



AER Orientation and Mobility Division Executive Committee

Wednesday, December 14, 2022

Meeting Minutes

Raychel Callary called the meeting to order at 7:03 EST. Valery Kircher took attendance.

NOTE: The Addition to Policies and Procedures Manual item, postponed at 9/14/22 meeting, was removed and will be discussed at a special meeting to be scheduled in February. Identified changes will be voted on by the executive committee.

1. In Attendance:

- Raychel Callary (chair)
- Margaret Winn (chair-elect)
- JoAnne Chalom (past chair)
- Valery Kircher (secretary)
- Shay Utley (District 2)
- Eric Shaw (District 4)
- Kevin McCormack (District 5)

2. Select Parliamentarian: JoAnne Chalom

3. Consent agenda (read by the secretary and adopted)

A. Approval of Meeting Agenda

B. Approval of September 14, 2022 Meeting Minutes

C. Treasurer's Report

1. Expenses paid by AER Board of Directors since June 16, 2022: \$6315 for Transportation Research Board annual meeting registration for Meg Robertson, MaryBeth Cleveland, JoAnne Chalom, Jennifer Graham, Linda Myers, Beezy Bentsen, Raychel Callary
2. Funding for Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting attendance and associated costs for travel and accommodations received since June 13, 2022: \$8300. (Motion to amend made at the

12/14/2022 meeting: Shay Utley made motion and Eric Shaw seconded the motion)

- a. \$1800 from Stronggo Industries
- b. \$1000 from Vanguard
- c. \$2000 from Polara
- d. \$2000 from PedSafety
- e. \$1500 from Novax Industries

D. Chair report

1. Met with Tiffany at AER re: January watercooler, will contact after determining date at 12/14/22 EC meeting
2. AER Board of Directors Update
 - a. Meeting was held via Zoom 10/28/22
 - b. Unable to attend 12/09/22 meeting due to travel change
3. Had table at Southwest O&M Association (SWOMA) 11/2022
 - Spoke with around 50 attendees, received several committee volunteers
4. Attended aging division water cooler
 - Discussed support for VRTs re: proposed ACVREP certification path for OTs
5. Met with Lee 11/14/22: discussed leadership for various divisions, awareness of division activities, opportunities for collaboration
6. Inclusion of vision rehabilitation professionals was noted in the occupational index. Unsure if this may assist with billing, but seems a valuable step in raising awareness of our field and increasing perceived legitimacy.

E. Committee Reports

Professional Issues:

- Meeting scheduled with personnel preparation division 1/17/2023 to begin collaboration on issues identified in the strategic plan including recruitment and retention, student participation, mentoring.
- Position paper update:
 1. Orientation and Mobility: Roles, Responsibility and Qualifications (revised)
 - a. Approved by division membership October 14, 2022.
 - b. Approved by AER Board of Directors October 28, 2022

2. O&M Specialists and the Provision of Travel Instruction to Individuals with Nonvisual Disabilities (new)
 - a. Approved by division membership October 14, 2022.
 - b. Approved by AER Board of Directors October 28, 2022
3. The O&M's Role in Support Canes (new): in progress
4. Creation of a paper on O&M assistants and role release was approved at the division business meeting in July, and a writing team will be identified soon.

New and revised papers approved by O&M Division membership and AER Board added to AER website division page 11/29/22:

1. The Orientation and Mobility Specialist's Role in Low Vision Driving
2. Teaching Orientation & Mobility Through Individual and Group Lessons
3. Teaching Street Crossings at Streets and Lanes Where There is No Traffic Control
4. Orientation & Mobility Assessments for Students in Education and Life Skills Settings
5. Orientation & Mobility in Natural Environments
6. University Personnel Preparation of Orientation & Mobility Specialists
7. Teaching Street Crossings at Signalized Intersections
8. Use of Visual Occlusion in Orientation & Mobility Instruction
9. Remote Instruction for Orientation and Mobility
10. Orientation and Mobility Specialist Roles, Responsibilities, and Qualifications
11. O&M Specialists and the Provision of Travel Instruction to Individuals with Nonvisual Disabilities

Program: no report, will not begin to meet until planning for 2024 conference begins.

Awards: no report, will begin to meet in January 2024.

Nominating and Elections: Will begin to meet in February to manage Student Representative nominations.

Scholarship: Will begin to meet at the end of January 2023. A few volunteers were received at the SWOMA and AERI St. Louis conferences. Additional members and chair needed.

