

Meeting Minutes: West Central DHHSD Advisory Committee, 06/03/2022

Date: 06/03/2022, 12 -2 p.m.
Minutes prepared by: TJay Middlebrook
Location: Virtual on Zoom

Attendance

Members

- Ade Haugen
- Brenda Hommerding

Absent: Karen Ampe, Carla Buzzeo, Rebecca
Thiesse, Amy Zempel

Captioner and Interpreters

- Michelle Remer, DHHSD Interpreter
- Dee Ramnarine, ASLIS Interpreter
- Megan, Veritext Captioner

DHHSD Staff

- Diane Leonard, DHH Specialist
- TJay Middlebrook, Regional Services
Supervisor
- Dan Millikin, DHHSD Director

Others Present

- Christy Leach, Consumer Directions,
Inc. (CDI)
- Rochelle Garrow, Department of
Commerce

Agenda

- Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules
- Land Acknowledgment Statement
- Acceptance of October 8, 2021, Meeting Minutes
- Regional Update Report
- Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program & Operations Update
- Regional Needs and Gaps
- New Business
- Guest Speaker
- Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing (MNCDHH) Updates
- Announcements
- Next Meeting Date

Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules

Diane Leonard called the West Central Advisory Committee (AC) meeting to order at 12:01 p.m., June 3, 2022. Meeting minutes, Regional Update Report, 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

Diane read the Land Acknowledgment Statement.

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes

- Minutes from October 8, 2021. Ade was the only person who attended the October meeting present. No one could second a motion to accept the October minutes as written. The AC tabled this item until the next AC meeting.
- Minutes from January 1, 2022. Ade was the only person who attended the January meeting present. No one could second the motion to accept the January minutes as written. The AC tabled this item until the next meeting.

Regional Update Report

AC members received the update report before the meeting. Specialists have worked on many activities statewide in the last few months.

Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program, TJay

Updates

- The TED Program is producing a video to reach people who have physical and speech disabilities. Once completed, TED program staff will share the video link with organizations that serve those communities.
- Now that staff have returned to work, the Northeast TED Specialist position will be posted within the next month. The plan is to expand the counties served per region. This means that four TED Specialists will provide initial services instead of five. Sarah is working on updating the list map.
- TED Specialists are now providing home visits (if needed), presentations and booths in-person.

- Virtual chat on June 9 from 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. Upcoming GovDelivery announcement will have details.
- Staff developed flyers for people who have speech and physical disabilities and the Latine and Black communities. The Latine flyer is available in Spanish and English.
- Flyers are also available in the following languages: Arabic, Bosnian, Kurdish, Nepali, and Somali.

Minnesota Relay (MR) Feedback

Members had no feedback to offer.

Regional Needs and Gaps

Ade explained she has been working with Dan and TJay to identify the needs of people who are speaking deafblind and to discuss ways to address those needs.

Brenda asked Ade to clarify what gaps specifically she sees in the community. Ade explained when participating in the focus groups her experience has been that they focus on things relevant to those who are deafblind and use ASL to communicate. They address issues related to employment. These focus groups do not really attend to the needs of people who are hard of hearing and have vision loss. Minnesota Deafblind Association does not include Greater Minnesota. Ade's group, Minnesota Speaking Deafblind seeks to address this gap. Ade also sees a gap in information on DHHSD's website. These things make people who have dual sensory loss and do not use sign language to communicate feel unheard.

New Business

- Dan shared the fiscal year 2022 will end soon.
- DHHSD is currently working on expanding the definition of telehealth to include video communication. This will make telehealth inclusive of people who sign or use interpreters through a video platform. The next step is working on implementation.
- The budget continues to hold steady. Dan discussed operational costs. The budget for fiscal year 2023 has been balanced. The division is strategizing for fiscal year 2024-2025 to cover vacancies and costs. Dan mentioned that everything looks good. There are no reductions in grant funding. Providers can continue to deliver services. The Department of Human Services values grants and sees them as a priority for providing services to our communities.

- TJay announced the new Information and Referral Specialist, Lindsey Moon, will start on May 25. Lindsey will connect people who contact DHHSD to programs and specialists based on their needs.

