

**Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Equality  
Behavioral Health Committee Meeting  
March 19, 2013 - 1:30 P.M.  
Delaware School for the Deaf – Newark, DE**

**Present:** Christy Hennessey (Chair); Lois Steele (Vice-Chair); Warren Ellis, DDDS; Karen Miller, Deaf Ministries; Loretta Sarro, DODHH; Dara Schumaier, DSAMH; Josh Weinstein; and Kyle Hodges, Staff.

**Interpreters:** Pamela D'Occhio and Rita Jo Scarcella

**Call to Order**

Christy called the meeting to order at 1:43 pm.

**Additions/Deletions to the Agenda**

none

**Approval of the Meeting Minutes**

Motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the minutes of the January 15, 2013 meeting as submitted.

**Chair Report**

This is included under Business.

**Business**

**Services (Group Homes, Day Programs, Etc.) for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Clients in the DDDS & DSAMH Systems**

Christy thanked Warren and Dara for the statistics (handouts) and asked if anyone had questions. Kyle asked Dara what groups are reflected in the stats. Dara explained that group homes most likely would not be included in these numbers, but was unsure about the living arrangements, particularly those with gambling or substance abuse issues. She added that some of the older clients with mental health issues may live in group homes. Kyle asked if this could be determined; Dara could not confirm this. Kyle commented about the original issue raised about deaf/hard of hearing clients being isolated in group homes. Dara will check further on this and get back to Kyle.

Josh asked for clarification between the two agencies—DDDS and DSAMH. Loretta provided a brief explanation on the differences. Lois commented about her experience with the work overlapping into several different agencies. Warren commented that has to do with required eligibility criteria. He gave an example of dual diagnosis which means something different at DDDS and DSAMH and how it can cross over. DSAMH's primary focus would be mental health or substance abuse and DDDS's primary focus would be intellectual disabilities. Josh commented that this clarification helps him determine in which agency to refer clients. Josh

stated that it would be helpful to find a common ground where clients with different issues could be served in the same building.

Warren stated that there is no day program specifically for deaf and hard of hearing clients but some agencies may have deaf staff working there, but not DDDS staff as most services are contracted out. Josh commented that DDDS clients have been sent to Connections, which has a day program and a deaf staff person. Warren added that they have a small contract with Connections, but was not specifically intended for deaf and hard of hearing clients. Warren clarified that they do not fund by ratios, but by hours of support that the rate setting process identifies. Warren asked about DDDS clients being referred to CHIMES and found no deaf staff. There is a problem for deaf clients being put into programs that do not have deaf staff where they cannot communicate and have social interaction. Warren stated that clients choose which agency they want to attend. Warren stated one of the reasons for his participation in this group is his interest in pairing deaf clients in deaf-staffed programs. Suggestion was made to initially set up a specific place and connect with a specific support provider. Warren has requested case managers to find out who may be interested in participating in this type of program for residential and day programs. He has sent information on agencies that have deaf and hard of hearing clients, which cross a variety of programs. Kyle confirmed that there are 139 people not in residential placements (living at home) who are deaf or hard of hearing and 52 in residential placements funded by DDDS, referring to Warren's email (handout).

Lois spoke about the importance of staff using sign to communicate effectively with deaf clients and having that they have language access to get accurate information. Warren commented that he wants to see the initial level of interest before proceeding further into developing a program. Four of the agencies they contract with have deaf/hard of hearing clients (Chimes, Connections, Community Interactions and possibly Mosaic or Bancroft). Suggestion was made to provide outreach and have a provider who has an interest in having a program and an interpreter skilled in working with these types of clients to ensure that they receive the services that they need. Warren stated that Community Interactions has a program in Pennsylvania that serves deaf and hard of hearing clients; a similar program could be developed in Delaware since they are one of the agencies they contract with. Warren explained how the funding process works for each client. Warren commented that he thinks there would be interest, although it would not be a large number initially. Suggestion was made that the funding for the interpreting services could be a shared cost. Suggestion was made to have Connections attend a meeting to see their level of interest in having a program. Warren commented that it would still be the consumer's choice to be in a program, which is a requirement in receiving Medicaid funding.

Dara spoke about the 14 clients under DSAMH. She piggybacked on Lois's comments about getting information on what people want. She mentioned that they do a customer satisfaction survey conducted by peers every year. She added that what appears lacking is some type of Deaf Peer Network or Group to interact with clients to find out what their true needs are and level of satisfaction. She suggested that DDDS have something similar, for example, deaf peers talk to deaf clients. Warren thought this was doable, but commented that, with the cognitive impairment involved, there are many deaf consumers who do not sign and use gestural type of communication. Lois commented that there are teams available to provide that type of service. Lois also commented about black ASL, where the signing is different. Kyle asked if the level of impairment and mode of communication reflected included only the 52 in residential placements; Warren confirmed that it did. Warren explained the different types of day program services.

