

CODHHE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, June 17, 2009
6:30 PM – Delaware School for the Deaf
Newark, Delaware

PRESENT: Richard Pelletier, Chair; Loretta Sarro, DODHH; Peg Stewart, Treasurer;; Julia Sullivan, HLADE; Pam D’Occhio, Advocate; Loretta Sarro, DODHH; Karen Miller, Deaf Ministries; Kyle Hodges, Staff

Christy Hennessey, IRI

Guests: Julie Johnson – Delaware Families for Hands & Voices Foundation; Kathi Riley, State Audiologist - School for the Deaf/Hands & Voices; Kelly Costello, Hands & Voices; Heidi Heath-McEvoy, Hands & Voices; Debbie Trapani, Delaware School for the Deaf; Debi Duren, D.A.D. Treasurer; Kim Bucha, D.A.D. Vice-President; Yvonne Weinstein, D.A.D. President; Josh Weinstein; D.A.D. Secretary

INTERPRETERS

Lois Steele
Eileen Casey

CALL TO ORDER

Rich Pelletier called the meeting was called to order at 6:40 PM. .

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the March 18, 2009 minutes.

TREASURER’S REPORT

Peg provided copies of the Treasurer’s Reported. Peg reported that as of March 31, 2009, the closing balance was \$9,727.61. As of April 30, 2009, there was a closing balance of \$9,728.40. The balance as of May 29, 2009 was \$9,729.23. Motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the Treasurer’s reports for March, April and May as submitted.

BUSINESS

Julie Johnson – Delaware Families for Hands & Voices Foundation and Other Issues

Kyle introduced Julie Johnson of Delaware Families for Hands & Voices Foundation. Julie provided relevant materials to the Council. Julie reported that her group is a nonprofit parent organization that supports families and children who are deaf and hard of hearing. Their main philosophy is that they provide a nonbiased approach to supporting the person who is deaf/hard of hearing no matter what the methodology of communication is. They have been established for approximately one year.

They have set several goals. Some are as follows:

- Ensure that families are getting information and referrals for early intervention right at the screenings.
- The “Guide by Your Side” Program. This is a program in which a trained parent works with families who have a member who is newly diagnosed or is late onset to help provide them with information and support as they are navigating the system.
- Provide an opportunity for children who are deaf and hard of hearing to get together for events.
- Advocacy.

There are a couple of grants for newborn screening program, and as part of their budget for both of those grants, they have put in for money for the Guide by Your Side Program. Hopefully, they will know about this funding soon.

They are involved with some legislative initiatives. A few years ago the State did focus groups for families with deaf and hard of hearing children, and based on that, they determined needs for families who have children who are deaf and hard of hearing. Another initiative is Deaf Child’s Bill of Rights (draft included with handout). Some states have passed similar legislation, some are in the process, and some have tried but not been successful yet. It will be a priority for the next legislative session. They would like to have some input/feedback on what is included in this Deaf Child’s Bill of Rights and also obtain support for this legislation. Julie has modeled this after other states, mainly from Colorado and California. Kyle requested that Julie forward the draft legislation electronically and then he would forward to this group and he would coordinate getting all the comments to her. Kyle also will share this with State Council for Persons with Disabilities.

Julie commented that another issue that may be addressed is the IEP process. Typically, an IEP process is challenging for a parent to navigate. They have looked at what other states have done. Some of the materials provided include placement considerations for deaf and hard of hearing students and it gives you a format to walk through the process and to make sure everything is covered; it can be used as a guideline. They also have a functional listening evaluation because that is not often included for students who are hard of hearing to determine whether or not the environment is conducive to their hearing. She also included an IEP Checklist for students with hearing loss and a Communication Plan that allows the school to discuss what type of communication the child uses, the use of adult role models, and peer groups. Right now the IEP form is used for whatever disability the child has...the materials provided by Julie ensure that the needs for students who are deaf and hard of hearing are considered. Julie stated that she

brought it up with the appropriate Committee within the governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens, but not the full Council.

Julie will provide this draft document electronically and Kyle will send out and gather comments and relay them to Julie. This will be an agenda item for September.

There was some discussion regarding getting all children screened for hearing loss through special education services. It was noted that, at one time, each county had its own audiology services and the audiologist trained the school nurses to give a hearing test. This is not being done currently. Statistics shows that 3 out of every 1,000 babies are identified with hearing loss, but when you get to school-age children, the statistics double to 6 out of every 1,000. It was noted that the NAD had a good model of a Deaf Bill of Rights that covers all individuals. Josh suggested being careful about the language. For example – “adequate” who determines what is adequate? Kyle suggested that Josh send his comments to him. Kyle commented that sometimes broad language is better since it allows for broad interpretation.

Credentials for Interpreter Tutors for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

Kyle provided the regulations for interpreters in schools. Sterck abides by these regulations, but it does not appear that all the other school districts meet the regulatory requirement for interpreters. Section 3.0 lists the requirements and Section 3.2 states the following: “Maintains a current and valid license and is certified as a Teacher of the Hearing Impaired.” Peg stated that these are the credentials required for hiring under the title “interpreter tutor”. School districts are hiring individuals who are not necessarily under the title “Interpreter Tutor”. It was noted that districts are hiring paraprofessionals who lack the skills necessary to interpret in a school setting. School districts may not have the funding to hire qualified interpreters. Therefore, they hire people who do not meet the requirements for an interpreter - “somebody is better than nobody”.

