

Minutes
East Central DHHS Advisory Committee
May 25, 2010

Attendance: Emily Smith Lundberg, Linda Henrickson, Ernie Watson, Brenda Hommerding, Michele Isham, JoLynn Larson

Staff: Diane Leonard, Rich Diedrichsen, Kris Haffley (interpreter), Staci Lahr (note taker)

Absence: Jody Gertken Teter, Rebecca Crowell, Beth Schultz

Meeting was called to order by Emily Smith Lundberg, chairperson; minutes from last meeting were reviewed. Brenda corrected an error in the minutes; she serves five counties not six as state. JoLynn motioned to approve the minutes with this amendment, Ernie seconded this motion.

Upon review of last meeting's minutes, attendees shared briefly positives and negatives that occurred since last meeting date.

DHHS Update:

Rich: reported that so far no cuts have been made that he is aware. There has been a 2.5% reduction in grant funding, however, at this time. Programs that could be affected as a result of this include the Deaf Mentor Program, the DeafBlind Program, etc. These programs will continue to be available; however, longer waiting lists may occur as a result of reduced funding. The Mental Health Program currently has a very high demand so should not be affected by the cuts. Services will not drastically change but there will be a 2.5% reduction in administrative costs. Staff may need to make small adjustments to accommodate this change.

The TED program is actually struggling more financially than DHHS as a result of the CapTel advertisements earlier this year. These ads resulted in significant interest and a high demand for equipment. Budget money was used to purchase this equipment so although it is good that people were able to get the equipment they needed, this did significantly affect the TED budget.

Brenda asked if the TED wireless pilot program was continuing. Rich state that the pilot program was complete. The Blackberry program was not successful because of additional expenses related to these phones. The Jitterbug program was successful and representatives from the TED program and from the phone company have already entered into negotiations, although details are left to be worked out. Eventually the Jitterbug could have text messaging capabilities.

DHHS will be conducting a consumer satisfaction survey in the near future. Currently a draft for of this survey is being reviewed and will be sent to staff for

final approval. Additional feedback and suggestions will be requested before the survey is provided to consumers. The purpose of this survey is to provide the State of MN with measurable outcomes to make sure what we are doing is benefiting the public. Positive feedback will greatly benefit the division. The draft survey will be sent to staff for feedback in approximately one month.

Diane: Workload lately has been pretty standard and consistent. Has continued to provide presentations and workshops to the community. An emergency preparation newsletter was also developed and sent to the community about two months ago by email and print form.

Diane informed members that there was an error in the length of advisory council terms state on the member list. This will be updated to actually reflect term dates. Members are also encouraged to check the list and make sure all contact information is accurate. In addition, mileage reimbursement is still available. Please return requests for reimbursement as quickly as possible as our fiscal year is coming to an end.

The next AC meeting will be in September. Due to a recent change from the central office, Rich will work with Emily to develop the agenda for the next meeting. Regional managers have been asked to take over this responsibility.

Currently the Disability Task Force is working with the Independent Living Center in St. Cloud. DHHS is promoting this collaboration as an attempt to raise awareness for people with disabilities. Soon a video will be available (starting this summer) related to disability awareness. The video will be shown on September 30th. More details about this event will be sent when available. Also, the St. Cloud Armory will host an event on October 28th, again more details will be sent out closer to this date.

Brenda asked if there is currently a waiting list for the Deaf Mentor Program. Diane replied that there was not and that in fact, more applications were needed as the program will start again July 1st. Students must be under 6 years of age; however, there is some flexibility with this if students start the program at age 6. Currently two families are enrolled, one will be completing the program and the other will be beginning their second term. Diane did mention that other regions may have a waiting list for the program but she was not sure.

MCDHH Update:

Michele: the MCDHH meeting last Friday was very overwhelming as much information was shared and discussed. Recently the commission has been working hard with the Department of Education as they are working towards collecting substantial data related to Deaf and Hard of Hearing education. Mary has been supporting this effort. She recently hosted a national summit which provided an opportunity to learn what other states were doing related to this issue. The goal is to come up with a plan to figure out what needs improvement

with regards to DHH education. The commission is also hoping to provide training to individuals related to data collection.

Michele informed members that she has applied to be on the DHH state advisory group. One of their responsibilities is to develop a written report that will be presented at the commission and the legislature.

During the meeting, there was also discussion and a presentation related to the budget. Mary has been working hard to prevent any DHHS programs from cuts as a result of budget issues. Lastly, Mary has been working to make sure State websites are accessible to the DHH population. Michele will scan and e-mail to AC members the detailed notes from the MCDHH meeting.