Strategic Plan: 2022-2027 Strategic Plan was approved by division 11/4/22. Committee will include chair, chair-elect, and past chair. Chair to appoint additional members who need to be division members but do not need to be EC. Committee will meet at least quarterly to discuss progress and report to the EC. Chair will report to AER Board of Directors and membership per PPM.

New committee met 12/1. Execution of current goals were discussed. Topics for the January 2023 Watercooler were discussed. Date to be determined at 12/14/22 EC meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for 1/30/23. EC members are welcome to join or recommend committee members. Will solicit members at January watercooler and in the newsletter.

Environmental Access Committee: Seven members are attending the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting in Washington, DC in January. Janet Barlow and Beezy Bentzen forged significant opportunities over years for collaboration with engineers and planners. Beezy and JoAnne are both presenting, and other members will speak up in sessions to advocate for the needs of pedestrians with blindness and low vision. Information learned will be shared with the membership through newsletter articles and both in-person and remote presentations.

Communications: Newsletter submissions due 1/1.

4. OLD BUSINESS

A. Discussion: O&M Outpost (resource on AER website)

<https://aerbvi.org/about/divisions/orientation-mobility-division/resources/>

- Last meeting: Jennifer and Megann offered to take this over from Chris Tabb. Chris suggests considering desire and ability to control and update information as needed.
- Motion made by JoAnne Chalom and seconded by Maggie Winn to table this discussion until the next meeting because Jennifer Duncan and Megann Brousard were not in attendance. Motion passed.

- B. Discussion: January 2023 Watercooler
1. Determine date: January 23, 2022 at 7:00 pm until 8:00 pm EST.
 2. Topics will be presented in the format of the game show Jeopardy per JoAnne Chalom's suggestion. JoAnne further suggested that a prize might be a certificate to attend an online class for ACVREP credits.
 - a. Meet division leadership
 - b. Learn about division activities
 - i. Strategic plan
 - ii. Committees
 - c. Opportunities for involvement with the division including what positions cover.
 3. Raychel will meet with Tiffany, send announcement and reminder, and put together a template for people on the Board to fill in.
- C. Discussion: Executive committee member roles -- Raychel Callary stated that after the February 2023 meeting Board roles for the Secretary and Treasurer will be adjusted and conveyed to those members, as well as stated in the Policies and Procedures Manual (PPM). Further per Raychel another Finance Committee member is desired to work alongside JoAnne Chalom and Megann Brousard. Also per Raychel the Secretary is responsible for sending the PPM to Michele at AER central office so that it may be posted on the AER O&M Division page.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Discussion: members needed soon for communications, strategic plan, and scholarship committees. Will add to newsletter and promote at watercooler.
- Raychel stated that the discussion of the scholarship committee is urgent.
 - Maggie stated that judges are needed to go through the applications for scholarships and that Susan Langendonk created a template to assist with the selection process, and she mentioned that this may be an ideal activity for a retiree from the field of O&M. JoAnne wondered if AER kept a list of retirees and there was then a healthy discussion regarding retired O&M specialists.

- Maggie stated that she would send a confirmation email to the applicant once the Scholarship Committee makes their selections, she further stated that she is willing to continue to Chair this committee if necessary.
 - Maggie suggested creating a separate email for potential applicants to submit their paperwork for the application.
 - Only applicants from AER-approved O&M programs are eligible for the Donald Blasch Scholarship.
 - Scholarship Committee Chair must be an AER member.
- B. Discussion: Student Representative application and selection process
- Chair will assemble nominations and elections committee and solicit members as needed
 - Nominations and elections committee will create application form
- C. Discussion: encouraging students enrolled in AER approved programs to participate in staffing O&M table at various conferences
- It was mentioned that District Directors could contact Universities in their area to encourage students enrolled in AER programs to volunteer
- D. Discussion: ACVREP announcement regarding new certification path for OTs
- There was much discussion on this hot button item that overlaps a recent OMSA town hall meeting that ACVREP held and many attended. During the meeting there was a lot of discussion and many in the field were unaware that this was even being considered. AER may be in the process of writing a response to what ACVREP is proposing.

NOTE: Raychel Callary had an emergency at 7:59 pm EST and had to immediately leave the meeting. Maggie Winn continued the meeting.

- Eric Shaw stated that he has a friend at UMass Boston who could shed more light on the ACVREP and OT situation.

- JoAnne Chalom made a motion to table the ACVREP discussion until a later time and Shay Utley seconded the motion. All approved.
8. JoAnne Chalom made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Eric Shaw. The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm EST.

