

**DRAFT**

# **Vermont Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing/DeafBlind Council Meeting Notes**

Agenda

March 17, 2020

9:30AM to 12:00 PM

Zoom Remote Meeting

## **Welcome/Housekeeping/Announcements**

Discussion that this meeting has whomever speaking to be pinned including both Interpreters. Happy St. Patrick's Day. Co-Chair Will Pendlebury is on vacation. CDCI Cares the vendor for the AOE grant has named Pam Hoover as their nominee on the Council. She will fill an opening as someone who serves the D/HH/DB population. An update by CDCI Cares as well as UVM ESP and EHD, will be emailed to the full council in the interest of making sure the presenters have enough time to present and allow for Q&A

## **Program/Organizational updates**

### **VCIL – Val Hughes**

Val has been working for Vermont Center for Independent Living as a deaf independent program coordinator. She has been working primarily on new referrals for folks who are Deaf and Deaf/Blind and the Hearing Aid Coverage Bill which is progressing well.

### **VANCRO – Jessica Hutchins**

Awareness with consumers continues to grow and they are getting 2-3 requests weekly. The Vermont DBHI Plus Conference is Deaf/Blind Hearing inclusive and will be held on April 30, 2022, 9:00am-3:00pm. Hoping to see all ages of people represented from all over the State of Vermont. VANCRO is providing clear masks for everybody, for visibility. 10 vendors have registered so far and are excited about this event, especially here in Vermont. It will give a chance for people to put faces to names, get up-to-date resources, and allow for networking.

VANCRO has also initiated a Deaf/Blind training program it hopes to begin next month. 12 interpreters have expressed interest in training to work with Deaf/Blind individuals. The training is expected to extend for about a year with monthly gatherings working with the Helen Keller National Center. They have modules that will be used, and there will have one intensive weekend together. Yolanda Henry Community Fund is another advocate that VANCRO is working with. General funds in the Yolanda Henry Community Fund and that's for things that are not otherwise covered like funerals and weddings. That fund is growing slowly, and we started a [Fundraiser with the Vermont Association of the Deaf: Vermont's Yolande Henry Community Fund \(gofundme.com\)](#). Anything that isn't covered under the ADA is we try to cover with the Yolanda Henry Community Fund. For more information people are invited to contact Jessica.

We are providing interpreters for Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous and 12 step meetings around Vermont. VANCRO want to spread the news of this service and that confidentiality will remain; we just need the location of the meeting given to VANCRO or contact Jessica directly in a timely manner to have someone available.

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They are halfway through the Mentoring program with the first Cohort of Interpreters. VANCRO has hosted meeting where mentors were identified and paired with the mentees. Feedback will be collected on their experiences which will be used to help inform further cohorts in the program.

### **VTAD – David Krueger (President of VT Association of Deaf)**

- On March 26<sup>th</sup>, the VTAD General Meeting will happen in Bethel. It is open to the public as well as members. The meeting is from 11:00am-4:00pm and interpreters will be provided as well as a vaccine clinic supported by Department of Health. There will be a presentation from John Pirone, Nick Lalanne, Rebecca Lalanne, and Stuart Soboleski present about Deaf education to help folks understand better the services being provided and get the community input regarding the Vermont HEARS grant and services. Additionally, they want to discuss advocacy around providing input to the AOE grant during the second half of the legislative session.

Vermont Legal Aid will also be in attendance to help provide assistance with information on the process of expungement of criminal records. VTAD is also working to try and set up a legal clinic where the actual process can occur with lawyers present. Old criminal convictions on one's record has been a barrier to getting employment, housing etc.

- The Association of the Deaf, VTAD is a 501C3 Organization and are the fiscal agent that produces the invoices for the dollar amount to pay the interpreters. Requests are made through VANCRO, and Page Kirby is helping us keep track of donations.
- VTAD is working with Richard "Dick" Todd who is the representative for Deaf Senior Citizens Association. Richard is seeking for someone to take on his role.
- National Association of the Deaf will hold their biannual conference in Orlando. VTAD working on who will attend to represent Vermont.
- On April 30<sup>th</sup>, VT DBHI+ will be held from 9 am to 4pm at Vermont Technical College and will be in the format of an Expo Day with multiple booths. VTAD will have a booth as well.
- The Allies Conference in New Hampshire geared towards Deaf community and Interpreters. There will be discussions around community needs, internal bias or oppression, culture in the community and to get insight about what is most appropriate.
- The VTAD Board is also in preliminary stages of setting up a Social Club for the community- a place for folks to gather for social time. We're working on what that would like.

