

## **Community Advisory Meeting**

**St. Paul, September 13, 2012**

**Marie Koehler, Regional Manager DHHS, Metro Office:** Welcome, communication ground rules, housekeeping

**Bruce Hodek, DHHS Division Director:** Welcome, introductions of Central Office staff Carol Mermon, Amy McQuaid, Jan Radtz, John Gournaris

Bruce talked about the challenges the division has encountered over the last few years: Dealing with budget reductions, closing two regional offices (Rochester and Bemidji), reducing our in-person one on one work and relying more on video phone meetings, providing more online trainings. A training recently revamped in the Metro office is the Deaf, Deaf World. Given budgetary constraints the division will have to say "no" sometimes to certain work.

**John Gournaris, Mental Health Program Director:**

John explained that the mental health program started about 5 years ago and it's evolved ever since. Recent work includes adapting a peer support curriculum into ASL format so that individuals who are deaf living in Minnesota can become certified as peer support specialists. It will be a great addition to the services that the MH staff already provides.

Recently, legislation was passed to allow children to be placed in residential treatment facilities in other states.

The mental health program maintains a resource list of ASL-fluent mental health providers throughout the state. That list is available on the DHHS website.

Minnesota will host the national 2012 ADARA conference from May 29 through June 1, 2013. This conference is geared toward service providers, rehabilitation counselors, teachers, support staff, and any person in the helping profession. Presentations will be geared toward employment, MH issues, etc. If you are interested in presenting please let John know.

The Mental Health Program also manages a few grants including Volunteers of America (VOA), Health and Wellness Program (HWP), and People Inc.

## **Bruce Hodek:**

Really want to emphasize the MH program. Also VOA because they serve children throughout the state.

The TED program is 27 years old. The division is working to modernize the program. TED would like to introduce some new wireless devices. Bruce introduced Rochelle Garrow from the Department of Commerce who funds the program.

Bruce also introduced Marty Barnum who was just hired as an Ombudsman with the Board of Aging to address systemic nursing home issues as it relates to residents who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Paula MacDonald was introduced as the new staff person at CSD who oversees the interpreter referral work.

The new iCanConnect-Minnesota DeafBlind pilot was noted and attendees were encouraged to address their questions to Jan Radatz.

## **Comments from community service providers and consumers regarding needs and gaps in service:**

### **Mental Health Related:**

- \* MH issues for hard of hearing people and CI users, those who are non-signers, what services are available for them?
- \* MH services for young adults who do not have the ability to get themselves to appointments.
- \* MH services, usually it is a crisis and they need services in their homes. Service providers can help with referrals and set up appointments, but then there is no follow-through. The client does not show-up for appointments but their issues/needs are still pressing.
- \* Seeing more hard of hearing people with Cochlear Implants in need of MH services.
- \* MH and family issues – doesn't seem to be a good network of support for family members and/or caretakers of people with hearing loss. (HLAA was mentioned as a support group; all HH, Deaf, family members, etc. are welcome.)

## **Employment Related:**

- \* Employers are requiring more math, reading, English in the pre-interview process and this is creating barriers.
- \* We need to equalize the playing field related to employment opportunities for D/HH
- \* Simplify and increase employers' access to workplace accommodations, resources that benefit D/HH & DB individuals
- \* As a person who works for DEED I'm looking forward to contributing and assisting in finding out about employment/unemployment statistics for D/HH Minnesotans and to discover resources to enhance equal opportunity employment for the D/HH community.
- \* Work related training, have to hustle around asking about assisted devices and to make sure that the speaker knows to talk into the mic. There are work related webinar classes that are not captioned.
- \* Crowds are always difficult, even if you have just two or three individuals chatting by your cubicle, it makes it very difficult to hear on the phone.
- \* Education for people that work with someone with a hearing loss. Employment managers are not using equipment properly or not providing the right equipment for the HH employee. (The DHHS PTE program was mentioned as a potential solution.)
- \* Hard of hearing people in the beginning process of hearing loss, struggling in the workplace. Employers don't have the resources for the employee. Really have to be your own advocate. There is more education and training geared toward younger people with hearing loss and those who know sign language, but less training is focused on hard of hearing adults who are non-signers.

## **Children and Families Related:**

- \* Sign language education is needed in the community for families with d/hh children and adults.
- \* D/HH youth dealing with isolation issues.

- \* Lack of after school activities for d/hh youth and kids, this is a big need area.
- \* For families wanting to learn sign language we need people who are willing to go into their homes, especially for refugees. Funds are lacking.
- \* Mentoring for young males who need role models. (It was mentioned that there is a D/HH mentoring program at Humboldt and they are looking for mentors.)
- \* Increased academic requirements, the schools can't do it all...

### **Legal Related:**

- \* A need for more deaf friendly lawyers who sign or are willing to hire interpreters.
- \* Struggle to find lawyers to refer clients to for family law situations. Need to lobby the bar association for funding for interpreting services.
- \* Increase access to legal resources for D/HH & DB individuals, specifically for those who live in rural areas.

### **DeafBlind Related:**

- \* Students in the Interpreter Training Programs need more in depth interpreter training and experience related to deafblind interpreting. There is definitely a lack of interpreters with these skills.
- \* A need for more service providers who can better communicate with DB.

### **Hearing Loss Related – Service and Technology Needs:**

- \* Some hard of hearing people who are slipping through the cracks. They don't meet the criteria for a social worker, mental health services, etc., but they too need help with financial management, housing, etc.
- \* Medical insurance coverage for hearing aids and ALDs for HH people.
- \* There is really a lack of understanding of what it is like to have a hearing loss and how to communicate with a person with a hearing loss. People are insensitive.

- \* People with a recent hearing loss don't know what is available to them and where to begin.
- \* Staff at the DHHS Metro office is seeing more veterans coming home with significant hearing loss. Some have additional disabilities, PTSD and TBI.
- \* Need to train more people in the health profession about hearing loss (seniors).
- \* Training for the general public on how to communicate with people who are hard of hearing, deaf, deafblind.
- \* Captioning for news stations, they start out fine then get lost and never finish. They lose the ending and details of lots of news.
- \* Hearing Aids help but are not a cure. It's difficult for individuals to understand that while hard of hearing people may be able to hear fairly well in a quiet area they cannot hear in environments where there is a lot of noise. This creates anxiety and makes social events uneasy.

#### **TED Related:**

- \* The Jitterbug is the only cell phone the TED program offers. I need a cell phone where I can do mostly texting. I'm not sure if the Jitterbug will fill this need. There needs to be more wireless options.

#### **Other/Miscellaneous Related:**

- \* Create something like Craig's List for deaf people looking for services, mentors, etc.
- \* Noticing more and more deaf individuals with secondary disabilities.
- \* MADC (and other organizations) struggling to find volunteers. We need to promote volunteerism.
- \* Fraud/scam situations have increased significantly. Individuals who have been victimized by frauds and scams – several consumers are very vulnerable and easy prey.
- \* Transition difficult for students into mainstream, university level.
- \* Chemical health and chemical dependency – housing for people after completing treatment?