Valery Kircher - Recording Secretary

Topic: AER Outpost

Potential actions:

- 1) Vote to take over maintenance of the O&M Outpost
 - a) Formally request funding from AER board of directors
 - b) Determine how volunteers will proceed and if additional volunteers are needed
- 2) Table discussion until a date certain or conditions are met
- 3) Vote to discontinue resource

History:

The O&M Outpost (<http://aerom.org/>) is a resource linked from the AER website (<https://aerbvi.org/about/divisions/orientation-mobility-division/resources/>) which Chris Tabb has been maintaining. It uses Wordpress which has had a cost of \$96/year. Funding has been included in our division funding request, but would need to be formally requested. This resource may be less needed than when it was developed, considering the current collaborative climate at the AER international office. Update requests submitted to Michele have been handled promptly. Issues to consider are how much control is desired, what we hope to include on a site (including archives), how often we plan to update it, and how we plan to maintain the information.

At the September 2022 executive committee meeting, this issue was discussed and Jennifer and Megann offered to take this over. Raychel was tasked with contacting Chris Tabb, and obtained the information in the previous paragraph. Further discussion was tabled at the December 2022 meeting since Jennifer and Megann were not present

Topic: ACVREP announcement regarding new certification for OTs

Potential actions:

- 1) Request a virtual forum for members to discuss the issue
- 2) Create a written statement expressing the opinion of this committee to provide to AER board and/or ACVREP
- 3) Contact ACVREP to request additional information or communication

In or around September 2022, ACVREP announced the proposed creation of a new certification designed for OTs working with adults. The Orientation and Mobility Specialists Association (OMSA) held a virtual town hall for discussion, and the topic has been brought up in AER strategic planning meetings, meetings from various divisions, and this committee's last meeting. The AER board of directors is planning to prepare a statement describing AER's position regarding this new proposed certification, and requested input from the divisions. The issue was discussed at the Council of Division Chairs meeting on March 2, 2023, and division leaders were asked to discuss the issue with their executive committee or in a forum that works for their division. Input received will be provided to the AER board.

Prior to this announcement, a resolution was passed at the 2022 international conference establishing the need for a taskforce to develop "an interdisciplinary consensus and recommendations concerning how the vision-rehabilitation-related professions can agree on each other's scope of work and the specialized training needed to complement and maximize each other's interventions." The resolution addresses the inadequate number of vision professionals to meet current and predicted needs and efforts to increase the availability of services. This group has met a few times and is working on ensuring broad representation. The AER Board of Directors will determine a date for the task force to present its findings to the board.

ACVREP announces it is developing an in- depth certification for licensed/ registered Occupational Therapists in blindness/low vision

Why: All people who are blind or low vision deserve to receive services from highly qualified professionals to ensure they have the skills needed to be independent and be engaged in family and community life, regardless of the age at which they lose their

sight and where they live in the world.

Why Now: By 2030, 15 million Americans 65 and older will need access to quality services for blindness or low vision in order to live optimally full lives. Worldwide, the challenge is greater with an estimated population need by 2050 of 61 million people living with significant vision loss. Think about someone you know who is over 65—your mother, your grandmother, or a friend—who will need to learn how to live with blindness or low vision. If action is not taken now, most of these individuals will not be able to obtain vision rehabilitation services because there are not enough well-trained quality professionals who can help them maintain their independence. For services to be available to this growing population of individuals we must expand the number of quality service providers. **Action is needed now to meet the need.**

As of the end of September 2022, there are only 593 Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (CVRT) in the US and many are not currently practicing but are in administrative positions. Retirements have been offsetting new certificants. In the past 20 years the number of CVRTs has only grown 11% in total. The growth rate of Certified Low Vision Therapists is higher, but there are still only 456 CLVTs in the US.

Developing a new certification to embrace an expanded field of service providers to meet the growing need is not replacing any of the existing professionals or their certifications, but rather expanding the number of professionals qualified to provide vision rehabilitation.

How: ACVREP uses the tool of certification to advance professional competency. When a new certification is launched, ACVREP forms a subject matter expert committee to develop a scope of practice, establish quality standards through certification criteria, establish a Code of Ethics and develop a rigorous certification exam. Before certification criteria are finalized, they are posted for a 30-day public comment period that will include other vision rehabilitation and education professionals as well as consumers. This process takes 18-24 months.

What: Expanding the number of people who have access to high quality services by launching a new certification for occupational therapists working with adults with blindness or low vision.

Blindness and low vision can impact anyone. People with blindness or low vision often have other medical issues in addition to vision loss, requiring the services of an occupational therapist (OT). These may include traumatic brain injury, dementia, diabetes, stroke, arthritis and Parkinson's among other medical conditions.

