

Meeting Minutes: Northwest DHHSD Advisory Committee, 5/11/2022

Date: 05/11/2022
Minutes prepared by: Jeanne Kolo-Johnson
Location: Virtual via Zoom

Attendance

- Members
 - Kathryn Rose
 - Lori Vigesaa
- Absent
 - Cynthia Ruiz, Elizabeth Merz, Linda Fairbanks, Maureen Lilleby, Micki Curtis, Susan Anderson
- Captioners and Interpreters
 - Michelle Remer, DHHSD Interpreter
 - Brandi Hoie, ASLIS Interpreter
 - Lisa Richardson, Veritext Captioner
- DHHSD Staff
 - Jerry Geist, DHH Specialist
 - Jeanne Kolo-Johnson, Lead DHH Specialist
 - TJay Middlebrook, Regional Services Supervisor
 - Dan Millikin, DHHSD Director
 - Sarah Maheswaran, TED Program Administrator
- Others Present:
 - Christy Leach, Consumer Directions, Inc.
 - Darlene Zangara, MNCDHH
 - Rochelle Garrow, MN Department of Commerce

Agenda

- Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules
- Land Acknowledgment Statement
- Acceptance of January 19, 2022 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: All members
- Next Meeting Date

Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules

Jerry Geist called the Northwest Advisory Committee (AC) meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. Members and guests introduced themselves. Jerry sent the agenda, January 19, 2022, meeting minutes, the regional update report and presentation materials to members before the meeting through email. For a copy of these items, contact dhs.dhhsd@state.mn.us.

Land Acknowledgment Statement

Jerry read the Land Acknowledgment Statement.

Acceptance of January 19, 2022, Meeting Minutes

Kathryn moved to accept the minutes. Lori seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as written.

Regional Update Report

- Jerry sent the regional update report to members before the meeting. Members asked no questions and made no comments about the report.
- Jerry explained how to print material on the website that are not in PDF format.
- Jerry encouraged members to attend the DHHSD Virtual Chat on May 12 about communicating with law enforcement.

Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program, Sarah Maheswaran

Updates

- Staff have returned to the office and currently work hybrid schedules. Most work two or three days a week from the office and the rest of the time from home. They have started providing home visits for their consumers and doing presentations and booths in person.

- The TED program is producing a short promotional video targeting people who have speech disabilities. ZenMation has the contract, and they hope to complete the project by June 30.
- Sarah will not hire a Northeast TED specialist to replace the specialist who retired a year ago. Current TED regions will expand to cover the Northeast region.
- The TED Program will have a virtual meet and greet in June. The date has not been set yet. Participants will have the opportunity to meet TED staff and learn who covers which counties.
- The TED program has new promotional flyers specific to people who have physical and speech disabilities. The program also has new flyers for the Latine community in English and Spanish and a flyer for the Black community. Sarah will send the links for the new flyers to Jerry to share with the AC. Flyers are also available in Arabic, Bosnian, Kurdish, Nepali and Somali.

Minnesota Relay (MR) Feedback

- Committee members shared no feedback.

Regional Needs and Gaps

- Lori identified the need for children’s therapeutic services and supports (CTSS) or skills workers and adult rehabilitative mental health services (ARMHS) for people who are deaf and use sign language to communicate in Northwest Minnesota. When she, as a therapist, refers her clients for services, the agencies she refers to may not provide interpreting services even when Lori specifies a need for an ASL interpreter. More training is needed for those agencies. Jeannie asked if Lori has referred families to DHHSD to advocate for communication access. Some families struggle to make connections, and another does not want to work with state agencies. Jeannie recommended making a soft referral or getting a release so DHHSD can make the initial contact with the family. Jerry suggested meeting with the family with Lori to start developing a relationship with that family. Kathryn asked if any of the children have CADI waivers, which might help to cover the cost of services. Most families do not want to work with the counties. One family was told by the county they have nothing for a child who is deaf or hard of hearing. Jeannie will plan to contact that county, as a part of outreach, to offer training.

