

DHHS ~ METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, December 8, 2008

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jennifer Anderson, Melinda D'Angelo, Ken Hobbins, Merrilee Knoll, Liz McDevitt, Joe O'Brien

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jessalyn Frank

OTHERS PRESENT: Lynn Bloom (North Star Academy), Jennifer Hume (Minnesota Hands and Voices), Jerry Pouliot (Minnesota Relay), Curt Micka (Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS), Nancy Krause (DHHS - TED Program), Marie Koehler (DHHS), Stephen Medicott and Gretchen Dugan (Interpreters), Lisa Richardson (CART provider)

I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS:

The meeting was called to order at 11:05 a.m. Introductions were made.

II. ACTION ON SEPTEMBER 8, 2008 MINUTES:

Liz made a motion to accept the meeting minutes as written. Jennifer seconded. The minutes were approved as written.

III. DHHSD/RSC UPDATE:

- Sharisse Leier was recently hired to fill the Central Office staff interpreter position. Sharisse begins her employment with DHHS on January 7.
- Mary Hartnett hired a new person to function as an administrative assistant. The person will also begin in early January.
- The information in the Update Report noted that the Metro DHHS office was moving to a new location. This announcement may have been a bit premature. A move is being "considered."

IV. TED/MINNESOTA RELAY:

A. Update on Wireless Project:

- Sarah Maheswaran, the TED Administrator who formerly spoke to committee members about the Wireless Project, decided that TED would not "pilot" the distribution of wireless phones and pagers. Instead, a work group of 6 DHHS staff was created to study this issue. The group will compare options available through other state programs who offer wireless distribution. They

will identify what has and has not worked in other states and explore what existing programs might be adapted for Minnesota.

B. Feedback Regarding Minnesota Relay:

- Ken shared that the two-line CapTel phone is very functional for him at work. He experiences just a slight delay with the captions. Using the CapTel allows him to handle calls more professionally. He noted that Rehabilitation Services (RS) is still considering the use of Web-based CapTel.
- Merrilee affirmed that the CapTel is better than using a TTY and she has seen some improvement in the captions. She and Ken acknowledged that you get both good and "lousy" operators.
- Jerry shared that the quality of the Communication Assistant (operator) also depends on how well the person with the hearing loss educates the people with whom they are calling.
- Nancy Krause offered that CapTel users can hook up their phones to their computers using the USB port to read their phone conversations on their computer monitors. Users can then increase font size, adjust color, etc.
- Since CapTel phones and TTYs require analog lines, users with just digital lines may experience problems; those with DLS lines may need a filter.
- Jennifer shared that most of her clients at MEC use Video Relay and not TTYs.
- Jerry asked that he be contacted if a business refused to accept a text relay call. He will follow-up with this businesses to educate them about relay. He noted that Minnesota Relay only addresses relay issues that are "landline based."

V. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Update on Advisory Committee Recruitment Efforts:

- Members were thanked for bringing guests with them to the last advisory committee meeting. This effort resulted in 4 new prospective members!

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Proposed Changes to DHHS Advisory Committee Meetings:

- Jennifer and Marie discussed a new advisory committee meeting concept: to incorporate a networking meeting into our advisory committee meetings. The networking portion of the meeting would be similar to MAPSHIP (Metro Association of Professionals Servicing Hearing Impaired People) meetings from years ago where professionals serving people with a hearing loss would meet quarterly to share information and exchange ideas. The new networking group would include parents, representatives from organizations such as HLAA, MADDC, professionals working in the field, etc. The group could meet for 1½ hours and then the advisory committee could meet for an

additional hour (non-members could stay for the meeting if they'd like).
Member feedback:

1. This would be a good way to maximize contacts with other professionals.
2. Good way to learn about other agencies and the services they offer.
3. Some thought meeting in the afternoon around 2:00 or 2:30 would be good. Someone liked scheduling part of the meeting over the lunch hour.
4. Agencies could rotate hosting these meetings (although parking and space may be an issue).
5. Other meeting sites noted: Courage Center, YMCA, community centers, the State Retirement Building, the Department of Health site off of Energy Park Drive.

➤ Members were asked to send additional feedback to Marie

B. Guest Speaker, Curt Micka, DHHS Assistant Director:

- Children's Mental Health Task Force: With the lack of appropriate mental health services in our state for deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing children and their families, DHHS, in collaboration with the Children's Mental Health Division has set up a task force to address this need. The task force includes service providers, parents, representatives from the Board of Social Work, Board of Psychology, Pacer, Department of Corrections, etc. Task force members will identify service gaps and what to do to address these gaps. The task force has identified 4 goals:
1. Raise community and professional awareness of the specialized mental health needs of deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing children.
 2. Increase professional development opportunities for providers to better serve people with a hearing loss.
 3. Increase access to agencies/resources that already serve children with mental health issues.
 4. Develop a centralized information base for families and professionals.

