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DAIL School-Age Subcommittee.

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>> Why don't we get started today.

Laura is going to join us at 4 o'clock. Laura Siegel and Cassie had a family need arise. She had to, unfortunately, cancel at the last minute. And hello, Michelle. Welcome. Can you turn your video camera on and say hello?

>> Hey, everybody. Sorry.

>> Great, I'm glad you're here Michelle. Sherry and I had four items on the agenda for today. The first one was to debrief from the council meeting last Thursday.

Just give you all as subcommittee members, and I can't remember Michelle if you were on the call or not, an opportunities just to process what you heard and ask us questions and Sherry and I will pipe in, too.

Michelle, did you have a question?

>> Sorry, I'm like -- I've been away at conferences, so can someone give me the smallest summary of what happened. I couldn't do both things at once.

>> Sure, absolutely. I think, did you get the email that Sherry and I sent out? Okay. That basically was the summary of what do we want to do. And how do we move forward.

And so I'd like to have Amelia and Rebecca and have you all have an opportunity to speak to what you heard and what your thoughts were?

>> It's a flawed system. You know, I think what it comes right down to is we aren't going to get that data unless they give us more power to be able to get that data. Seems really frustrating that we can't just get the numbers for the state to start with. But I mean I don't know how, what to do to change it to get that data. You know, then we look at the subcommittee and say what can we change and what can we work on. I think about quality improvement projects and what can

we change. What can we control. Do we need to tweak things to move in that direction. But we need that data. We can't do anything unless we have that data. So you know, how do we -- maybe that becomes our focus instead of the tool, we focus on how we change things to we can get that data. And how do we get it from everybody in the state. It has to maybe start with the AOE where it's required on the 504 and IEPs where deaf and deaf blind is labeled as a disability. For a long time Natalie's IEP didn't say deaf blind. Only multiple disabilities. Can we implement change there so any kid in the state, can the AOE gather that information and say we have this many kids on 504s with this and you know.

>> I will respond to that and I want to invite Rebecca to speak up. If you look at the checklist, one of the items on the checklist Amelia is, is this student documented in the paperwork that they're receiving deaf and hard of hearing services to address the point that you raised. When I spoke to Michelle's group back in June at the coalition, Michelle, I walked the group through how to look at the OCEP data, which is the data that's required federally to report the number of kids on IEPs and the Vermont AOE is reporting there are 61 kids who are either deaf or hard of hearing and clearly that is not our population based on the few numbers that we do get from the providers. You hit on a very, very important point.

I concur 100%. And I think that Sherry and I participated in this council since 2016, Sherry. When we first did our sub analysis or what was it called, I think our needs analysis, we worked identifying all the needs. And the biggest one was we need data. Otherwise, we don't know how to allocate our resources. And here we are. Here. Thank you, Amelia. Rebecca?

>> I noticed that there were some people who were not sure which way to go. From ESP or CARES, even though their partner, supposed to be partners there was some discomfort about what lies where. And it was a bit confusing which path to follow and what's the right way to talk about it all. It was unclear. It was just not there yet.

>> I'm not sure I understand what you're saying Rebecca, can you expand a little bit?

>> Well, it seems that some of the parents out there want to be in touch with ESP or CARES but they're not sure which is the right organization for them to be in touch with. And sometimes parents will start to work

with one of those entities and they say, no, that's not really us it should be the other. And it's a waste of time for the parents.

And right now, I know of one parent up north who is not getting any services and is very frustrated. And it's like, there's a loss of description for how to navigate and what falls under the school and the IEP team and what is medical and what is under the audiologists and where do you go. So who's the point person essentially.

>> Uh-huh. Yes, that's why I raised the question about the MLU that was signed indicating collaboration. The MLU is from central valley union, supervisory union or something along those lines and I was wondering the they were all going to collaborate within that district. I wasn't exactly clear on the answer I got. My hope is it somehow applies to all districts even though it's on the letter head of one district. I don't know the process at that level. Maybe Sherry, you can speak to that. It's just unclear to me.

>> Yes. So if a student is receiving services that are paid for through the IEP, the district special ed director created an MOU. Every person receiving services from CARES or ESP or someone else has to have a contract from MOU, same thing. Each one has to have one and it's a boilerplate. It may list if there is differing services. Someone is getting direct services and someone technical.

I think Rebecca and Amelia are really speaking to the state of special ed in Vermont. I'm sitting on my hands and being very kind because Sharon told me to but I need to wait.

>> I need to jump in and say that CVU has been phenomenal this year. The team is great. They know exactly what Natalie's needs are. They are listening to us and putting them in the IEP. We have everything lined up however we're running into issues with who their contracting with to provide those services. Because they're a contractor, they don't have to follow special ed law. I have no legal action against them because they're a subcontractor. CVU is following exactly what Natalie's needs are however, we're running into roadblock after roadblock after roadblock on who the school is contracting with for these services and it's really frustrating. I don't know where to go with it. Who they're contracting with now is like pulling out this stuff now: They didn't pull it out over the summer when we had time to fix things or discuss things and they keep throwing things at us that poor CVU team and us, we're like what to we do. We're stuck between

a rock and a hard place and bend over back ward and do what they want even though it's not free and appropriate education, least restrictive environment, ADA disability. It's not following any of that but we're at the mercy of who the school has contracted with. We're in a different boat this year. It's something we never experienced before. Is there anything that we as a subcommittee, school-aged subcommittee can do. There has been practice but there is nothing to hold these contractors, there is nothing for us to hold them accountable or with. Like there is just nothing.

>> Yes. I'll jump in and Sherry I know you can go because you're biting at the bit here.

There were three things at the council meeting that did not get said that I thought were important to say. And maybe some of you picked it up and I'm being redundant but I think it's important to be transparent and completely up front here. This committee has worked incredibly hard and we have really made a lot of progress. In either of the two programs put together in terms of getting things out there to try to be helpful.