An OT with in-depth specialty training in blindness and low vision builds on their OT Scope of Practice by using a holistic approach to evaluate and

provide rehabilitation to adults with blindness or low vision, taking into consideration their other medical needs. OTs work within the medical system and therefore are much more likely to intersect with people who are blind or low vision, especially in the aging population. The new certification will provide a means of determining which OTs have the in depth knowledge and training to provide quality services to effectively meet the rehabilitation needs of individuals with blindness or low vision.

ACVREP's commitment: ACVREP remains committed to the growth of all certifications and will continue to work diligently with all subject matter expert committees and the field to promote recruitment and certification of those who provide services to individuals who are blind or low vision worldwide.

The following two background documents are provided for your information and are not scheduled to be discussed. Information for additional agenda items follow.

From: Lee Sonnenberg
To: Kathleen Zeider
Cc: Olaya Landa-Vialard
Subject: ACVREP Participation in AER Task Force
Date: Tuesday, December 13, 2022 8:57:00 AM
Attachments: image001.png

Dear Board Chair Jack Chen and ACVREP President Kathleen Zeider,

We are writing primarily to invite the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) to offer participation in AER's recently established task force that is bringing the vision loss community together with allied health professionals, university faculty, and other critical stakeholders. As called for by resolution of the AER membership assembled this past July in St. Louis at AER's Biennial International Conference, the primary purpose of the task force is to further develop cross-disciplinary consensus about the scope of practice and preparation of professionals offering vision rehabilitation services to adults, particularly older adults, who are blind or visually impaired. ACVREP-affiliated participants would make an important contribution to the task force's critical work.

If ACVREP would like to have ACVREP-affiliated individuals participate in the task force, we ask that at least two names be nominated in writing to us on or before Friday, January 13, 2023. Nominations will be given due consideration, and any appointment that may be made of one or more nominees will be determined promptly by the task force's leadership thereafter.

Preliminary work is already underway to establish task force leadership, composition, and management. In doing so, our goal is to promote an inclusive diversity of

perspectives, expertise, and seasoned experience. The task force is not a congress of interest groups per se. Rather, the task force will seek substantive points of view from individual contributors who, because of their organizational familiarity, personal consumer perspectives, professional orientation, policy or programmatic leadership, academic attainment, or similarly useful backgrounds, are free both to agree and to disagree but with the intent of achieving consensus where possible irrespective of specific organizational affiliations or agendas.

With regard to ACVREP's recently declared agenda to establish a novel occupational-therapy-related certification, we know that you are aware, as are we, of the significant preponderance of field-wide expression of concern, confusion, objection, and even alarm that has ensued.

Therefore, we are entreating the ACVREP Board of Directors to announce, at the earliest possible opportunity, ACVREP's intention to suspend any further action or consideration pertaining to any new OT-related certification. Doing so will help as our community tries to come together in good faith to follow whatever pathways toward consensus may be open to all of us.

Again, we sincerely hope you will accept our invitation to nominate at least two ACVREP-affiliated individuals to participate in AER's task force expressly created to promote the very consensus upon which any future work that ACVREP may undertake in this context is so obviously dependent.

Respectfully,

Olaya Landa-Vialard, Ph.D.
Board President

Lee Sonnenberg
Executive Director

AER Resolution 2022-03: Concerning Consensus-Building to Promote Vision Rehabilitation Therapy

Whereas research has shown that at least half of Americans aged 65 and older are at high risk of eye diseases that can lead to impaired sight, and as our population ages, the number of older people experiencing vision loss will grow exponentially; and

Whereas vision rehabilitation services can make a substantial impact on older people with vision loss allowing them to remain safely independent in their homes and to care for themselves; and

Whereas the level of federal funding for the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) program has remained static for more than a decade, and has not kept pace with the demand for vision rehabilitation services. Currently the federal appropriation serves fewer than 60,000 people, while the latest estimates show that there are far more than four million people aged 55 and older who are blind or visually impaired; and

Whereas the Aging and Vision Loss National Coalition is focusing its efforts to significantly increase the availability of vision rehabilitation services to the other 97 percent of eligible individuals currently not receiving services; and

Whereas existing traditional personnel preparation programs for Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (VRTs), Orientation and Mobility Specialists (O&Ms), and Low Vision Therapists (LVTs) have historically been unable to successfully recruit enough students to even adequately serve the 3 percent of consumers receiving some measure of services today; and

Whereas it is important to preserve, safeguard and continue to advance the body of knowledge accumulated by the VRT, O&M, and LVT professions during the past 60 years; and

