

**Behavior Health on Deafness Sub-Committee Meeting  
December 17, 2008  
Independent Resources, Inc.  
Wilmington, DE  
10:00 am**

**Present:** Christy Hennessey (Chair); Cliff Rodman; Loretta Sarro; Lois Steele, Christine Zenorini and Kyle Hodges, Support Staff

**Interpreter:** Pamela D'Occhio

**Additions or Deletions to the Agenda**

- Kyle will give an update on the visor card.

**Approval of the Meeting Minutes**

Motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the October 15, 2008 meeting minutes as submitted.

**Chair Report**

Christy stated that at this time she is waiting for DPC and DVI to send her their policies and procedures on how they handle communication and interpreting services in serving the deaf and hard of hearing. Christy has followed up with DPC and DVI. Currently, Christy has reports from Public Health, Division of Family Services, DDDS, and Child Mental Health.

Christy attended a Consumer Recovery Advocates of DE (CRACD) meeting and would like to invite others to attend. This group involves people with substance abuse and mental health issues. Christy will forward the information to all on their January meeting. Steven Dettwyler from DSAMH shared their budget with Christy and this was provided to the Committee. Christy stated that she asked why there is no sub-group listed. DSAMH's reply was that the numbers are too small even if they are identified as persons with disabilities. Kyle added if you do not provide the right services for the deaf and hard of hearing and they do not know about the services, they will not come. Lois asked if there is way to find out the percentage of deaf and hard of hearing people in Delaware or nationally so you can document the need for services for deaf and hard of hearing people with mental illness. Christy added that this report is for the 2008 and she will ask for the "sub group" numbers in their 2009 stats.

Christy also went to the DAD meeting last Saturday and met a person named Joshua, who is deaf, and works in the Southeast Philadelphia Mental Health Services. Christy invited him to this meeting today; however, he had a prior

commitment. Joshua was talking about expanding these services to Delaware. Christy believes that he may be a mental health therapist that works with deaf and hard of hearing children. Joshua will be contacting Cathy McKay of Connections to see if they could contract and expand their services to Delaware.

## **Business**

### Survey Next Steps

Cliff stated that the changes from the last meeting were very good; however, Cliff feels that it would be better to let others mold it into a format that could be utilized by all.

Cliff added that from the last meeting, it would be better to give this test survey to adults who are not sophisticated consumers and do not have a lot of experience to determine if they understand the survey, and then based on their responses, it would be a better product.

Loretta suggested on #5, page 2, there should be “other options”, regarding interpreters, e.g. had one, but was not satisfactory. Also, letter d.—change the language from “Too expensive” to “Out of Pocket costs too expensive”

Cliff asked if it was acceptable to say “Sterck School” or the “Delaware School for the Deaf”. Per Loretta, either one is correct.

Cliff stated that he found Mary Ellen Hillegas’ background information on the deaf people in Delaware as stated in the last minutes very informative. Christy will e-mail Mary Ellen and ask her where the data and/or records on this background information are kept and if so, could she bring that information to the next Committee meeting. Cliff added that the numbers need to support the dollars requested especially over the next few years. Kyle added that the legislators are going to look at which programs serve the most people.

Cliff stated that he would like the Committee to focus on what he believes is the BHDC’s mission: 1) that the Committee are the advocates for enhancing services in the behavioral health community for the deaf; 2) then after you have advocates, you need a way of enhancing the services (the survey and numbers are needed to support this); 3) legislative or political action (some help is needed in saying we hearing you and are aware of the problem and we will prioritize some of the resources). In order for political action to happen, you need to have sustained interests from your consumer groups. Kyle added that the legislators need to see and hear the deaf and hard of hearing persons at the DSAMH budget hearing. For DSAMH to secure interpreters, you would need to contact DSAMH ahead of their budget hearing time. Christy added that she went to one of their hearings a few years ago and brought her own interpreter paid for by IRI. The legislators were uncomfortable at first with the interpreter but they did get

adjusted. Kyle would like to find out the legislators' procedures for requesting an interpreter for a budget hearing. Kyle can provide a legislative contact name. Kyle added that he is involved with a group that is planning a legislative event on April 8 at Legislative Hall where issues are being presented. Some of the attendees will be setting up appointments to meet with their legislators. At this event last year, there was a training for people who are not familiar with working with their legislators in the morning and then everyone over to Legislative Hall in the afternoon. This year's training may be a good opportunity for the Committee members and others to attend. Kyle will keep you updated on this year's legislative event. Cliff added that consumer groups (DAD and other groups) will need to get on the band wagon and keep the fire going if we expect to get any real results from our efforts. Christy stated that this would be the next step after the survey is completed. Kyle added that at the February Committee meeting we need to plan what groups should complete the survey.

In summary, Christy added that she will make the suggested changes from the meeting for a test survey and give out to a test group. Christy will have the revised survey and feedback from the test group at the February meeting.

### **Other Business**

#### **Visor Card**

Kyle gave an overview of the Visor Card. This visor card issue was started in 2000. The Deaf community and the Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CODHHE) have been trying to work on coming up with an identifier so when a law enforcement officer or a police officer pulls over a person they will know quickly that this person is deaf or hard of hearing. A visor card was developed and Loretta's office has the 1,000 cards at this time. There is an application process that will be handled through Loretta's office. The visor card is presented to the officer and it has tips for the officer and instructions for the driver. At the Police Chief's meeting in December of 2007, the Police Chief's approved this card. The card was printed and a press release was scheduled in October by our Public Information Officer from the Department of Safety and Homeland Security. Loretta also did a lot of work to make this happen. We did not have the press event. In the mean time, the U.S. Attorney's Office has taken an interest in this issue and they would like to see something in the registration process so when the officer pulls the person over, he will have the information in the system indicating that the driver of this vehicle is deaf or hard of hearing. This is a good idea; however, it would be very costly to the Division of Motor Vehicles due to the necessary changes that would needed to be made in their computer system. With the economy and our fiscal resources, this would not be able to happen quickly. We went back to the Police Chiefs Council earlier this month to present the visor card again and everyone is still in support of the visor card. In moving forward, Loretta, her supervisor and Kyle are going to have a conference call tomorrow to determine next steps. Our Public Information Officer is willing to

help in any way. Hopefully, something will be done with the Governor in her office. Loretta will get a deaf community representatives' group together to attend and if the press comes that would be great.

### **Reports/Announcements**

Loretta announced that DVR and the DE Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing are having a statewide conference on March 27, 2009 at the Dover Sheraton from 8:00 am to 5:30 pm. "Save the Date" cards have been sent out. The agenda and registration forms will be sent out soon—the conference cost is still to be determined. The "Deaf Professional's Happy Hour" may be held after the conference. Motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the December 17, 2008 meeting minutes as amended.

The next meeting will be on February 18 at 10:00 am at IRI in Wilmington.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kyle Hodges  
CODHHE Administrator

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