Christy asked about the referral process where a different program might be more appropriate for the person than the current one they are attending. Warren explained that all they need to do to let the case manager know that they are interested in looking at alternative programs. The agency would have to determine if they are willing to support the person. Lois clarified that Christy was speaking as an advocate, not as a legal guardian. Warren stated that the family or person would have to agree on the referral. Warren asked that Christy send him an email if she is not getting a response from the case manager. Lois suggested working on the day programs first and if that is successful, then including residential clusters. Warren stated that there is a wide array of services available and one program may not work for a particular consumer, but there can be flexibility. Warren related this to when special populations were formed and explained the process. Warren commented that no one agency has a large group of deaf consumers. Kyle requested that Warren forward the breakdown of agencies and how many deaf consumers each has to him. Kyle spoke about Lois's concern regarding effective communication. He suggested that once we know what is needed, that the appropriate team follow-up with this Committee. Warren commented that he would have to work with Jane regarding this, but does not foresee it as a problem.

Kyle asked about the services needed for the 14 hearing impaired clients under DSAMH. Dara clarified that these numbers are in-house. Dara spoke about older people with persistent and chronic mental illness that need to be in a medical group home and there would not be alternative programs for them. Those that can live in a less restrictive environment are working with case managers to choose their own housing; congregate housing would be counter to the DOJ Settlement Agreement. Josh raised concern about deaf consumers being a minority linguistic group that thrive interacting with each other; suggestion was made to research PAHrtners in Glenside, Pennsylvania, which has been very successful for deaf consumers. Warren will look into these two programs and asked for other suggestions. Lois also suggested looking at Valley View in Pennsylvania. The language needs to be addressed first, then the disability with this particular group. When a linguistic population is suppressed, it creates isolation. Dara commented that deaf consumers could be encouraged to have housemates who are hearing impaired or live near people with similar communication skills. Dara commented she would attempt to raise the consciousness of the housing program staff. Kyle stated that this group may want to encourage consideration of this type of living situation. Kyle asked for statistics through Dara who will contact Melissa Smith. Kyle commented that we need to know what services deaf clients are receiving in order to make a recommendation. Dara commented that shortage of staff makes getting this information difficult, but she will try to get service program information by provider. Kyle will contact Carlyle Hooff (Community Integration Housing Coordinator for DSAMH) about addressing what deaf and hard of hearing consumers want and the option of living with or near a person who is deaf or hard of hearing. Dara commented that the Housing Authority could be more sensitive in the use of the search tool.

Christy spoke about the meeting in January and the discussion about assessments of communication skills and referred to #6 in Warren's email. She asked if there was any additional information for those with limited communication skills and how to measure. Warren explained that DDDS is not in a position to do this at this point; he also explained that the clients would have to want to participate in the assessment to assess language and communication skills. Dara commented that there seems to be a desire for things to happen on a State level that may be better handled on a consumer movement level because the State is tied down to adhere to rules and regulations. Dara asked if there was an organization in Delaware that advocates for deaf and

hard of hearing consumers. Christy commented that she is one of those advocates and hears from deaf consumers on what is needed. Christy offered to bring several consumers to talk about this. Dara commented that State agencies need to ask deaf consumers what their method of communication is and track that information. This would help inform our programs and see what is needed. Dara stated that the clinical intake form for psychiatry asks if the person is hearing impaired and a check off if interpreting is needed or not. Suggestion was made that recommendation could be made by members of this Committee to make the form more deaf friendly. Christy and Kyle agreed that this needs to be addressed at some point. Christy has a form developed that she will share with Dara and Warren. Loretta added that the State has a lot of catching up to do in terms of wording used.

### **Announcement**

Kyle distributed an statement from Carol Stevens (handout) who could not attend today's meeting but wanted to give an update about the situation of interpreters for an AA meeting in Newark for a deaf consumer. DEAFinitions & Interpreting compiled a list of 8 volunteer interpreters to assist. A question was asked if there were any local colleges that have student interpreters that could do an internship and add to this list. Christy suggested contact DEAFinitions directly and speaking with Joe D'Occhio. Karen stated that there are interpreter training programs in New Jersey, Philadelphia and Baltimore. Loretta commented that there had been an ALS interpreter program at Del Tech & Community College in the 1990's, but no longer. The ALS program thrived, but those transferring into the training program was minimal. The College required a minimum of 10 students to hold a class.

### **Adjournment**

Christy thanked everyone for attending today's meeting. The meeting ended at 3:20 pm.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, May 21, 2013, Delaware School for the Deaf, Newark, 1:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jo Singles  
Administrative Specialist  
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