

>> Good morning.

>> Morning.

>> Good morning. Spenser, the Zoom seems to be a new format.

>> What?

>> Is this Zoom a new format? It's like my screen looks quite different and I had to go through a whole different pathway to get here.

>> I could, I have not done anything to change settings, so it could just to be Zoom itself updating the layout. So --

>> Yeah. OK. All right. I guess I've been out of circulation a little bit.

I will... stop my video.

>> Morning.

>> Morning.

>> So Diane will be with us momentarily, we just finished another meeting, she'll be hopping on soon.

>> I think we'll go ahead and get started.

>> OK.

>> A fair amount of people here. We do have a few people that are not members of the council and general public, and I would ask if you could introduce yourself since some of you we know who you are, others we don't, and we'd like to know who you are, and if you could welcome yourself and then I'll update... on other people that will be attending the council from DAIL.

>> I guess I'll start first, my name is Sang Pham the technology partner for the State of Vermont. Work closely with the state agencies of Vermont to assist with any kind of solutions problems and services that is needed to assist the state.

So thanks for having me on, appreciate it a lot. And I like to listen in to see where I could help, but I will not interfere at all.

>> Thank you. Welcome.

So we'll go ahead and get started. So just some quick updates before we dive into the agenda. As many of you are aware, Megan Ward is retiring after a long and illustrious career as deputy commissioner at DAIL. And her replacement is someone well known to us who has presented at the council Angela Smith Dieng will be taking over and there's transition period for that.

So and that note, Fred Jones who also many of you are familiar with will be filling in for Megan as Angela is transitioning over to full-time as deputy commissioner at DAIL.

So, Fred, I don't know if you want to introduce yourself for others that may know you or don't know you.

>> Sure. Thanks, Spenser. Hi, everyone, Fred Jones, I work at DAIL. With the position for the Blind. And standing in for Megan today, and very soon, Angela will be attending your meetings regularly. So thanks for having me.

>> Fred does have a fairly close connection of the council, he was part of the hiring process when we were hiring Laura back when Monica Hutt was overseeing the process. So he's quite familiar with our work and Laura's work.

Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> OK. We have a majority of people here now. So we can dive into agenda. Some people are rearriving late including Jessica from VANCRO and Linda Hazard from UVM. So if they arrive in time, we'll have them provide their updates, if not, they can provide updates later.

I also need to mention that I will be stepping off at the break due to another commitment that I'm unable to get out of, and so I'll be making Will cohost to continue for the remainder of the meeting after the break.

OK. So, I don't know if Val Hughes is on. I didn't see her, yes, there she is. Val, you want to jump on and provide a VCIL update?

>> Sure. This is Val Hughes, & I'm a Deaf Independent Program Coordinator for Vermont Center for Independent Living. Updates, I work statewide. And travel all the way. Right now, I'm currently up north for a good amount of time in Burlington, at least that area.

So good morning, everybody. I just wanted to do a couple of updates about VCIL. Just got \$18,000 from Lawson's Finest Brewery. That was for a fundraiser they did for about two weeks to support VCIL, it's phenomenal, very excited to have their support and funding. What we're going to do with the funding is yet to be determined. We're still working through that process in-house to see where the funds will go.

I am also getting new peers onboard with our program and have been steadily getting a flow of new folks, which I'm very excited about. Happy to work with them. And currently working with one person in the Rutland area, seems to be living, have been there for about five years.

And is just, yeah, trying to get their feet wet with the state, getting used to things and need more support. They're also homeless at this point in time. So, yeah, we're really trying to support them as best as possible.

Still working with everybody else as per usual. Helping people with their insurance, their social security, supporting them in different ways to be independent with the resources we have available to us. Super busy, it's just me as this program coordinator

and it's hard to work statewide being solo, but I'm hoping some day VCIL will hire a second person to tag team with me. We'll see, I'm not holding my breath, but it would be nice.

Any questions? From the group?

>> Any questions for Val?

>> OK. Thanks, everybody, have a good day.

>> I know that Jessica's not on for VANCRO, so we'll jump over to the Vermont Association for the Deaf, Rebecca, hop on and provide an update from your association.

>> Hey, good morning, everybody. Yes, I am Rebecca, President for the Vermont Association for the Deaf, VTAD. Not a ton of updates for our end, but we did have our first town hall, and that was Barre. And we also had a gentleman by the name of Lason who is the manager for the UVM Health Network language access program. So talked about updates with UVM Medical Center, language access, what's happening, what's lacking, and really a nice town hall for people to talk about what they need and what they see as services that are gaps.

So we're also trying to set up a permanent connection with them, especially for their intake forms. Because what we're noticing is that medical intake forms are pretty consistent across the board. So they're hoping to have a QR code or ASL translation with that, because as most people know, English is not our first language.

So making sure there is access to the intake forms in particular at the UVM Medical Center. But we're trying to be realistic, trying to figure out what's priority for them. A really good conversation was had. Other updates. Still, obviously trying to do fund raising for the Yolanda Henry Community Fund. If those of you in attendance don't know what that is, it's a fund in particular that is set aside that we have for people who need interpretation for events that are not covered by the ADA, such as funerals, weddings, reunions, and the like. And there's a high demand of requests, and we deplete the funds pretty regularly.

