**AER Resolution 2022-01: Concerning the safety of clients in residential and related training facilities, as well as university programs**

Whereas, over the last few years, scores of credible allegations have surfaced regarding sexual assault, harassment, and other forms of inappropriate behavior of a sexual nature, as well as charges of bullying and demeaning conduct, on the part of students and staff at residential and other training programs serving individuals who are blind or visually impaired across the United States; and

Whereas, states have authorized expenditures of taxpayer dollars to send consumers with vision loss to these residential rehabilitation centers; and

Whereas, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has the fiscal oversight, enforcement power, and statutory responsibility necessary to establish standards, mandate compliance, and establish and maintain metrics for funded agencies.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) assembled on this the 24th day of July, 2022, in the city of St. Louis, MO, that this organization urge, in the strongest possible terms, the Rehabilitation Services Administration to establish comprehensive standards of conduct and ongoing verification that such standards are being adhered to by all directly or indirectly federally supported residential rehabilitation training centers, community rehabilitation programs (CRPs), and all other individuals contracted to provide rehabilitation services to people who are blind or who have low vision as part of RSA’s ongoing monitoring processes; and

Be if further resolved that such standards and code of conduct requirements be modeled after the consistent recommendations of consumer organizations representing people with vision loss, particularly those of the American Council of the Blind as thoroughly outlined in ACB Resolution 2021-04; and

Be it further resolved that RSA direct state rehabilitation agencies to include in their State Plans policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that documented allegations of sexual misconduct and/or bullying be appropriately investigated, resolved and reported to State Rehabilitation Councils (SRC’s) and to RSA; and

Be it further resolved that state rehabilitation departments and commissions serving consumers who are blind or have low vision immediately suspend all approvals for consumers to attend any residential rehabilitation training center for which documented allegations of sexual or other abuse/misconduct have been made until such time as the department or commission determines that the issues arising from any documented allegation have been addressed in accordance with standards to be developed by the state entity and/or RSA pursuant to this resolution; and

Be it further resolved that AER affirms, in the strongest possible terms, the tailored application of the standards of conduct identified by this resolution to university personnel preparation programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education, their faculty, staff and students, to ensure the safety, personal respect and professional dignity of all who are part of the vision loss field's personnel preparation community.

ADOPTED