

Meeting Minutes: West Central DHHSD Advisory Committee Meeting, May 7, 2021

Date: 05/07/2021, 12:00-2:00 p.m.
Minutes prepared by: Jeanne Kolo-Johnson
Location: Virtual via Zoom

Attendance

- Members
 - Carla Buzzeo
 - Ade Haugen
 - Brenda Hommerding
 - Amy Zempel
- Absent: Karen Ampe, Christine Loos, Rebecca Thiesse
- CART and Interpreters:
 - Kristi Arntzen, Veritext
 - Michelle Remer, DHHSD Interpreter
 - Maria Dively-Rodriguez, DHHSD Interpreter
- DHHSD Staff
 - Diane Leonard, DHH Specialist
 - Jeanne Kolo-Johnson, Lead DHH Specialist
 - Kristina Anderson, Management Analyst
 - Dan Millikin, Director
 - Dr. Colleen Donohue, MH Psychologist
- Others Present:
 - Rochelle Garrow, Department of Commerce-Telecommunications Access Minnesota

Agenda

- Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules
- Acceptance of February 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes
- Regional Update Report
- Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program
- Regional Needs and Gaps
- New Business
- MNCDHH Updates
- Announcements: All members
- Next Meeting Date

Call to Order/Introductions/Handouts/Communication Ground Rules

The meeting was called to order at 12:05 p.m. Members and guests were introduced and welcomed. The February 19, 2021 West Central AC Meeting Minutes, Regional Update Report, Fact sheets and publications and agenda for today's meeting were distributed prior to the meeting. For a copy of these handouts, please contact dhs.dhhsd@state.mn.us.

Acceptance of February 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Brenda introduced a motion to accept the minutes. Carla seconded the motion. The minutes were accepted.

Regional Update Report

An update report was sent to all members prior to the meeting.

- Diane shared that three committee members have recently tendered their resignations. Amy Zellner recently joined the advisory committee, and so we are looking for two new members. If you have ideas or know of somebody who might be interested, please let Diane know.

Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) Program

Updates

- People can now apply for a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Emergency Broadband Benefit Program. This program provides a discount of up to \$50.00 a month for eligible households, and up to \$75.00 a month per household on Tribal Lands. For more information, see [Emergency Broadband Benefit](https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit) (<https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit>)
- Lori Peters, Northeast TED Program Specialist, retired after 36 years of service. The TED program will wait to fill her position because staff are still working from home so things are a bit slower. A specialist from another region is covering the Northeast region. The position will probably post in the next three months. Lori received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Commission.
- The TED Program is evaluating a new device that can be used in place of a Captel telephone. The device uses Automatic Speech Recognition technology instead of a communication assistant to caption everything that is said. The device is called the Clarity XLC8-GLT. The phone includes a Bluetooth amplified cordless phone with a captioning tablet and uses Google Live Transcribe. See Teltex LXC8-GLT Introduction Video for more information: [Teltex Clarity XLC8-GLT](https://teltex.com/clarity-xlc8-glt-vco/) (<https://teltex.com/clarity-xlc8-glt-vco/>)
- TED has started the distribution of iPads and iPhones to original pilot participants. The TED Program is using a limited amount of funds to contact participants from the first and second pilot programs. Once the current TED clients are contacted, specialists will conduct an assessment to determine whether the device is still working and if it is the appropriate equipment for the client. Sometimes other equipment

may provide better access. Once the funds are depleted, clients will be placed on a waiting list for fiscal year 2022 (July 1). This distribution is only available to current TED clients from the pilot programs. The TED program is not accepting new applications for advanced wireless devices currently.

- A question was asked about if there is a need for more funding for the TED program, if people are not receiving equipment they need for telecommunication access. Jeanne explained that the iPad and iPhone devices are only a small part of the TED Program; the TED Program provides people with many types of equipment to provide access to telecommunication and not everybody requires an iPad or iPhone to access the telephone.
- It was also explained that there are funding options available for broadband access, but those programs are not run by the Department of Commerce.

Minnesota Relay (MR) Feedback

No feedback was provided.

Regional Needs and Gaps

- A member shared that she talked with teachers of children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing during Lobby Day. Those teachers expressed concern about a lack of access to technology and internet/broadband services in rural areas. This has created barriers to accessing education in rural areas. Sometimes, even when families do have access to technology and internet, they do not have the experience or skills to use the technology and they cannot help their children access education online.
- Another member shared that people who are Deafblind or who have dual sensory loss and who rely upon SSPs (Support Service Providers) are struggling to find people to hire in rural areas.
- A question was asked about how to apply and/or qualify for subsidized internet/broadband services. Rochelle Garrow explained the difference between federal programs and state programs. She will provide more thorough information with a PowerPoint at the next advisory committee meeting.
 - The TAP Program applies to landline phones only and is a state program.
 - The Lifeline Program is a federal program and applies to broadband services.
 - The TED Program only provides equipment and does not apply to services.

New Business

Mental Health Program updates and issues during COVID and social unrest, Colleen Donohue

Dr. Colleen Donohue presented information about the mental health services DHHS provides, and what impacts COVID 19 and social unrest have had on people who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing.

Accessible vaccination clinics

DHHS collaborated with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Metro Deaf School (MDS) to provide a pop-up vaccination clinic on April 24 at MDS. The Moderna vaccine was provided. The second

vaccine will be given on May 22nd at MDS for those who received their first dose at this pop-up clinic. All accommodations were available on site without the need to make a request: ASL interpreters, tactile and Protactile interpreters, speech to text apps and assistive listening devices could be used. Interpreters have also been available at the state fairgrounds. A second pop-up clinic scheduled in Fairbault was canceled due to low registration numbers.

Division-wide updates

DHHS programming remains stable. The Department of Human Services (DHS) budget has a surplus. All regional office services will continue as is. The return to working in offices will probably occur in the fall.

DHHS Regional Services Supervisor position

The Regional Services Supervisor, Marie Koehler, is retiring on May 25th. The posting is currently working its way through the human resources posting process. The job will be posted for St. Paul. Regional Service programs are expanding, so this position offers exciting opportunities.

Enhancing and increasing DHHS visibility in the community

DHHS is looking forward to hosting the Town Halls that were put on hold due to COVID 19. Other ways DHHS plans to increase their visibility in the communities they serve is by increasing online training offered, while also recognizing the unique differences in each office.

- One member shared with Dan the fact that deafblind individuals who use screen reading software have difficulty navigating the DHHS website. Webpages are “too busy” and it is difficult to find the information being sought. They frequently give up, and call the specialist in their region for information instead. Dan will discuss this with the communications coordinator to determine what can be done to improve accessibility.

MNCDHH Updates

- The commission hosted their first virtual Lobby Day.
- The commission postponed the 35th and 36th birthday celebrations.
- There was a Lunch and Learn for parents and teachers.
- The commission is monitoring House File 944, which focuses on authentic communication.
- Darlene Zangara, Executive Director, visited regions across the state virtually in her “Traveling Tuesdays.”
- The next board meeting will be May 21st.
- A couple of new members were introduced to the board, including Chandra Peterson from the Southeast, and Kathryn Rose, who is continuing her representation of the Northwest Region.

Announcements: All members

- Minnesota Hands & Voices is continuing to do their home visits virtually. They will do staff training on May 25th. Some of their staff are excited to attend the national conference in person in the fall. They have offered families virtual activities and have found benefits to doing this; families from across the state have made new connections with each other, and the events have sold out. Minnesota Hands and Voices may continue to do virtual activities or use a hybrid approach once in person events become possible.

Next Meeting

Look for an email from Diane to plan the date for the next meeting, which will be held in October.

