

**Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Equality  
Behavioral Health Committee Meeting  
January 15, 2013 - 1:30 P.M.  
Delaware School for the Deaf – Newark, DE**

**Present:** Christy Hennessey (Chair); Lois Steele (Vice-Chair); Joe D’Occhio, DEAFinitions & Interpreting; Karen Miller, Deaf Ministries; Loretta Sarro, DODHH; Josh Weinstein; Kyle Hodges, Staff.

**Interpreters:** Pamela D’Occhio and Rachel Matthews

**Guest:** Kathy Pettigrew, DSD

**Call to Order**

Christy called the meeting to order at 1:32 pm.

**Additions/Deletions to the Agenda**

Addition: DOC Contract with Connections

**Approval of the Meeting Minutes**

Motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the minutes of the November 20, 2012 meeting as corrected: Page 3 - Under AA: 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph: remove words “you cannot”; 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph – Change sentence to read: “Carol commented that if a person cannot afford an interpreter, his recovery is being jeopardized.” and remove last sentence “Dara suggested that has been in recovery for an extended period of time, but cannot afford to pay for an interpreter.” The next sentence – change word “pay” for “may”.

**Chair Report**

This is included under Business.

**Business**

**POC Contract with Quality Management Agency**

Kathy provided background information on her experience in working with group homes in Delaware and previously in Camden, New Jersey. Kathy noted that she notices the lack of communication of deaf clients here in Delaware in the teaching of managing medication and communication with staff is non-existent. In New Jersey, clients are taken on trips, which includes managing Activities of Daily Living (ADL). Kathy contracted with Quality Management Agency, but plans to reapply at Community Interactions.

Kathy spoke of one particular client with a temper issue when communications were improved and he had more opportunities, the behavior changed. Christy noted that she had seen a big difference with this client, but now that they now only have hearing staff, the communication has

declined. There was some discussion of several deaf applicants applying for a position, but not being hired. Lois commented that it could be that they did not have the skill set for the job requirements. Karen asked if Kathy thought it was beneficial to have deaf clients housed together and Kathy answered that they feed off each other's communication skills and are more integrated, rather than being lonely and isolated. She stated that when hearing staff is giving directives, it goes completely over the deaf consumers' heads, so they are missing a lot of information.

Karen asked Kathy to explain her one-on-one role as staff. Kathy explained that in New Jersey they had a 1:5 ratio of staff to consumers and the consumers were integrated into society, which resulted in them having higher self-esteem and higher motivation to exchange dialog. Kathy confirmed that they were being exposed to independent skills in the real world. Suggestion was made that the different agencies need to pull resources together to have a more unified system.

Kyle asked for clarification if Connections, Quality Management Agency and Community Interactions agencies are providers for DSAMH (Division of Substance Abuse & Mental Health). It was stated that one or more of these agencies contract with DDDS, but Kathy will get more information. Kathy spoke about another client in a group home managed by ResCare and hearing staff take care of this client. Kathy stated that it was beneficial to have deaf staff work with deaf consumers in one facility by one agency. She recommended that this client be transferred to one of these other agencies. Loretta asked for information on the ELP (Essential Lifestyle Plan) system; Christy explained that she had attended a meeting on this. Kyle restated that the most integrated setting for deaf consumers in a group home situation is to have deaf staff support. Kathy restated that explaining the medications to deaf consumers was imperative. Kathy was given thanks for her insightful comments.

Josh commented that we are making some progress because Warren did come and participate in a meeting and offered good insight on how the system works. Loretta commented that she would like to see Connections post to hire a deaf staff person. Josh brought up Connections on his cellphone to check on employment opportunities and noted that none of the position describe deaf and hard of hearing requirements. Josh checked Quality Management Agency's website to see if they were hiring deaf staff.

#### D DDS Follow-Up Regarding Group Home Services for People Who Are D/HH

Christy referred to Warren's email (handout). Christy commented that Warren's email does not mention Connections, Community Interactions or Quality Management Agency. Kyle spoke about the level of impairment, which is very subjective on the staff's part. Half of the 52 mentioned have severe hearing impairment. Christy questioned who determines the mode of communication used by consumers and what credentials this person has. Kyle spoke about a follow-up email from Warren stating their interest in following up and how best to proceed; also, any assessment to be done would need approval from the consumer or their family.

