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**Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired**

**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 meager 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