

# DHHS ~ METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, December 6, 2011

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Lynn Bloom, Laura Godfrey, Jan Swanson

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Sue Brabeck, Mary Jo Duncan, Joe O'Brien, Jason Valentine, Deanna Rothbauer

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Rochelle, Garrow, Department of Commerce/TAM Program, Marie Koehler, DHHS Manager; Stephen Medicott and Lauri Krouse, interpreters, Lisa Richardson, CART provider

## **I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS:**

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 a.m.

## **II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:**

Laura made a motion to accept the minutes, Lynn seconded. The minutes were approved as written.

## **III. DHHS UPDATE REPORT:**

- Marie shared that DHHS has not yet announced which agencies will be awarded the grant dollars for the Family Mentor Program or the Assessment Program.
- Members were encouraged to send Marie names and email addresses of employers who employ people with hearing loss so that they could be invited to the PTE Open House. Rochelle noted that state agencies employ a lot of people with hearing loss and they should be invited. Marie said she will work with the ADA Coordinator at the Minnesota Management and Budget office to reach out to all of the state agencies.

## **III. TED/MINNESOTA RELAY:**

### **A. TED Update**

- Members were provided with TED applications that reflect the new income guidelines. The allowable gross annual income for a family of 1 decreased this year from \$45,240 to \$44,771.
- There was a discussion about the challenges that TED faces maintain or increase the number of applications received from deaf and hard of hearing consumers in need of accessible phones. Some consumers are getting rid of

their landline phones, wireless phones have issues related to reception in homes and remote areas of the state; in addition, many consumers cannot afford the ongoing monthly service fees. Laura said that younger children, who do not yet text or use cell phones, need phone access, and this poses a problem if families do not have landline phones. Rochelle shared that the FCC (Federal Communication Commission) has established a Broadband Inceptive Taskforce to address and improve statewide broadband access for low income people and individuals with disabilities.

- Rochelle shared that the FCC is also revamping policies related to VRS (Video Relay Service) to minimize fraud. As a result, the number of VRS providers will be streamlined. Sprint recently announced that they will no longer offer VRS service. Users of Sprint VRS have the option to port their VRS number to a new VRS provider of their choice, but they must do so by January 4, 2012 or their default VRS provider will be ZVRS.

**B. Feedback Regarding Minnesota Relay, Including CapTel:**

- No one had feedback to offer. Marie noted that since DHHS took over the Outreach portion of Minnesota Relay, they have only received a handful of relay related phone calls.

**V. OLD BUSINESS:**

**A. Appointment of New Chairperson/Revised Meeting Time:**

- Jason Valentine, who was just appointed as chairperson for the Metro DHHS advisory committee, has a new position at Metro Deaf School and he can no longer attend morning meetings. He can attend meetings if they are held around the lunch hour. All members present said they could attend advisory committee meetings if they were scheduled for a two hour period around lunch time. Marie will inquire with other members before a decision is made.

**B. Rapid Response Update:**

- Marie spoke with Becky Bazzarre at LifeTrack Resources to obtain an update on the Rapid Response services being offered. Becky said that their staff has responded to a few requests for assistance, but they are really waiting for DEED/Vocational Rehabilitation to determine and clarify the role of Rapid Response. This will occur once VR hires a new State-Wide Coordinator for the Deaf.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. National DeafBlind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP):**

- DHHS Central Office staff recently submitted a proposal in response to federal dollars available to distribute technology to individuals in Minnesota

who are DeafBlind. If awarded the grant dollars, this program would not compete with or replicate services provided by the TED program. An example of technology that may be distributed is computer hardware or software. Other services providers were supportive of DHHS taking the lead on this project.

- One potential glitch is that payment to DHHS would be made on a reimbursement basis. We would have to find a work-around for this since we do not have extra operating dollars readily available.

**B. State-Wide Coordinator for the Deaf (DEED) and SSB Counselor:**

- DEED/Vocational Rehabilitation Services is currently interviewing to hire someone to function as the Statewide Coordinator for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. This position has been vacant for some time. The person in this position will work with statewide rehabilitation counselors/staff and collaborate to improve employment opportunities for Minnesotans with hearing loss.
- State Services for the Blind (SSB), recently hired Katy Kelly to work as a counselor for consumers who are DeafBlind.

**C. New PTE Promotional Flyer:**

Hard copies of the new PTE flyer were handed out to members. Members were encouraged to distribute it to supervisors and managers in their agencies. A flyer to promote the PTE Open House has been drafted and will be distributed to members soon.

**D. Status of Advisory Committee Members:**

All members present agreed to continue serving on the DHHS Metro advisory committee. Sue Brabeck also expressed a willingness to continue. Marie will connect with remaining advisory committee members.

**E. Set Meeting Date for March:**

Members will meet again either March 6, 7 or 8. Marie will first check with members who missed the meeting regarding their availability for noon-time meetings.

**VII. Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans (MCDHH) UPDATE REPORT:**

- MCDHH lead on the development of a collaborative plan for children who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing. The goal is to align policies and processes, remove barriers and take advantage of opportunities to improve the lives of children with hearing loss. The plan includes specific goals with

action plans. (Note: Marie said she would send a link to the plan, but it has not yet been posted on the MCDHH website.)

**VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- Laura shared that Minnesota Hands and Voices will sponsor a rollerskating event for families on Sunday, January 29.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:51 a.m. to prep for the Meet and Greet meeting which followed at 10:00 a.m.

**THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING!**

**I WISH EACH OF YOU A JOYOUS HOLIDAY SEASON!!!**