

DHHS Advisory Committee Meeting

December 13, 2016

9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Golden Rule Building

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| Meeting called by | Marie Koehler |
| Note taker | Kristina Anderson |
| Attendees | Members: Laura Godfrey, Dave McAuliffe, Christine Morgan, Rochelle Garrow, DOC/TAM; Angie Sundell (CART); Keisha and Sharisse Leier (interpreters); Marie Koehler, Regional Manager |
| Absent | Kim Fishman, Katy Kelley, Kathryn Rose, Marie Saliterman |
| Others present | Invited guests: Robin Coninx, Liz Brown, Mary Bauer, Sara Kreiling Guest speaker: Heather Anderson, ICC; Christy Leach, DBSM/TTAP |

Agenda Topics

Call to order / Introductions / Welcome

Marie Koehler

Discussion

The meeting was called to order at 9:37 a.m. Introductions were made and members were welcomed.

Acceptance of Minutes from September 13, 2016

Laura Godfrey

Discussion

Christine made a motion to accept the meeting minutes. The minutes were approved as written.

DHHS Update Report

Marie Koehler

Discussion

DHHS Mankato has a vacancy for a direct service staff position; interviews were conducted this past Friday. The position will hopefully be filled within 2-4 weeks.

Marie is no longer supervising the St. Cloud office. Two other regional managers, Tracy Bell and Craig Schield, are co-supervising that office. It is unclear if or when the RM position for that office will be filled.

TED/MR Update

Marie Koehler

TED Update (Additional results and iPhone/iPad pilot)

The TED iPhone/iPad pilot began this past May. To date, staff have distributed 119 devices; 67 iPads and 52 iPhones. The TED Program has received numerous calls regarding this pilot. TED is currently distributing the iPhone 7, and waiting for the iPhone 7 Plus to become available. Sarah Maheswaran, the TED Program Administrator, will write a report in January regarding the findings from this pilot and submit it to Rochelle Garrow and David Rosenthal, DHHS Director. Sarah's recommendation will be to continue distributing these devices. Her report will include the demographics of those who received the devices. Rochelle said the Public Utilities Commission will review and approve the budget Sarah proposes for the distribution of these devices, unless they have concerns.

The official end date of the pilot is February 28, 2017. If applications for these devices are received between March through June, the names of consumers will be added to a waiting list and they will be served beginning July, 2017 if the distribution of iPhones & iPads continues. Due to the efforts of a Deaf Somali woman who has been educating deaf immigrants about available resources, several Somali individuals have submitted applications to the TED Program. It was acknowledged that the Somali consumers coming into the office have varying levels of ASL and English skills.

Christine indicated that HLAA would like to attract hard of hearing immigrants to their group. Marie said she connect will the Deaf woman making the referrals to the DHHS office to let her know that there are resources for Somali's who are hard of hearing.

A significant issue that continues to challenge both the TED Program staff and consumers is limited broadband service in several pockets throughout the state, as well as costs associated with Internet service. There are several barriers and challenges with the Obama phones; they can be poor quality, not have an amplification option, not be hearing aid compatible, lack a query keyboard, etc. The rules of service providers also cause barriers for consumers such as consumers needing to commit a certain amount of time to a carrier before switching to a different carrier, being lured by introductory prices, etc. Rochelle shared that Lifeline began offering broadband for \$9.99 to low income users. Several carriers are not eager to partner with this program.

A potential problem with the new administration is the possibility that net-neutrality (level playing field) may be eliminated, giving certain carriers higher Internet speeds than others.

Feedback Regarding MN Relay, including CapTel

There is a new captioned phone service available to consumers called InnoCaption. They offer a free real-time Captioning App for smartphones. (Wireless service only.) They provide live captioner's (stenographer's) instead of relying on voice recognition.

Christine looked into it, but found out the user is assigned a 2nd phone number, which she thinks can be confusing to those who call her.

Old Business

Marie Koehler

Update on recruitment of new members

There will be 4 new members joining the advisory committee starting in 2017. Robin Coninx is one, replacing Laura Godfrey whose 2 terms have expired. Other new members include Grant Watkins who works at the Wilder Foundation, Blaine Newberg who works at the MN Employment Center through LifeTrack, and Izzy Mohammad (this was not mentioned but he works at Metro Deaf School and Global Deaf Muslim – MN Chapter organization .

Visor Card Update

At the previous advisory committee meeting, members in attendance saw samples of two visor cards created for consumers with hearing loss that they could show to law enforcement if they were pulled over in their car. Recently, copies of these visor cards were given to two law enforcement individuals. They were asked to gather feedback from fellow law enforcement workers. Feedback will also be sought from other officers and community members. Stay tuned!

New Business

Marie Koehler

Preliminary action plan for DHHS as a result of the division and TED studies, the situational gap analysis & several stakeholder meetings

It's been an interesting year for the division. Both DHHS and TED contracted with two different vendors to have their programs/services studied. A report was written summarizing the findings and it is being routed through the department before being submitted to the legislature. In partnership, DHHS and MNCDHH conducted an internal and external gap analysis of services for consumers. Although it wasn't the most comprehensive analysis due to timeframe constraints, it provided information and offered some good insight to guide the division's future work. On November 30 through December 2nd there was a three-day retreat to review the data we've gathered and begin to move forward with some action plans. DHHS managers and representatives from the direct service, TED staff and administrative assistance staff, as well as community members met on the first day to review and discuss top themes identified from the

gap analysis. Day 2 & 3 of the retreat, the selected division staff meet to identify specific strategies to implement some of the plans. The 3-day meeting was valuable and a lot was accomplished. Several of the strategies developed are dependent on funding from the legislature. Some of the themes were:

- Modernizing the DHHS and TED statutes: The DHHS law was passed in 1980, and it is very outdated. Staff made recommendations to modernize that law. These suggested changes will be proposed to legislators this coming legislative session.
- Staffing and organization: There are significant differences between metro and greater MN when it comes to service provision. In metro, staff have more options to refer consumers to other appropriate service providers; in Greater MN there are fewer service provider to refer consumers to.
- DHHS been around for 36 years, and there are still a lot of people who do not know about our services. An increase in visibility and promotion is needed.
- Interpreting and CART services in greater MN continue to be a big barrier, so the division must address this need.
- Trainings for providers: Marie is thinking that for the metro area, staff need to train more in masses, such as offering trainings at state wide conferences for various service providers.

