

## Meeting Minutes: Metro DHHSD Advisory Committee 5/24/2022

Date: 05/24/2022 9 a.m. – 11 a.m.  
Minutes prepared by: Liz Brown  
Location: Virtually on Zoom

### Attendance

- Members
  - Steve Emory
  - Dave McAuliffe
  - Christine Morgan
  - Jeanette Shaw
  - Alita Portillo
- Absent: C.T. Karnowski, Heidy Nazario, Sheila Ritter
- Interpreters and Captioner
  - Michelle Remer, DHHSD Interpreter
  - Dee Ramnarine, Freelance Interpreter
  - Jayne Carriker, Veritext Captioner
- DHHSD Staff
  - Mary Bauer, DHH Specialist
  - Liz Brown, DHH Specialist
  - Dan Millikin, DHHSD Director
  - TJay Middlebrook, Regional Services Supervisor
  - Sarah Maheswaran, TED Program Administrator
- Others Present:
  - Rochelle Garrow, Department of Commerce, Telecommunications Access Minnesota (TAM)
  - Christy Leach, Consumer Directions Inc.
  - Alita Portillo, Program Director, People Inc. (new AC member)

### Agenda

- Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules
- Land acknowledgment statement
- Acceptance of January 18, 2022, meeting minutes
- Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program
- Regional needs and gaps
- New business
- Guest speaker, Christy Leach
- Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing (MNCDDD) updates
- Announcements
- Next meeting date

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

The Metro Advisory Committee (AC) meeting was called to order at 9 a.m. by Mary Bauer. Members and guests were welcomed. The January 18, 2022, Metro AC Meeting Minutes, Regional Update Report, Hear for the health of it publication, Using Zoom for DHHSD webinars publication, DBCDS General Program Description and TTAP Program Guidelines were distributed via email. For a copy of these items, contact [dhs.dhhsd@state.mn.us](mailto:dhs.dhhsd@state.mn.us).

C.T. Karnowski shared that ThinkSelf has a new staff member and C.T. will step down and be replaced by Katie Romey at the next AC Meeting. She had a conflict for this meeting.

## **Land acknowledgment statement**

The land acknowledgment statement was read. Staff acknowledge the statement is only the beginning of our equity work.

## **Acceptance of January 18, 2022, Meeting Minutes**

Steve Emory moved to accept the meeting minutes. Christine Morgan seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

## **Regional update report**

The Regional Update Report was sent to members prior to the meeting. There were no questions or comments about the report.

## **Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program, Sarah Maheswaran**

### **Updates**

- TED Program staff have started to return to the office recently and most have a hybrid schedule. They are starting to conduct more presentations in person as well as signing up for booths.
- Due to staff retirement in the northeast region, Sarah will be redesigning the counties served by each region. Instead of having five TED Specialists we will have four and relocate one of the staff.
- TED is also sponsoring a virtual chat. It is scheduled for Thursday, June 9, 2022, from 6 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. The chat will include time for questions and answers. We will send an email announcement.
- TED has been working on a video project focusing on another underserved population — people with physical and speech disabilities. The video will include physically and speech disabled actors and will be distributed to organizations that serve those populations.
- Lastly, TED has designed some new flyers for the speech and physically disabled communities, in English and Spanish for Latine communities and a flyer for Black communities.

Replies to questions for Sarah:

- Mary asked about the types of relay services. Sarah replied that relay services include the CapTel Captioned Telephone, Voice Carry Over (VCO), Text Telephone (TTY), Speech-to-Speech (STS), and Hearing Carry Over (HCO). To learn more about Minnesota Relay Services see the Minnesota Relay website ([www.mnrelay.org](http://www.mnrelay.org)). TED still filters consumer questions and complaints. If necessary, Rochelle Garrow is pulled in to address consumer complaints.
- Steve asked about the distribution of iPhone and iPads. These devices have preinstalled telecommunications apps and are given out on an as needed basis. TED is currently going through an RFP process to potentially include Android devices as well.
- Rochelle replied to Christine regarding a person whose internet speed was not fast enough. With Century Link consumers can upgrade. Two programs, the Lifeline program and the Affordable Connectivity Program, provide discounts on cell service, home phone service or internet. The discounts can be combined too.
- Steve asked about phone service for consumers who live in group homes. Sarah and Alita confirmed that TED does not serve those consumers and that the group homes are responsible to provide access. Alita has worked with clients through their social worker, CADI waiver or DB waiver. Sometimes social workers can support that client by filling out a discount application for that phone service.

## **Regional Needs and Gaps**

- Steve and other VR counselors questioned referring participants to regional specialists for help with housing, transportation, SSA benefits, etc. Dan and TJay had just had a meeting with the Housing Supports Division. Housing Supports Division provides supports for social security disability benefits and housing resources for people on Medicare. People who have a hearing loss could benefit from those supports through the SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access & Recovery) program. They are focusing on specifically someone fluent in ASL who really understands hearing loss culture in general. They are interested in partnering through a DHH specialist position focused on navigating these systems. The DHH position would be a statewide position and collaborate with our regional offices as well.
- Christine shared HLAA-TC is the only chapter in the state, so the organization is looking at becoming a state organization. Also partnering with the greater Minnesota regional offices in educating the communities that HLAA exist not only to serve the Twin Cities. Another goal is to share resources and how they can expand programs and really focus on statewide services.
- Mary shared that recently DHHS had a video chat (webinar) about law enforcement, and heard a lot from people about the need for training law enforcement. We shared information about communication cards and traffic stop cards.
- Steve brought up the challenge of real time captioning versus automatic speech recognition captions. The person requesting the accommodation needs to request real-time captioning because of the accuracy.
- Jeanette works as a Metro parent guide with Minnesota Hands & Voices. Jeanette feels more Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) teachers and training more people in the schools

regarding hearing loss is needed. Mainstream teachers feel that deaf and hard of hearing kids need to only deal with special education teachers. Jeanette stated that children have a hearing difference and placing them only with special education teachers is not always the answer. Children need someone who is properly trained to work with them. Many parents do not have DHH teachers working in the schools with their children. They face many problems.