For more information about this task force, contact Deb Olson from DHHS at 651/431-2360 or deb.olson@state.mn.us

➤ DHHS Division Update:

1. Budget Update: DHHS staff do not know how the current state budget deficient will impact the division, but there will be an impact. For the current fiscal year (now until June 30, 2009), DHHS may be asked to cut 10% of its budget. There will probably be a hiring freeze implemented. For the 2009-2010 fiscal year, greater cuts are expected. State agencies could experience extreme cuts like they've never experienced. The state may incorporate "zero base budgeting" which will mean that state agencies will compete with one another for the money that is available. Legislators may look at state

programs that are not federally mandated to determine if the state will continue to fund them. DHHS receives all state funding.

- Program Updates/Projects: DHHS (Rich Diedrichsen) is working with HLAA to sponsor a statewide hard of hearing conference in St. Cloud on March 27-28. DHHS is working with Rehabilitation Services to explore ways to better collaborate. The division is working with the Aging Division to better address the needs of senior citizens who experience progressive hearing loss. DHHS implemented result based tracking to better measure the outcome and impact of work activities. This information will be helpful when the division meets with legislators who want to know how effective services are. Lee Clark, the DeafBlind Specialist, is working to set-up a camp opportunity for individuals who are deafblind at Courage North. He is also working with the Department of Transportation to address possible modifications to street crossings and the placement of GPS on buses to provide both a voice and text announcement for bus stops. Members were encouraged to visit the DHHS website periodically as new information is regularly added.

C. Guest Speaker, Nancy Krause, TED Program/ Work Accommodations:

- Primary duties include processing TED applications and distributing specialized phone equipment to deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, speech impaired and physically disabled people. Most consumers served in recent years are hard of hearing seniors. Nancy uses a variety of techniques/methods to communicate with her consumers:
 1. Does a lot of her work through VRS and has a lot of success with this. At times, people do not even realize that she is calling through a relay system. VRS providers now provide users with a direct VP number, so consumers can call her directly and forego calling another number first.
 2. Periodically uses the CapTel phone and has success with this.
 3. Uses a sign language interpreter for some home visits, but not all. Calling the office on her pager provides her with feedback on "test calls" the consumers make to the DHHS office.
 4. In the future, she hopes to try out Web Captel, VRI (Video Remote Interpreting) and IP Relay (Internet Protocol).
- Nancy said she was offered this job in 2004 but was not in a position to accept the job offer. In hind site, she is not sure she would have succeeded without VRS. New technology has opened up a lot of job opportunities for people with a hearing loss.

D. Recognition of Outgoing Members:

- Members were thanked for serving on the advisory committee this past year and given a small token of appreciation. Jennifer A., Melinda and Joe will continue serving on the committee; Liz and Merrilee will step down.

VII. MCDHH REPORT UPDATE REPORT: Liz shared the following:

- The “Get out the Vote” effort was very successful. MCDHH staff got a lot of people to register and made a big effort to register DeafBlind consumers and find them rides to their polling sites.
- In January the committee will vote on what issues MCDHH will present during the legislative session. A lot of their work will be defensive in nature; to help protect laws that are in place and funding that exists.
- Liz is so impressed with the amount of work MCDHH offers with such few staff!
- EHDI (Early Hearing Detection and Intervention) has been very successful. Most hospitals are in compliance and offer hearing screening to infants.
- Rubin Latz who works for Rehabilitation Services (RS) spoke to MCDHH members about RS efforts to increase job placement of their clients. Placement increased from 5% to 22%.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Jennifer shared that MN Hands and Voices is hosting a roller skating event for families on January 25. They are co-sponsors of an event for Spanish speaking families scheduled for February 7 at Centro in Minneapolis. Parent Guides from their program just completed training.
- Merrilee shared that she has served on the advisory committee for 6 years and appreciates how much she has learned. She passed out brochures and the newsletter from HLAA-TC. Contact Merrilee if you want to receive an electronic copy of their newsletter.
- Liz echoed Merrilee’s sentiment, saying she appreciates what she has learned. Marie thanked Liz for being Metro’s representative on the MCDHH committee. Members were asked to consider applying for membership on MCDHH **(one representative from the Metro advisory committee must serve on the MCDHH committee)**. Contact Marie if you are interested – the Governor must approve all applications and this process has taken up to a year, so do not delay!

Meeting was adjourned at 12:57.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!!