

Meeting Minutes: Southeast DHHSD Advisory Committee, 01/28/2022

Date: 01/28/2022, 10 a.m. - Noon
Minutes prepared by: Jeanne Kolo-Johnson
Location: Virtual on Zoom

Attendance

- Members
 - Ridge Euler
 - Matthew Heidenwirth
 - Chandra Peterson
 - Sonny Wasilowski
 - Ashley Worthen-Galuska
- Absent: Lloyd Ballinger, Wes Brandenburger, Mellissa Cummins, Annette Peters
- CART and Interpreters
 - Michelle Remer, DHHSD Interpreter
 - Maria Dively-Rodriguez, DHHSD Interpreter
 - Doug Bowen-Bailey, ASLIS Interpreter
 - Dee Ramnarine, ASLIS Interpreter
 - Jason Hawkins, ASLIS Interpreter
 - Janell, Veritext Captioner
- DHHSD Staff
 - Calla Kevan, DHH Specialist
 - Jeanne Kolo-Johnson, Lead DHH Specialist
 - Dan Millikin, DHHSD Director
 - TJay Middlebrook, Regional Services Supervisor
 - Sarah Maheswaran, TED Program Administrator
- Others Present
 - Amy Perron, System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR) Program
 - Rochelle Garrow, Telecommunications Access Minnesota (TAM)
 - Amie Miller, Twin Cities Public Television (TPT)
 - Kaomi Lee, TPT
 - Darlene Zangara, MNCDHH
 - Katy Kelley, MNCDHH

Agenda

- Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules
- Land Acknowledgment Statement
- Acceptance of October 1, 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

Calla Kevan called the Southeast advisory committee (AC) meeting to order at 10:01 am. The October 1, 2021 meeting minutes, Regional Update Report, Understanding hearing loss: A guide for law enforcement, STAR Program PowerPoint, TPT PowerPoint, and the agenda for the meeting were sent out by email before the meeting. For a copy of these items, contact dhs.dhhsd@state.mn.us.

Land Acknowledgment Statement

Calla read the Land Acknowledgment Statement.

Acceptance of October 1, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Ashley moved to accept the meeting minutes as written. Chandra seconded the motion, and the minutes were accepted as written.

Regional Update Report

- How can DHHS help? A virtual chat – DHHS will host a virtual event on February 3rd from 6:30-8 p.m. via Zoom. This information has been shared through email and GovDelivery. The event will provide DHHS with a way to connect with people around the state, and to share information about the services DHHS can provide.
- Update report – No questions or comments were shared.

Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program, Sarah Maheswaran

Updates

- The TED Program has a new, streamlined application with a separate brochure describing the program. You can find them online 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)

- Staff continue to provide services remotely; they cannot do home visits. A staff person does go into the St. Paul office once a week to process applications. TED specialists then determine client eligibility and the type of equipment needed, and the vendor ships the equipment directly to the client.
- The advanced wireless program started in July. Specialists can provide clients with iPads and iPhones with preinstalled apps. Specialists use a very specific screening process to ensure clients can use the equipment or they can learn to use the equipment on their own because staff cannot travel to provide training. A request for proposals (RFP) will be issued soon to expand the program to include android devices.
- Outreach efforts have been limited since staff began working from home; they would like to provide virtual presentations about the TED Program. If you know of an agency who would like a presentation, contact Sarah.
- The TED Program has been dealing with several products being discontinued, in part because of delayed shipments due to COVID.
 - Although there are solutions for people who can use wireless technology, this is dependent upon WIFI, and many people do not have access to WIFI.
 - Manufacturers who make captioned phones are starting to move toward producing phones that use automatic speech recognition (ASR) technology rather than the traditional communication assistants/captioners.
- A question was asked about whether current clients can upgrade their equipment. Sarah explained as client needs change, TED specialists can reassess their needs and provide new equipment to meet the client's needs. There is no need for the client to reapply to the program.

Minnesota Relay (MR) Feedback

- No feedback was provided.

Regional Needs and Gaps

- Sonny addressed the following issues:
 - There is a need for captioning in public places.
 - Access to skilled interpreters continues to be a need.
 - Language deprivation for people who are deaf and hard of hearing is an ongoing issue.
 - A suggestion was made to change the language in the new publication regarding law enforcement to say, "minors should not interpret" rather than "children..." Sonny does not believe the word "children" is clearly defined.
 - The Deaf community in Faribault needs more services.
- Chandra shared:
 - Social workers do not understand how hearing loss impacts a person; it would be nice to have social workers who are Deaf and/or use ASL to provide direct services. One idea offered was to create a grant to establish a unit to provide services for Deaf clients, like Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) has a deaf unit. Dan noted part of the issue with social services is high turnover rates within those agencies. DHHS provides training and consultation, but then

