

## Meeting Minutes: East Central Advisory Committee

Date: September 24, 2019, 4:30-6:30 P.M.  
Minutes prepared by: Dawn Morton (remotely)  
Location: Granite Corporate Building, 4150 2<sup>nd</sup> Street South, Suite 311, St. Cloud

### Attendance

- Members
  - Todd Grabowski
  - Suzanne Iwainat
  - Diane Schiffler-Dobe
  - Michele Isham
  - Jamers Speier
  - Melinda Brown
  - Not Present: Shane Grom, Judy Leach, Omar Ibrahim
- Other Attendees
  - Diane Leonard-DHH Specialist
  - Jeanne Kolo-Johnson-Lead DHH Specialist
  - Dawn Morton-Administrative Assistant (attending remotely)
  - Cory Vaske-Stearns County Veterans Service
  - Krista Dillman-Guest
  - Tiffany Dillman-Guest
- Interpreter and CART
  - Two interpreters (ASLIS)

### Agenda

- Call to Order/Introductions/Welcome
- Acceptance of 6/18/19 Meeting Minutes
- Guest Speaker: Cory Vaske, Stearns County Veterans Office Service
- Member Input (Members identify gaps and service needs in region)
- DHHS Updates/Diane L
  - Information and Referral Numbers
  - New Website: <https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing>
  - Outreach Update
  - Aging Eyes Initiative

- Community Advisory Meeting 2020
- TED/MR Update:
  - TED Modernization
  - Feedback Regarding Minnesota Relay, including CapTel
- MNCDHH Update:

## Meeting Notes

### Call to Order/Introductions/Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 4:45pm. Members and guests were introduced and welcomed.

### Acceptance of 6/18/19 Meeting Minutes

A motion to accept the minutes was made and seconded. The 6/18/19 minutes were approved as written.

### Guest Speaker: Cory Vaske, Stearns County Veterans Service Office

- Cory shared a PowerPoint presentation describing the roles and services which his office provides and different types of benefits he helps Veterans obtain from other national and state programs. County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs) in each Minnesota county provide general advocacy regarding community and Veterans' issues. CVSOs do not directly provide benefits but assist veterans in obtaining benefits from other sources.
- The vast majority of veterans may experience hearing loss and/or tinnitus due to significant acoustic trauma. The challenge in obtaining coverage for hearing aids, etc. is to find the connection between military noise exposure and auditory injury. Older generations of veterans did not have hearing tests upon military entry. Now hearing tests are conducted when persons enter and separate from the military.
- It was asked whether Cory had any knowledge about a class action law suit against 3M related to faulty hearing protection. Cory confirmed there is one in place. He did not have specific experience or information to share.
- When asked if technology other than hearing aids is included in veterans' benefit programs, Cory said he knows some veterans have received items such as Pocketalkers.
- DHHS has also worked with consumers who have received alerting devices and Pocketalkers.
- The VA's obligation to provide ASL interpreters if consumers attend appointments with a spouse was discussed. If a consumer ever needs assistance, they should contact Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services.

## Member Input (Members identify gaps and service needs in region)

- A member asked whether driver's education classes are required to provide accommodations for people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
  - There was a lawsuit several years ago that resulted in a pool of funds to be used by private driver education programs. Follow up with the MN Disability Law Center will be made to determine whether local programs are still required to pool their funds.
  - Information was also shared that Interpreters are not allowed in the car but can interpret directions prior to the driving portion of the test to establish expectations and instructions.
  - It was also suggested that Faribault has offered summer driver's education classes.
  - Think Self is considering conducting courses in the northwest region if they can confirm three or more attendees.
- It has been shared that there has been trouble connecting to staff in the DHHS office in St Cloud.
  - People with hearing loss who do not use sign language cannot communicate with staff if there are only deaf staff in the office and no interpreter is available.
  - People who have disabilities find it difficult to get to the office and the door is often locked.
  - Some experience frustration when calls are often not returned.
  - The number of staff members has decreased from six to three in the St Cloud office. There may be times when all staff are off-site working with consumers, and no one is available in the office for walk-in consumers. Staff have heard few complaints. Consumers are encouraged to call to schedule an appointment to ensure staff is available for consumers. Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services will move to a smaller office space in the future, but when is unknown.
- A question was asked about whether or not advisory committee meetings are open for public input and whether the minutes are posted.
  - It was confirmed that meetings are open for the public to attend and community members are encouraged to share their concerns and feedback.
  - A list of advisory committees and the names of committee members have been seen on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services website in the past by community members.
  - Advisory committee meeting minutes are shared with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services managers, the Commission and with the Department of Commerce.
  - It was suggested that meeting times and dates be posted and made available to the public and that meeting minutes also be posted to the website.