Kyle commented that we may want to give them suggestions as to whom should be doing the assessments. Lois stated that we need to do some research about assessment tools to be utilized statewide that could be recommended. Josh spoke about what is done in Pennsylvania and that the preference to have consumers placed with one agency, where a hub system can be developed for needed services. Karen suggested getting information from a group home in Pennsylvania

(Glenside) that could possibly be a model for Delaware (PAHrtners in Glenside). Kyle asked if the team in Pennsylvania has a person with expertise in hearing loss. Karen confirmed they do that and much more. Kyle spoke of another option to consider would be contracting with DSD (Delaware School for the Deaf) who already have audiologists on board or the Hearing Loss Association of Delaware. Comment was made that there is a need for certification or licensure so that DDDS and DSAMH can have people perform assessments. Loretta commented that there are many audiologists in Delaware and DVR contracts with specific local audiologists. Loretta will find out how many audiologists that DVR contracts with statewide. Josh suggested that a DVR representative attend a meeting for their feedback and to brainstorm. Josh commented that we need to have audiologists who work with people who have cognitive disabilities and are also deaf.

Kyle brought up Warren's question in his email asking how well in Delaware do doctors and other professionals provide interpreter services when they see people who need them. There has been for a long time to have qualified interpreters for people with cognitive or mental health issues. Joe spoke about the difficulty in getting doctors to pay for two interpreters. Christy spoke about her personal experience in using interpreters in doctor's offices. Kyle will check into PAHrtners. Josh suggested that Christy or Loretta contact DVR regarding attending meetings on a regular basis; he also suggested having a representative from DDDS and DSAMH also attend regular meetings so real changes can be made at an upper level.

Loretta commented that she forwards BHC meeting agendas to her supervisor and have invited them to attend meetings or assign someone depending on their availability. Kyle asked for clarification from Josh on how they would contribute to the Committee. Josh stated that he is interested to know the specific range of deaf and hard of hearing people they serve, do not serve some due to low functional level for the services they can provide, if they assign job coaches and if these job coaches work with people housed in a deaf and hard of hearing group program, and how they manage their outreach and community liaison with the deaf community. Kyle will invite Andrea or Harrietann to attend or send a representative to address these questions and attend a meeting and determine the need for participation at regularly scheduled meetings. Josh will review the questions after Kyle drafts them. Josh commented that the brainstorming and feedback received on these topics will enhance our mission and focus. Kyle stated that Dara is the DSAMH representative and Warren is the DDDS representative. Loretta questioned the lack of participation by DSD, particularly by a school psychologist (Ann Lofting or Katie Reinhold) or social worker (currently vacant). Kyle confirmed that both of these people are on the distribution list, but will follow-up on their attending meetings.

### Department of Correction Grant

Christy spoke about the Department of Correction having awarded funding from a grant for mental health services to Connections for a two-year contract, with the possibility of two, one year extensions. The total vendor payment for the new contract is \$11.9 million. Christy also spoke about DOC not provided interpreting services for a deaf or hard of hearing inmate located at the Sussex County prison who has not been provided mental health services. Joe clarified that DEAFinitions has been providing interpreting services for two inmates. Karen spoke about a call she received about a week ago from an inmate saying that the medication given to him had not been explained and he refused to take it (this was an ongoing issue). Joe clarified that the interpreter has been going. Karen will get more information and contact Joe directly.

## **Announcement**

Loretta spoke about two meetings held recently on Captel. There is a pending authorization to move this forward. Management and funding details are still being worked out among the different agencies. An amendment with Captel language that abides by the legislation needs to be attached to the documentation. Once approval and authorization has taken place, the program will be rolled out. Loretta is compiling a list of names of people interested in getting Captel service. Loretta explained if you know of anyone else interested, send her contact information. Applications will be sent out soon and people will be added to the service on a first-come, first served basis. A revised letter was sent stating there will be a 2 cent surcharge so the funding can be built. DTI will be responsible for payment of the bills. The invoice will show the minutes for Captel and Relay separately.

Josh spoke about the lack of deaf individuals in the higher tier of a company that provides the majority (80-90%) of the video-relay services for the military. Another company that handles the minority (10-20%) of the relay services has a deaf CEO, Vice-President, and many other deaf staff; he added that they have a specific way of delivering service to the deaf and hard of hearing and gave an example of the difference.

Karen stated that March 16 is a tax day for deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Contact her if you know of anyone willing to interpret as a volunteer. Karen commented that she has sent information to Christy and Loretta, but will also send to Josh and Kyle.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting ended at 3:32 pm.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, March 19, 2013, Delaware School for the Deaf, Newark, 1:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jo Singles  
Administrative Specialist  
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