Members Update:

Brenda: About one month ago, SNAPS had a meeting to discuss upcoming events and activities. The meeting was very successful. The following are some of the events currently in the works:

- SNAPS Family Picnic: June 30th in Becker (Brenda will e-mail the final draft of the flyer to AC members)
- Harvest Fest: October in Monticello/Becker
- Roller Skating: November in St. Cloud
- Signing Santa: December at North Jr. High School as well as Brainerd
- Ice Skating: February in St. Cloud
- Emily also has quite a few events happening in the Brainerd area

Brenda reported that she personally attended the EHDI Committee Conference in Chicago which was a very good experience. Brenda had the opportunity to meet with the Minnesota team and bring information and ideas back to her local area.

The National Hands and Voices Conference in Minnesota will take place July 8-10 at the Riverwood Conference Center in Monticello. This will be open to the public and their hope is to get vendors and exhibitors to participate as well.

JoLynn: inquired about mentoring programs available to Deaf teens and whether or not funding would be available to set something like this up. This would be a great way to teach them communication skills, ways for relating to family members effectively, and coping with Deaf and hearing cultural difference. Teens need support so a program similar to the Big Brother, Big Sister program would be very helpful. Brenda suggested mentioning this to Mary Hartnet or VOA. Diane also suggested Family Therapy. Michele reported that similar activities in the past were organized but there was a lack of interest. Ernie suggested contacting the Jr. NAD or connecting with Deaf college students or recent graduates, perhaps hosting a weekend retreat for mentors and teenagers to interact and socialize; it might also be possible to set up a helpline through Sorenson or CSD. Diane mentioned that CSD would probably be a better option

as Sorenson is a VRS provider. Emily offered to contact the director of CSD to inquire about this possibility.

JoLynn also inquired about issues related to Sorenson and VRS funding. Emily reported that the FCC recently announced that they would not be paying as much per minute as they currently are. This could pose serious problems for VRS companies. Diane mentioned that people need to communicate with the FCC to let them know the importance of this service and the funding that is needed to support it. Emily also mentioned that Sorenson is currently developing a video to further explain the situation. Ernie mentioned that newsletters were sent and he will forward these to JoLynn if possible.

Ernie: reported that he had to postpone Dr. Ron's visit again. This will hopefully be rescheduled. Brenda suggested encouraging more people to come by offering a free meal as part of the event.

Ernie reported that Winter Camp was a success. It was a very positive experience for all. Ernie will be contacting the Optimist Club to see if they have funding available for this event.

Recently the Optimist Club hosted a communication contest. Only two kids registered to compete but one did not show up. The other student presented on the topic of Cyber Communication which included some great information. Bethany Johnson won the contest in Fargo. The contest was for students in grades 8-12. Brenda suggested that Ernie also contact the Sertoma Club with regards to providing funding. JoLynn also suggested contacting the Lions Club.

There was brief discussion regarding the ASL movie. Perhaps it would be more successful as an outdoor movie hosted in Monticello, which is closer to the twin cities. In addition, additional advertising to a broader community may be helpful as well.

Emily: the next retreat will be June 4-6 for families with hard of hearing children. Eight families are currently registered so two more are needed. A science camp for DHH kids will be hosted June 18-20. Camp Sertoma will take place July 11-16. More information related to these opportunities will be available and sent via e-mail closer to these dates.

Guest Speakers:

Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA)

Rich: HLAA was established in the 1970s. Before this establishment, there were no advocacy groups for the hard of hearing population. HLAA was established by people who are hard of hearing and the group welcomes individuals of all ages. Issues such as funding for hearing aids, cochlear implants, ADA laws, real time captioning, and assistive listening devices are discussed. Currently HLAA is advocating for tax credits related to hearing aids. HLAA also provides and hosts

awareness and education type events. HLAA consists of a national organization as well as local chapters.

Every July HLAA hosts a picnic and in December hosts a holiday party. The next meeting in June a presenter from Toastmasters will be at the meeting. Generally an average of 10 people participate in the monthly meetings.

Linda: reported that HLAA meetings take place at the Whitney Senior Center on the first Tuesday of every month beginning at 6pm and ending at 8pm. The meetings generally because with a speaker/presenter which is then followed by announcements and light refreshments.

Closure:

The next committee meeting is scheduled for September 21st, 2010 from 4:30-6:30 pm at the East-Central DHHS Office, meeting room.

Guest speakers could include representative from MADC or college students/recent graduates to discuss mentoring for Deaf teenagers.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.