**Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind Advisory Council**

**November 19, 2020**

**Zoom Video Conference**

**9:30-12:00**

**ATTENDEES**

**Board Members:** Spenser Weppler, Charlea Deb Baker, Monica Hutt, Amelia Briggs, Laura Siegel, Katy Langevin, Sherry Sousa, AJ Van Tassel, Rebecca Chalmers, Linda Hazard, Sharon Henry, Amy Williamson, Will Pendlebury, Kate Parrish, Julie Stefanski

**Guests:** Liz Perreault, Dr. Margaret Overman

**Interpreters:** Crystal Haynes, Elizabeth Fox, White Coat Captioning

**Council Seat Vacancies:**

Bill Hudson has retired from his Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) position and Kate Parrish will now be the VR representative.

Bill would like to remain on the council as a nominee to fill one of the vacant community member seats representing the Deaf. **Deb Baker moved that Bill Hudson be appointed as a representative of the deaf community for the remainder of his term, Linda Hazard second the motion, and all approved.**

Spenser Weppler’s first term as chair is expiring. Spenser would like to continue to serve in the role for a second term. After discussion, the council agreed that voting on the chair should follow an established nomination process. Nominations should be sent to Liz and the vote will occur at the January meeting

**Updates:**

**D/HH/DB Services Director position- Commissioner Monica Hutt**

The D/HH/DB Services Director position has been posted and a copy of the position will be resent to the council for distribution. Please encourage any potential candidates to apply. Currently the posting expires on December 7. However, that deadline will be extended if it is needed. There was some concern that the responsibilities outlined in the posting seemed to be too much responsibility for one person. Monica Hutt stated that she would review the wording of the job description and change the wording if it seemed necessary.

**VCIL- Will Pendlebury**

The VCIL Referral Service Advisory Committee has a representation that is 1/3 from the deaf community, 1/3 from the interpreter community, and 1/3 is a representation of requesters of the service. In the past, the Yolanda Community fund was limited in what it would pay for. The scope is now broader, including most things that are not covered by the ADA.

**VAD- Laura Siegel**

Alaina Shapiro is the new Vermont Association of the Deaf president. The current work is finding ways to celebrate the holidays with the children. VAD and Vermont Hands and Voices have been working on finding safe and fun ways to still celebrate the season.

**HLAA-VT Chapter - Deb Baker**

A focus for the VT Chapter of the HLAA is the Hearing Aid bill initiative. Hearing aids are expensive and present a lower quality of life if needed and are not available or accessible. There will be renewed energy in the upcoming legislative session to move a hearing aid coverage bill forward. If anyone is interested in helping and working on drafting and advocating for the bill, the Vermont chapter is holding a Zoom meeting on December 2 that is open to all.

The National HLAA site has all the states listed with agendas for upcoming meetings making all the meetings publicly accessible across the nation. You can find this information on Hearingloss.org. There are pamphlets available in provider offices. Deb has a box of pamphlets if anyone would like to make them available to their networks. There is an electric version available and Deb will send the link to Liz Perreault to share with the council.

**VT EHDI- Linda Hazard**

The cyber attack on the UVM Medical Center has made doing business difficult. Some staff have been deployed to do contract tracing which has made response to calls slower than usual.

The Care Project, which is an organization out of North Carolina, will be partnering with North Carolina EHDI, Tennessee EHDI, and Vermont EHDI for a virtual workshop for professionals on empathy. This is scheduled for tomorrow. This same workshop for parents was offered for free Two weeks ago.

Typically, there are between 25 and 29 babies that are referred for screening, but the numbers are closer to 44, which is high. The question whether COVID-19 affects a child born to someone who has contracted it was asked. It is a topic of discussion, but it is too early to know what, if any, are the effects on an unborn child.

The VT EHDI conference is scheduled to take place virtually in February.

**Nine East Network- Linda Hazard**

* Nine East staff continue to learn how to conduct and participate in virtual trainings.
* There are three students who are finishing up the ASL course.

**COVID-19 Updates- Council**

Monica Hutt reported that Vermont cases are on the rise and Governor Scott has asked all Vermonters to stop socializing outside of their households. Additional testing sites have been created across the state. If a person needs interpreting services, they can ask when they make the appointment for the test.

Laura Siegel stated that remote services from VAD could also be requested. VAD has also been working with Vermont Department of Health (VDH) to make COVID-19 information accessible and available to the deaf and hard of hearing communities.

Rebecca Chalmers discussed Bluetooth microphones being a vital tool at this time of mask wearing and social distancing. The microphones are helpful because even with hearing aids, the 6-foot distance that must be maintained between people make the voice out of range for the hearing aid. However, the microphone can pick up the voice from that distance.

Kate Parrish wanted to remind folks that VR services are available to people who are D/HH/DB whether they are working or not. If you have any questions, please contact Kate at: kate.parrish@vermont.gov.

**Legislative Draft Report- Spenser Weppler, Will Pendlebury, and Monica Hutt**

At the meeting in September, the council was asked to look over last year’s report and give any updated data that should be included in the report that is due to the legislature in January. The report will maintain the same structure but include some additional information.

Things to consider including in this year’s report:

* A high-level perspective of the three demographics, deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind.
* Data from All Hears.
* A comprehensive list of all of the different organizations that represent and support D/HH/DB Vermonters.
* Captioning in movie theaters.
* New director.
* Hearing aid bill.

A good source for future data will be the State Plan on Aging survey that will be conducted. Monica will invite Angela Smith-Dieng, Adult Services Director, and Conor O’Dea, State Unit on Aging Director, to speak to the council about the state plan on aging.

There was concern expressed regarding the amount of writing and personal time that is being undertaken by council members for the report and why data from previous years report wouldn’t continue to be included in this year (and future reports)It was suggested when considering the data for number of Vermonters who have a hearing loss that the council use 20% for unilateral loss. Additionally, it was suggested that the revising of the report begin earlier, i.e. in the summer to allow for more time to gather all the information.

The clean version of this report needs to be completed and sent to the Secretary of Human Service by December 15 for review and will be shared with the council for final feedback before it is sent to the Secretary

If there is any other information that council members have that would benefit the report, please send the data and information to Liz Perreault.

**Other- All**

Council members, please let Spenser, Will, Monica, and Liz know of agenda items you would like to have discussed in the new year.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 21, from 9:30-12:00 and will still be held virtually. When asked if there are there any changes the council would like to see in the frequency or length of the meetings moving forward the consensus was to keep things the way they are. Liz Perreault will secure the dates, interpreters, and captioning for the 2021 year.

Kate Parrish wanted to say that she is very happy to be working with this group again.

Dr. Overman, an Educational Audiologist during public comment stated that she started and oversees the “Vermont Hears” organization for students and adults and she would be happy to share a blurb about the program for the annual report. She also highlighted a correction that needed to be made in the current draft of the report in the Nine East Network update section.

There was a question asked why the report must be reviewed by the Agency of Human Services (AHS) Secretary before going to the legislature. Will Pendlebury responded stating that DAIL supports the Council who is under AHS and they are responsible for all the legislative reports that come out of the Agency. Information regarding this process was requested Will is going to seek that out and share it with the council.

Julie Stefanski wanted to give a Public Service Announcement for the Medical Center. No visitors are allowed for appointments or inpatient visits at this time. There will continue to be interpreter services available for appointments through Zoom or in-person. Interpreters are considered as part of the care team.

**Meeting was adjourned: 12:19**