

## Meeting Minutes: Metro DHHS Advisory Committee, 10/19/2021

Date: 10/19/2021, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.  
Minutes prepared by: Natalie Regenscheid  
Location: Virtually on Zoom

### Attendance

- Members
  - Robin Coninx
  - Steve Emory
  - Christine Morgan
  - Sheila Ritter
- Absent: C.T. Karnowski, Dave McAuliffe, Heidy Nazario, Grant Watkins
- CART and Interpreters
  - Michelle Remer, DHHS Interpreter
  - Maria Dively-Rodriguez, DHHS Interpreter
  - Megan, Veritext Captioner
- DHHS Staff
  - Mary Bauer, DHH Specialist
  - Jeannie Kolo-Johnson, Lead DHH Specialist
  - Dan Millikin, DHHS Director
  - Natalie Regenscheid, OASI
  - Teika Pakalns, Policy & Planning Specialist
- Others Present
  - Rochelle Garrow, Telecommunication Access MN (TAM) Administrator

### Agenda

- Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules
- Acceptance of May 18, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- Regional Update Report, Mary
- Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program, Jeannie
- Regional Needs and Gaps, Mary
- New Business
- MNCDHH Updates, Christine
- Announcements: All members
- Next Meeting Date

## Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules

The Metro Advisory Committee (AC) meeting was called to order at 9:06 am by Mary Bauer. Members and guests were welcomed. The May 18, 2021 Metro AC meeting minutes, Regional Update Report, Telecommunications Access Minnesota (TAM) PowerPoint and agenda for today's meeting were distributed via email. For a copy of these items, contact [dhs.dhhsd@state.mn.us](mailto:dhs.dhhsd@state.mn.us).

## Land Acknowledgment Statement

"We collectively acknowledge that we are located on the traditional land of Indigenous people that once and still is occupied by the Ojibwe, Dakota and other Native peoples from the time immemorial. These lands hold great historical, spiritual, cultural and personal significance for these Native nations. We recognize, support and advocate for the sovereignty of these nations in this territory and beyond. By offering this land acknowledgment, we affirm tribal sovereignty and will hold ourselves accountable to the American Indian people and nations."

- September 30, 2021 was Orange Shirt Day. Orange Shirt Day was established in 2013 by Phyllis Webstad, a residential school survivor in Canada, to honor those Indigenous children who were taken from their homes and placed in boarding schools. They were then shamed and abused for their heritages. Thousands of children died in these schools. The last boarding school did not close until 1996. Orange Shirt Day is intended to give people the opportunity to pause and reflect on the treatment of Indigenous people.

## Acceptance of May 18, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Robin moved to accept the meeting minutes. Sheila seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

## Regional Update Report, Mary

- Steve asked the following:
  1. When will the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division's (DHHSD) equipment lab be open?
    - a. Mary shared the equipment lab will tentatively open in January, when all staff return to the office. There is some concern the equipment will no longer be useful, as it has been two years and many items are outdated. In the meantime, members can reach out to A System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR) for deaf and hard of hearing devices. The STAR program has transitional kits that can be loaned out. For more information, visit [Minnesota STAR Program](https://mn.gov/admin/star/) (<https://mn.gov/admin/star/>).
  2. Are there more apps available other than what is provided on the DHHSD website?
    - a. Mary explained apps change frequently, which makes it challenging to stay up-to-date. The workgroup for apps is working on compiling a list of websites that have products and videos for consumers to view how apps work.

## Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program, Jeannie

### Updates

- The TED Program is distributing iPads and iPhones, within a limited budget. When a consumer applies to the TED Program, a TED specialist reviews their application to determine if they are eligible to receive an iPhone/iPad. Current TED clients do not need to reapply, but they do need to reverify their eligibility to receive an iPhone/iPad.
- Sarah, the TED Program Administrator, is in the process of submitting a request for proposal (RFP) to expand the TED Program to provide Android devices in addition to iOS devices.
- In the past, 3G network devices were provided to consumers. They will be discontinued at the end of the year. TED specialists are contacting TED clients to replace the 3G devices with 4G devices.
- Virtual presentations are being offered to service providers and consumers to explain more about the services provided by the TED Program.

### Minnesota Relay (MR) Updates

No feedback provided.