But the email that Sherry and I sent out to the counselor, we went back and forth a lot of times on it. Trying to get all the language just right. And we explicitly said we want to raise and discuss with the full council the following points and we listed out our four or five points that we wanted to discuss explicitly. The council's feedback is valuable and we're together to discuss those job descriptions. So the school age falls under the general updates, right, of the first part of the council. And somehow we got left off on that Thursday which was very discouraging and very, very disappointing.

But as Sherry and I discussed by email with Spenser, he said you can slot it in after the CARES ESP report and before the guest speaker whose name I'm sorry I have already forgotten.

So I think it's really too bad there wasn't a more robust council discussion.

But the second piece is, and no one said this at the council meeting is that, both Pam and Linda were there and really did not, you know, disclose to the council they have pulled out their participation from the school aged subcommittee. I know, Michelle, right. Both UVM CARES and the ESP program wrote a memo to Sherry and me dated August 30th which was a surprise. It's really too bad. And I thought well maybe it was just the directors. So they probably saw the initial

invitation that I sent out included Tracy and Jen, but they not permitted to participate either, which is really too bad.

That's why in the point here, it says, after many times together information from the AOE and from the current providers, we haven't been able to do anything. And I think the third thing that was not said that was also disappointing to me as a parent was that both Sherry and I knew in late August that Heather Willis Doxsee is leaving her position. I said that wrong it's Doxsee-Willis. Anyway, you know who I'm talking about. The Vermont Director of Special Ed who was here for 9 or 10 months. She was on the call and she did not disclose and she said she is leaving her position and I'm not sure why that was. That was disappointing to me because I'm all about transparency and good process. But Cassie did share at the end of the meeting she is leaving as of September 30th and Cassie said there is no plan in place.

So Sherry and I are feeling like we led as much as we can. And we have reached out to the AOE and providers as much as we can. And now there is no one at the AOE that we can liaise with and all the memos that we've sent, we have not gotten one response that I'm aware of. At least to Sherry and I as co-shares. Maybe they went to Spenser and he didn't share, I don't know. Those are three important things that I just wanted to put out there. I think we've worked incredibly hard. Michelle has a question and then Sherry.

>> I have a question. I want to make sure that I understood that correctly. I knew Heather but you said that Cassie is getting done.

>> No Cassie shared that Heather was leaving and didn't know the plan.

>> With the ESP and CARES, they wrote the subcommittee something saying we're done?

>> Yes.

>> I haven't seen that.

>> Well, Sherry and I didn't share the memo with the subcommittee. I might send it out after we're done.

>> That was a surprise. I didn't know. I was like are you sure that's what they said? I guess if they sent you a memo that's what they said.

But I was wondering if maybe I misunderstood. Just checking.

>> I don't have easy access Sherry to the memo where I am right now. But maybe you can pull it up after we going and you can maybe read it to everyone for the record. You heard correctly. Without the providers and without AOE, go ahead Sherry.

>> I think there's another part. So you know, Sharon and I have been emailing all summer and we got frustrated in July. We've been frustrated for a while because we haven't had the support of the council. I said let's talk to will and get a thought partner. We've been told we need to step back. That we need to allow EPS and CARES to do their thing and that we really, in essence stand down.

And so that's -- so that was then supported by Linda pulling out. By Tracy and Jen saying they can't be part of it. And really, we wanted the support of the council to put some pressure or accountability for the groups that are receiving state money to provide services. And we were basically told, now wait and see how they do in March, in March we'll see how they report.

It's incredibly frustrating. I think that's one place of frustration. The other is the state of special ed in Vermont.

I shared with Sharon. I hired special ed teachers that I never would have hired previously because we're so in need. We cannot find special ed teachers. We cannot find speech language pathologists or school psychologists. It's a really dire situation and then to lose Heather.

I know the superintendent down there. She can make more money and work in a much more productive environment at Bellows Falls than she will at the State and agency.

Then we have Zoie, and I got to meet with her, the interim secretary. She has her marching orders from the governor. And it's specific. It's around school closures and about reducing administrative positions and it's around controlling special education services. I mean there's -- the governor sent a letter two weeks ago. It's incredibly discouraging. We have the funding, HB887 that came out in June is requiring districts to cut millions of dollars. I have to cut 2 and a half million from my budget and everything is on deck to cut.

CEU cut 44 positions last year. That is just the start and we'll be going through that whole process over again because of that piece of legislation. Not only do we not have the support of the council, I'll put it on record, I don't care. Nor do we have, you know, agency of ed does not have the capacity. They've lost other people that have been really valuable people. So there really isn't, I think Zoie is doing the best that she can. Saunders as interim. She is working for the governor, you know. And, I think, she is trying to be

more data focused. Another piece that's interesting that may help us, there's a new report from the agency of ed that we have to submit where we finally have to report the number of 504, EST and IEPs. That is data that's never been collected before.

So this in about two weeks all districts will be required to provide the information. IEP information has been collected by 504, EST has not been as regulated in Vermont as before. So we might be able to get more information. Again, who do we call up there? There aren't -- I've been up there and the desks are empty. Everybody is still working remotely. You can't find anybody. There is no secretary of special ed. I'm feeling - honestly, I feel really discouraged. Sharon and I have talked about unless we get some support from the council, I'm not sure of the work of this committee can do.

>> Yes. I think that, lots of people are accountable. And we were asked to stand down because they got uncomfortable. I kept on jumping online about the talk last November is accountability matters. And when Michelle first came to speak to our subcommittee when we got going two and a half years ago. What was the conversation about? Data. The need for data.

And yes, so.

>> You bring up really important parts. You can have a district that wants to do the right thing but there is no accountability for service providers. It's just money being thrown out. And there's no recourse. And that was our mission. That was the job of this council. To identify needs, gaps, accountability, and we don't have the authority or the support to do that work.