New Business, Dan Millikin

- Offices have reopened throughout the state by appointment only. Staff can meet with consumers and agencies in person and attend in-person meetings. Most offices will be closed, and most staff will work from home on Fridays.
- The legislative session will end soon. DHHSD worked to help DHS’s efforts to define and expand language regarding telehealth. DHHSD worked to make sure the word “video” is included in the

definition of telehealth services so video platforms can be used for reimbursable services. Medicare did not reimburse services provided through video platforms.

- There were no funding cuts for fiscal year 2023 (FY23), which begins on July 1, which means no grants had to be cut. However, increasing costs, inflation, salary increases, and increased costs of equipment mean the division must make the budget go further. We expect no budget increases for FY24 and FY25, so the division must evaluate spending and available funds. The division is looking specifically at regional services and operations.
- Operations updates from Amy McQuaid-Swanson include:
 - People who have vision loss and who use keyboard and screen readers to navigate the website have had problems. There have been attempts to resolve this problem without much success. The Department of Human Services (DHS) plans to do an accessibility overhaul and a fix to the problem will likely be part of that overhaul.
 - Staff recently updated mental health content on the DHHS website to simplify the menu. Some content has also been added in the mental health resources.
 - Three new pages can be found under the “Living with hearing loss” menu. Those pages are Adult mental health services, Children’s mental health services, and Mental health provider directory.
 - People can find updated information about mental health grants on the website. To find this information, go to the “About us” section, and select “Grants” from the drop-down menu. The [Grants](https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/about-us/grants/) webpage URL is <https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/about-us/grants/>.
 - Readers can also find new information on the website about signs and symptoms of hearing loss, tinnitus, and an updated list of trainings available related to deafblindness and a new list of resources for people who are deafblind.
 - Several grants currently provide specialized training to improve communication access for people who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing.

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

Christy shared information about the Deafblind Consumer Directed Services (DBCDS) program and the Deafblind Technology & Training Access (TTAP) Programs. Jerry sent handouts to AC members before the meeting.

One member asked how staff boundaries, hiring and firing are handled. Does CDI provide support for those things? Christy explained consumers choose their own staff, how much to pay their staff, and so forth. CDI handles all the paperwork and other “behind the scenes” work to hire staff. They also provide staff with training materials. If problems with staff come up, Christy will problem solve with consumers.

Jerry asked if services are provided to consumers based on region or if they are provided on a first come, first serve basis. Christy explained when the program started each region had a specific number of “slots.” Not all regions used their slots, and they were “loaned” to the Metro area. These slots are used for a long period of time, but because they were loaned from Greater Minnesota, if they were no longer needed, Greater Minnesota would have priority over someone in the Metro. CDI has also created temporary slots, and have encouraged people to use the TTAP as much as possible.

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

- The legislative session ends on May 23, 2022. The Commission has been attending the hearings and advocating for bills on the legislative agenda. AC members can find updates and sign up to receive the Commission newsletter. Go to <https://www.mn.gov/deaf-commission>.
- The Collaborative Experience Conference for parents and professionals serving students who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing will take place virtually and will happen November 3 through November 5, 2022. The planning committee is currently accepting proposals.
- On May 24, the Commission is hosting a deafblind panel discussion. Panelists include John L. Furney, Erin Bradford, Lolly Lijewski, Kaitlyn Mielke and Patrick Vellia.
- The Commission is working on the state’s ADA virtual celebration for July 26.
- The Commission board meeting is on Friday, May 20. The board will meet in person for the first time since the pandemic started.

Announcements: All members

- DHHS will host a virtual chat called “Communicating with law enforcement” on May 12. Interpreters and real-time captioning (CART) services are available. Wendy DeVore will provide information to participants as well.
- Deaf CAN’s grant will end, and the organization will take clients in recovery on a camping trip. If AC members know anybody in recovery who would like to join, contact Kathryn.

Next Meeting

A decision will be made about whether the meeting will be held in person or remotely.