### Regional Needs and Gaps, Mary

- Sheila shared the Minnesota Employment Center (MEC) recently had a meeting, and it was mentioned that someone specifically from DHHS can directly help with housing for deaf and hard of hearing consumers. Jeannie explained that Liz Brown, DHH Specialist in the Metro region, is part of a policy committee for housing services statewide. As far as having one specialist working on housing issues statewide, this isn't ideal as housing can be specific based on regions. DHHS can help provide communication access and ensure providers comprehend the impact of hearing loss on the person's ability to navigate services. Dan added that Liz's role in the housing services policy committee is to collect information from all agencies (state, profit and non-profit) on the following:
  - 1) What is the status of housing? Do they have a home? Rent? Own? Homeless?
  - 2) Are organizations actively reaching out to the homeless or are consumers seeking services? If consumers are seeking services, are they being provided the services needed? How are resources being funded?
  - 3) How are services and resources being provided now during COVID-19? (In-person, virtual, etc.)
  - 4) Are organizations providing direct support for filling out paperwork and verification or are they referring to another organization to do so?
  - 5) Are organizations providing information and multi-avenues of communication of benefits and services?
- Mary asked Sheila if Independent Living Skills (ILS) is a factor that needs to be considered with housing. Sheila replied that it was mentioned, however, MEC found that the primary focus is on supporting consumers to find housing. The waiting list for housing is long.

- Robin shared Minnesota Hands and Voices (MNHV) have had conversations with parents about concerns with guardianship for children transitioning into adulthood. Robin asked if DHHSD can assist or refer to an agency who can help initiate the guardianship process. Jeannie shared that this is a legal matter and recalled a workshop she attended years ago regarding a non-profit that helps families explore options for guardianship. She will send Robin an email when she finds this information. Jeannie encouraged families to reach out to DHHSD for communication access support and making sure the child in question understands the guardianship process. Dan added that court proceedings would be responsible to provide accommodations. Any legal court proceedings will have a Court Administrator to guide and coordinate services for a successful transition for legal guardianship. There are resources, such as the Disability Law Center, that can help. Dan will find this list of legal resources and share it with Robin. Steve suggested reaching out to PACER, an advocacy group that works with families and students with disabilities. There is a video that [explains guardianship](https://www.pacer.org/transition/video/player.asp?video=185) (<https://www.pacer.org/transition/video/player.asp?video=185>).

## New Business

- Position updates: DHHSD is hoping to wrap up the interview process and hire a Regional Services Supervisor soon. Teika Pakalns is now the Policy and Planning Specialist; her position as the Program Planner will be posted soon.
- Fiscal Year (FY) 22 and FY23 budget updates: COVID-19 impacted the division's budget, resulting in reductions but no impact on services. There are three positions that have not been filled and will remain parked. Three fleet vehicles will be eliminated. The biggest concern for budget cuts would be for FY23 because bigger reductions than expected will be required.
- Regional office facilities: There are currently five regional offices, and two (Rochester and Hibbing) satellite offices. There is discussion of subleasing the Mankato office to another state agency. Rochester remains a satellite, and Hibbing staff will continue teleworking and will later work from the Duluth office as needed. The Hibbing satellite office will close. The plan to move DHHSD staff from Golden Rule Building (GRB) to Elmer L. Anderson (ELA) has been dropped and DHHSD and MNCDHH staff will remain in GRB.
- Legislative audit and updates: The Office of Legislative Audit (OLA) selected several state division's programs, including DHHSD's, to audit. There were recommendations made for improvements and corrections for the TED program and for grant program compliance. In the past year, DHHSD made these changes and DHHSD is now fully compliant. DHHSD will continue to practice the measures implemented.
- AC and Town Hall meetings: AC meetings will continue to be virtual until further notice. DHHSD is revisiting long-term plans of community and town hall meetings throughout the state. Town Hall Meetings will focus on one or two main topics in each region. Once the pandemic subsides, it will be easier to determine what things will look like for in-person meetings.
- Telehealth services: DHS is studying the provision of telehealth services in relation to equity and accessibility. DHHSD has used video platforms to provide services for a very long time and are ahead of the rest of DHS, and so Dan, DHHSD Director, is participating in the committee tasked with studying this issue to provide insight and guidance. He can provide a strong perspective regarding accessibility for people who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, and late-deafened. Proposed best practices for

telehealth services addressing internet connectivity, equipment recommendations, the use of varying languages, etc. are being considered.