>> I have a follow up point but I think Rebecca has a question or a comment?

>> Yes, I did have a question actually for Sharon. Maybe I'm wrong, last year the PowerPoint where they were introducing the bill with accommodation changes, that checklist, I think you submitted that for school. What happened with that? Do you mind going over that? Has it gone through? Do you mind reminding me what happened with that?

>> I'm not sure what checklist? We created a checklist which is a shorter version of the tool to help guide IEP and 504 discussions but it was never attached to a Bill that was going through the legislative process. Is that what you're asking me about?

>> Oh, oh, okay. Gotcha, good to know. Yes, that is

what I was talking about.

>> We recommended, we wrote a memo to the governor and the AOE recommending that the checklist be used by the next AOE grant team so it can get in the queue.

>> Sorry, for the interpreter, you recommended that the tool be used by who?

>> By the AOE grant team, whoever the grant goes to. As a starting point and then as we did continuing educational sessions across the state, we hope that we get more and more providers and more and more districts and so forth. That was going to be one of our pieces of discussion today and our work going forward, is presenting to the southeast collaboratory in the spring of 2025 because Sherry is the vice chair or maybe she is in charge, I don't know. She is in charge of most things. But -- and the reason why that was important is because when Michelle collected the feedback from March 26th meeting, the feedback was I would love to see the checklist used and the model 504. We modeled the IEP. And I raised this on Thursday at the council meeting that maybe Pam and Linda can collaborate and pull off a model 504 using the checklist. Because that was one of the big push backs from CARES is that well the checklist doesn't apply to [inaudible] which is hard to believe. They got their money for that and, but we as a subcommittee can't do it because we don't have any providers, right. The providers have been pulled from the committee. You need a speech language pathologist and TOD and audiologist and we don't have them on our committee.

Rebecca?

>> So, a question again. So, we can't go forward with those like you said. Virginia, did you catch that?

>> What if that were included in the bill for children somehow? Would we then be able to move forward?

The deaf hard of hearing and deaf/blind children that we proposed last year. We talked with specific senators who mentioned that there was resistance to the bill saying that they felt oh, we've already got 504, we've got IEPs and the ADA. That is where now in speaking with the Vermont Association of the Deaf, talking with that group, we're planning to try to bring forward that bill again at the same time doing research as to where the gaps are, where the holes are.

That are not covered by 504 and IEPs.

And then I wonder if that bill along with the checklist would serve a purpose if they could be combined and has that, I don't know if it's been tried or if it would be helpful to try. I'm just spit balling this out.

>> Rebecca, thank you, I think those are very good suggestions. My education with education in Vermont is requiring any kind of special materials, curriculum, ideas in legislation no way. I mean we can't even get it done in literacy. We can't get -- and we've been fighting and fighting and fighting. I mean I don't want to give up, but I just am not optimistic.

>> Yes, I think as Spenser said on Thursday, the statute that was written that formed the council and gave the council its charge, I think his words were something to the effect of it's kind of weak because it has no authority.

Certainly, has no budget. So, all three educational sessions where the costs were covered by other entities or -- sharing time or personal accounts. So the council cannot make the AOE report, the data to us. However, in the guidelines when it talks about authentic collaboration, you think about the AOE collaborating with the council and because [inaudible] is collaborating with the council. But there doesn't seem to be that spirit of collaboration right now.

And I think the, as I said in June, I talked to the NASDSE coalition, my concern is that as these budget cuts come down the line, someone is going to see there are only 60 kids in the State of Vermont that are deaf, hard of hearing and why we're spending a million dollars on that. Because it's a known federal requirement to report on 504s and the AOE is not doing the job keeping track of them. And the providers are providing spotty data.

>> Yes, it's really frustrating. It's just, it's really discouraging and you think the state's making progress and everybody have this oh let's work together. We're working tot now. We're getting along. Let's be positive and move forward. And it's just like oops, hand off, we're done, we're going to all go our own way and do our own thing. And it's like what happened? What happened? What about these kids? That is why we're all doing this. It's the kids. We have to work together. We have to come together, and we have to make progress or else like you said they're going to see 61 students and be like, hey, we don't need to fund this. It's just really, really frustrating.

>> I kind of feel that way about other parts of the counseling. I think our subcommittee is the only one that's done productive work on behalf of our population. There are meetings where people are just reporting out. It's great to share information but

that's not a council. That is not living the mission.

>> Right.

>> We're all putting huge amounts of our personal and professional time out there. We've done all this work and it's great to get the cheers of the group but where is everybody else? It's birth to three. It's the adults once they leave school. There are so many unmet needs and the council is supposed to be serving that and I don't see that at meetings.

>> Right. I think it was the coalition that kicked off the four-part webinar series in the fall of '21 or '22 and we dovetailed with that and did three more educational settings. Between that entity and this one, we've done more to dust off the guidelines that are sitting on the shelves and begin to try to operationalize them. And I don't know Michelle, if you just want to share what the coalition might be doing in this next academic year. And it could be that you're stalled as well. I don't know.

>> This is Michelle speaking. I suppose I could be and I just don't know it.

I will say, yes, I let, we met through I think July but definitely until June and then I started prompting with look at your schedule. Look ahead. Look ahead. We'll have to find a time we can all meet. I needed to create a spread sheet to figure out who was available when based on their feedback. I don't quite have 100% at any given time where there is the majority yet. And I would say the response so far has been yes, I want to keep doing this but I can't tell if it's a genuine yes, we're going to work and we're going to do the things. Or are we just nodding and saying yes, I will show up for one hour and month and nod and smile. And I'm not, I hate to question the legitimacy of it. I do feel like apparently, I have missed a lot because I am very overwhelmed and a bit dumbfounded by much of what's been shared at this meeting. I don't understand. I interact with this people a lot and this is all news to me and that is worrisome for me, right. I should have come into this meeting, even though I was gone the last nine days across the country. I should have come in knowing these things had occurred and this is all brand new to me. So, I'm concerned about what that means for the coalition. I have big concerns about. Because for me, I felt the coalition took off and was running and the subcommittee restarted and I thought we were doing parallel work.