### **HAAA VT Chapter – Deb Baker**

HAAA, has been busy working with the Hear Hear Coalition on the Hearing Aid Coverage Bill which has been progressing well.

HAAA VT Chapters has switched their meetings to the last Wednesday of each month. Anyone can attend the Zoom meetings- reach out Deb for the link. At the February, Ruby Baker from COVE oversaw a workshop on the legislative process. At the March 30<sup>th</sup>, Lindsey Owen, the Executive Director of Disability Rights Vermont will talk about ADA. We are finding people who are newly losing their hearing or have been very isolated for a long time and have no idea what ADA is or what it is about and how it impacts them personally.

The March/April Newsletter by Carol Devine will be going out soon. Contact Deb if you would like to be on the email list.

On June 23<sup>rd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>, The National HAAA Convention will be in Tampa, Florida and on September 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>, The Regional Conference will be in Glens Falls, NY. HAAA VT Chapter will also have a booth at the VT DBHI+ Expo.

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**EHDI and UVM ESP – Linda Hazard**

Updates will be emailed to the council

**CDCI/CARES – Pam Hoover**

Updates will be emailed to the council.

**Feature Presentation**

**Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative (DDHI) Overview – David McKay, Ellen McKay, Enzo DeMaio, Debbie Lamden**

**Introductions:**

David and Ellen introduced themselves and stated that they are parents of an adult child who is congenitally Deaf and has Cerebral Palsy. Their child cannot speak, hear, sign, or walk and requires living in a signing environment in order to proceed with day-to-day communications.

Debbi and Enzo introduced themselves and are also parents of adult child who has Cerebral Palsy and is Deaf. Access to the necessary services for their child to live at home has been extremely difficult get. Currently their child has two shared living providers which at times were neglectful.

**Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative (DDHI) Overview:**

The DDHI was started last year, partly in response to a great deal of urgency on the part of aging parents of adults with developmental disabilities and partly in response to all the federal dollars from COVID-19 relief that are coming to Vermont to support community and home-based care for people with Developmental Disabilities. There are 80 parents of more than 40 adult children with Developmental Disabilities. DDHI is trying to establish safe, secure, stable living environments and housing options for adults with Developmental Disabilities. Each of which would support a small number of peers in close proximity, not necessarily in the same apartment or house, but in close proximity so they could share resources and opportunities. DDHI would like work within the current state system of Designated Agencies for continued access to disability services.

Vermont House Bill H.720, just passed the House Appropriations Committee unanimously and will cross over to the senate later this week after being voted on the House Floor. It's an Act relating to the System of Care for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities. One piece of the bill is to set up a small number of pilot programs, housing options for people with developmental disabilities around the State. One of which should be for Deaf clients that would include Deaf or signing staff. It should be a community and not restricted to 2 per site.

DDHI has a Models Committee which looking around at other models we could emulate here in Vermont.

Megan Tierney-Ward, Deputy Commissioner of DAAL, provided a link to the [current system of care plan](#) that that was referenced. There is differentiation between shared living, which is the one or two people living in an unlicensed home and what the system of care plan calls group living, which is up to five people. Normally, the State System requires a home to be licensed if it's providing care to more than 2 people. There's an upcoming opportunity to possibly change, not just in the legislature with the bill, but also with the system of care plan that needs to be renewed. Stakeholder input will be important during this process. The Federal Government does have some very specific rules about what a home and community-based setting can look like to be approved for Medicaid funds and a standard to which states are held to with regards to paying for home and community-based settings.

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David McKay would like to see a set of apartments or homes of one sort or another where Deaf and signing people with and without disabilities are able to live together within a larger community that is very supportive of them and able to provide activities, services, and jobs that those with disabilities might want. This could be similar to assisted living facilities for the elderly that we see in Shelburne, and other towns in Vermont. Another possibility would be a setting like the University of Vermont in conjunction with its Medical School which might be interested in developing a community living environment on campus where, again, Deaf and signing people with and without disabilities could live together on a campus which has say courses in American Sign Language, nursing program, a physical therapy program.

A question was asked about whether the bill addresses communication needs at all which it does not, it only focuses on housing and support services.

