

Meeting Minutes: Northeast DHHSD Advisory Committee, 6/23/2022

Date: 06/23/2022
Minutes prepared by: Jeanne Kolo-Johnson
Location: Virtual via Zoom

Attendance

- Members
 - Maisie Blaine
 - Nancy Diener
 - Karen Sheldon
 - Mary Soltis
- Absent
 - Jack Bender
 - Joshua Morris
 - Michelle Nelson
 - Marie Pank
 - Natalie Stanley
- Captioners and Interpreters
 - Maria Dively-Rodriguez, DHHSD Interpreter
 - Michelle Remer, DHHSD Interpreter
 - Jayne, Veritext Captioner
- DHHSD Staff
 - Anne Janckila, DHH Specialist
 - Jeanne Kolo-Johnson, Lead DHH Specialist
 - Sarah Maheswaran, Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program Administrator
- Others Present
 - Christy Leach, Consumer Directions Inc. (CDI)

Agenda

- Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules
- Land Acknowledgement Statement
- Acceptance of February 17, 2022, Meeting Minutes
- Regional Update Report
- 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 (MNCDHH) Updates
- Announcements: All members
- Next Meeting Date

Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules

Anne called the Northeast Advisory Committee (AC) meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. Members and guests introduced themselves. Anne sent the agenda, February 17, 2022, meeting minutes, the regional update report and presentation materials to members before the meeting. For a copy of these items, contact dhs.dhhsd@state.mn.us.

Land Acknowledgment Statement

Anne read the Land Acknowledgment Statement.

Acceptance of February 17, 2022, Meeting Minutes

Karen moved to accept the minutes. Mary seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as written.

Regional Update Report

AC members had no comments or questions about the Regional Update Report. If they do have questions, they can contact Anne.

Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program

Updates

- Lori Peters retired a few years ago, and the pandemic led the TED Program specialists to share Lori's work rather than posting her position. Now Kirk Anderson, who lives in Little Falls, will cover the Northeast Region. Sarah first will update the position description, then will post the position so he can assume that role. Once he starts covering the Northeast region, the remaining specialists' regions will expand, and they will begin to cover the Southern region. The TED program will have four specialists instead of five moving forward.

- Mary asked if Kirk would visit the Northeast region and Sarah replied that he will do home visits in the Northeast region.
- The TED program has produced a new, fully accessible video for people who have physical and speech disabilities. The [video can be found](https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/communication-access/ted/ted-disabilities.jsp) at <https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/communication-access/ted/ted-disabilities.jsp>. Scroll to the bottom of the page to watch the video. Karen asked if she could share this video. Sarah encouraged all members to share it.
- TED staff work hybrid schedules now. They spend two days in the office and can do home visits, provide presentations and work at booths in person.
- The TED Program also has new promotional flyers specifically geared toward people who have speech and physical disabilities. They have also created flyers for the Latine community and the Black community. Flyers have been printed in English, Spanish, and in other languages, including Arabic, Bosnian, Kurdish, Nepalese and Somali.

Minnesota Relay (MR) Feedback

- Members had no feedback.

Regional Needs and Gaps

- Karen described a need for opportunities for youth who are deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing to get together. These opportunities might have some educational or structured activity component, but also need to provide the youth the opportunity to socialize in an unstructured way so they can build connections with each other and practice their social skills. Karen has written a curriculum to use. She envisions monthly or quarterly get-togethers. The committee discussed the potential of including Regional Low Incidence Facilitators, college students, the Mentor North program, and Wilderness Inquiry in these efforts. Nancy serves as a trustee for an organization called Sheltering Arms Foundation. They provide grants that help to reduce the achievement gap. They might be able to assist. Anne will connect with Karen to discuss this further.

New Business

- The legislative session has ended. The division closely monitored a provision that would redefine telehealth to include video platforms in addition to audio services. Currently Medicare and Medical Assistance only reimburse providers for audio services. The new definition would allow reimbursement for services provided using video platforms. This would cover services provided for people who use ASL or for people who rely on video services to speech read and use visual cues for communication.

- The budget did not increase, and it was not cut. It remains steady. As inflation and gas prices rise, the division needs to plan strategically for FY23. Most importantly, there are no changes to services provided through grants.
- Cheryl Blue has retired. No plans are in place to fill her position at this point. In addition, the division hired a new Information and Referral (I&R) specialist, Lindsey Moon.
- Central office provided Jeanne the following updates:
 - People who use screen reading software or keyboards to navigate DHHSD's website have had some problems. DHHSD has tried to resolve the problems with the website but have so far not had success. DHS is currently pushing for an agency-wide accessibility overhaul of all DHS websites. When that happens, the problems with DHHSD's website will most likely be resolved.
 - The mental health program has added and simplified content on the website. They added three new pages, including adult mental health services, children's mental health services and the mental health provider directory. Grant information has also been updated.
 - Staff have also added information about signs and symptoms of hearing loss and tinnitus to the website. There is also an updated list of trainings about deafblindness.
 - Grants are in place to improve interpreter skills in a variety of settings.

Guest Speaker, Christy Leach, Consumer Directions Inc., (CDI)

Christy shared information about the DeafBlind Consumer Directed Services (DBCDS) and Technology, Training & Access Program (TTAP).

A member asked if Christy would help a consumer identify vendors and resources when they are looking for equipment. Christy asks the consumer questions to help them narrow their choices down and looks to see what the consumer has available to them.

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

- Unfortunately, none of the legislative proposals made by the commission passed this year. This included the interpreter licensure bill, the bill that would add CDIs to the educational interpreter law, a bill that would add clarity to a statute on hiring and retaining state employees with disabilities, a bill that allows the state academy to keep rental income from land and residences, and a bill giving Metro Deaf School enrollment preference, which protects their ability to give preference to students who have a primary disability of deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing.

- Katy Kelley has taken a promotion.
- The board has adapted processes to monitor the commission's progress to ensure the commission avoids conflicts of interest.
- The board just completed a self-evaluation.

Announcements: All members

- Mary shared information about the Minnesota Hands and Voices picnic happening on August 4 in the Twin Cities.

Next Meeting

The meeting adjourned at 2:24 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 22, at 1 p.m.

