



AERODYNAMICS

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of the Blind and Visually Impaired

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BUSINESS CLASS

AER Board Resolution Concerning ACVREP's Announced OT Certification

Amid growing concerns from members of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), in response to the announcement by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) to establish a new national certification open only to occupational therapists, the AER Board of Directors, on behalf of the membership, release the following statement. Questions or comments may be directed to Lee Sonnenberg, AER Executive Director, at lee@aerbvi.org.

Olaya Landa-Vialard, PhD
President, AER Board of Directors

Lee Sonnenberg, MA
AER Executive Director

AER Board Resolution 2023: Concerning ACVREP's Announced OT Certification

Whereas, nearly a quarter-century ago, the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) voluntarily discontinued AER's certification program and, after sacrificial financial divestiture, established the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP); and

Whereas, the primary rationale for doing so was to enhance the stature and recognition of the highly specialized professional disciplines in our field by establishing administrative independence for the development, maintenance and refinement of existing and potential pathways to certification in longstanding and emerging professions dedicated to meeting the unique needs and capabilities of individuals with vision loss; and

Whereas, ACVREP's role in our field is a strictly administrative one in which available certification options, and the particular requirements for specific credentials, must reflect and preserve the settled and widely shared consensus concerning the need for and value of specialized services provided by properly prepared professionals; and

Whereas, in recent years, a concerning pattern has been emerging in which ACVREP, both in its own name and under associated auspices, has proceeded with initiatives, even in the face of appreciable controversy, which have been pursued without the necessary prerequisite of broad stakeholder consensus and formal involvement, if not endorsement, of partner organizations including AER; and

Whereas, in two such instances (namely the establishment of a purported national registry of teachers of students with visual impairments, and the recently announced determination to establish a new national certification open only to occupational therapists (OTs) who may acquire some degree of in-service vision-related training in order to sit for an exam confirming possession of some yet unspecified threshold level of competence to provide vision rehabilitation), there is no evidence of any attempt to include AER or other organizations to acquire their advice or consent; and

Whereas, as the overwhelming preponderance of expressions of concern and opposition to the new OT certification have consistently confirmed in various forums since the new certification was revealed, there was no appreciable effort undertaken by ACVREP to seek even a general assent to proceed from any of the several stakeholder communities, from consumers to personnel preparation programs and others, to ensure that ACVREP's propagation of new vision-specific credentials for existing OTs would be of use, are desirable, or will have legitimacy and be respected by the vision loss community; and

Whereas, the new OT certification has engendered a catalog of questions and fears about the new certification's relationship to, and negative impact on, the vision rehabilitation professions that have long been certified by ACVREP, that are not formally recognized by America's public health systems, and that suffer

from profound personnel shortages which a new OT certification is sure to divert attention from, if not exacerbate; and

Whereas, no reliable evidence has been proffered demonstrating that ACVREP's new OT certification (which would seem to be more demanding than the portfolio-based low vision credential once offered by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) will be taken up by more OTs than the total number that availed themselves of AOTA's low vision credential, meaning that the potential identified risks with the new OT certification are likely to utterly eclipse any financial benefit to ACVREP or the new certification's likely meagre practical impact on the national availability of quality services to adults who are blind or who have low vision.

Now therefore be it resolved by the AER International Board of Directors on this the twenty-eighth day of April, 2023, that AER calls upon the Board of ACVREP to formally act to indefinitely suspend any further development of a new OT certification and to recalibrate ACVREP's exclusionary and anti-collaborative posture with respect to AER and other key constituencies to ensure that any future undertakings, particularly including any further progress toward a new OT certification, will possess the breadth of expertise, seasoned experience, commitment to values and broad-based support that are indispensable to ACVREP's ongoing legitimacy and the success of its mission and work.