Whereas the number of Occupational Therapists electing to pursue a career in vision rehabilitation has been increasing during the past decade; and

Whereas there have been more programs established to enhance OTs' knowledge in vision rehabilitation, such as the graduate certificate program at the University of Alabama and Salus University in Philadelphia; and

Whereas by training, Occupational Therapists do possess a similar general professional orientation to that of VRTs, focusing on the maximization of skills for independent functioning; and
 whereas a large percentage of older individuals with vision loss report age-related chronic conditions which need to be considered in providing services; and

Whereas OTs are able to secure third-party reimbursement from Medicare and private insurance providers, thus significantly increasing the amount of available funds for vision rehabilitation services; and

Whereas interested OTs have recently established the Vision Rehabilitation OT Association without any apparent input from AER and its professional divisions.

Now, therefore, be it resolved, by the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), on this the 24th day of July, 2022, in the city of St. Louis, Missouri, that:

1. This organization, through its Board of Directors, shall establish a task force for the

purpose of developing an interdisciplinary consensus and recommendations concerning how the vision-rehabilitation-related professions can agree on each other's scope of work and the specialized training needed to complement and maximize each other's interventions.

2. This task force shall be comprised (as appointed by the task force co-chairs) of individuals: representing each of the AER Divisions whose members are or may be certified by ACVREP; representatives of VRT personnel training programs and other preparation programs as deemed appropriate; leaders from UAB's graduate certificate program, Salus University and any other OT programs engaged in the provision of low vision/vision rehabilitation personnel preparation; the newly established Vision Rehab OT Association; and any other identified parties (e.g., representatives of individual nonprofit organizations offering direct vision rehabilitation services, accrediting/certification bodies such as AERAC, ACVREP and any equivalent body representing Occupational Therapy, ETC).

3. It is anticipated that this task force will spur the need for and interest in the establishment of new in-service training programs to assist new "general" OTs interested in pursuing specialization in vision rehabilitation.

4. This task force will present its findings to the AER Board of Directors by a date certain designated by the AER Board and, once approved, the recommendations will be disseminated to all interested parties through all available media, including online webinars.

ADOPTED

Topic: Special meeting to update the policies and procedures manual

Requested action: plan meeting with members of this committee to review and consider changes to the division policies and procedures manual. The revised manual will be presented to this committee for discussion and a vote.

Topic: Requesting funding for table at Michigan AER conference

Requested action: Vote on request for the AER board to approve \$100 for a vendor table, table materials, and banner shipping for the Michigan AER conference; in the alternative, that \$50 be approved for a vendor table and table materials.

Supports 2022-2027 Strategic Plan goal number 6d: “At least four times a year, the executive committee will facilitate hosting of an O&M division table at AER and orientation and mobility association conferences”.

The division can host a vendor table at the Michigan AER conference in April for \$25. Maggie plans to attend the conference and will be able to staff the table part of the time. Volunteers will be solicited. Requested table materials will include division brochures and small giveaway items. If shipping is approved, Raychel will ship this to Maggie.

Topic: April forum

Requested action: Determine possible dates, forum details

Supports 2022-2027 Strategic Plan goal number 6b: Beginning in April 2023, the executive committee will host a biannual virtual forum for division members to promote professional connection and to discuss professional needs, division activities, and opportunities.

Note: Will be open to all AER membership per AER standards

Topic: Professional Personnel Recruitment Committee Collaboration

Several division strategic plan goals direct efforts toward recruitment. The AER Professional Personnel Recruitment Committee (PPRC) has recently reformed after being defunct for several years. Audrey Dannenberg is chairing the committee, and has been providing updates at AER meetings. The committee is collaborating on the creation of recruitment videos. COMS Mary Kline has been working with the PPRC and

has offered to liaison with this committee. As chair of the professional issues committee, Maggie will continue contact with Mary.

Topic: Utilization of the AER e-learning platform and the role of the continuing ed committee.

The development of the AER e-learning platform has shifted the role of the O&M division continuing education committee. The executive committee needs to determine the role of the continuing education committee. This could be discussed in collaboration with Tiffany and/or Lee at the AER international office to determine options.

Topic: Council of Division Chairs document supporting proper hiring and utilization of vision professionals

There are situations occurring where practitioners are being asked to work outside of their scope of practice or are not able to work according to their code of ethics, which can risk their certification. The CDC was asked to consider this issue and to create a document describing expectations for service provision as they apply to employers and certificants. This would support practitioners advocating for their own employer expectations, and would declare expectations to employers about hiring practices and utilization of staff. A writing team is currently being formed; contact Raychel if interested.