Another question was asked if there were training programs available through the state so they would have the skills and capacity to become excellent to provide these services when the housing is up and running. Currently there is not.

It was noted that as we emerge from the pandemic it is a good opportunity combined with the funding to figure out how to develop and improved on the services and the overall system to achieve access to housing that provides the necessary services and communication on a daily basis in order to help alleviate the burden on parents of adult children with Developmental Disabilities.

### **Break**

### **D/HH/DB Director's Report**

#### **Accessibility:**

- 1) Currently working on a proposal to submit to (Building of General Services) BGS about inquiring hearing induction loop system in Waterbury State Office Complex (WSOC) as a model to start and hopefully spread out to other state buildings. Vermont Assistive Technology Program (VATP) and several from HLAA provided some technical assistance. Thanks to all for doing so.
- 2) VATP just released the first of a series on telecommunication devices on Tuesday. Collaborating work efforts with Caelan Manning from VATP.
- 3) DAIL's Hope Smith and other admin assistants worked together to create a Zoom protocol. We just purchased a license that is consisted of ten ZoomGov account including:
  - Commissioner's Office
  - Adult Services Division
  - Developmental Disabilities Services Division
  - Department of Licensing Protection
  - Division of Blind and Visual Impaired
  - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
  - Assistive Technology Program

The next move is to provide training on how to use ZoomGov to accommodate those who are DHHDB that receive services from anyone within DAIL. Vermont Department of Health (VDH) is interested in doing the same training has been completed the training.

- 4) In process of creating an AHS ASL Policy Guideline.
- 5) Created a menu with tips to the Statehouse on how to accommodate DHHDB constituents.

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### **State Employee Training Accessibility:**

- 1) LINC (the State's learning management system) for state employees now have access to my recorded training. It's a 30-minute overview on how to best serve DHHDB. Just last week, I have converted it to be accessible to external community partners on our YouTube channel.

### **Languages:**

- 1) Multilanguage task force: [Vermont Language Justice Project - YouTube](#) had 15 videos created in ASL. So far 1,843 views on them. 4 videos are in process of being made. [ASL - YouTube](#)

### **Bills:**

- 1) S.147 Language Access Bill is not moving forward because Xusana Davis said that her office, Agency of Administration have already started the work about language access, and she said the work can be done without legislation. The bill was focused on translation of documents only.
- 2) H.266 Hearing Aid Coverage Bill passed out of the Healthcare Committee 9-1 and was introduced on the floor on March 16 where it passed on the second reading. The third reading will occur on March 17<sup>th</sup>, and it will then move over to the Senate Health and Welfare Committee.
- 3) EHB's: Department of Financial Regulation received approval from Green Mountain Care Board to modify the essential health benefit package to include Hearing Aid Coverage which would begin in 2024. DFR is now working on the report which they will submit to the CMS. DFR will keep me updated once they open the second public comment and Laura will keep the council apprised when the public comment period opens

### **Public Education/Training:**

Amanda Garces from Human Rights Commission (HRC) present along with Bor Yang (ED and legal counsel for HRC) presented to my Educational Outreach group a few weeks ago. It was very informative for the group. Norma Miller from White Coat Captioning present in two weeks. WeiWei (Way-Way) Wang from Vt Professional of Color Network- and Vermont Health Equity Initiative will present in two months.

### **Department of Mental Health:**

DMH will be sending out a survey to providers. Our hope is to gather information to have a better understanding on how/what we need to do to enhance mental health services.

### **DBVI:**

Nothing is official yet. We just got approval of funding. We are in process of creating an RFP to initiate a pilot program for SSP services.

### **ANR:**

We will start collaborating to enhance communication access throughout their three departments: Dept of forests, parks, and recreation, dept of fish and wildlife, dept of environmental conservation. I don't know if you recall, I've mentioned a recorded training was completed with dept of fish and wildlife for their 220 volunteer instructions has been release.

