

Meeting Minutes: Metro DHHSD Advisory Committee, 01/18/2022

Date: 01/18/2022 9:00 a.m. – 11 a.m.
Minutes prepared by: Jeanne Kolo-Johnson
Location: Virtually on Zoom

Attendance

- Members
 - Steve Emory
 - Christine Morgan
 - Heidy Nazario
 - Sheila Ritter
- Absent: C.T. Karnowski, Dave McAuliffe
- Captioner and interpreters
 - Michelle Remer, DHHSD Interpreter
 - Maria Dively-Rodriguez, DHHSD Interpreter
 - Lisa, Veritext Captioner
- DHHSD staff
 - Mary Bauer, DHH Specialist
 - Jeanne Kolo-Johnson, Lead DHH Specialist
 - Dan Millikin, DHHSD Director
 - TJay Middlebrook, Regional Services Supervisor
 - Sarah Maheswaran, TED Program Administrator
- Others present: Rochelle Garrow, Telecommunications Access Minnesota (TAM), and Amy Perron, System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR)

Agenda

- Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules
- Land acknowledgment statement
- Acceptance of October 19, 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
- Announcements
- Next meeting date

Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules

The Metro Advisory Committee (AC) meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m. by Mary Bauer. Members and guests were welcomed. The October 19, 2021 Metro AC meeting minutes, Regional Update Report, System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR) PowerPoint and agenda for the meeting were distributed via email. For a copy of these items, contact dhs.dhhsd@state.mn.us.

Robin Coninx from Minnesota Hands and Voices and Grant Watkins have resigned from the committee. Please refer people who may be interested in joining the AC to Mary Bauer.

Land acknowledgment statement

The land acknowledgment statement was read. Staff acknowledge the statement is only the beginning to our equity work. Contact Jeanne Kolo-Johnson at Jeanne.kolo-johnson@state.mn.us with questions.

Acceptance of October 19, 2021 meeting minutes

Sheila moved to accept the meeting minutes. Steve 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 regarding the report.
- Virtual DHHS Chat. DHHS will host its first statewide virtual event on February 3 from 6:30-8 p.m. Participants will learn more about Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division. Staff will share information about the ways DHHS works with consumers to achieve communication access and educates them about assistive technology. Staff will also share other resources and services available through DHHS for people who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing and late deafened. This event will be provided via Zoom. ASL interpreters and real-time captioning will be provided. Contact Mary with questions.

Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program, Sarah Maheswaran

Updates

- TED program staff continue to serve clients remotely. One person goes into the office once a week to process applications. Once a specialist determines what equipment meets a client's needs, the vendor ships equipment directly to the client.
- The TED Program has a newly redesigned application. In the past, a description of the TED Program, eligibility guidelines and other information were included in the application. Now the TED Program has two separate documents: one document contains information about the TED Program, and the other

document contains only the application form itself. These documents are available on the DHHSD website:

- [What is the TED Program](https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-4005D-ENG) (<https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-4005D-ENG>)
- [TED Program Application](https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-4005-ENG) (<https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-4005-ENG>).
- Beginning on July 1, 2021, the TED Program began distributing advanced wireless devices, or iPads and iPhones. These devices cannot be provided to everyone who requests them. Specialists first determine whether an advanced wireless device best meets the client's needs or if something else is a better fit for the client. The TED Program will also post a Request for Proposal soon to expand services and devices available to consumers.
- TED specialists are trying to provide virtual presentations. If you know of any agencies that might be interested, please contact Sarah.

Minnesota Relay (MR) feedback

- No feedback was given.

Regional needs and gaps

- Steve explained two students with whom he works have experienced trouble accessing ASL interpreters and captioning services in college settings. He wondered if this is something DHHSD can help with. Mary explained DHHSD can assist people with hearing loss achieve communication access. She also explained that schools are often using automatic speech recognition (ASR) software rather than CART as a cost saving measure, but ASR does not provide equal access in many instances. Sometimes it is a matter of educating the provider about what accommodations are effective for which situations.
- Mary asked if committee members had experienced situations where ASR software blocks swear words with four ****, limiting full access to the spoken word for people who rely on the captions. Although no members offered their feedback, members did nod their heads.

New business, Dan Millikin

- Introduction to TJay Middlebrook, Regional Services Supervisor. TJay Middlebrook started in his position as the Regional Services Supervisor on December 1, 2021. Prior to coming to DHHSD, TJay worked as the ADA Coordinator for the City of St. Paul.
- Budget and legislative updates
 - The legislative session will start on January 31. No legislative proposals impact our division currently. DHHSD is providing feedback on legislation related to gaps in the provision of services for people who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing or late-deafened. DHHSD typically provides feedback on communication access. DHHSD continues to remind the legislature the deaf community is an underserved community and needs to be included in equity and inclusion efforts.

- The budget remains stable. Vacant positions and a reduction in travel have created cost savings. The division will close the Mankato office and terminate the lease. The office is currently empty and does not house any staff.
- The return-to-office timeline. No return-to-office date has been set. If staff need to go into the office for administrative reasons, they must either be vaccinated or follow testing procedures. Staff may meet with consumers under strict guidelines on a rare case by case basis.
- Natalie Regenscheid, OASI, has moved to a different position and is no longer with DHHS. Natalie was the first point of contact for consumers. A position will be posted soon to ensure that phones are answered, and peoples' needs statewide are met.
- Members whose terms ended in the last year, or whose terms will end this year will be asked if they would like to continue in their position and will receive a letter verifying the continuation of their terms. Also, when handbooks were updated two years ago, members were asked to sign forms acknowledging they had read and understood the handbook. If they did not return the signed form, they will be asked to do so now.

Guest Speaker, Amy Perron, System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR)

Amy shared information about the STAR Program and answered questions. A PowerPoint was shared prior to the meeting.

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

- The Commission is seeking to change legislation so the board can fill vacancies more easily and with more diversity. State law currently dictates very specific requirements for board members, making it difficult to fill all vacancies.
- Legislation is being proposed to address T-coils in hearing aids, intervenors in classrooms, and others. The Commission will also support other bills.
- The Commission will meet on Friday and Christine will have more information after that.
- Mary added the Commission hosted a focus group for people who are hard of hearing to gather feedback.

Announcements, all members

- Heidi will send a PowerPoint to Mary with program updates for the Deaf Hard of Hearing (DHH) Guide Program and the Deaf Mentor Family Services Program.
- Sheila shared the Minnesota Employment Center (MEC) continues to provide services and meet with consumers in person as needed. Because they are state contractors, they do provide either proof of vaccination, or weekly testing. They are now fully staffed.

- Christine asked what the requirements are for advisory committee members. Mary and Jeanne clarified that applicants should be deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing or late-deafened, and should be from the seven-county metro region. DHHS would like to have a diverse committee to represent the community in which they provide services. Interested individuals can contact Mary Bauer for an application.
- Mary asked Rochelle about a recent judgement made against Sorenson Communications and Caption Call. Rochelle explained that Caption Call had been providing audiologists and dispensers with incentives to refer their patients to get Caption Call phones.

Next meeting

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:47 a.m.

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