ADOPTED

ACVREP Launches a New Study Tool for the Updated COMS Exam

The Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) has launched a 142 question COMS (Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist) Practice Exam for a cost of \$65 (U.S.) that can be purchased on the ACVREP website at: <https://www.acvrep.org/certifications/study-guides>

The Practice Exam is unproctored and can be taken on your home computer. It simulates a secure testing environment by allowing only a specified amount of time--four hours--to complete the Practice Exam. During those four hours, if you log out, you will not be able to log back in.

Once you submit the exam, you will see the questions that you answered incorrectly by noting your answer in a filled radial button in the answer and then the correct answer will be noted with an asterisk before the answer.

When you purchase the exam, you will receive an email with the voucher code and instructions for accessing the exam on ACVREP's online testing portal. If you don't see the email in your in-box, check your spam or junk folder. If there are any other issues, please contact css@acvrep.org for assistance.

Connecting the Dots is Back...in a New Format!

[Connecting the Dots](#) is Canada's largest educational and professional development conference focused on education, technology and employment for people who are blind or partially sighted. In an effort to connect with more people than ever before, we're unveiling a new way to experience Connecting the Dots. "My Connecting the Dots" is a new way to experience the Connecting the Dots conference in a community near you! My Connecting the Dots is just like Connecting the Dots, but on a smaller, more intimate scale. It provides participants with a more personalized program experience, featuring more networking opportunities and focused discussions.

Save the Dates:

- [My Connecting the Dots: Halifax](#), In-Person Sessions and Networking
Date: Friday, June 16, 2023
- My Connecting the Dots: Quebec, In-Person Sessions and Networking
Date: Tuesday, October 17, 2023
- Connecting the Dots: Toronto, In-Person Exhibit Hall, Sessions and Networking
Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2023
- Connecting the Dots: Vancouver, In-Person Exhibit Hall, Sessions and Networking
Date: Wednesday, November 8, 2023

Registration for the Halifax event is now open. Registration details for the other dates will be updated at the below link as they become available. Why not submit a session proposal by the deadline of July 7, 2023. For further details, please visit: cnib.ca/connectingthedots

Connecting the Dots: National Virtual Conference...Coming February 2024!

Join us for an exciting exploration of the latest trends and innovations in technology, education and employment, all from the comfort of your own home.

Mark your calendar for February 28, 2024, for this highly anticipated virtual conference. Stay tuned for more details!

Vision 2023 Denver

The 14th International Conference on Low Vision Rehabilitation will be from July 24-27, 2023, in Denver, and registration is now open. Come meet the University of Colorado

Department of Ophthalmology and Anchor Center for Blind Children in the Mile High City for this unique experience connecting low vision professionals with multidisciplinary specialties to collaborate on new therapies under one roof. With a theme of Low Vision Rehabilitation

Across the Life Span, Vision 2023 Denver will feature courses on the most recent developments for infants and toddlers through school, vocational years and into retirement--plus a special track on vision and the brain.

For more information and the latest updates, please visit: <http://www.vision2023denver.com/>.

Joint AVRT and NE/AER Annual Conference

“Strong Roots...Many Routes”

Professional Development Opportunity

Where: Portland, Maine

When: November 1-3, 2023

This year’s theme, “Strong Roots...Many Routes”, is the acknowledgment that with our strong professional foundations, we are all able to help our clients reach their ultimate goals even if we are coming from different directions. Ideally, we are seeking to hold sessions in the track areas: education, rehabilitation, technology, orientation & mobility, guide dogs, employment, and research. Consider topics such as assessment, teaching methods, transition, self-determination, and collaboration. This year’s conference will reach out beyond our current limits and take our services to new heights!

