

# **DHHS ~ METRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

## **MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, May 22, 2012**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mary Jo Duncan, Laura Godfrey, Jason Valentine (joined for part of the meeting via caption stream)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Lynn Bloom, Sue Brabeck, Joe O'Brien, Deanna Rothbauer, Jan Swanson

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Sharisse Leier and Stephen Medlicott, DHHS staff interpreters; Lisa Richardson, "CART" provider; Marie Koehler, DHHS Metro Office

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

The meeting was called to order at 8:50 a.m.

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

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

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

1. The "Immersion into the World of Hearing Loss" seminar has generated a lot of interest. There are 12 people on the waiting list for both the morning and afternoon session. If the training is successful, we will offer it again.
2. Jason Valentine did a presentation for DHHS Metro on May 17 on "Chemical Dependency in the Deaf Community." There was a lot of interest prior to his presentation, but unfortunately less than half of the registrants showed up. Anita Buel also did a presentation that afternoon on "Deaf Community Health Workers" and sadly, of the 17 people registered, only 3 showed up. We do send email reminders to participants 1 week prior to our training seminars.
3. May 18 was the "Be Safe Be Cool Educational Fair for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing." Approximately 250 students and teachers attended; there were 24 vendors. The students had a great time at this event and learned a lot. The vendors also gained a much better understanding of hearing loss and become aware of the diverse types of hearing loss and communication modalities.
4. Cindy Otto, the Regional Manager in Duluth, is retiring in July. Her position has been posted externally. Members were asked to inform individuals they know who may be interested in applying for this position.

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

##### **A. TED Update:**

- Recent legislative changes that impact the TED program were shared. Technical changes relate to some language changes in state statute. "Telecommunications Equipment" will replace "telephone," "telecommunication device" will replace "communication device." Hopefully these language changes will allow TED more flexibility to distribute wireless technology. The definition of "DeafBlind" also changed to align with the definition used in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Act. A change in Minnesota Relay service now allows *hearing* people to file complaints about relay services. A new policy change gives the TED Program some flexibility on whether or not it will take back equipment from people who move out of state or have had their equipment for several years. TED has always taken the equipment back but the costs involved are quite high and most of the equipment is so old it is sent to "graveyard."
- Together with the TED Program Director, appointed DHHS staff will analyze and strategize about maintaining the TED program and addressing consumers' telecommunication needs. There are concerns that many of our consumers will not be able to afford their monthly wireless fee; so just providing a wireless phone to someone may not be very helpful in the long run. Other consumers are looking for higher end wireless devices which TED probably will not distribute.

##### **B. Feedback Regarding Minnesota Relay:**

- None

#### **V. OLD BUSINESS:**

##### **A. State-Wide Coordinator for the Deaf/HOH (DEED) – Position Filled**

- Elise Knopf was hired as the new State-Wide Coordinator for DEED and begins work on May 29<sup>th</sup>. Her background includes working at MEC (MN Employment Center) for 7 years and most recently at PEP.Net for several years. The ultimate goal for this position is to enhance services to applicants who are deaf and hard of hearing that apply for vocational rehabilitation services.

##### **B. Identifying Needs of Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind Individuals in the 7 County Metro Area – Incorporate Meet and Greet Group**

- Marie believes she may want to incorporate this topic into the next combined advisory committee meeting/Meet and Greet. (Community Forum.) Ideally a mix of advisory committee members, service providers and consumer would attend. A tentative target date will be the week of September 10.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS:**

### **A. National DeafBlind Equipment Distribution Pilot – Update from Jan Radatz, DHHS Policy Analyst**

- Jan was not able attend, but she did put together some information about the FCC's National DeafBlind Equipment Distribution Pilot Program. DHHS submitted a proposal for these grant dollars, although to date, no decision has been made. The purpose of the pilot is to provide equipment to low-income individuals who are DeafBlind so they can access telecommunications and Internet services and relay services. If the division is awarded the grant, someone will be contracted with to: assess the DeafBlind person's needs, order the equipment, install the equipment, train on the equipment, and provide temporary equipment if a consumer's equipment should break. This is a two year pilot that would begin July 2012 if DHHS is awarded the grant.

### **B. Statewide Implementation of Consumer Survey**

- DHHS staff recently created a survey to help determine if communication access needs of the consumers with whom we work have been met. The survey also asks consumers if they know what to do in the future if their access needs are denied. Stephen Medlicott, DHHS interpreter, will assist with conducting these surveys.

### **C. 2012 – 2013 DHHS Training Calendar – Member Input**

- Marie reviewed what training seminars are typically offered by DHHS Metro and noted that the plan is to offer a 3 hour Deaf Panel session for the 2012-2013 training calendar. Members were asked if they had suggestions for other training topics that might be of interest to people. Laura suggested the possibility of offering webinar accessibility for our trainings. She said that she would discuss this with her supervisor to see if she has any input on topics. Laura also suggested that LifeTrack staff could design training flyers (extracting information from our training calendar) that could possibly help attract some of the families with whom MN Hands and Voices works. Mary Jo suggested that DHHS create a video for employers to teach them about working with Deaf individuals, and to alleviate some of the fears they have about hiring Deaf individuals.

### **D. Fraud/Scam Workshop for Community Members – Interest/Need**

- Member input was sought on the potential for offering a Fraud/Scam workshop for consumers with hearing loss. DHHS staff recently received training in this area and is aware of some consumers who have fallen prey to fraud/scams. An evening or weekend workshop might attract more people. This is a question that can be asked during the September Community Forum.

#### **E. VRS and CapTel Relay Calls During Mock Emergency Drill with Homeland Security and Emergency Management**

- DHHS Metro staff participated in a mock drill designed around an incident at the Prairie Island Nuclear Power Plant. DHHS staff called the hotline center via Video Relay Service and CapTel Relay to give Homeland Security staff who answered the phones an opportunity to experience relay calls. Effective immediately, when Homeland Security and Emergency Management activate the State Emergency Operation Hotline Center for a disaster/emergency, they will accept calls from all types of Telecommunications Relay users, not just TTY calls as has been the case for many years.

#### **F. Set Date for Next Meeting**

- As noted previously, the target date is the week of September 10.

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

- Marie suggested that members subscribe to MCDHH's list serve to receive timely update reports on legislative issues, MCDHH activities, community events, etc.
- The Children's Inpatient Mental Health Treatment Bill was passed! Medicaid will cover the cost for children who are deaf, DeafBlind and hard of hearing and use ASL as their first language to receive inpatient mental health treatment out of state. One such facility is the National Deaf Academy in Florida, where children can receive treatment from professionals who sign. This will help an estimated 10 children every year, and will be less expensive than providing local treatment and paying for sign language interpreters.
- Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor Training Bill: MCDHH staff met with the Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy to discuss concerns about proposed repeals that removed existing requirements that licensed alcohol and drug counselors obtain training regarding the treatment needs of deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing patients. The Board agreed to delete the repeals so that counselors will still be required to obtain this cultural training.

### **VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- Laura: Minnesota Hands and Voices is organizing a Mom's Retreat for the fall and planning their Family Picnic scheduled for August 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:30.

**THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING THE DHHS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
AND OFFERING YOUR TIME AND FEEDBACK!**