## DHHS Updates: Diane L

- Information and Referral (I&R) Numbers
  - A new DHHS flyer [Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services Division brochures](#) and an I&R promotional card are available.
  - DHHS now has one set of centralized contact numbers for the division. 800-657-3663 (V), 651-964-1514 (VP), dhs.dhhsd@state.mn.us (email). Emails and calls to these

numbers will be handled by our new Information and Referral Specialist (I&R), Eric Nooker. He will answer inquiries, gather information, and redirect questions to appropriate staff throughout Minnesota. This number is answered via videophone. Hearing callers are connected through video relay.

- The direct DHHS-St. Cloud office numbers 800-456-3690 and 320-223-7130 have been disconnected. A recording will direct callers to the new centralized contact numbers. Consumers can reach any staff at their direct voice telephone, videophone, or email.
- Diane explained this is a new system for the DHHS Division, and we are working out bugs in the process. Jeanne encouraged people to test the new contacts, so we know if consumer concerns are reaching the right staff people. We welcome feedback.
- New DHHS Website [mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing](http://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing)
  - The new website contains information and resources for people who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing and late-deafened and for groups or agencies serving individuals with hearing loss. Information is presented in ASL; video clips are also captioned. Brochures and factsheets can be downloaded by individual users.
  - Diane L encouraged everyone to review the new site and provide feedback.
  - It was noted that the addition of videos is a positive change.
- Diane L and Karen Salzl, the TED specialist, have been busy working on outreach to all counties in the East/West Central region. Their current focus has been reaching out to facilities for Senior Citizens.
- Aging Eyes Initiative
  - DHHS and SSB are collaborating to provide assistive devices for people with vision and hearing loss. Retired Minnesotans who are 55 years and older are eligible to receive PockeTalkers, magnifiers, and other low vision aids. New flyers for this program are available.

### TED/MR Update: Jeanne

- A Modernization of the TED program passed the most recent legislative session. An internal work group has been formed to:
  - Develop a screening tool to help TED staff identify consumers' needs for other DHHS services and technology. Once the needs are identified, referrals can be made to appropriate DHHS teams.
  - Expand the TED program to help consumers with other telecommunication discount programs such as LifeLine and TAP.
  - Research other interconnectivity devices to help meet telecommunication needs of TED consumers.
- The second iPhone/iPad pilot period has ended and a report from TED is expected to be prepared for the Department of Commerce. The desired outcome is to be able to distribute these types of devices through the TED program.
- The South Region in Mankato has a new TED specialist, Kirk Anderson.

### TED/MR Feedback

- Some people have experienced frustration when making calls with the CapTel. Sometimes the person answering the call hangs up thinking it is a robo-call or scam. Is it possible to not announce the call as a relay call? Another option discussed was to use the voice carry over option when making video relay service (VRS) calls.

## **MNCDHH Update: Michele**

- Executive Director Mary Hartnett's last day was Wednesday, September 11.
- A conditional offer has been extended to Darlene Zangara to fill the Executive Director position.
- Emory David Dively will serve as Interim Executive Director until a new director is in place.
- Staff have been working on the results of the strategic plan. Michele encouraged members to view the MNCDHHS website for details.
- The next topic they intend to explore is the new interpreter licensure plans. Right now, the commission does not support or reject the idea, they want to learn more.

## **Community Advisory Meetings 2020**

- It has been proposed that each DHHS advisory committee hold three meetings a year plus one meeting townhall community meeting.
- Staff discussed benefits of holding a joint meeting yearly combining the East Central and West Central committees. Some members feel there is not enough commonality between the two committees to continue to hold a joint meeting.
- The next East Central Advisory Committee meeting will be in February. February 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> were offered as options. Diane L will confirm a meeting date and inform the members.

## **Adjournment**

Melinda made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jamers seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:12pm.