>> In collaborating, yes.

>> And I thought, I can certainly tell you as Vermont hands and voices, I spend a lot of time at meetings

harping about our belief as Vermont hands and voices that it doesn't matter who has the grant. That it's about collaboration. It's about transparency and blah, blah, blah and everyone working together. Having vested parties all being there. And everyone has nodded and smiled and slowly but surely, we're making progress and now I feel like the wheels have just totally fallen off the wagon and at a standstill. At this point, we have not met as a coalition. The plan is to hopefully start next month. Because September never goes well for any of us. We had talked about bringing new people on to the coalition because we feel it needs some infusion that is missing and some new folks. I don't know how all this is going to work. And I, this feels like a very delicate dance and I'm not sure how this will proceed. Because I, now Vermont hands and voices right has a seat on the council.

>> Yes. Spenser did --

>> For five years of me attending as a public member. It's a real thing now.

>> Spenser announced that on Thursday. He did announce that.

>> That was nice. That was nice of him. Yes. So, I'm concerned. I'm pretty concerned about what I'm hearing both as a parent and as a quote unquote professional. And I, my plan had been at the first meeting to discuss, okay, let's look ahead. What do we want to do with these recordings we've had. What are we going to do this year to get the education and awareness out?

And I mean if I'm hearing that folks don't want to give the data, then this, where does this go? We educate people and as soon as someone raises their hand and says how many kids are on IEPs, what am I going to do? There's a lot brewing in my head right now and I'm not sure, how it's all going to pan out. I certainly will keep everyone abreast of how this goes.

>> Right. Sherry and I are as vocal as we can be saying how we're concerned and uncomfortable with the wait and see approach that the council leadership has proposed. Let's be clear that is Spenser.

>> I have questions about that. Again, if I'm stepping too far, ask me to do the proverbial step back you've all been asked to do. I'm very confused. That's all I feel in this meeting is I don't understand why. Why are they asking you to step back? Why is there no more interagency work? How did this come to be?

>> Right. So, if you, Linda and -- \$240,000 part of

the grant. And so, I think that is taken as a sign of -- and it wasn't the case in other years where UVM CARES was the principal investigator.

I'm assuming that is taken as a sign of authentic collaboration. And that after three years of talking badly about each other and going -- and not serving kids so well that Spenser's email was something to the effect of, we need to give them a chance to collaborate and get along in the sand box and --

>> We did. There was a year, they shared it. We already did that.

We had that.

>> I know. I know. That was 22-23. They shared the data with us last July of '23. There was a glimmer of transparency and one thing that we shared. I asked them on Thursday about it. Where's the data? So, I don't know, Sherry do you have another perspective on Spenser's email to us? I can't remember it off the top of my head.

>> I think there's been a lot of conversations behind the scenes and Laura just to get you up to par, real quick. We basically as a school aged subcommittee have been asked to step back and let ESP and CARES do them work. To stop pushing for the data. We met with Will over the summer asking for some ideas and ways to access and move forward as a group and we have been basically, told to step down.

I'm not sure what the behind the scenes are. Sharon and I are not privy to that, but the message has been very clear in the emails, I believe, that we are expected to let's see. And as an old special ed teacher, I'm not of the let's wait to see someone fail model. That is really hard for me when I already, Amelia is already talking about her situation and not having a place to bring that.

But we really have, I think been disempowered to do any more work.

>> Right. As a neuroscientist, I'm very concerned about the wait and see approach because that is not how little brains develop.

Anyway.

The other thing that was brought up by a council member, Rebecca Travers, while the School Age Subcommittee submits to both providers, both ESP and CARES, the subcommittee a list of data they are interested in. They can say, yes, we can give it to you or no we can't. And if we can't, this is why. She didn't get a firm commitment and she brought it up again, and both providers said, yes, I guess we can do that.

It didn't make me optimistic, okay.

>> Again, I think it's coming back and holding these two entities accountable. They have to adhere to something: They need to get off their high horses and get down and work with people and work with the students and the families and the school teams. Right now they're just like up here wanting to do their own thing and there are nobody holding them accountable. That's what they're doing now. This is what we're doing, take it or leave it.

>> Right.

>> There has to be a way, they have to be held accountable. And Sharon, like you said, CARES is getting money from the state.

Like, they have got to be --

>> A million dollars. Yes. Yes.

And now there is no one at the AOE to hold UVM CARES or -- accountable because it's two weeks, in 7 days Heather is leaving.

>> Rebecca has a question.

>> I'm sorry, Rebecca?

>> More of a comment. I'm concerned by ESP because before they were trying, they were giving, you know, direct services and such. But the concern now is that they, you know, we've been told by, I've been told by a hard of hearing employee under ESP that they don't communicate with the deaf/hard of hearing/deaf blind community.

For ESP in particular, it was decided by the upper echelon and announced at a meeting that ESP is, they're getting, they're getting zero feedback from the deaf/deaf blind/hard of hearing community. I was told that directly.

And so, in ESP, is more of a trainer than a program. This hard of hearing person that works with them questioned why are you not practicing? Why are you not leaving as a program. And I on Thursday, I don't know if you all recall this, but I said they were changing from a program to practice because they're serving only deaf/hard of hearing and deaf/blind broadly. They could give me that answer but they couldn't give that answer even to their own employee.

What does that tell us?

>> Yes, Rebecca I did not understand what was behind your question. Nor did I realize they had actually changed their name.

So, I don't understand the implication of changing from program to practice.