So Vermont Association of the Deaf is the overseeing agent for that fund. Trying to do fundraisers, looking for resources to bolster that. We're hoping to have other in person events, probably February will be the next one, and we'll keep you posted. That is it for now. Any questions?

All right. Thanks, everybody.

>> OK. Moving on. Deb's next.

>> I'm next.

>> HLAA.

>> Good morning, everybody. Well, we're into a new year, and things are rolling forward with HLAA. We've had a chapter meeting in September with Dr. McIntosh, the founder of Safe and Clear and promoting the use of clear masks, particularly in medical situations, but certainly, in any situation where people rely on lip reading.

So, that was a really interesting presentation. And we

are continuing to have our chapter meetings every other month, but we're actually changing it this year. Instead of the last Tuesday of the month, it's the last Wednesday of the month.

And it's still at noon. We still try to catch people at their lunch break, which seems to be working fairly well. So, there is that shift from Tuesday to Wednesday, just to let people know. This month, actually, yesterday, we didn't have a speaker and we decided instead to have a virtual coffee clatch where people got together, introduced themselves, and we brainstormed and talked about situations, hearing loss does cause glitches in our lives.

And it was very well received. People were very excited about it. And said we really need to do this on more regular basis. So, we're going to continue to have guest speakers. But now, we have a wonderful backup plan when we end up a little short.

So, that was very, very positive, and the feedback we got from that was very positive. Let's see. I wanted to remind people that if you want to contact HLAA, it's Vermonthlaa@Yahoo.com. To if you know of anybody who suddenly has hearing loss or told they need hearing aids or are really kind of in a quandary, please, let them know about us.

We are continuing to welcome and encourage anybody who would like to volunteer to serve on our steering committee. We are only too happy to have extra hands. We have 7, a core group of 7 people on the steering committee at this point.

And in terms of membership, I believe we are almost up to 70. So, that's people with hearing loss, allies, family, so that's very encouraging.

Our biggest project at this point is we're in the process of designing a card that can go into places, public places, displays, where we all see them, you know, go visit the Apple Barn or whatever, and we're going to have an informational card about the chapter and about national, so that people are aware of that. Something you can grab.

And I guess that's it. Any questions?

>> Thank you Deb.

>> Yes, question from Rebecca. And I don't know if you'll have the answer to this or not. But I am currently working with one person in a school system as an advocate who doesn't sign, does have a hearing loss, and they're really struggling to get hearing aids. And apparently the situation is such that they're borderline with their decibel loss, so the mom has been fighting, do you have any suggestions, tips, do you want me to connect the mom with you? What's the best way to do this?

>> Probably the best thing to do is probably to have them connect with me directly.

>> Great, I'll make that connection. Thank you so much.

>> That'd be great, thank you.

>> Yeah.

>> Anybody else?

>> Deb, I have one quick question, you said the membership is 70. Is that Vermont only? 70 members in Vermont in the membership? Overall membership?

>> Yes.

>> Or is that regional?

>> Yep. That's Vermont. Yep. There is some action afoot in terms of putting together an HLAA regional group. And that is basically New England states. That's still formulating.

>> Any other questions for Deb?

>> OK.

>> I don't know if Kate Parrish is on. Yes, she is.

>> All right. Good morning, everybody. This is Kate Parrish. And I work for HireAbility Vermont. I am the coordinator for Deaf, DeafBlind and hiring services for HireAbility Vermont.

Just a couple of updates, this spring is going to be super busy. So partnering with VANCRO and DVAS, the three of us are really working diligently on getting ready for our next annual event, which is the Vermont DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing inclusive day. Vermont DBH plus. Definitely plan for the spring. We'll definitely keep you posted on more details.

We're adding more activities for youth during that event. That's been the request. It'll be an opportunity for transition age folks to participate more fully. So we're definitely doubling our activities on-site. We're hoping to draw more families, as well, just to see what we're about and what we have to offer in our state.

So it'll still be May, May 3rd, in particular. We're just relocating the actual site. So, we had been using Randolph, Vermont Tech Center, and we decided to do something new, and we're going to do it, just change it up a little bit. Looking forward to announcing that site once we discover it.

We're just -- so save the date, May 3rd. And yeah, we'll send out a full announcement in January. The other update, working with the New Hampshire coordinator and we're trying to figure out how we could possibly establish, like, a three-part series online.

Workshops for youth. We're hoping to invite all of the New England states to participate. So, high school age is the population we're going to target. And we thought we could provide a panel for one of the workshops. Maybe businesses who are hiring, working with Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind folks and their experiences. We want to ask students to be part of a panel and working with VR and what their experience and journey has been. And what services they have worked with and have found successful for them. And also, we're going to give a quick workshop about what we do as VR and what we don't do as VR.

Just nice marketing techniques. And then, the last day

of that series, we're hoping to have an actual in-person session where people can meet everyone they just met on Zoom for the three-part series. Good networking opportunity. It's still in the works. So yeah, work in progress. We will have more information down the road.

Another project that I'm currently working on is for the summer. We're hoping to have a STEM event. Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics event, particularly, again, for youth, and it would be a summertime session. We're hoping to have the National Technical Institute for the Deaf and NTID to be part of that the Rochester Institute of Technology. They are willing to come tout to our state and provide STEM activities and workshops and it would be accessible to folks who sign, don't use sign.

