

Meeting Minutes: Upper Northwest DHHSD Advisory Committee, 11/4/2021

Date: 11/4/2021, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Minutes prepared by: Natalie Regenscheid
Location: Virtually on Zoom

Attendance

- Members
 - Rebecca Benke-Hinckley
 - Leslie Carnegie-Hilde
 - Briana Efta
 - Les Fairbanks
 - Michele Ostgard
 - Ann Marie Srnsky
- Absent: Darla Waldner
- CART and Interpreters
 - Michelle Remer, DHHSD Interpreter
 - Maria Dively-Rodriguez, DHHSD Interpreter
 - Brandi, ASLIS Interpreter
 - Lisa, Veritext Captioner
- DHHSD Staff
 - Jeanne Kolo-Johnson, Lead DHH Specialist
 - Jerry Geist, DHH Specialist
 - Dan Millikin, DHHSD Director
 - Teika Pakalns, Policy & Planning Specialist
 - Natalie Regenscheid, OASI
- Others Present
 - Rochelle Garrow, Telecommunication Access MN (TAM) Administrator
 - Katy Kelly, Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing (MNCDHH) OASS
 - Lori Vigesaa, Guest

Agenda

- Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules
- Acceptance of June 10, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- Regional Update Report
- Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program
- Regional Needs and Gaps
- New Business
- Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing (MNCDHH) Updates, Les
- Announcements: All members

- Next Meeting Date

Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules

The Upper Northwest Advisory Committee (AC) meeting was called to order 10:32 a.m. by Jeanne Kolo-Johnson. Members and guests were welcomed. The June 10, 2021 Upper NW AC meeting minutes, Regional Update Report, Telecommunication Access (TAM) PowerPoint and agenda for today's meeting were distributed via email. For a copy of these items, contact 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."

- The land acknowledgment statement is a part Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division's (DHHS) efforts to develop a more equitable lens and provide more equitable services. 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 June 10, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Leslie motioned to accept the meeting minutes. Les seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Regional Update Report

No questions were asked.

Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program

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 for the program. If they are, the specialist then conducts an in-depth assessment to determine whether they need an iPhone/iPad. Current TED clients do not need to reapply, but they do need to reverify their program 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) Feedback

No feedback.

Regional Needs and Gaps

- Interpreting Services
 - Some private entities will not provide an interpreter. For instance, Les had to directly contact an interpreter to make arrangements and then it became a matter of, who pays for the service? Entities should pay for interpreting services. Jeanne shared that interpreting shortage is an issue statewide and encouraged members to reach out to DHHS when issues arise, so these can be addressed immediately.
 - There are not a lot of local interpreters and it is preferred to have local interpreters due to relationships and understanding of the local language. Consumers are encouraged to contact referral agencies to create their preferred interpreter lists.
- Deaf Advocacy
 - Students and parents are not aware of services and programs available, such as American Sign Language (ASL) classes.
 - Les discussed a lack of resources for parents to learn ASL when they have deaf children, and the issues related to language deprivation. He also described a bill proposed by Senator Daniels, intended to improve deaf children's exposure to deaf adults.
- School Systems
 - School systems are not following through on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Leslie shared one family struggled with their child not receiving services in school and as a result, filed a complaint and relocated to a different school. Minnesota Hands and Voices (MNHV) can help families gain better advocacy skills and knowledge of the IEP process, their rights as parents, and their children's rights. MNHV is seeking recommendations on how to better provide education services to parents of D/HH (deaf and hard of hearing) children for advocacy. Jerry asked if MNHV staff attend IEP meetings. Leslie answered that MNHV does have two staff who can join IEP meetings and act as advocates. Parent guides like Leslie do not have specialized IEP advocacy training, however.
- Hearing Loss Screening
 - Ann Marie asked if doctors are providing information about resources and services available to help those with hearing loss? Jeanne answered that there is an early intervention screening process in place so those who don't pass the hearing test are referred to do further screening with an audiologist, MNHV and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). DHHS has a grant that provides funding for the Deaf Mentor Family Program with MNHV. This program is

available to families to have access to deaf adults to teach ASL and act as role models. Leslie added that MNHV provides neutral support. MNHV's goal is to educate families about resources available to help them make informed choices without pressure.

- Ann Marie asked if doctors continuously provide information and resources if a patient were to develop hearing loss later in life. Jeanne shared that medical facilities don't often provide screening for hearing loss in children. Also, many audiologists who serve the NW region are in North Dakota. When they report to the MDE and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), it takes extra time or falls through the cracks. As for adults, screening for hearing loss doesn't necessarily occur. Only 30% of physicians do annual hearing screening in adults.
 - Michele added that not only do children and adults need hearing screening, but elderly adults would also benefit.
- Ann Marie shared she will ask her doctor to share information and resources about hearing loss with other physicians. This is an effort to shift the awareness process for doctors to ask more questions, check for hearing loss, and ensure information is shared.
- Dan added that access to education, IEPs, and advocacy are on-going issues statewide and DHHSD is focusing on the scope of client services. DHHSD is collaborating with MNCDHH, MDE, MNHV and other organizations to have information and resources more readily available and expand disseminating this information statewide.
- Michele shared that the wording "deaf" may have to change. Often, classification of deaf is applied when really, it is a hearing loss. Not many people understand the difference between deaf and hard of hearing.

New Business

- Position updates: DHHSD is hoping to wrap up the human resources process and hire a Regional Services Supervisor soon. Teika Pakalns is now the Policy and Planning Specialist; she left her position as a Program Planner to fill the Policy and Planning Specialist position. The Program Planner position 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. 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. The Rochester office will remain a satellite and the Hibbing satellite will close; the Hibbing office staff will continue teleworking and work from the Duluth office as needed. There is discussion of subleasing the Mankato office to another state agency.
- AC and Town Hall meetings: The next round of advisory committee meetings will be virtual.
- Telehealth services: The Department of Human 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.

- Legislative audit and updates: The Office of Legislative Audit (OLA) selected several state division's programs, including DHHS's, to audit. There were recommendations made for improvements and corrections for the TED program and for grant program compliance. In the past year, DHHS made these changes and DHHS is now fully compliant. DHHS will continue to practice the measures implemented.
- Central office operations and mental health program updates: due to limited time, Jeanne will send an email with these updates.
- Telecommunication Access Minnesota: Rochelle went through the PowerPoint explaining services, programs and common questions received over the years.

Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing (MNCDHH) Updates, Les

- MNCDHH is considering the following bills: captioning in public places, language deprivation, and an interim interpreter licensure board.
- Katy added that the commission is looking for three more members to join a focus group. They want community members to advise MNCDHH on their strategic plans and want statewide involvement. MNCDHH released their research findings on the gaps in the deafblind community. MNCDHH hired two new staff members: Danelle Gournaris is the Collaborative Plan Program Director; and Alicia Lane-Outlaw is the Government Relations Director.
 - Ann Marie asked if there is a way to regulate caption speed and text size on the television. Jeanne will reach out to Ann Marie.

Announcements: All members

- Michele shared there is a shortage of employees for the elderly.

Next Meeting

Jeanne will send an email to determine the next meeting date.

Meeting adjourned at 12:32 p.m.