>> Well, it means that, well the concern is that they will veer off and focus on similar kind of work that

CARES is doing. I don't really know. Because they're not even communicating with their own employees so who is to know what they're doing. But it seems they're doing direct service but are they actually being transparent about it? It's just, you know, what's happening above them? And CARES, what's the partnership with the ESP. It's murky and I'm concerned.

I got an email last week I'm looking for.

Student in Grand Isle is not getting any support in the mainstream setting.

So then who is helping them? I can't really say. I can advocate for them but at the same time, they're not doing their job.

>> I think there's a difference, right. ESP if they can't provide the service don't take on the contract. Right. Like just we don't -- instead of taking on the contract and them being like oh we don't have anybody, or this is all we can provide. Don't take the contract if you can't provide the service. That's what we're running into now. We sat down at the end of the year, had a whole discussion about the needs. This is IEP, this is the need, and so they are like we have two teachers for you. This is great, and then school year hit, oh, well, we can only provide services for these hours and we have to do remote some of the time. It's just like keep throwing these things in which aren't part of the IEP but they signed onto the contract saying, yes, we can provide services. Ultimately, it's the school's responsibility to get those services for your student or child. When they have a contract with an agency that is saying yes, we can do this and then they don't, that's the poor school that is stuck.

>> Right.

>> Whether or not the student at Grand Isle if they have a contract with CARES or ESP, that contract needs to be fulfilled.

>> It's state money. It's not like a private provider. It is a grant funded by all of our tax money that is supposed to meet this need. That's what they promised in their application. It's not like it's another agency who's funded. This is the grant. This is their responsibility.

>> Right. Right.

>> Taxes paying the school, right. Ultimately, it's the people that are paying them to do this service.

So --

>> Right. Taxpayer. Right.

The other thing that I asked them for explicitly is

when you look at the data from '23 when greater than 50 percent of the kids who reported on, which of course is a subset. Just put that up front there.

>> Sharon, I'm sorry, this is Virginia, something is with your audio, it's a little bit hard for me to hear. If you can maybe try speaking slower, I can parse it out better.

>> Absolutely. I will turn my volume up. I get excited. I apologize. But I will make this point and then I'll recognize Laura.

Greater than 50 percent of the kids are two to three grades behind on the data that was reported in July of '23. The subset of kids:

So, I asked Linda and Pam to please address what specific criteria will they use to assess the children on 504s and make the appropriate referrals as needed. And I guess we'll have to wait until November to hear the response because there was not one on Thursday. And the other piece that came up, the pilot conversation is that Cassie is preparing disability determination checklists. And she was going to share information about that today, but she had a family need come up and she couldn't attend today.

But my concern is that too many kids are staying on 504s and falling behind because of it, I know that specific ed has a model, a failure model. I get all that. But if they received assessments by a qualified provider and therefore the appropriate accommodations ensured by qualified provider, we could maybe avoid some of those kids from having to be transferred over to an IEP.

Laura?

>> Hi, my head is on the checklist. Actually, my own checklist, several things I hope I can remember. The Thursday meeting, last Thursday, I don't remember who said it but I think it was Pam who mentioned that we can't -- on the advice of our legal team, we can't share. Is that the same legal team last year, what changed? Why are they no longer able to share? That really made me wonder. And I wanted to ask for clarification. What changed.

Is it the attorneys or something happened that impacted their decision? Oh, no, no, we can't share. I mean -- you know, zero details. That's where I'm just lost by that.

Another thing I feel we need to be clear as a body about what they are willing to share with us so that we can be more effective.

Seems right now what we're asking, they're not willing to satisfy us with. So, what can we do as a group?

There's a sense to get some sense of accomplishment, if you know what I mean.

That's a common complaint during council meetings. Oh my gosh, we're going over the same old things, updates only, where's the action. I want action. I want to get going here.

And I get that. Rebecca tried setting up a bill of rights for deaf kids. Applaud that. Unfortunately, it didn't breakthrough the process.

But I think we need to collaborate to help Rebecca with her next attempt with the legislature and how we do that is to let parents know, if you're having problems, you don't like the way things are going, get brave and contact your legislatures. Many are intimidated by legislative power and, I can't do that. So, I mean I'll admit, when I first started 3 years ago, I was a little fearful of approaching legislators. I'm not going to lie, that's a fact. But now I have the confidence and I'm no longer afraid. I can walk those halls and keep ongoing.

There was a fourth thing I'm trying to recall what I wanted to bring up or what was it.

I forgot. Yes, yes?

>> I would just say that I think Sharon and I can be easily dismissed. Because of our positions and our roles: I just feel that. But I, Laura, Rebecca, Amelia, you guys, at those council meetings, say dammit, I want this. We're being dismissed Sharon and I. We're too far away: I guess my hard of hearing child doesn't count.

>> And my hard of hearing child doesn't count either.

>> Or my mother or family: But you all are the ones with power. I just feel like the two of us are being dismissed.

>> I think it's hard, like you -- I went to the council Spenser, Will, several times when we were having lots of issues asking for advice. What can we do? They said we need many families. One student isn't enough. One student is too many. That's the answer I got when I tried to push on the council for things. It's really, really frustrating. Back to the council thing, we don't do anything. The only reason I'm part of the council is because of the subcommittee and we're actually doing things. We don't need to sit around the whole morning listening to updates. Let's do work. They were listing all the legislative report and what he wanted to do. It's not what the council has done, it's what each individual group has done. The hearing loss. That's not council work. That's individual work. We haven't done anything as a

council. Maybe a few things. I'm wondering about a listening session. Through Rebecca, Laura, the parents that have contacted you and can we somehow get the message out to parents, can we have a listening session with Spenser and Will there and maybe some legislators so, they can hear directly from parents. It's scary for parents. How do I go about it? What do I say? It's intimidating. If there was a public or a listening session hosted. Can we get people to tell their stories and share their lived experience so they can see this work still needs to go on and then some.