Everybody within our population of that age range. So we're thinking probably August, but we'll see how that rolls out. Those are my updates. Thank you. Any questions?

>> Any questions for Kate?

>> Thanks, everybody.

>> OK. So Jessica's not here. So when she arrives, we will have her just give an quickly after we finish up. I guess to move on and have Sharon and Chery [SPROID](#) r provide a subcommittee update.

>> Thanks, Spenser, and good morning, everyone. As you know, Chery, Susan and I have been cochairs of the student age subcommittee since 2016. And we have about 5 or 6 different points we'd like to share with you this morning to update you as to where we are.

And I guess, the first point I'd like to make is as a council, we've been given an amazing gift to better serve our deaf, Hard of Hearing, deafblind populationing in Vermont through collaboration and accessing our collective expertise. And if I reflect back on what we've done since 2016, I really don't think we have been fulfilling our legislative mandates and I'd like to challenge the council to reflect on what we have and have not accomplished and what we can cobetter and more of. Sherry?

>> Yes, and from the school-aged side. And I know this very well as a special Ed teacher, Special Ed Director, and superintendent. Special education is described as a wait to fail model and that's really painful. We have so little time with our deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind children, students in order to have a real academic impact.

It's a very short amount of time. The committee is attempting to address our legislative charge.

>> And we, Sherry and I, and the school-aged subcommittee drafted our legislative report. We gave that to you maybe I don't know 2 or 3 weeks ago. I hope you've had time to review it. It basically reflects our work over the 2 plus last years or so. I think we got the charge from Spenser in 2022, and we've been working hard to address that charge.

And the report is very factual, and thanks to Sherry, we

operate in an open meeting law. And so all of the things that are in that report can be tied back to meeting transcripts and meeting minutes.

And all of that, of course, is publicly posted thanks to Laura. So, the school-age subcommittee report really needs to be vetted and voted on by the entire council. So that when it gets submitted to the appropriate parties listed in our statute, we can be sure that all the members of the council have been involved and we've done it in a timely manner, and using a very transparent process.

And I know that we have a meeting on the books in December, but we're also happy to take questions about the report when we're done. Sherry?

>> Yeah, I think one of the reasons why we've been so productive as a committee is that we've included parents, educators, service providers, and school administrators. A concern for us is that the subcommittee is no longer includes a teacher of the deaf, audiologist and service providers. As a result of this, the work has stalled. And we don't believe we can move forward with integrity.

>> Yeah, and it's unfortunate that both UVM CARES and UVM MC have pulled out of the subcommittee because while we had some involvement from them, we were able to offer three educational sessions that we coordinated with other stakeholders across the state. And I've been involved in this work since around 2002 when I was a member of the hearing advisory council that focused mostly on birth to 3.

And when our subcommittee was first started, our focus with UZ going to be on data, and as I reflect back to 2002 when I was working with providers then, the discussion at that point in time was the need for data so that we know who we're serving, how they're doing, and what the unmet needs are.

And when we first started the council in 2016, we all were charged to do gap analysis, and that gap analysis, the major conclusion was, we need data. And here we are as a council 8 years later and we still don't really have the data.

So, I sat in on the commission for the future of public education in Vermont, and I've had an email with interim secretary Saunders and she openly admit that the data infrastructure is not robust at the AOE and they certainly are struggling. And... her direct quote was, we do not have a robust data infrastructure, but we're working to improve the data collection, quality, and accessibility.

And in the absence of that, we've been trying to work with the AOE grantee and the other vendors in the state. And we haven't had any luck in advancing in our work there. So, I -- the commission has a data framework that I shared with you last week, I think.

And lo and behold, what do they want to do? They want to focus on demographic data, which was number one of our minimum data set that we all voted on back in May. And the other thing was, disaggregated student performance outcome data.

Which was number 3 on our list of our minimum data set that we all agreed was important for our population. So we're in step, but we're not there yet. And when we've requested these data from the AOE and the service providers, we've not had any success to date. So Cassie suggested submitting a FOIA. A federal public records request. And I would expect using the VSA 316, the Vermont state statute rather than a FOIA. I think it would be helpful if the directors filled out the data table that Rebecca suggested back in September. It's clear from the grant that some of those data are being collected.

And if you're not paying attention to the commission for the future of public education in Vermont, I'm really concerned that the \$1 million that is designated for this school-aged subpopulation is at risk because in checking the OCEP data website, it's still reporting only 73 children who have a primary disability of deaf hard of hearing in Vermont. And we know from Pam and Linda, the population is much greater. I worry we're at risk, and I don't want to lose services as fragmented as they are.

And the last thing is if we look at a state like Colorado, for example, they have been looking at their data across time. And I've shared all of that with our school-aged subcommittee. So we have an example of what things could look like. And yet, we're not, we're not striving for that. And that's very frustrating.

Sherry?

>> And just to finish up, I think the council has an amazing opportunity. We do have direct access to legislation. As a superintendent, I know how hard it is to get their ear and to get their -- in front of that group. And we also have mandated responsibility to serve our community of unique individuals.

I'm hoping that we use our time in the council to create some concrete next steps, I know that's part of our report to advance the rights and quality of life of our population.