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### **Commissioner Update – Megan Tierney-Ward**

FMAP Update – This is the Act that gives the State authority for spending kind of mid-year, (adjustments to our budget). Governor signed a Budget Adjustment Act (BAA) yesterday. There is an additional piece to the Act related to recovery from COVID. Reference to recruitment, retention to help support workforce, COVID expenses, and funding for designated Agencies. This affects the programs managed by DAIL. BAA is the legislative authority for the agency of Human Services to move forward with the ARPA FMAP plan. The ARPA is the American rescue plan act. And that included benefits to States called the Home and Community Based Services enhanced FMAP the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage Funding. Vermont typically receives a match- most common match is around 50%- for all our Medicaid services. This gives a quite a big boost, a 10% boost over a set period of time for all the services we provide between April 2021 and March 2024. We get to use that bump and reinvest in certain categories. The estimated benefit to Vermont for approved activities is almost \$150 million dollars. The spending is broken down by categories of types of things the plan will support, you have been given a PowerPoint 4 slides that list those categories. The approval through the BBA for the enhanced FMAP funding plan, they will be able to move forward on getting a contracted vendor to help facilitate the plans for spending the money, to organize a process and to help flesh out actual projects, while working with stakeholder's input.

We will have quarterly updates to CMS. Wendy Trafton who is leading this plan for the agency, will be at the DAIL Advisory Board. I'll provide Liz the updated Council email list and she can just forward the DAIL invitation which has the agenda of each meeting, usually 24 to 48 hours before the meeting. And you choose if you want to attend.

### **School Aged Sub-Committee – Sharon Henry**

Sharon highlighted her earlier email to the council with the committee update. The committee has met twice on February 23<sup>rd</sup> and March 7<sup>th</sup>. Meeting summaries and the closed captioning will be posted on the DAIL website. Sharon had posed two questions to the council in her email which had not generated any response. 1) Are there any other stakeholders that you think we should engage with? 2) Are there other resources that you know of that would help us develop a good assessment tool for Deaf and Hard of Hearing services?

We've talked to different states including Washington, Minnesota, New Hampshire, no one is familiar with the NASDSE guidelines, which are the 10 principles that define what best practice is. But that tool still needs to be adapted into an assessment tool and, of course, we are legislatively mandated to assess Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind services. To have the assessment tool would mean that the Agency of Education would use this tool to assess progress that the grantee and over vendors are making and assess the quality of their programming.

We will be reaching out to other services providers other than UVMC ESP and UVM CDCI Cares and have to come up with a way to be able to reach out to those service providers and assess their services at some point after the assessment tool is developed. If you have other resources or other stakeholders, please email Sherry Sousa or Sharon Henry. March 7<sup>th</sup> meeting, all the subcommittee members unanimously expressed an opinion they hope that UVM Cares chooses to reengage.

Summaries will continue to be sent out to the council regarding the committees work prior to the next council meeting so you can have time to review it and come with questions and we'll have questions for you, as well. The plan is to draft a white paper summary around Maybe late May/June based on the work that's been done to date.

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**Spenser Weppler** – Had conversation with the AOE, to get an update on the AOE Grant and they're still trying to better understand the flexibility and language around funding for educational services more broadly. It's possible that the grant may have to be reposted, again, annually for this upcoming year. They want input from stakeholders and to have the process be more inclusive this year. The School-Age Subcommittee meetings will be informative to the AOE. If groups are coming together that have ideas and suggestions on how to improve the process, and the grant, the AOE wants that information.

**Public Comment**

There was no Public Comment.

**Next Meeting:** May 19, 2022

**Council Attendance**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spenser Weppler (Chair)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Julie Porter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pam Hoover
<input type="checkbox"/> Will Pendlebury (Co-Chair)	<input type="checkbox"/> Kate Parrish	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rebecca Lalanne
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bill Hudson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Krueger	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracy Hinck
<input type="checkbox"/> Ralph Gallo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Megan Tierney-Ward	<input type="checkbox"/> Jacqui Kelleher
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rebecca Chalmers	<input type="checkbox"/> Danielle Howes	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sharon Henry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Linda Hazard	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amelia Briggs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deb Charlea Baker	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kelly Decker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sherry Sousa	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Guest Attendance**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Laura Siegel	Director of Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing, and DeafBlind Services
Sabine Perry	Council Admin.
Diane	Whitecoat Captioning
Lianne Moccia	Interpreter
Kristal Hier	Interpreter
Jessica St. Arnauld Hutchins	(VANCRO)
Michelle John	(VT H&V)
Val Hughes	VCIL
John Pirone	(UVM)
David McKay	DDHI
Jesse Suter - Executive Director	UVM CDCI
Ellen McKay	DDHI
Deb Lamden	DDHI
Mike Ferrant	Legislative Operations Director