

Advisory Committee Update

June 16, 2011

- Welcome new member, Joann Hovey! She is from Kasota, is hard of hearing and has experience working with senior citizens. Her knowledge will be a great asset to our committee. Welcome Joann, and we will do an introduction at the next in-person meeting.
- Staff attended the Deaf Mentor training and Early Hearing Detection and Intervention conference in March. There are currently no deaf mentors or families interested in mentor services in our area (SW Minnesota).
- Staff attended the Family Get Away weekend in March in Mankato. Jerry, Jenny and Tracy were on a panel for the parents, sharing life experiences as individuals with hearing loss. Approximately 30 families attended the Get Away. The next Get Away weekend will be in 2012 due to financial constraints.
- Tracy attended the MCDHH meeting on May 20. To this date, Roberta still has not received her appointment letter from the governor. Highlights of the May 20 meeting include:
 - Discussions about audiologists versus hearing aid dispensers
 - Will Stark talked to MCDHH members about the Thompson Hall project – MCDHH is working with Thompson Hall in St. Paul to get it placed on the National History Register. The goal is to get the Thompson Hall building on the register so that the building would be eligible to receive grants/funding for much needed renovations.
 - Mental Health Assessment Funding
- Bruce Hodek and John Gournaris met with Chemical Health Division in regards to Greater Minnesota Mental Health Assessment Grants. The Chemical Health Division has \$17 million in grants, but none of these monies include serving people with a hearing loss. They will continue to work on tapping into these funds.
 - MCDHH's interns created a new website – www.deaf-rights.state.mn.us. It has a lot of good resources on the website.
- TED Program Updates:
 - Plans are in progress for the transition of Minnesota Relay Outreach to DHHS/TED staff, beginning July 1. Sarah Maheswaran and Carol Mermon have completed a roll-out spreadsheet delineating deadlines and duties for all staff involved in the transition.
 - The TED Specialist position description is being changed to include Relay Outreach duties along with their TED responsibilities. The proposed position description changes are based on the interagency agreement components.
 - Beth Cherryholmes from the Metro office has been meeting and shadowing staff from the Minnesota Relay Outreach office to learn information about the operations of the Relay Outreach program. She will then plan a strategy for how to provide this information to staff during the TED Specialists' June meeting.
- DHHS Southern Region staff update:
 - Jenny Stenner's temporary work assignment as a program consultant ended on April 7. We thank and appreciate Jenny's time and work with us.
 - Chandra Baker started working with us as an Office Administrative Support – Intermediate (Administrative Assistant) on April 27.

- Jerry Pouliot is still with us as a temporary consultant. A contingent offer has been made to an applicant for the consultant position. An email will be sent out when the applicant begins employment.
- Outlook:
 - DHS (as well as DEED, and other state agencies) are waiting on the budget decisions. To this date, no decisions have been made, but state agencies are expected to make cuts, but do not know what kind of administrative reductions yet. State employees have already received their lay-off letters starting July 1 if the state enters a shutdown. For information on the possible shutdown, people should be referred to bereadymn.com.
 - DHHS staff in Mankato are preparing for the Aging and Disability Odyssey in June. Tracy will be presenting with Heather Gilbert and Marty Barnum from CSD on Video Relay Interpreting.
 - Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens Conference will be happening on June 24 and 25 in St. Paul.
- Next face to face meeting will be on Friday, August 26, 2011 from 10:00 to 12:00, location TBA.

Questions, comments, can be referred to the committee, Chairperson Roberta Johnson, or Regional Manager Tracy Bell.

Have a great summer!