

## West Central Advisory Committee Meeting

November 15, 2016 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm  
Kandiyohi County Health & Human Services- Room 2045

Members: Rosanne Kath; Cindy Bjur; Christine Schiroo

Absent: Ernie Watson

Staff: Christina Costello, Tracy Bell-Acting St. Cloud Office Manager and Mankato Office Manager; Natalie Regenscheid-Mankato OASI

Interpreter(s): Anne Janckila, Mike Provancha

Note taker: Kris Hulett

Meeting called to order by Christina Costello. This meeting was called to provide any updates and to introduce Tracy Bell as the acting St. Cloud office manager.

### Director's Update:

DHHS and MNCDHH worked together with many community partners to gather information about the services Minnesota has for people who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing, including service gaps that still exist. This information contained major gaps identified by a variety of stakeholders, MNCDHH, DHHS and the recent studies of DHHS and the Telephone Equipment Distribution (TED) program. It was shared at a high level with invited stakeholders on Monday, October 31<sup>st</sup> for their feedback and to make sure we did not overlook anything.

Feedback from this group validated the information presented to them. This information was put together to create a situational analysis document that will be used to assist DHHS with the next step of our strategic planning process.

DHHS is hosting a strategic planning process meeting with representatives from the DHHS Regional Advisory Committees, some community partners, and MNCDHH staff on Wednesday, November 30<sup>th</sup>. We will review the situational analysis, identify obstacles, and define high level strategies that will help DHHS achieve its vision. Some of you will be invited to participate on November 30<sup>th</sup>.

On December 1 and 2, DHHS staff will develop specific strategies and implementation plans, including specific action steps. We look forward to shaping the future of our division!

You may remember hearing about the report based on the two studies of DHHS and TED that would be completed this month. This report containing reports from the study vendors is undergoing final revisions. We hope to be able to route it up through the DHS Commissioner's office to the legislators by next month. Once it is released to the legislators, this document will become public information.

Thank you for your participation on the Advisory Committee! We look forward to your input and advice as we move forward with our strategic planning process!

### Regional Update:

Tracy will be on-site one day per week along with Craig Schield (Duluth office manager). This will allow the St. Cloud office to have a manager available and on-site two days per week. Tracy is the lead manager, so essentially the go-to person for the St. Cloud office. Although this is not an ideal solution for a manager in the St. Cloud office, it is the best that can be done with the current budget and financial position of the division.

One of the gaps that has been identified is in the West Central part of the state. Diane will be taking over the western part of the region as well as the eastern part as a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist. A meet and greet was set up and held in Granite Falls in October. Eight individuals showed up and it was decided that every other month there would be a meeting to address concerns and needs for services that are known. These meetings will occur during months with no snow (April – October) and on the last Tuesday of the month. The first meeting has been set up for April 25<sup>th</sup>. The preference would be to hold this meeting in Clarkfield, but if there isn't a place to meet, Granite Falls would be the second choice. A flyer will be sent out in February or March and Diane will be setting up a presentation. Next fall, there will be a big workshop in the West Central area. If anyone has any ideas for a location, please let Christina know. Christine S. said that Kandiyohi County has a multi-purpose room on the first floor that could accommodate 50 people.

As far as the TED program goes, the survey portion of the pilot project for the iPads and iPhones is now finished, but the Specialists will continue to hand out devices.

Interpreting has had many things going on starting with the workshop on September 10 with guest speaker Carlos Grant on the "African American Experience". In summer/fall there are plans for a legal workshop for legal interpreters. MRID will be holding a meeting on December 1 in the Midtown Mall in St. Cloud at the Tuscan Bistro. Anne has also set up a bi-monthly network meeting for interpreters which is designed to help interpreters support each other. There are typically 10-15 attendees each meeting.

### Mental Health Update:

Christina shared that Mental Health had their retreat two weeks ago. The topic was "Burn out" and Christina said it was a very good presentation. As a reminder, Christina does still have some openings if anyone knows someone in need of and Mental Health Services.

Christina also went to a Deaf Muslim workshop. Some of the topics covered were: the Somali Community, how they communicate, many times Deaf Somali children are hidden, and setting up a 501c for Muslims coming into Minnesota.

December 10 is the Minnesota Hands and Voices Winter Party at Apollo High School. There will be a discussion about how to address the issues between St. Cloud and Fergus Falls when it comes to which office should cover which area and also holding events in the area.

#### Announcements and Information Sharing:

Cindy Bjur shared that there is a new rechargeable hearing aid that has the charger included. The battery in the hearing aid is similar to a cell phone battery and should last about 24 hours, with only a 3 hour charge time. This particular hearing aid is covered under waivers.

Christine Schiroo shared that there isn't much that is new in her area. She is a social worker with Kandiyohi County and works with the elderly. Many times her clients don't want a hearing aid or they lose them. There are three in the unit that get taken out to do an assessment. The one thing she wishes she could change is that people would come in sooner and get their hearing checked much sooner that they normally do, especially the older farmers in the area. Christine also said there were some changes to MA as well. Now they will be doing MNchoices which requires an assessment that takes at least 4 hours and maybe more, depending on the client and their language and hearing status/abilities, and consists of more than 900 questions. This has not been implemented for managed care yet but could be coming soon.

Rosanne Kath shared that she had been speaking with a D/HH teacher in Willmar about going to Nelson Farm or the Pumpkin Patch event last month and how it would be a great event to have annually. It would be similar to the Signing Santa annual event in St. Cloud so that everyone would know it was happening every year and possibly at the same pumpkin patch too. It could happen around mid-October each year. There are also some concerns about the Deaf Mentoring services. It is becoming harder and harder for services to be offered in the West Central area. One family in particular had submitted an application for a mentor last spring and still has heard nothing. Has funding for the program been cut? Does it go by region or statewide? How does the process work for getting a mentor? Are the mentors still for age 6 and under?

Christina said the new age eligibility is 21 and under. Tracy also shared that there is a waiting list for the Deaf Mentor program. The wait also depends on where the mentor lives compared to where the family lives. Tracy said she would contact Danelle Gournaris to see about the West Central region and if there is a waiting list. There are also new flyers for the Deaf Mentor and Hard of Hearing Role Model programs that will be e-mailed out with the meeting minutes.

#### 2017 Meeting Schedule:

In 2017, we will be changing the schedule to include four meetings per calendar year. The committee agreed it would be best to follow the Minnesota Commission of Deaf and Hard of Hearing so that we can have a commission report for the advisory meeting. The time will remain the same: 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm and we will be meeting on the following dates in 2017:

February 7  
June 13  
October 10  
December 12

Our next meeting is scheduled for February 7 12:00-1:30 in room 2045 at the Kandyohi Health & Human Services building.