It's time to look at our roots, again. I think back about the time when we spent some real good subcommittee work on looking at unmet needs and next steps. And I hope we can return to that. I thought that was really powerful work.

For the school-aged subcommittee, I would love to recruit a broader representation of membership to fully grasp the challenges our students face. I think advocating for data. I know the AOE is working hard, Secretary Saunders is working hard. Having that data, having it accessible, and I think when the council makes these requests, it gives AOE the opportunity to validate the significance of this.



It's not to pit us against AOE, but we're validating their desire to have a better infrastructure, greater access, and resources for data.

And I want to continue to investigate other models of service delivery. I was able to connect Linda Hazard with... we have a Southeast collaborative, it is a Bosse's model of bringing expertise across a region where we have lots of special education needs.

We have a new director who has been running a collaborative in Massachusetts who brings together groups of students with unique needs to make sure there's a community of students, I know that's something we've talked about. How do we bring back a community of students so they have shared experiences and understandings?

And so, I think there's ways that we can, again, continue to look at how we meet the needs of this very unique student population without waiting for a failure. And that is not to question the work that's being done. I just know it is so hard, and it's the resources for Special Ed, as superintendent, I know very clearly, we can't find all of the experts we need to provide the quality of services that need to happen for those students.

And so, working together, identifying needs, finding the data, advocating for that, and looking for new models, to me, is some really important work that I'd love for the student... the student-age subcommittee to continue on. I'm optimistic when we can partner and collaborate. But I think it's, we have an opportunity as a council and I really hope we can leverage it for that. The purposes that were originally identified. So thank you.

>> Yeah, and I think just to close, I think if you really reflect to my knowledge and I think Sherry agrees with this, we are the only disability group that has a legislatively mandated council. And if we waste this opportunity, we are going to really lose a gift. And so, let's pull together and let's do something that's really effective. And work together.

Because our kids are struggling and the system is not working and we have Sherry, we have a lot of work to do. Thank you. And we're happy to take questions about the report or anything that we've shared with you now.

>> I'll open up the floor for discussion. Although, I will just start and preface this... and I know I'm going to sound like a broken record saying this, but we are legislatively mandated council, but we are a council that has absolutely no binding authority whatsoever.

Our job is to write recommendations and reports to submit to our legislature and the governor. Whether they take us up on that,

is their call. You know. And so, and we've seen it, you know. We've seen the fact that we've submitted the requests to the AOE and we've not gotten responses directly from the top level.

You know, the work that the subcommittee has done. So, I know that we have this charge, but that charge can only go so far. Other than to do what we're doing. And unless we can have legal authority to say this shall happen, which other councils and commissions have in this state.

All through state government, we just don't have that authority. You know, it's very explicitly written in statute that our charge and mandate is to do what we're doing, but then to make recommendations to the legislature and the governor.

>> So maybe one of the recommendations could be that the data shall be shared. So not playing this cat and mouse game and the vendor, the AOE grantee to cooperate so we can actually do the work. We do have that power, Spenser, and I don't think it's been utilized. I think we can work legislatively to change the way the statute is written.

>> Yes, and I completely agree with that. I think we can sit there and ask for clarifying language in the statute, existing statute that says, you know, these departments shall, you know, provide the data as required for the council to be able to do their assessment in order to propose their mandate.

So that's definitely a possibility. That's going to be a battle in and of itself, we know that. It's hard enough to get the data now from the AOE or from anybody, but, yes, you know. Put it in there. We ask for it, and then, it has to go through the whole process.

I'm going to open it up for others to chime in on this.

>> I mean, I don't have anything to add, other than, I know some record requests have come in, and I've been working with the team to collect what we can and what we have available, what we shared on the spreadsheet is what we internally do collect through child find and other collections.

I know the data team right now is putting together, again, what they're able to share, and they're going to also share why there's asterisks and some of the things they're just not able to share because of the end side. And I'm not a data guru, so when I say end size, I know that may not mean a lot to everyone, I'm still learning what an end size is. But if it's smaller than 11, I believe, it's an asterisk.

So just know those requests are being worked out.

>> Thank you, Cassie. Thank you. I also think we have to look at our vulnerability in terms of Sherry mentioned the service delivery model. That would be such important work to do. Because we're paying the salaries for two directors.

And I'm just worried about the budget climate. I listen to what Sherry says very seriously. She sits in the decisionmaking and the budget cutting seat, unfortunately. So... and we don't have data on student outcomes, what little data we do have is not very encouraging. So...

>> Can I make one more observation? I'm looking at the number of names on this screen. And this is really discouraging. Because we used to have a very vigorous, fully vetted, I mean, we had a much larger group involved. And I see our numbers dwindling, and I wonder why.

>> I'm going to ask a question more for Sherry, I guess. Given the role as a superintendent and the ability and your experience in special education director, and your ability to have direct access to other fellow, you know, superintendents, I know you guys had your one-day seminar, you know, talking about and educating the Superintendents Association and all of that, I actually had talked personal little to somebody I know who is a close colleague of mine here in upper Vermont, Northern Vermont, a superintendent about that.

And while they're appreciative of it, basically, almost like it's not required of me, I'm not going to do it.

