

Meeting Minutes: Northeast DHHS Advisory Committee, 02/17/2022

Date: 02/17/2022, 1-3 p.m.
Minutes prepared by: Jeanne Kolo-Johnson
Location: Virtual on Zoom

Attendance

- Members
 - Jack Bender
 - Maisie Blaine
 - Nancy Diener
 - Michelle Nelson
 - Karen Sheldon
 - Mary Soltis
- Absent: Maggie Hoppe, Joshua Morris
Marie Pank, Natalie Stanley
- CART and Interpreters
 - Michelle Remer, DHHS Interpreter
 - Maria Dively-Rodriguez, DHHS Interpreter
 - Megan, Veritext Captioner
- DHHS Staff
 - Cheryl Blue, DHH Specialist
 - Anne Janckila, DHH Specialist
 - Jeanne Kolo-Johnson, Lead DHH Specialist
 - Dan Millikin, DHHS Director
 - TJay Middlebrook, Regional Services Supervisor
 - Sarah Maheswaran, Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program Administrator
- Others Present
 - Amy Perron, System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR) Program

Agenda

- Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules
- Land Acknowledgment Statement
- Acceptance of October 21, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- Regional Update Report
- Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program
- Regional Needs and Gaps
- New Business
- Minnesota Commission for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing (MNCDHH) Updates
- Announcements

- Next Meeting Date

Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules

Cheryl Blue called the Northeast Advisory Committee (AC) meeting to order at 1:01 pm. The October 21, 2021 meeting minutes, Regional Update Report, Understanding hearing loss: A guide for law enforcement, and the agenda for the meeting were distributed by email. For a copy of these items, contact dhs.dhhsd@state.mn.us.

Land Acknowledgment Statement

Cheryl read the Land Acknowledgment Statement.

Acceptance of October 21, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Mary moved to accept the minutes from the meeting held on October 21, 2021. Nancy seconded the motion, and the minutes were accepted as written.

Regional Update Report

- Members received the update report prior to the meeting. Anne summarized work specific to the Northeast region:
 - Anne continues to work with the Iron Range Equal Justice Committee in the Virginia and Hibbing courthouses. The goal of the committee is to improve access to the court and judicial system. The committee is currently focused on diversifying juries; they tend to be made up of mostly white males. The committee is educating diverse communities and women about the jury process.
 - The Equal Justice Committee and the Voices for Ethnic and Multicultural Awareness are planning a second open house in the Virginia area.
 - The committee is working to recruit more attorneys to the region, particularly public defenders.
 - The committee will host two mock trials at the St. Louis County Fair in Chisholm this summer.
 - Cheryl and Anne are developing an outreach plan for the northeast and north central regions. They plan to contact organizations to offer presentations to during the spring and summer.
 - Both Anne and Cheryl continue to participate in the Dementia Friendly Airport Work Group (DFAWG). This group is focused on making airports more accessible for people with disabilities. They are working to implement the sunflower lanyard program for people to use to self-identify as people who may need additional time or help to get through security, or to board airplanes, and so forth. The committee is currently looking for an airport willing to host filming of training videos.

- Cheryl met and worked with the Arrowhead Agency on Aging staff about how to request and include accommodations for the trainings they provide.
- How Can We Help? DHHS Virtual Chat – The first DHHS statewide virtual chat went well and had a good turnout. The presentation focused on the services DHHS provides.

Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program

Updates

- TED staff continue to provide services remotely. A staff person enters the Golden Rule Building in St. Paul once a week to get the mail, scan applications and process them. Staff continue to serve consumers. Once the specialist and consumer decide on which equipment is needed, the vendor ships it directly to the consumer.
- Working remotely has made doing outreach and sharing information about the TED Program with agencies and providers challenging. TED staff can do virtual presentations about the TED Program. If members know of agencies who might be interested, contact Sarah.
- The TED application has been redesigned. In the past the program description and the application were combined. The two have been separated into two documents. The brochure with the program description now has updated pictures of current equipment. The application is black and white and has a fillable form only. If you need applications, they can be sent to you. They can also be found at:
 - [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)
- Full distribution of iPads and iPhones began in July. A Request for Proposals to expand the distribution of advanced wireless devices to include Android products will be posted soon. The TED Program provides the device and preinstalls needed apps prior to providing the equipment to the consumer.
- The TED Program budget is due on March 1st. This budget is different from the DHHS budget.