>> So, Rebecca, I'm curious about your petition. Do you feel that you could collect enough stories from people. Yes. I'm talking to you Rebecca. Sorry, what were you saying. Your petition that you've already collected a lot of stories from parents: I don't have many. I just -- I don't have a lot from parents that have reached out to me. I do have parent's stories but they have all requested it be anonymous. That comes from fear of oppression. Well --

>> Retribution, yes.

>> If we could add language mandating regional programs to be permanent. No matter size of student body but permanently there in perpetuity in a couple of regions so when new parents move, they can be told there are these two programs available in these two locations. They can know where to move.

That's the problem right now, things are too spread out and there's not enough of a cohort and age groups in each of the areas. Therefore, there's no program. And I'm told, well, it's up to the school district. They decide to set up a program. I'm like really?

Of course, no one's thinking about the scarcity of staff. Particularly in deaf ed. I went to a meeting a couple of weeks ago about school. Where they said over 50 percent of those schools are searching tirelessly because no one is interested in working in that school system, the pay is not very good. They do better at McDonalds. Oh my gosh.

>> Rebecca?

>> A question for Amelia. Have you tried to get parents together with legislators and would it be, what do you think? Would it be more effective in person or remote? For maybe parents could be a little bit more at a distance remotely?

But who knows if they even have access to Zoom. But what would your thoughts be on dynamics like either of those scenarios in.

>> I would think remote would be more accessible to families. Right. Because we can reach people from all

across the state and hopefully they can log on and don't have to worry about driving time and that kind of stuff. But again, it's the age-old question. What day of the week, what time, where, when, location. If we could have a couple of listening sessions via remote, I think that would be good. And if parents are scared, would they be willing to join with their camera off and instead of a name, put unknown. At least there is a voice and someone speaking. Don't use any identifying anything but talk about your experiences and it gives them a chance to join in on the conversation and people can ask questions of them without knowing their name or anything. Just an idea if people are really --

>> Do that through hands and voices because that's the closest parent connection. The School Age Subcommittee is not a parent group per se. We ran a parent education session to try to get them up to speed on the checklist and the tool. But I don't know. If Amelia and Michelle, you would be motivated to do that. I mean, we're not the -- we are dismissed and our kids don't count. The reason I stay involved in this work is my kid was accessible and the system went through with my kid. I want to make that system work again. Even though we don't have a center for deaf and hard of hearing again any time soon under the current models but there has to be another way to make the system work for families and their kids.

>> It's really frustrating that you're dismissed because it's not just parents. It has to be everybody working together to make this happen. And you have lived experience as parents but in your professional life, Sharon of gathering data and science and research and pushing things through. And Sherry, your experiences, all of your school experience. It has to be multidisciplinary. It can't just be parents. Because we can go talk until, we're blue in the face but until there is other people helping push this through, whatever it is and listening to us, talking to us and willing to help out, as parents we have no power. You know.

>> I want to go back. Hold on a second Laura, the whole thing with data. Yes, I have a lot of experience with data and I know HIPAA rules pretty well. I think that the data can be sent in and any time there is a cell where there are ten or fewer kids, just put an asterisk in there right. And that keeps it de-identified. It's done all the time in research data and other things that I've been involved in the hospital and the UVM side. Regarding the policies and what's changed, I suspect there is a little bit of

smoke being blown -- cleverly asked, if we can't have the data we need a reason why. And maybe we don't need a policy. I know UVM fairly well and I think I can get my hands on any policy and read it. But I would like to think that providers are more transparent and willing to collaborate. It's exhausting and I'm tired:
Laura?

>> Sorry, switching interpreters.

So I'm sorry you guys are feeling both dismissed. From my point of view, I don't know if it's entirely intentional. I've heard similar comments, people look at me and say, why is Sharon and Sherry, you know, so obsessed with this? The kids are graduated: I'm like, whoa. I'm very defensive of you two. Hold up, back off. It doesn't matter if their kids are graduated. It's not like we chucked them out and don't care anymore. We care about the future children in the same boat and we want to plan for the future.

Hearing loss doesn't just go away. It's around there and out in the community. Kids have a lot of things that go on. It doesn't matter if they have, you know, it matters they have a good structure. But if it, no one else, you guys I think are doing great.

>> Thank you for that validation. I appreciate that.

>> Sharon, what did you say?

>> Thank you for that validation.

>> Thank you for saying that for us Laura. We do have a meeting in November. I think we whether it's the subcommittee or others, need to make specific demands of the council that is, you know, what are the objectives going into the report for work that is going to be done next year. And maybe we say it's predicated that in the council does not begin to take action, then what is the role of the council membership?

>> Yes.

>> Because I got a lot to do. You all have a lot to do and very full lives. And sitting for two and a half hours doesn't make me feel like I'm being productive. So maybe the ask when we see, when we get the draft report, what are the objectives for this year, 24-25.

>> I was wondering that same thing and I would love to see that. We need to review membership and the chairs are supposed to change out, what, every 2 years and we've had the same chairs for years. I think it's time we need to elect new chairs, and we really need to restructure. I know my first council meeting, I can't remember what year it was. It was when Linda and Bill Hudson were chairs. And we had that big meeting where they brought in that guest speaker who helped plan and get us all the subcommittees to plan. Oh, wow, this is

great. We're going to do stuff. Each subcommittee is going to do stuff and that never happened.

It would be great to get back to that spot where it's reinvigorating new cochairs and we're doing work.

That's what the council is supposed to be doing. If people want to share updates from their individual groups, put it in an email and we can read it when we have free time. Let's just get together and do work. If someone comes to speak to the council, come with an ask. Don't come lecture us. Come with an ask and be open to a discussion about something. Don't just come and present something.

>> Right. When I look around this council table and I see the -- that are sitting there for 2 and a half hours, oh my god, what a waste of money and time. I think that is a great idea. Michelle, the coalition [inaudible].