>> So what would -- yeah, what what was covered in that meeting is required. So I created the agenda. This is not something that's conceptual, it's pragmatic in my district. That agenda is required. So the challenge is, people who are now being put in the position, superintendents, director of special ed, special ed teachers do not have the expertise and training they had 5 and 10 years ago.

So, everything in that presentation, legally, is required. So, when they say that, that's really concerning to me. Because as a previous sped director, there was nothing novel in that, parental rights, involving parents, everything in that agenda is something I mandate in every IP meeting in my district.

And it's best practice. So, good to hear feedback. But that makes it even more concerning to me if a superintendent doesn't understand that what we presented and feedback, and I'm hearing from special educators who previously I would not consider as a candidate, but we are so in need of special educators, people of that background. I'm training people. I'm offering a graduate course in special education now to ensure that all my students who are on IPs are receiving the right level of services.

So, AOE, their hands, they are so stretched thin, I respect Cassie, I respect the Secretary of Education, but we, they need special ed directors need as much opportunity of professional development as we can offer. And those with any expertise need to get themselves out there because, you know, I see Tracy is an amazing teacher of the deaf and audiologist. But she is a unicorn.

We cannot find the people with that expertise, that passion, that commitment. And training is critical. And not available. So, thank you, Spenser, for that feedback, but I will tell you, as someone who works really closely still with special educators and directors, we are looking for any resource. And again, money is short.

So if it's free or inexpensive, and it's close by, and it's online, people are signing up. I know as part of the collaborative for the Southeast of Vermont, we are trying to meet that professional development need, and we are getting people signed up all the time. Because it is great need.

>> And I think to echo that, Spenser, is that with a low incidence disability with deaf hard of hearing is so specialized, and any special ed person with a master's degree will tell you they got little to know training around this disability.

So it really is incumbent upon our council and the respected vendors and providers that participate to provide this education. And I'm waiting to hear from Linda and Pam about what education they're offering this year so we can maybe work synergistically. Because special ed people don't know what this population needs.

Sherry spoke to kids on IEPs, but the kids on 504s are in the same, are struggling, as well. And I talked to parents. So... and they're afraid to speak up because they're afraid of retribution.

>> I just want to clarify my point, and then Cassie can respond. But I was talking specifically about the tool, the tool and the specific measurement quality tools that you put together and that's the one that was being piloted in school districts. That's what I was talking about, not the other required data that is required to be submitted.

I get that. That's what I was talking about when I was talking about disability. If it's something above and beyond what I'm required to report, unless it's mandated by the AOE, I'm not going to do.

>> And again, that tool is best practice. That, to me, it wasn't even beyond. That's a standard. Of practice. Especially for this population. Sorry.

>> It provides guidance -- it provides guidance, Spenser, to someone who doesn't know what to do and given the lack of training in this particular arena, it provides best practice and guidance.

>> I understand that. But you know, as Sherry said, there's a lot of dynamics in play here in school systems, it's tradeoff for some. Right? It's got to -- it's prioritizing and maybe their priorities aren't right. I'm not saying it's right or wrong, you know, their priorities are something else and disagree with that, somebody else may agree with their priorities.

So just that's how I'm trying to frame the conversation by saying that. Cassie did want to reply.

>> I was --

>> Hold on a sec. We're doing an interpreter switch, Cassie can reply, and we do need to move on because a speaker needs to leave at 10:45.

>> Can you let Linda Hazard in, this is Tracy.

>> OK. Yep. Cassie, you want to talk?

>> I was going to echo what Sherry was saying that there is a reality that we have shortages, in special education. And as someone trained 15 years ago, yes, now the training is very different. I want to echo that with Sherry. They're at a point, there are pathways in our state right now that essentially, if you have a bachelor's degree and the district wants to proceed with you as a candidate, you can become a teacher of record, right?

And just so everyone here knows, there's a plan for me to present about some baseline special education topics, and I'm happy to talk a little bit about licensing and some of the issues that are happening statewide just to give people that lens.

I think, hopefully, Spenser, I might be presenting in January or February whenever that meeting is scheduled. And again, I wanted to echo that what Sherry said, there are staffing shortages, and there's also just a lack of baseline knowledge because some of the, many of the people in the field are not trained in the same way they used to be.

>> Rebecca?

>> Yes, good morning, this is Rebecca. I have to say, I agree with Sharon and Sherry. This is a systemic flaw. We need to change this for our kids. We need to be able to be attentive and accountable to them. I work with definitely a lot of students in school systems. And there are some folks that are getting the same... they're in the same school but not getting the same accommodations as their peers.

So again, sometimes, the teams aren't fully listening to the parents' requests and their rights. I feel like the school systems are failing the students. And they're waiting for them to fail as was mentioned before. It shouldn't be a wait to fail. Why are we in that predicament? Why aren't they going from the get go saying, hey, here's what we know works. People are advocating and fighting for it. Why aren't the teams listening? I think Sharon and Sherry's work is critical. We need to change the system for the better because our kids are struggling and they shouldn't be. We want them to thrive, not just survive and even take. It's not right.

>> To that point, I think Bill, you introduced last year, could be another effective way if we can get student support to basically force, you know, school districts, I don't want to say the

AOE, to say, you know, these services will be provided. Come hell or high water. So Sharon?