On-line training opportunities- feedback and suggestions

Marie Koehler

This was not covered during the meeting.

iCannConnect (iCC) and Technology and Training Access Program (TTAP), two programs for individuals who are DeafBlind

Guest Speakers: Heather Anderson and Christy Leach

Heather Anderson presented about iCC which is in its 5th year; services are offered in all 50 states and 4 US territories. Perkins School for the Blind oversees the Minnesota program. iCC is designed for low income individuals who have a dual-sensory loss (hearing & vision) or are DeafBlind. The purpose of iCC is to get consumers accessible equipment for distance communication, for example cell phones, homes phones, computers, tablets, and all accessories and software that comes with it. iCC also tries to tap into other programs like the Telephone Assistance Program. The iCC process with consumers can be ongoing; they can get equipment/technology and then add to it. There isn't really a limit of what they can receive, but it needs to be within reason.

- iCC staff assess each consumers needs/situation; consumers are supposed to be familiar with the equipment they request and have some awareness of how to use it. The iCC staff can provide training, but it is fairly basic and not in-depth. The program provides Braille equipment, but cannot provide training for it.
- There is no limit of money that a person can spend. Streamers and neck-loops now need to be standardized, but Heather would like them to go back to being brand-specific so they work with all hearing aids. Nationwide, iCC has a \$10 million annual budget. Perkins School for the Blind oversees 20 state iCC programs, so if needed, they can shift money within their pool of money. If a state isn't using money, they can transfer it to a state that needs it.
- To receive service, consumers should be about 5 years of age and up (but it's up to the parents to decide if the child is ready to use a tablet). The income guideline level is for a household. What gets sticky is roommates or boyfriends and girlfriends living together. The FCC takes into account everyone living in the house. If a family receives MA or SSI, they automatically qualify. For a single person, the income guideline is 400% of the national poverty guidelines. Last year, the MN iCC spent \$50-\$75,000 beyond their original allotment.
- iCC serves consumers statewide. DHHS staff in Duluth and St. Cloud have provided a lot of referrals, but there have not been many from southern MN. There are 5 staff working in MN for the iCC program. They are able to manage the work load pretty well.
- iCC staff help consumers set up their equipment and they demonstrate the settings and features to help users become as independent as possible.

Christy Leach presented on the Technology and Training Program (TTAP). DeafBlind Services of MN (DBSM) was awarded \$250,000 from DHHS for fiscal years 2016 and 2017. DBSM contracts with Christy for the service. Consumers are eligible for the services if they have a dual sensory loss, live in MN, and need the equipment. They can also receive assistance from other DeafBlind services, such as the DeafBlind Consumer Directed Services program. For example, if the equipment they need exceeds \$500.

- The application process is simple. Fill out the application and provide verification of deaf blindness. If an individual is already a consumer served by DBSM, they automatically qualify.
- Christy works closely with Heather in the iCC program to ensure consumers are not getting duplicate services. Consumers wanting distance technology (noted above under iCC) are referred to Heather.
- As with iCC, it's expected that consumers know what kind of technology they need and how to use it. Consumers complete the purchase agreement and send it to Christy for processing. Most requests by consumers are honored, but when they want a huge TV, that's not something TTAP can provide. iCC can provide TVs for telecommunication purposes, but not larger than 42 inches.
- The limit for the program is about \$8,000 per person. People are encouraged to only ask for what they need, because the goal is to serve as many people as possible. If consumers are on Medical

Assistance, they need to use MA dollars, not TTAP dollars. The grant program runs until June 30th, after that the legislature will need to approve additional or ongoing funding. The program only has \$35,000 remaining until June 30. Christy will continue to accept applications even after the money is gone. In fact, she encourages consumers to submit applications so that the program can prove to legislators the need for more funding.

- To date, TTAP has served 27 total consumers (20 this fiscal year). An additional 7-10 applications are in various stages of completion.
- Equipment mostly frequently requested includes CCTVs, hearing aids, and singling devices. After overhead and operating expenses, 57-60% of the total funding is targeted for equipment.

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| Recognition of exiting members | <i>Marie Koehler</i> |
| Thank you to Laura Godfrey. It has been a pleasure having her on this committee, and assisting as Chairperson this past year. | |
| New chairperson for 2017 | <i>Marie Koehler</i> |
| A new Chairperson will need to be appointed beginning in 2017. Members were asked to consider taking on that role. If anyone is interested they should contact Marie. | |
| Next meeting dates for February/March | <i>Marie Koehler</i> |
| Marie suggested meeting in February. She will look for some possible dates and send out an email. The 3 members present suggested an earlier start time. They all experienced issues finding parking in the nearby ramps – as did the CART provider. | |
| Announcements | <i>Committee Members</i> |
| No announcements from committee members. | |
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Meeting was adjourned at 11:29a.m.

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