- those staff members leave, and more training must be done for those agencies. DHHSD is working hard to maintain and to reconnect with county social services and human service providers across the state. The pandemic has had an impact on DHHSD's relationships with some of those agencies.
- There is a need for ASL education for late deafened adults. Others added an adult mentor program could be helpful, and it could be helpful to partner late-deafened adults with deaf adults who teach ASL to other adults.
 - Another idea was proposed that the Commission create an entity like the educational collaborative that brings together health and human service professionals to collaborate to find programming solutions for people who are deaf.
- A list of ASL classes posted on DHHSD's website was discussed. One person suggested it be posted on the website; another noted the resource is already there, but there are not many resources available.

New Business

- Introduction to TJay Middlebrook – TJay Middlebrook is the new Regional Services Supervisor. He joined DHHSD on December 1st. He has a wealth of experience, having worked as an accessibility coordinator for the City of St. Paul, and having worked for Corner Stone Mental Health before that. TJay shared he is starting two work groups:
 - One work group will focus on technology, grants, and home technology
 - One work group will focus on policy and ways to approach communication access
- Staffing –
 - Teika Pakalns is the new Policy and Planning Specialist, and she is focusing on legislative and policy work. She provides input on potential bills that may have an impact on people who are deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing through the governor's office. This work is separate from the work the Commission does. Teika also gathers data. When she took this position, her previous position was left vacant. This will be reposted in the spring; the person who fills this position will oversee grants and will do some operations work.
 - A second position, Information and Referral (I&R) Specialist, will be posted as soon as possible. Natalie Regenscheid, an Office and Administrative Specialist Intermediate (OASI) and who covered I&Rs, has accepted a position with another agency. The person who fills this role needs to be able to gather information and make referrals to the appropriate specialist in the division. This position was supervised by two areas but will now be supervised by TJay. Once DHHSD staff go back to the office to work, this position will work primarily from the St. Paul office with the option to work from home on occasion.
- Return to work – There is no definitive timeline for when staff will return to their offices and in person services. In person services are provided in crisis situations on a case-by-case basis.
- Legislative updates – DHHSD is not proposing new legislation. DHHSD is consulting with the Community Supports Administration about legislation that will impact people who have hearing loss. DHHSD has recently worked closely with the healthcare administration, who oversees Medical Assistance and other programs. Since the pandemic, Medicaid and Medicare telehealth services have been provided "audio only" due to statute. This creates inequities for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. DHHSD has

advocated to include video-based services to include ASL and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), and this language change to the law is being proposed. Sonny asks that Minnesota interpreters be used for telehealth appointments in Minnesota. Dan explained the first step is to make the change to the law to ensure Minnesotans have access to interpreters and real-time captions.

- Budget – The budget is steady. Federal funds will go to programs that have been most impacted by COVID, including housing and behavioral health programs.
- Membership (Jeanne) - 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 Speakers

- Amy Perron, System of Technology to Achieve Results (STAR) Program – Amy shared information about the STAR Program and answered questions. A PowerPoint was shared prior to the meeting.
- Amie Miller and Kaomi Lee, Twin Cities Public Television (TPT) – Amie and Kaomi shared information about the captioning grant they receive from DHHS to caption the Almanac and the Almanac at the Capital, and they answered questions. A PowerPoint was shared prior to the meeting.

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

- The Commission is working on the following legislation:
 - Telecoil education – this bill would require hearing aid providers to provide education to hearing aid users about telecoils.
 - Deafblind interveners.
 - Requirements for MNCDHH Board appointments.
- The Commission also supports the following bills, which have been proposed by others:
 - The establishment of an interpreter licensure board.
 - Closed captioning in public places.
 - Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs) in the classroom.
 - Local government website accessibility.
 - IEP process accommodations for parents – this bill requires schools to provide accommodations for parents so they can participate in the IEP process for their children.
- MNCDHH hosted two listening sessions, one of which will be posted on their website.
- St. Anthony Main, an independently owned movie theater in Minneapolis that had agreed to provide open captioning for their film showings, has been sold. MNCDHH is advocating to have the new owners caption the films shown at the theater.
- There has been a lot of activity in preparing for voting and community education for the upcoming elections.

- Check the website for more information: [Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing](https://mn.gov/deaf-commission) (mn.gov/deaf-commission).
- One member asked how the Commission advertises when MNCDHH posts board meeting dates, how the legislative agenda is determined, and how input from community members is gathered. Contact Alicia Lane-Outlaw with the Commission at mncdhh.info@state.mn.us regarding this issue.

Next Meeting

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

The meeting adjourned at 12:22 p.m.

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