Julie Johnson commented that the Deaf Child's Bill of Rights could say that the child has the right to a qualified interpreter. Julie noted that educating parents about the IEP process is important. Parents need to know that regulations are not being enforced in the school districts and that is something they could address at an IEP meeting. Someone commented that there are certified interpreters who could not work as educational interpreters. The educational field is very different and requires a specific skill. It was noted that the qualifications for an interpreter should be determined before anything goes into the Bill of Rights.

Peg reported that the credentialing of interpreters will have financial implications for districts. It was noted that interpreters may want more compensation if they have to meet higher standards. In addition, school districts may have a concern that they will lose current “interpreters” given the higher standards and having to pay more for interpreters who meet the new qualifications. Peg noted that the current regulations were written without the input of interpreter tutors who work at the School for the Deaf.

Kyle sent an email to Martha Toomey, DOE which noted the concern that revolves around the idea that a certified, licensed teacher of the deaf is not a guarantee that the

individual has sign language skills sufficient to interpret. Another concern is that school districts are not hiring individuals with the title "Interpreter/Tutor" but as paraprofessionals or teachers aides with sign language skills and the person is trying to do the job of an interpreter without the experience, skill or pay of an interpreter. Therefore, students outside of DSD may be receiving substandard services. A meeting is scheduled with Martha Toomey on July 16 at 10 am to discuss these concerns. Kyle welcomed anyone from Hand & Voices to attend. Kyle will also let Wendy Strauss know about it and will let Martha know who is attending.

Wilmington Train Station & PAV (Public Access Videophone)

There is a handout of an email sent from Loretta that went to Christy, Rich and himself, and it addresses some new phone technologies. Loretta shared this information with Dwayne Day, DelDOT to be considered for the Wilmington Train Station, Smyrna Rest Area, and Rest Area on I-95 and he was going to pass this information on to DelDOT staff responsible for these areas. There is going to be a meeting about this and Loretta will let Kyle know about the meeting. Loretta confirmed that Wilmington Train Station, Rest Area on I-95 and Smyrna Rest Area do have TTY capability. It was noted that the Wilmington Train Station will be undergoing major renovations with stimulus money and this could be a good time to bring this up.

DETRS Committee Legislation

Kyle reported that the law regarding the Delaware Telecommunication Relay Service Advisory Committee (information provided at the meeting) is being amended to reflect current practice. For example, this is no longer called the Dual Party Relay Advisory Committee.

The Committee reviewed the draft legislation and made the following comments and recommendations (noted as underlined as additions or comments and strike through if deleted):

Section 1. Amend Chapter 1, Subchapter II, of Title 26 of the Delaware Code by deleting § 221 in its entirety and inserting therein the following:

“§ 221. Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Committee.

- (a) The purpose of the Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Committee is to oversee the Relay services contract, the Delaware Relay web site, new product announcements and all associated outreach programs. The Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Committee shall advise any public utility which is authorized by the Commission to provide a statewide telecommunications relay service, and to also advise any contractor, designee, agent or assign of such public utility on matters related to the use of the telecommunications relay service ~~by hearing or speech impaired persons.~~ It was noted that hearing persons also use relay.
- (b) The Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Committee shall be composed of 11 members:

- 1) 1 member shall be a public utility, authorized by the Commission to provide a statewide telecommunications relay service (TRS) utility; - this is currently the Verizon representative.
 - 2) 1 person designed by the TRS utility, and shall be under contract with such utility to provide all or part of a statewide telecommunications relay service; - this is currently the Sprint representative.
 - 3) ~~One representative from the Office of the Public Advocate;~~
 - 4) One representative from the ~~State Office of Telecommunications~~ – insert Department of Technology and Information.
 - 5) One representative from the Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Equality;
 - 6) One representative from the Delaware Association of the Deaf;
 - 7) ~~One representative from the Architectural Accessibility Board;~~
 - 8) One representative from the Hearing Loss Association of Delaware;
 - 9) One representative from the Delaware Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing;
 - 10) One representative from the Delaware School for the Deaf; and
 - 11) One representative from the ~~Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Independent Resources, Inc.~~
 - 12) Other agencies, organizations and individuals who are needed to meet the requirements of this section.
- (c) A public utility acting as a member of the Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Committee shall be obligated to reimburse such Committee for the reasonable expenses incurred by such Committee for interpreter services. The Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Committee shall submit invoices for such reasonable expenses to a public utility obligated to reimburse the Committee for the same. These expenses shall be recovered by a reimbursing public utility in the manner authorized by the Commission for recovery of any other costs associated with the implementation and operation of a telecommunications relay service.

It was also recommended to add the 911 Administrator or Department of safety and Homeland Security (where the 911 Administrator is housed). It was decided not to include the Division of Visually Impaired at this time since they have not participated and could be part of subsection 12 above if needed.

Motion was made, seconded and approved for CODHHE to submit the recommendations to legislative staff.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Loretta made an announcement that the Division of Medicaid & Medical Assistance Acting Director attended the SCPD meeting and spoke Walgreens' decision to discontinue filling prescriptions for Medicaid recipients effective July 6th Rite-Aid and all other pharmacies will continue to fill Medicaid prescriptions.

Rich thanked the group Hands & Voices for coming to the meeting and Kyle will add Julie to his distribution list.

Kyle announced that Jo Singles will be replacing Linda Bates who is retiring effective July 1.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Respectively submitted,

Kyle Hodges
CODHHE Administrator
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