But you might not want that.

>> Laura had a comment.

So, since January, I've been the one that has been invited all of the guest speakers. So, for our advisory meetings, so I think the last one was, we've been trying to get data for that, just in general. Not just for education but general data because it's been a little frustrating to develop services and programs without the data. It's been troubling. So, we've been waiting for those two groups to see what they're doing. And they haven't really started and jumps off.

This is Rebecca, at the same time Sherry and Sharon, we've been waiting and looking, as well. We don't want to lose -- the interpreter is just clarifying -- we don't want to lose that momentum. We want to keep motivated and be excited about the work and stay in the loop with what is going on. What are the processes. And now, of course, you know, we've been working with those two groups and we haven't been getting reports yet. So, it's kind of a lot of just waiting.

>> It's odd when the ask --

>> This is Rebecca. Laura is saying we have nothing to report from those two groups. It's not that we've done anything wrong. But we think, we thought they were starting to work, you know, in July getting ready for the opening of school in September. And make sure the kids were all matched up and direct services were in place by the end of the summer. But instead, now, I mean we should have already been able to get progress reports so something is very wrong.

>> Yes. I lost my train of thought. I'm sorry. Sherry.

>> In summary and just to wrap up. It's good to hear

your support. I appreciate that: I want to make sure we respect everyone's perspective as the cochairs and subcommittee. I think the most immediate thing we can do is air our concerns through that report.

And that's the only accountability tool for the council. And it puts pressure on Spenser and Will to do more than put an agenda out there and move people through some items. I think if members of the council email saying it is time to relook at the effectiveness and reevaluate it prior to writing a report, I think you all have so much power, Sharon and I have shared our concerns.

We've been very specific about them. I think it would be powerful to hear that replicated in your opinions and if that comes out in the report, if the council isn't doing anything anymore, I think, Rebecca chambers will say that because she's been saying that for a while. What is this group doing? Rebecca is not happy and I'm with her.

>> I am, too. And so, because Sharon and I are so committed to transparent process and there is never a doubt of who said what and I'm proud of that. I'm committed to that and I learned about open meeting law from Sherry, thank you Sherry. But Sherry and I will draft the School Age Subcommittee report and share it with all of you. Inclusivity is important. We're committed to that.

And I'm away on vacation and when I get back, Sherry and I will put some things together. Email it to you. Please get back to us. And we will exercise the level that we do have which is to include it in the report. And then we can go from there.

The other thing that we were supposed to talk about today, was the assessment piece. Accountability matters. And Tracy --

>> Say that again, Sharon, you broke up a little bit. What are you talking about.

>> Accountability matters.

Right. And so, we have the numbers of the kids on the 504s and number of kids on IEP, we need the assessment piece. Cheryl was so clear about that last November. And Tracy who is so thorough and so complete, she sent, emailed to me and Sherry, I think it was, the list of assessments that she put together that she was going to discuss today had she been permitted to attend. I will say to I am in -- possession of them. I don't know what to do with them at this point because we don't have any professionals on the call.

Audiologists. But I will email that to you along with a draft of our School Age Subcommittee report that we

can then put forward to the council for the conclusion in the year-end report.

And I just want to say, I'm so thankful for all of you for your commitment and hard work and the great progress that we've made in these past 2 and a half years. Sherry and I asked for a full council discussion and we didn't get it.

But our marching orders are somewhat clear.

Michelle?

>> Again, I may be stepping deep into the swamp now, sorry.

I'm trying to -- sorry, I'm trying to word Smith this in my head so it comes out appropriately. As a subcommittee, are you allowed and/or welcomed to ask again, for a whole council discussion at the next full meeting?

Is that allowable?

>> We could. We could. And if we showed that on the agenda, if -- our agenda and wasn't, right Sherry.

And as you I'm sure you catch up with the emails, Michelle, you will see the school aged committee was not on there as a separate item.

>> I did see that. But I, I guess I missed where you just weren't going to be welcome to do it anyway.

I just assumed hey, we're going to do it anyway. So sorry.

>> [inaudible] (muffled) after the report was given by -- and ESP. Other council members and I don't think people quite understood what was happening. Because no one said, and I put this at the foot of the council leadership, no one said that UVM CARES and ESP had withdrawn at the beginning of the meeting. And no one said Heather was leaving at the end of the month.

>> That is on the chairs. They needed to say, hello, as an entire council you need to know this group and this group, listen, I have watched as a public member for five years. Yes, everyone gives their updates and I want to cry. I literally pull my son out of school to attend this meeting. What I find is that, I'm just going to say it and I'm so sorry if I'm being offensive. The passivity of the council cochairs just kills me. We don't have to be lion, no. But the passivity of not being comfortable or available or whatever is happening for each of them to say here is the information you all council members need to know in order to understand what is about to be said or what is being presented to you. I don't think it's on the shoulders of whoever may be presenting whether it's Amelia or you two as the cochairs. I don't think if you're given ten minutes of time, you don't have time

to explain out why did ESP and CARES pull out. You have to go right to your talking points.

I just, I would love to see a change in the leadership or at least in their leadership style. The introversion is great. It has its place. But you still have to be able to speak.

>> I have to change bylaws saying every two years new chairs: I thought it was set up to have the chair every two years and the cochair stepped into the chair. You did a two-year stint. One year as chair and one as cochair.

>> I'm not a conflict avers person at all. I think that, I was all committed to process and to these kids. But it seemed that it was more than the School Age Subcommittee was left off because no one is having the hard conversations that we're having right now and really should happen at the council level. Rebecca?

>> So, two things. I agree with Michelle. The council feels like we're just waiting on them because, you know, on my own with my own people for deaf and hard of hearing and deaf blind, the bill we were working on. I knew if I put that work out to that council that it would get delayed. There would be so much discussion and nothing would happen. I would have to spend more time on education before I actually got anywhere.