>> Just one last point. I'm having trouble with my icons here. I'm sorry. But yes, thank you, Rebecca. I think to your point, Spenser, about principals pushing back. And that's why the school-aged subcommittee also ran an educational session to try to reach parents to be partnered with Hands and Voices in order to do that because if parents can advocate and have their voice strengthened, then they can hopefully advocate for what their student needs.

But the other thing that, and the 2024 report, Spenser, that went in, on the cover page, you listed the House and Senate committees that the report goes to in addition to the governor. And it included all of the committees that are listed in our statute except for the committee on education. And I'm just wondering if you actually did send it to the House Education Committee and forgot to put it on the cover page, or if, in fact, the education committee never received, has never received our reports. By statute, the education committee should be receiving our reports.

So that's a housekeeping thing, but I think given the focus of our work, the active committee on the council has been the school-age subcommittee, the education committee should definitely be receiving our report.

>> OK. Clarify, it did go to the committee, OK. It's not my job to send it to the committees. It's HS the central office sends it to the governor's office and the legislative council and the committee. So I'm on the email when it goes to the committee chairs, when it comes from the central office. I don't send it to them, and I will say, unequivocally, at least in house health care, and house education, almost one of the first things they do in the first three weeks, they have legislative joint legislative office come in... legal CFO, legal counsel come in with the reports that are required in statute to be submitted and the ones that pertain to their committee.

And I've seen (inaudible) walk through all of her health care reports that were mandated and the education committee walk through the reports and they sit there and get the reports. Now, whether they read them on their own time, I have no idea. I can't, you know --

>> Of course you don't just that --

>> I can continue to nudge them, but I can't, you know.

>> OK.

>> Well, I think that's where the council members could have an impact by reaching out to their representatives and maybe that is going to be our plea for action. But I just -- my point is just to include it on your cover page. I thought it was an oversight and I wanted to bring it to your attention.

>> Yeah.

>> Thank you.

>> OK. Pam, last note, and then I've got to move on. Go ahead, Pam.

>> Thank you. Hi. I just wanted to, regarding the indicator tool, I wanted to add that it's a valuable resource for teens. And it's offered along with other resources by our program, as well as ESP. Because we've had conversations about it. But it's really important to remember that ultimately, it's a team decision. And it's school choice.

So it's definitely offered, but ultimately, at the end of the day, it's a team decision to use it.

>> OK. The conversation will obviously continue as we try to figure out how to be more effective as a council as a whole and the subcommittee to continue to do their work. I'm going to shift now to our guest presenter.

For a different age group, somewhat, I guess, if you want to call that. But Diana Demosse is here from HireAbility. And so, I will just turn it over to her and let her introduce herself and discuss what she's here to discuss.

>> Thank you. Good morning, everyone. I am Diane Dalmasse the director of HireAbility. And Will included me to join you this morning. And I'm hoping that he will be part of this discussion to talk about a possible needs assessment of the deaf community in Vermont.

And just a little bit of context, HireAbility formally Voc Rehab has always had a strong commitment to serving individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. We, historically, for many years had four counselors for the Deaf covering Vermont, each of them covering a quarter of the state.

And several years ago, I'm not remembering exactly how many years ago, due to demand or lack thereof, we reduced our number of counselors for the Deaf from four to two.

And that was with a lot of concern about whether we would be able to meet the needs of Deaf Vermonters. And at the same time, we... moved the services for Hard of Hearing Vermonters to our general case loads.

So, we've had two counselors for the deaf for a number of years now, and Will and I were somewhat concerned because we think that that these two individuals -- Kate Parrish who is here is one of our counselors for the Deaf and also serves in a coordinator role for Deaf Services, that their case loads have capacity.

And so, we ask the question, why? I mean, why are we not seeing full, robust case loads for employment services and education and training services for Deaf individuals in Vermont? And I think this is speculation on my part to some degree. But I do feel that the closing of Austine cool, the loss for the Center of the Deaf and

Hard of Hearing and that created somewhat of an exodus of Deaf parents and Deaf Vermonters to other places.

And so, I think, perhaps, we've seen a decline in the population. But regardless, we feel there should be, there should be a demand for our services across the state that we're really not experiencing.

So Will and I decided to pull together a group of our partners in this effort. And so, we reached out to Laura Siegle, to Vermont center for independent living, VANCRO, Vermont Association of the Deaf and others to conduct a needs assessment.

So we've talked about a number of different things. Laura connected us with a vendor ENEVE, which is an organization that do assessments work across the country. And we've recently received a proposal from them. To be frank, they're quite expensive. And I'm not sure that we have the resources to do exactly what they were proposing.

In terms of what we think we might be able to do, another group that I did not mention is Elaine Shapiro from Source and Videophone joined our original meeting. Because I had an idea that, perhaps, the directory of video phone users might be a source individuals that would give us a good cross section of Deaf Vermonters in terms of doing a needs assessment. I certainly want to suggest this is done with permission. And I think we're early on in this whole discussion.

And we haven't, certainly, come up with a plan of action as yet. But I think we're all quite interested in coming together and making this happen. I think the other two things we talked about doing is something that we've done in the past, and that is to attend Deaf events and really advertise HireAbility services and our, you know, what we can do in terms of vocational goals and employment and education and training.