## **New Business**

Dan Millikin

- Minnesota's legislative session ended Monday, May 23. No major bills were proposed that directly impacted DHHSD. Whatever happens will have some indirect impact on operations, budget, union contracts and resources.
- DHHSD is working with the Community Supports Administration and Health Care Administration to update the statutory language defining telehealth services for Medicaid and Medicare. Telehealth was previously defined as an audio service and did not include video-based communication. That will be added so people can get services through audio as well as video-based platforms.
- Budget: Budget remains stable. Funding for grants will continue, including deafblind services, rural real time captioning, mental health services, deaf mentor programs and interpreter programs.

TJay Middlebrook

- Website updates:
  - We continue to work with the web developers to figure out why keyboard navigation/screen reader navigation isn't working correctly. They have tried to fix it but are only having limited success. The Department of Human Services is pushing for an accessibility overhaul on all DHS websites, so it may take that project getting underway to truly resolve the issue.
  - Mental Health resources include new content and a simple navigation menu to find information on services for adults and children's mental health services as well as a directory.
  - New content will be added about recognizing hearing loss as well as new trainings for people who are deafblind or working with individuals who are deafblind.
  - There's more information and resources for low vision as well as tinnitus.
- Grants and contract services:
  - Building interpreters' skills for working in VRI settings.
  - Grants for deafblind services.
  - Grant for mentoring services for interpreters working in greater Minnesota to improve their interpreting skills.
  - Building interpreters' medical and health care interpreting skills.

If you have any questions or need more information, reach out to Mary Bauer or other regional specialists.

## **Guest Speaker, Christy Leach, Consumer Directions, Inc., DBCDS and TTAP**

- Christy emailed handouts about statewide DeafBlind programs prior to the meeting.
- The Technology & Training Access Program (TTAP) purpose is to provide deafblind adults and families with deafblind children with access to needed technology, equipment, and/or training to improve or maintain independence, safety, and participation or access to community and/or family. Currently there are 34 participants in the program.
- The DeafBlind Consumer Directed Services Program (DBCDS) helps adults who are deafblind to live independently and become more self-sufficient. For families with children who are deafblind: to develop children's communication skills and knowledge of their environment, and to provide opportunities for more involvement in their families and communities. Currently there are 36 participants in the program.

## **Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing (MNCDHH) Updates, Katy Kelley, Director of Business Operations**

- The MNCDHH's board meeting on Friday, May 20, was in-person for the first time since the pandemic started.
- The Collaborative Experience Conference for parents and professionals serving students who are deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing will take place virtually on November 3-5, 2022. The conference theme is "Supporting the Whole Child: Reboot." The deadline for presenters to submit a proposal was May 21, 2022. Possible topics included reading preparation, cultural competency, mental health needs, etc.
- May 23, 2022 was the last day of this legislative session. MNCDHH attended hearings and advocated for bills on their legislative agenda. AC members are encouraged to sign up to receive MNCDHH newsletters to get MNCDHH's legislative updates and other news. The link to sign up is on MNCDHH's website (<https://mn.gov/deaf-commission/>). You can find the updated Legislative Agenda and recent developments at MNCDHH's website, along with a video.
- On May 24, MNCDHH hosted a DeafBlind Panel Discussion. Panelists were Jon L, Hannah Furney, Erin Bradford, Lolly Lijewski, Kaitlyn Mielke and Patrick Vellia. Kaitlyn and Patrick were also the moderators. The event was on Zoom with ASL interpreters and real-time captioning.
- MNCDHH is working with the state's ADA Virtual celebration on July 26th. Be sure to save the date during your lunch hour.

Dave will hopefully be the Metro Advisory Committee representative to MNCDHH, pending official acceptance from the Commission.

## **Announcements, All Members**

- Steve shared that they hired Sarah Murphy to replace Lisa Holden who retired a couple of years ago. Sarah is on the path to become a VR counselor. There is now an opening for a VR

tech to replace Sarah. Mary Beth Elkert is retiring June 13. Her occupational communications specialist position is now open with Rehab Services.

- Jeanette shared that MNHV Annual Picnic is Thursday, August at Como Park at 4 or 5 p.m.
- Christine shared that HLAA will have a full board meeting this summer and they will be working on their future and doing outreach. They will start holding hybrid meetings since many members live hours away. Christine would appreciate the greater Minnesota regional offices promoting the HLAA meeting. The board will be rolling it out to their membership hopefully in September.
- Alita shared that People Inc. provides deaf mental health services. They host a drop-in in Minneapolis on Tuesdays and Fridays for individuals over the age of 18 who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing. It's an opportunity for them to socialize with their peers. Anyone feeling isolated or who wants to meet new people, email Alita. People Inc. is looking to expand to St. Paul later this year. They have deaf and hard of hearing staff available who sign.

## **Next Meeting**

Mary will send an email to members to set the next meeting date in October.

Meeting adjourned at 10:53 a.m.

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