We invite you to submit session proposals for breakout sessions or a poster session. Proposals should have a practical focus and may address a specific area of rehabilitation practices or principles. Sessions can be 60 or 90 minutes in length. The conference will be designed to encourage participants to expand upon their techniques and resources. Please consider submitting a proposal by the extended deadline of June 9, 2023, using the following google form: <https://forms.gle/pXHG3r35cUNZYEU97>

Additional information can be found at:

- www.nercve.org/ne/aer, Northeast Chapter of AER

Calendar of Events

June 16, 2023 – [My Connecting the Dots, Halifax](#), Nova Scotia, Canada

July 24-27, 2023 -- "[Low Vision Across the Lifespan](#)" International Society for Low-Vision Research and Rehabilitation (ISLRR) Conference, Denver, Colorado, USA

August 25, 2023 – **Submission Deadline for September issue of AERODYNAMICS**

October 17, 2023 – **My Connecting the Dots, Quebec**, Quebec, Canada

October 24, 2023 – **My Connecting the Dots, Toronto**, Ontario, Canada

November 1-3, 2023 – **“Strong Roots...Many Routes”**. Joint AVRT & NE AER Conference, Portland, Maine, USA

November 8, 2023 – **My Connecting the Dots, Vancouver**, British Columbia, Canada

November 29-December 2, 2023 -- [Getting In Touch With Literacy \(GITWL\) Conference](#), St. Pete Beach, Florida, USA

- www.avrt.org, Association of Vision Rehabilitation Therapists, contact us at confprogram@neaerbvi.org

ECONOMY CLASS

Apply for a CNIB Scholarship!

The CNIB scholarship program is here to help support members of our community who are pursuing a post-secondary diploma or degree, skilled trades certificate, continuing education program or apprenticeship program. In 2022 alone, we awarded over \$130,000 in scholarship funding to people who are blind or partially sighted in recognition of their educational aspirations and achievements. And you could be next!

Most of our scholarships, bursaries and awards are given to eligible students with little to no strings attached. The money is yours to use as you see fit! Recipients can apply their scholarship money to everything from education expenses to room and board or purchasing new technology.

Don't leave money on the table—apply by July 4, 2023! [Apply for a CNIB Scholarship.](#)

ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

Five Free Braille Books for Children!

Through Seedlings' Revised Book Angel Program, children up to the age of 21 with a visual impairment in Canada and the United States can now receive five new braille books per calendar year. The organization has given away over 83,000 books since 2002. For more information, visit: <http://www.seedlings.org/special.php>

Limitless Life Skills Camp 2023

August 8 to 12, 2023

Blind Beginnings is excited to be offering its Limitless Life Skills Camp this summer. Teens from across British Columbia will come together for five days at Victory Hills Dorms in Burnaby where they will learn and practice independent living skills with their peers.

In a supported environment, with the support of Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Blind Beginnings staff, teens will:

- Cook meals from scratch at a nearby Home Economics Kitchen
- Do meal preparation and place grocery orders
- Practice doing dishes, cleaning and laundry
- Route plan and take public transit around Metro Vancouver on buses and Skytrain and
- Have lots of time for socializing and fun with other teens who are blind or partially sighted.

Accommodations

Blind Beginnings is grateful to have access to four townhouses that are used by students who are deaf during the school year. Each house has six bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a kitchen and living room area. Teens will need to bring their own bedding, pillow and towels. All meals and snacks will be provided for the duration of the camp.

Who Can Attend

Teens from 13 to 19 years of age

The cost of travel of teens from outside Metro Vancouver to attend will be covered.

Cost

Camps are subsidized by foundation grants and individual donors; however, families are asked to pay a commitment fee of \$175 per teen.

If your teen would like to attend, please email Keisha Anderson for an application form:

keisha@blindbeginnings.ca

Space is limited, and spots will be offered on a first come, first serve basis. Teens must be members of Blind Beginnings to attend the camp. New members are always welcome.

Become a new member by visiting Blind Beginnings' [membership page](#).

AERODYNAMICS, the AER Canada Newsletter, is published four times per year—in March, June, September, and December. Please send all items for publication to the Editor at saralb@sympatico.ca by February 25 for the March issue, May 25 for the June issue, August 25 for the September issue, and November 25 for the December issue.

Views herein represent those of the authors and not necessarily those of AER, its Board of Directors, staff, members or Editor. Likewise, any products or services mentioned do not necessarily represent endorsement.

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