But I didn't want to partner with the council for that because of that delay that I knew was going to happen. It's a very common side effect, common thing that has come up with working with this council was the first thing that I wanted to mention.

And I agree with you, Michelle. The second thing, I was also wanting to ask, so we don't have TODs, we don't have audiologists. Should we be looking for, you know, people who can join? Or should we kind of just leave that alone? What does everyone think about that?

>> This is Laura, the problem with those -- part of the problem with UVM CARES and ESP is they're in conflict with each other. So, I wanted to add, do you remember when setting up with accessibility for the subcommittee, we had a few meetings that help -- Virginia, are you catching that?

So, the accessibility subcommittee, we've been working with an effort of writing two different documents that would include legislation in the annual report. And that was helpful. The legislation people took notice of that documentation and now that was some action, something actually came of that. Two weeks we started the rough drafts and have been drafting proposals to be able to submit for emergency communication. More so to

do with ASL communication and having those emergency services accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing community. That was just an example.

>> Other spoken languages as well.

>> I'm sorry, I have to --

>> Yes. So yes, and we're almost at time. I think our action plan, we love to live with an action plan. Sherry and I will draft a report. We will send the assessments that Tracy sent just to close the circle if you will.

And we can see whether or not we resend and reraise these points for further discussion at the November meeting and whether or not we ask for the data again, because maybe they would have worked everything out in the next two months and it will be perfect. You never know. Sherry says no.

>> Maybe we should request the legal documents from their lawyers stating why they can't provide data for the next meeting.

>> I almost am sure there are policies, Amelia.

>> But put them on the spot and hold them accountable to what they said.

>> Very wisely said, here is a list of data. Yes, no, if the answer is no, why not.

So, we can see what happens in November and ask them once again, it was a very, it wasn't a clear yes for sure. And clearly, I think Sherry and I have been cleared. We have irritated everyone and we've been asked to stand down. But since my voice doesn't count, maybe your parent voices will or we can find another way to find letters to push the work forward. I'm not less committed or less available but I -- I'm not sure what next steps are. And what we planned for this year was to do another educational session for the 504 and the checklist. Michelle, I don't know if the coalition can do that and we can help support somehow. Because there are providers who sit on the coalition who could do the role play and help make the scenario in the same way that we did for the IEP. I was brainstorming outside of the box here.

All this -- that we developed as a subcommittee get lost and not have the baton passed onto someone else.

>> I think Laura was trying to speak and the interpreter didn't catch it.

>> Oh.

>> It's all right.

It was just an idea that maybe we could do similar to the accessibility committee where they did a two-page summary that could include parts of the council's legislative -- annual, in the legislative report with

the list of recommendations. Get that in there. With solutions. How to make things better in regards to education. I'm just throwing that out there.

>> When we send the draft around, when Sherry and I send the draft around of the School Age Subcommittee report, you can use track changes and put those right in there. I will send that to all of you and you're welcome to comment. But Michelle, I don't know if, I'm not trying to put you on the spot, but is -- you don't know yet -- the coalition [inaudible].

Educational session.

>> I will jump in Michelle. I feel like the NASDSE coalition, it was started by Hands and Voices. Even if it the NASDSE coalition doesn't want to do anything anymore. We can potentially bump it back to hands and voices and we could potentially do a hands and voices educational event around the tool in a 504 because as hands and voices we are supposed to be doing educational sessions and events.

So that could be another avenue if NASDSE doesn't want to get together.

>> Because --

>> It would have to be a board decision.

>> Right. I know Michelle, you mentioned and now I forget whether it was the NASDSE coalition or hands and voices were going to do watch parties with the video tape. Is that still on the docket using the IEP video tape.

>> That was a hands and voices and we are meeting for sure at the beginning of the year but I can't remember this moment exactly. We set it for our retreat where we set all of 2025's events. We set them all. Part of what we have do is two educational events a year and that is, I think going to be our primary focus there. That is the plan. We've had shifts in our board as well. So apparently everyone is in a season of change. So we're trying to work through that as well. But, yes, I will say we as hands and voices are also going to begin a position within Eddy, as a parent liaison. It's a requirement for eddy programs so that has our foot in the door. In our state, the ESP program and EDHI it happens to be chaired by the same person so it allows us access to various avenues and certainly we can start, you know, working with that as well. I think, it sounds maybe not great on the surface but I think it really benefits this particular section of state issues. So I think it will be positive. It's just a matter of how do we get further down the road with that.

>> I will just ask, if you would consider the 504,

that piece as well.

>> That is, yes, and that has been on my radar. I have it on my little list things that I'm tracking to make sure it doesn't get lost in the shuffle. Because I do think it's really important.

>> Yes. That was a big push back of CARES. The checklist doesn't apply and Cheryl said, how can they say that. It's verbatim, I copied and pasted the guidelines onto the Word document. Enough said. So thank you all so much. I really, Sherry said she is sorry to have to go. The work that this subcommittee has done and the collaboration with NASDSE and Hands and Voices and two or three educational sessions was admirable. Despite the glitches and there are glitches, but I think those three organizations did more than the paid provider, not the providers. The provider is doing a good job. It's the agencies. So anyway, thank you all. And I will send you the email, look for an email from me and Sherry early in October with a draft of what we will submit as the school aged subcommittee report.

I will definitely welcome and we want your feedback. And I don't want people to feel quite as discouraged as Sherry and I do. Any other closing comments before we end the meeting?

>> I just want to thank everyone for all each of you does. Here.

>> Yep.

>> Thank you Rebecca and thank you all. And thank you to the interpreters and to the closed captioner, Lora. She will send the transcript to both you and me and we'll post it to the website as we always do. I always appreciated your administrative help behind the scenes. Have a good afternoon and we'll be in touch. Take care, thank you.

(meeting adjourned at 4:58 p.m.)