And so, that's one additional option. With the idea that, perhaps, we can organize some focus groups during those Deaf events. And then, Sara Landerville from the Vermont Center suggested perhaps it would be enlightening to do a survey of Deaf Professionals.

And so, that is also on our potential list. So, I think that we're going to be hampered to some degree by a lack of resources, but I think that we're all interested in, and I don't know I said this, but I think this survey would not be limited to vocational needs. Employment needs, but would be a much broader look at the needs of Deaf Vermonters. Spenser's right, this would be focused on adults.

We have initiated a number of things in terms of working with youth and students. We have an extensive infrastructure in Vermont in HireAbility with our transition counselors and our youth employment specialists through VABOR.

They are, they are -- they have a presence, a strong presence in all of Vermont's high schools. And we've partnered up



Kate and her partner, the other RCD, Joey Dutton to serve those individuals. So we have work to do, and we've gotten a good start. And we've connected with the consultants that provide services in those high schools, as well.

So I'm not sure, Will, what did I miss? What didn't I say? I think, again, we're early stages here.

>> Yeah, this is Will, Diane, thank you so much for this. I appreciate this. Very clear, you cover all of the points I can think of. Just one quick thing to add to what you mentioned. We're really focusing on, you know, culturally Deaf adults, signing deaf adults. We're not going to be focused on students as you mentioned or hard of hearing folks, again, that's what the general case load counselors.

But we're noticing there is a significant decline in those who are culturally deaf, signing deaf, utilizing HireAbility. So, again, that's our main focus point is the culturally deaf folks who do sign.

And then, the other thing, too, is we will have an update meeting this Friday, which, tomorrow, so we've got a few leaders from VCIL, VANCRO, Laura will be there, as well. I believe Fred Jones will also be participating in that meeting.

So we've got some really great stakeholders, we're going to check in, do updates and see what our actual plan is. And look, again, at the cost for the proposal that came through. And as you mentioned, it is a hefty price tag, we'll see if we go with that, or not. ENEVE, they work with larger organizations and larger states that have robust population and funding and Vermont, we're a small state, we've explained that, but at the same time, we will talk with them, again, see what's going to happen, maybe we work with them for some component. Maybe we can have them tailor their proposal a little bit differently to what we need. We shall see.

And after tomorrow's meeting, we will have a better sense of what we're doing and we can certainly be touch with everyone here about what our next steps are going to be, what the rollout plan is going to be. At this point in time, I'm happy to say, though, there's some many great ideas and it's a really exciting time for a needs assessment.

Because, yeah, we're noticing things have really shifted. And we haven't done a needs assessment for quite some time and I think it's a prime moment, we're long overdue. Great opportunity for HireAbility to learn more about what our community needs, but also for other organizations and other partners and stakeholders to know what is happening out there.

So, I'm looking forward to this process. I also really wanted to just at this point in time open it up for questions, thoughts, concerns for Diane, for myself, for Kate, anybody?

>> I have a question in terms of resource allocations because,

Diane, you said that you ended up having to cut a few positions because there wasn't enough case loads. What is the... if you were to, if you were to find people and increase the case loads, especially for those in the deaf population, would it require adding more staff resources? Or do you think you would be able to fulfill it with the existing staff resources?

>> It's really hard to say at this point. I think we'd have to see what the demand ended up being. I think if we had more of a sense of the need. What the need and maybe there could be some sense geographically about that. I'm not sure. We would, then, be attempting to meet the need, with the existing staff, but if it meant adding capacity, I think we'd try to figure out how to do that.

>> Anyone else have questions?

>> All right. And also, just take a moment, Laura's saying look into the chat, please. There's been some things populated there.

>> OK.

>> Can I hop in?

>> Yeah, go ahead, Deb.

>> Hi, Diane. Long time no see. I did put a comment into the chat. And I guess, I can certainly understand the importance of focusing on the Deaf community and their needs. And in particular since the Austine School and Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing closed down.

But my concern is for the hard of hearing population, back when I was in Voc Rehab, the hard of hearing folks clients were seen as sort of the "easy fix," you buy them a hearing aid and send them on the way because it made them a hearing person.

And, excuse me. Sorry. I have some background noise here. So my concern is, are the general case load counselors given specific training in terms of hard of hearing issues so that those clients are adequately served? Because providing hearing aid does not make a hard of hearing person a hearing person.

And they don't function as a hearing person.

>> I think I would let Kate Parrish speak to that. Kate convenes our hard of hearing, our counselors that are serving hard of hearing individuals, and I think has done some of exactly what you're talking about. Kate, would you please respond to the question?

>> Sure. Yes, I support the statewide team, the hearing aid liaison counselors. So I keep in touch with those folks. And so, they have me as a resource and each other as a resource. So if a referral comes in where they're feeling unsure about what else could be offered or what other services might be needed, I'm available for consultation.

And really, for any counselor who is working with somebody who might have a hearing loss. They can reach out to me,

as a consultant, to talk with them about what types of services might be, you know, available for folks.

And that's an ongoing conversation about offering the other full gamut of our services to people who have a hearing loss and not just hearing aids.

>> OK. All right. Because sometimes, people don't know what they don't know.