- Mary asked if CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) is being considered. Dan responded yes, CART is being considered in addition to interpreting, assistive listening devices, automatic speech recognition (ASR), etc. DHS is working on a statute for word, audio, and video to be more inclusive. Dan noted some companies are hesitant about the cost for CART services and will use ASR. ASR has a built-in mechanism whereas CART uses a live person to transcribe, which accounts for the cost difference.
- Maria added she recently provided a workshop on ASR. It is not necessarily equitable. For instance, picking up a white male's voice is approximately 80% accurate and when you add a female's voice, it accuracy is reduced by 13%. When you add an accent, accuracy goes down another 13%. It will go from an 80% accuracy rate down to the teens, depending on the voice.
- Mental health (MH) program and operations:
  - MH updates:
    - Dr. John Gournaris reported 85% of all 313 individualized treatment plan goals of consumers in FY21 achieved their goals or were in good progress to achieving these goals. MH staff made 3,075 contacts during FY21.
    - People Incorporated opened their drop-in center on Tuesdays as of July.
    - Regions Hospital's Health and Wellness program provided counseling services to 85 deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing consumers.
    - LifeConnect Health provided psychiatric services to 14 deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing consumers.
    - Children's mental health services, 92 children were served collectively by Volunteers of America and Therapeutic Services Agency. Metro Educational Cooperative Service Unit (ECSU) completed 27 psychological evaluations in greater Minnesota.
    - Dr. Gournaris and colleague published a peer reviewed scholarly article, "[Healthcare Altruism & Dysconscious Healthism in the Delivery of Integrated Healthcare Services to Individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind](https://nsuworks.nova.edu/jadara/vol54/iss2/3/)" (<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/jadara/vol54/iss2/3/>)
  - Central office operations:
    - Two new trainings introduce consumers and entities to the use of Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) services. These [new video trainings](https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/learning-center/trainings/) (<https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/learning-center/trainings/>) are now available on the DHHS website.
      - [Introduction to Video Remote Interpreting \(VRI\) for Consumers](https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/learning-center/trainings/-/detail/appId/1/id/491010) (<https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/learning-center/trainings/-/detail/appId/1/id/491010>)
      - [Introduction to Video Remote Interpreting \(VRI\) for Entities](https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/learning-center/trainings/-/detail/appId/1/id/491016) (<https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/learning-center/trainings/-/detail/appId/1/id/491016>)
    - Lutheran Social Services (LSS) is now the provider for the statewide deaf mentor family program. LSS received a grant from DHHS to provide these services.

- Central office operations continue to provide support to the various statewide grantees that receive DHHS's specialized services.
- Telecommunication Access Minnesota: Rochelle went through the PowerPoint explaining services, programs and common questions received over the years. For a copy of this PowerPoint, contact [dhs.dhhsd@state.mn.us](mailto:dhs.dhhsd@state.mn.us).

## **Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing (MNCDHH), Christine**

- MNCDHH is drafting a survey to develop their next strategic plan. They will focus on five areas.
- An RFP to for Community and Civic Engagement geared toward people who have hearing loss and do not use ASL was approved.
- MNCDHH is looking for a Director of Communications. It is difficult to find people who are qualified to fill the position.
- Hearing Loss of America (HLAA) is collaborating with MNCDHH to devise a plan to do more outreach about the services provided. Not many consumers, particularly in Greater Minnesota, are familiar with HLAA, MNCDHH and DHHS.
  - Christine is stepping down from her position as president of HLAA.
  - Robin asked how MNHV can develop a stronger connection with HLAA for families with younger deaf and hard of hearing consumers. Christine shared HLAA loves to be involved and would love to reach out to the younger adult population and have them join the HLAA board. Unfortunately, there are not a lot of members interested in taking on community engagement in addition to their work and personal life balance.

## **Announcements: All members**

There was not enough time left in the meeting to address new announcements from all members.

## **Next Meeting**

Mary will send an email with several dates to determine the next meeting.

## **Meeting adjourned at 11:04 a.m.**

