We plan to continue offering these parent trainings next fiscal year.

BCP hosted a virtual camp for children with dual sensory loss April 23-24 with virtual parent chats on April 18th and 29th, and Sibshop on April 25th. It was a huge success! Families from all over the state participated virtually in typical camp activities such as a campfire, cooking, crafts, sensory activities and a family dance intentionally designed to be fun and help children with combined vision and hearing loss develop skills in a variety of critical areas. Targeted skill areas included sensory efficiency, literacy, communication, socialization, and independent living skills. We are exploring how to do a hybrid camp next year - in person for families who can travel and virtual for families who need to participate from their home.

Also, BCP will be sending out a customer service survey out this summer, via email, to families who have been in active services for more than six months. We are seeking feedback on service provision and looking forward to continuing to improve our services.

And every year during the last week of June, Deafblind Awareness week is celebrated in honor of an icon in the Deafblind community, Helen Keller. This week is set aside not only to celebrate Keller’s birthday, but to provide community awareness about having a combined vision and hearing loss.

On June 24, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. BCP will celebrate Deafblind Awareness Week by hosting a family virtual social hour. This is an opportunity for families from across the state to meet one another, discuss topics of interest, and share joys and challenges of raising a child with a combined vision and hearing loss. Two parents of children with a combined vision and hearing loss and the BCP deafblind team will facilitate the social hour.

87th legislative session Update

Program	Senate Bill 1	FY 2021 Appropriation/ Efficiencies	VARIANCE (+/-)
2022-2023 Biennial Totals			
	2022	2023	2021

D.1.5. Blind Children's Program	5,748,136	5,748,136	5,748,897	-761
D.1.5. BCP Avg. Mthly Number of Children Receiving Svs	3,026	3,026		
D.1.5. BCP Avg. Mthly Cost Per child	153	153	99	99
F.2.2. BEST Program	430,000	430,000	430,000	No change

SB1 was sent to the Governor for signature on June 8, 2021. The Blind Children's Program and the BEST program were provided with level funding in the General Appropriations bill. We did see a slight decrease in our BCP funding allocation of -761 per year for FY 22-23. The

average monthly cost per child increased from 99 to 153. For the BEST program, there was no change in funding. The program remains at \$430,000 per year to provide screenings and treatment.

As always, I encourage you to visit the HHSC website hhs.texas.gov for presentations and reports and you can sign up for GovDelivery if you have not already done so which can be found in the top right corner of the HHSC webpage and by clicking subscribe. You can also reach out to me directly anytime with questions or assistance at my email address: Karissa.sanchez@hhs.texas.gov

Shifting to the 87th legislative session:

As always, AVIT is closely monitoring the legislative process and will keep you apprised of any program impacts as they are identified throughout the process. (The second Special Session is currently underway.)

Texas University Professionals in VI (TUPVI), Dr. Rona Poggrund

Summer session at TTU will begin on June 2, 2021. TTU will be offering in- person classes this summer. There are 31 in the cane class this summer since we were not able to offer that last summer due to COVID. There are 20 students in the Basic O&M class this summer. Deadline for Reach Across Texas applications is Nov 1 for spring scholarship consideration.

There are a large number of TSVI openings around the state. Many TSVIs are being hired on an Emergency Permit while completing their coursework.

The 1st cohort of Project INVITE finishes in May or August of 2022. We will be selecting the 2nd cohort for Project INVITE in early winter to begin in Summer 2022. Project INVITE (Interdisciplinary Neurological Visual Impairment Teaching Experts) is a federal OSEP grant that TTU received in 2019. Four states are included in Project INVITE (Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, & Texas) to train teachers of students with visual impairments and O&M specialists. The training will provide people to receive their master's degree in special education in 2 cohorts with a focus on NVI/CVI.

TTU's other 5-year federal grant, Project CAT-SI (Collaboration and Assistive Technology in Sensory Impairments) ends at the end of July 2021.

Texas University Professionals in VI (TUPVI) - SFASU, DJ Dean, Clinical Instructor/O&M Internship Coordinator

SFA Visual Impairment Preparation Program

SFA hired 3 people for the VIP Program:

Program Assistant III: Wendi Channel

Part-time faculty: Belinda Rudinger

Full-time faculty: Beverly Jackson

New Cohorts: 28 new graduate level TVI students; 7 new graduate level O&M students; 7 new undergraduate level O&M students

O&M interns: 11 graduate and undergraduate students were able to complete during the past 2020-2021 year; 15 graduate students currently working on completing internships; 5 undergraduate students working to complete internship

Braille and Cane Club is excited to be able to host activity this coming school year.

Matt Daw, Sight Savers America, Inc.

Funding is available for Dallas sites. Applications are being taken. The clinic in Dallas will be before the end of September. San Antonio will be the next area.

Discussion/Announcements

Future Meeting Dates:

The next meeting date is September 22, 2021 on Zoom. AVIT meetings are from 10-12. Agenda will be shown on the Alert AVIT Google Network in advance of the meeting. The meeting was adjourned by Cyral Miller.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Ann Siller, TVI, Treasurer.

A. Acronyms!

There are a lot of shortcut acronyms used in these notes. Here's a handy tip sheet:

AVIT - Alliance of and for Visually Impaired Texans

BCVDDP (or BCP) - Blind Children's Vocational Discovery and Development Program (aka Blind Children's Program), now housed at HHSC

CEC - Council for Exceptional Children

CILS - Center for Independent Living Services

COMS - Certified orientation and mobility specialist

DB - Deafblind

ESC - Education Service Center

FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions

HHSC - Health and Human Services Commission

HR - human resources (personnel)

IL - independent living programs

IT - information technology (technology services)

NFADB – National Family Association for Deaf-Blind

OIB - Older Individuals who are Blind

O&M – orientation and mobility

RCT – Rehabilitation Council of Texas

SFA or SFASU – Stephen F. Austin State University

SSP - Support Service Provider

STP - Short Term Programs at TSBVI

TDB - Teacher of students who are Deafblind

TEA - Texas Education Agency

TSBVI - Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

TTU – Texas Tech University

TUPVI – Texas University Professors in Visual Impairment

TWC - Texas Workforce Commission

TWS - Texas Workforce Solutions

VR - vocational rehabilitation

WIOA - Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the legislation that governs much of the vocational rehabilitation moneys from the Federal government