Minnesota Relay (MR) Feedback

- Mary asked if people still use TTYs or if other technology is used. One of her consumers tried to contact an unemployment insurance agency and they were told they had to call through the TTY line.
 - Sarah responded the provider may not have realized they must use the consumer's preferred relay service. She clarified there are still some people who prefer to use TTYs, but the TED Program very rarely gives them to consumers.
 - Cheryl added people who live in rural parts of Minnesota may not have access to internet service and may rely upon TTYs for telecommunication access. Some people also use TTYs from their cell phones.
 - Jeannie commented if a consumer is not able to access services, Cheryl and Anne can assist the consumer with self-advocacy, or they can advocate for the consumer. They can also provide training to the agency.

- Mary reported the person called the agency back and spoke with a different staff person who accepted their call. She sees a need for the agency to understand Deaf Culture and receiving calls from relay. Cheryl added the consumer may need coaching and empowerment as well.
- Sarah offered to provide training about relay services.

Regional Needs and Gaps

- Jack shared he has been called for jury duty, but when he requested an interpreter, he never heard back about serving. Anne will pass this information on to the Equal Justice Committee. Cheryl will investigate the issue, too. Dan supports follow up on this important issue.

New Business

- Introduction to TJay Middlebrook – TJay is the new Regional Services Supervisor. He started on December 1st.
- Legislative Issues – DHHSD is not submitting any new bills, but Teika Pakalns is monitoring any proposals that may impact DHHSD. None are expected.
- Staffing – Teika’s previous position as a program planner will be posted in the spring. This position will include management of grant contracts, data and analysis and those kinds of responsibilities. DHHSD will also post the I&R position soon.
- Facilities – The physical Hibbing office site was leased just before the pandemic began and it has not been used. That site will be closed, and Anne will be based out of Duluth; she will continue to cover the same region, and she will continue to meet people in person in her coverage area.
- Budget – The DHHSD budget will remain the same. Operational costs are increasing, however, which means expenses need to be reduced.
- Return to Work (RTW) – There is not definite timeline for when staff will return to their offices for work. When staff do return, they may return in a hybrid model, meaning they will work from both the office and their homes.

Guest Speaker, Amy Perron, STAR Program

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

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

- The board has voted on the legislative agenda for 2022. The current top action items are:
 - Telecoil education
 - Deafblind interveners in classrooms

- Inclusive requirements for commission board appointments.
- MNCDHH will support several bills led by others, including:
 - Interpreter licensure
 - Closed captioning in public spaces
 - Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs) in classrooms
 - Local government website accessibility grant
 - IEP process accommodations for parents.
- The link to the MNCDHH website was shared: [Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, Deafblind & Hard of Hearing \(https://mn.gov/deaf-commission\)](https://mn.gov/deaf-commission)
- The Commission hosted two Q&A sessions about the current legislative agenda. The second session was recorded and has been posted to the website for those who could not attend a live session.
- The St. Anthony Main Theater, an independently owned theatre, had agreed to provide open captions for all film showings. However, the theatre was since sold or leased to another party, the Minneapolis St. Paul Film Society, and they have not committed to providing open captions. The Commission is advocating for the return of open captions for the films.
- The general election takes place on November 8th. Township elections take place on March 8th, and the primaries take place on August 8th. The Civic Engagement team has been busy with work related to these elections.
- The Civic Engagement team recently hosted focus groups focused on under-represented groups to learn more about their needs.
- In the next year the board will assess their work as a board.

Announcements: All members

- Michelle Nelson announced the 2022 St. Louis County Health and Human Service conference will happen October 12, 13 and 14th at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center (DECC) and will have in person and virtual options. The theme is “Come together: Community, unity, and hope.” The closing keynote speaker will be Kathy Buckley, who Cheryl recommended.
- Mary shared Minnesota Employment Center continues to provide services virtually. In her work with the Deaf Mentor Family Services, she is working with two families, one from the Twin Cities and another from Cloquet.
- There will be a Deaf Social Night at Sammy’s Pizza in Duluth from 5-7 p.m.
- Karen Sheldon and a colleague will present at the national American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association (ADARA) conference about the emerging trends in rural service delivery.

Next Meeting

Date: May 19, 2022

Time: **1:30-3:30 *note time change**

Location: To be determined