Operations Update

- Website navigation: DHHSD continues to work with the web developers to figure out why keyboard navigation/screen reader navigation doesn't work correctly. They have tried to fix it but have had limited success. The Department of Human Services is pushing for an accessibility overhaul on all DHS websites. It may take that project getting underway to truly resolve the root of the issue.
- Website mental health resources: DHHSD recently updated the mental health content on the website and simplified the menu. The new pages can be found under the [Living with Hearing Loss menu, Find mental health support](https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/hearing-loss/mentalhealth/) (<https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/hearing-loss/mentalhealth/>). There are three new pages: Adult mental health services, children's mental health services and mental health provider directory. DHHSD also updated information about Mental Health grants. You can find these pages by going to the About us menu, and selecting [Grants](https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/about-us/grants/) (<https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/about-us/grants/>).
- Other new content on the website includes:
 - A page describing how to recognize [signs and symptoms of hearing loss](https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/hearing-loss/signs/) (<https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/hearing-loss/signs/>). This page is under the Living with hearing loss tab.
 - An [updated list of trainings available related to deafblindness](https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/hearing-loss/deafblind/) (<https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/hearing-loss/deafblind/>). This page is under the Living with Hearing loss tab and select combined hearing and vision loss.
 - A new page about [Tinnitus](https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/hearing-loss/tinnitus/) (<https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/hearing-loss/tinnitus/>). This page is under the Living with hearing loss tab and select Tinnitus.

Grants and Contracts

Several DHHSD grants provide specialized training to improve communication access for people who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing. These grants also improve the skills of interpreters who serve those populations. A few examples include:

- Video Remote Interpreter Training - Specialized training for working with people who are deafblind, low-vision and speaking deafblind.
- Mentoring to Excellence – provides deaf and ASL interpreter mentors to pre-certified and newly certified interpreters working in Greater Minnesota.

- Specialized medical and mental health interpreter training for interpreters working in Greater Minnesota.
- Protactile and other communication systems training is provided to 1) people who are deafblind 2) interveners 3) support service providers 4) interpreters. Training is also available to other service providers who serve people who are deafblind.
- People who are deafblind and need access to assistive technology or services and supports have access to two different intervener and SSP programs. These programs provide ongoing intervener or SSP support and/or technology that helps the person maintain or improve their independence.
- If you have questions about any of the DHHSD grants or would like additional information, please contact your local DHHSD regional specialist.

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

Christy Leach from Consumer Directions, Inc. (CDI) shared information about the services provided by CDI and answered questions. Two documents were shared before the meeting.

Ade asked how people who are blind can find their own SSPs, and who can help them with finding SSPs. Christy clarified her role as the connection between the SSP and CDI and explained she often will ask DHHSD specialists to help find SSPs. She also explained it is up to the consumer to talk to potential applicants to ask if they might want to work for them. Ade asked Dan if DHHSD can work with county social services to help identify SSPs. Dan explained each county has a variety of funding, policy and staffing issues to contend with and so the issue needs to be addressed on a county-by-county basis.

Brenda asked about the types of screen readers. Christy will share information and names of people who can give Brenda suggestions. Ade suggested Brenda contact State Services for the Blind to visit their technology lab. Dan shared the director's name is Natasha Jerde.

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

This legislative session ended on May 23, 2022. MNCDHH had been attending hearings and advocating for bills on the commission's legislative agenda. Brenda encouraged AC advisory board members to sign up to receive MNCDHH newsletters to get legislative updates and other news. The link to sign up is on [MNCDHH's website \(https://mn.gov/deaf-commission/\)](https://mn.gov/deaf-commission/). The commission posts updated legislative agendas and new developments there. The commission has produced a video as well. They will send out a legislative wrap up soon.

The Collaborative Experience Conference for parents and professionals serving students who are deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing will take place, virtually, on November 3-5, 2022. The conference theme is "Supporting the Whole Child: Reboot." The commission is currently accepting presenter proposals for the conference. The deadline to submit a proposal is June 11, 2022. Possible topics include reading preparation, cultural competency, mental health needs, etc. A full list of topics and submission guidelines is available on MNCDHH's website.

On May 24, MNCDHH hosted a DeafBlind Panel Discussion. The panelists were Jon L, Erin Bradford, Lolly Lijewski, Kaitlyn Mielke, and Patrick Vellia. Kaitlyn and Patrick moderated the panel. The commission will release a recording of the panel soon via newsletter.

MNCDHH is helping to plan the state's ADA Virtual celebration on July 26. Save the date.

MNCDHH's board meeting was on Friday, May 20. It was the first in-person meeting since the pandemic started. Board materials are available for review on the website under Board Documents – May 2022.

Announcements: All members

Rebecca Thiesse encouraged members to support the Medicare Audiologist Access and Services Act (MAASA). It has bipartisan support. This bill has not been voted on yet. It will allow Medicare to pay for audiology office visits, hearing testing, etc. It will also reduce the out-of-pocket payments patients make. It reclassifies audiologists as practitioners vs. technicians. All three audiology groups support it, which is rare. It could pave the way for Medicare covering hearing aids compared to the Medicare advantage plans that only offer discount devices. Most audiologists in MN (80%) will not work with the advantage plans because they are very limiting.

Next Meeting

Diane will send an email to members to set the date for the next meeting in September or October. We will avoid September 16.

The meeting adjourned at 1:21 p.m.

