

# AVIT Meeting Minutes – September 6, 2022

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## In attendance:

Cyral Miller, Chair, Central TX Professionals for VI  
Emily Coleman, Secretary  
Susie Welch, DBMAT  
Dr. Rona Pogrund, TTU / TUPVI  
Nicholas Trotter, TEA  
Matt Daw, Sight Savers  
Elaine Sveen, Region 10  
Alexa Poynor, Region 10  
Mari Garza, Region 20  
Chris Tabb, TAER O&M Division  
Karen Wolffe, Private Consultant  
Juanita Barker, TWC

*Note: there is an acronym list at the end for help in following these notes!*

**Cyral Miller called the meeting to order on ZOOM at 10:05 a.m.**

## Approval of minutes

Cyral called a vote for approval of minutes which was seconded by Chris Tabb and the minutes were approved of the June 2022 minutes.

## Treasurer's Report

Mary Ann Siller emailed our Treasurer's report this morning. Our current balance is \$3769.97 with no deposits or withdrawals to report. Cyral shared that we haven't asked for membership dues for several years, but membership dues may be requested at the start of the 2023 school year. A final decision on dues will be made at the December meeting.

## New Business

DBMAT and other organizations are reviewing proposed rules for programs within DBMD and other waiver programs. Here is a link to see the proposed new proposed language (all underlined words are new). Proposal has rules regarding "Individualized Skills and Socialization" passed down from the federal level pushing for more community-based training, which will require a special license and professionals trained in this area. In addition, there is a

requirement to reduce the number of hours the day-hab. can be reimbursed to 6 hours instead of 8 hours. Ratios of providers to clients are also impacted by proposed changes. Written comments must be in by September 12<sup>th</sup>.

## Agency/Organization Updates

### ***TEA, Nicholas Trotter***

New grant year began September 1<sup>st</sup>. Sensory network had book studies last year and are going to implement coaching book study this year. They are also developing six short courses on identifying secondary disabilities in addition to B/VI including assessment. These courses won't be completed until mid- to late-2023. There is a new resource available for behavior support from TEA, which can be found at this link:

[https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/behavior\\_guide\\_8-22.pdf](https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/behavior_guide_8-22.pdf).

Nicholas shared the test is still being created for the Teachers of Students who are Deafblind certification. He expects a new batch of questions for review in a couple weeks. Kate Borg will be the TSBVI contact for TDB updates.

### ***TSBVI, Emily Coleman & Kate Borg***

TSBVI has submitted their LAR for the upcoming legislative session. The first public hearing will be the joint budget hearing on September 30<sup>th</sup>. TSBVI has requested just over seven million dollars in exceptional items. Items of note include about 2.5 million is a request for classified staff salary increases, 1.4 million is a request to add outreach staff and travel funding, 2.5 million is a request for safety and security upgrades, and TSBVI also requested additional money to grow the university training programs. Due to staffing shortages, the School had to halt accepting new students at this time and also have required local students within 45 miles of campus to attend as day students. TSBVI implemented salary increases this summer in the hopes of retaining current staff, but still continues to see some attrition with few applicants for all of open positions. Emily has communicated with a few legislative offices regarding staffing shortages and hopes for the upcoming session.

White Cane Day will be on campus October 12<sup>th</sup> with some online components, too, from TWC. Outreach has many events including onsite Coffee Hours, SWOMA in November, and DB Symposium will be happening in Austin in February. The Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities has been meeting with a group of stakeholders to consider ideas to increase braille literacy rate in Texas. A final proposal hasn't been shared, but they've requested reports from TSBVI, TEA, and others to better understand braille reading rates in our state.

Family Lynx meets the second Tuesday of the month at 7pm in zoom. You can visit their website at [familylynx.org](http://familylynx.org) for updates. They are providing an alumni tent and family meet and greet on White Cane Day.

### ***Texas University Professionals in VI (TUPVI) - TTU update, Rona Pogrund***

Shannon Darst left SFASU and now works in Elgin ISD. Dr. Heather Munro is the new contact person for their VI program. TTU faculty position hasn't been filled and position is only open

until September 30<sup>th</sup>. 15 new students began this fall, including the second cohort for Project Invite including 8 from Texas. Dr. Phoebe Okungo has taken over DHH as an interim while she continues to oversee the DB components. Enrollment numbers have been down including the typical TSBVI pipeline.

### ***DBMAT, Susie Welch***

Family conference virtual this year on September 24<sup>th</sup>. 15<sup>th</sup> annual golf tournament will be October 14<sup>th</sup> and the tee off is usually at noon at a golf course in the Houston area.

### ***TWC, Juanita Barker***

October 12<sup>th</sup> is White Cane Day and is so excited to have it back in person at TSBVI. It'll be the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Austin event. This year will also have a simultaneous webcast through the TSBVI youtube. A 5k run, march, and walk begin at 9am. 10am program will start with activities ending at 2pm.

Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) program has increased services by 16% over the past year. They are seeking additional funding to increase capacity for services. 512-936-3388 is the current number for seeking support and they are working on a "1-800" number. You can also access VR services at [twc.org](http://twc.org) by selecting "Start my VR." The OIB helpline receive over 100 calls a month.

Open enrollment available soon for contractors to provide O&M, ILS trainers, AT trainers, etc. TWC pays \$75/ hour plus mileage. The agency is reviewing contract rates for proposed increases. Chris Tabb requested support for paperwork, etc. for those seeking to contract with TWC as there is a lot of business administration involved. Alexa Poynor mentioned she contracts with the state and agrees with Chris and would love to be part of the conversation to make the process easier for those wanting to contract. [Juanita.barker@twc.tx.gov](mailto:Juanita.barker@twc.tx.gov)

### ***Sight Savers – Matt Daw***

Provided clinics in Dallas and Rio Grande Valley and served about 60 children and provided them with high tech low vision equipment. Working in San Antonio and Hill Country area in December. In February, they will be back in West Texas in San Angelo and Abilene. After that, they will work in the Victoria/Huntsville areas to provide services and equipment to students. If funding isn't available, they implement a wait list.

### ***O&M Updates, Chris Tabb***

SWOMA will return in person on November 6-8. The committee has decided they will be in-person every third year with two virtual conferences in between. The International Mobility Conference will be in 2023 in Warsaw, Poland.

## **Discussion/Announcements**

Karen Wolffe reminded everyone about the Project Aspiro website, created in partnership with World Blind Union. The site includes a lot of firsthand accounts and resources for employment from early childhood throughout an individual's lifespan. Partner organizations also are

included with resources, too, specific to career education and other ECC topics. Go to: <http://www.projectaspiro.com/en/Pages/default.aspx> [www.projectaspiro.com](http://www.projectaspiro.com) or contact Karen directly for more information at [karenwolffe@gmail.com](mailto:karenwolffe@gmail.com)

## Future Meeting Dates:

The next meeting date will be **Tuesday, December 13th**. AVIT meetings are from 10-12.

Chris Tabb motioned to adjourn the meeting and Susie Welch seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 11:09 a.m. by Cyral Miller.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Emily Coleman.*

### A. Acronyms!

There are a lot of shortcut acronyms used in these notes. Here's a handy cheat 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  
CVI - Cortical Visual Impairment  
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  
NVI - Neurological visual impairment (often referred to as CVI)  
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