>> This is Will, I was just going to add, I also just wanted to add to what Kate had said. So, again, she convenes the liaison counselors, and I think that meeting happens quarterly. During that meeting, we have a number of different training opportunities, or guest speakers from relevant fields, I think we've had. I think we just had an audiologist come to talk about some of their work. And then, all of the counselors, again, reach out to Kate if there are any specific questions about a case or a need or a hearing aid or whatever it is, you know, or maybe someone's struggling. They have hearing aids, but they're not working for their employment or whatever it is.

And so, Kate can be called in to consult about what other types of services would be good. So we feel like we're developing a good system.

>> OK.

>> And this is Kate, I would just add, as well, that the hard of hearing, sometimes, we get people who, you know, have those kind of hearing loss where they are sort of last minute. And so, those people, they've just kind of woke up one morning and suddenly, they can't hear like they could yesterday. And so, those people we ask to get referred to Joey and I because they're dealing with a lot more.

I mean, they're dealing with a lot of grief and figuring things out. And we feel like we're better equipped to deal with those situations. So we've got connections with all of the liaison counselors. People like that, that seem like they're going to be higher needs, those folks can be referred to Joey and I.

>> That's my question. Somebody who is late deafened, somebody who is suddenly deafened. There's a whole lot of other, you know, it's not technology. You can't plug in technology and actually be serving the person.

So, that was my concern. Thank you.

>> Julie has her hand up. Go ahead, Julie.

>> Hey, everyone. I wanted to say something really quickly. Your presentation had me thinking about some recent patients that I've seen. Audiologists in the Burlington area. And there's several patients we've seen who are employed, though struggling in their work environment from a communication standpoint. And often, they are existing hearing aid users.

And, sometimes, what ends up happening is that I'm in sort of a liaison position between the patient and their work regarding

possible accommodations that might be compatible with hearing aids or assistive technology devices.

And this conversation kind of sparks me to think that there's very often people who may not be referred to HireAbility. But very likely could benefit from some of their advocacy and expertise, and so maybe I can talk, you know, a little bit more about that. But I have a strong feeling that there's many working Vermonters with hearing loss who are very unaware of equipment in which their employers would likely purchase for them as an accommodation.

And, you know, how hard to raise awareness to people that are struggling that there are options. And that can improve things. So I think there's a lot of population who could benefit from your services and advocacy and, you know, I would be happy to talk with Kate more about that. And try to reach out, also, to other audiologists about that.

>> Julie, that sounds great. We would love to have that conversation, I'm sure Kate can follow up with you. I think the other thing I would mention is that HireAbility also houses the assistive technology project.

And we have specialists across the state who actually are pretty skilled in knowing what the state of the art is in terms of equipment and accommodations. And that, also, might be a very helpful resource to you, potentially, or certainly to people you're serving.

>> Exactly. Yep. Thank you.

>> Yeah, this is Will. The other thing that I would also mention, which, you know, you all know, but there are more and more people who are having their hearing aids covered by their insurance plans. So we're seeing that more and more. Since that law passed here in Vermont. And that's generally very good news.

But we also don't want to forget that people are, they're often going to need more than just the hearing aid to Deb's point. And what Diane mentioned. We have the assistive technology program, folks might need, still support on the phone or maybe need an additional listening system for their employment environment.

So there are several things that the AT specialists all over the state can review with people, and I think that one AT staff who is just really, really well versed in hearing loss technology is certainly going to be a resource for folks.

But I think that Kate can get in touch with you, Julie, and follow up with you, and then, we also certainly want to be getting those referrals if you're working with anyone, you know, who you feel like might be helped by sort of our services is certainly a referral would be appropriate.

>> This is Kate. Certainly, you know, we also provide counseling and guidance, as counselors do, and that can really, for some of these folks, getting the hearing aid is maybe one piece of

it and technology is great. But we also provide consultation on how that can work and how to have those consultations or if people are just feeling unsure about what to do next, certainly a referral can be helpful. We can talk through some of their options.

>> Anyone have any other comments or questions? This has been a very beneficial conversation, I think, for everyone involved. And planning to hear more after you guys meet about next steps. So thank you, Diane, for coming. I will let you depart, since I know you have to leave in about five minutes. But before we hit the break, I will have, I just saw that Jessica jumped on.

So if she can just pop her head in and give an update on VANCRO before we go to a break.

>> Thanks for the opportunity, Spenser.

>> I thought I saw Jessica on here. There she is.

>> I am here. Hello, good morning, everybody. I apologize for being late. My son had an appointment that went much longer than expected. So I apologize. So I'm Jessica Hutchins. And I am, you know, a white woman, I'm wearing a maroon, for visual description, a maroon sweater, I have bracelets on my wrists. I have a 1 1/2-year-old here on my lap who is wearing a blue shirt with mountains on the front.

And has got a lanyard, a VANCRO lanyard. We're both blond hair, I wear glasses. Our background is a door to this room and a large dark colored background for professional background purposes. The update about VANCRO, the first thing I want to talk about is the SSP program. So we did get an extension for providing SSP services.

Only for a few months, but that gave, that was provided, was able to provide some hours for the folks who are utilizing that program for some of their services. And they could continue to schedule SSPs for their appointments.

But there are still concerns of after that extension, what is that going to look like? And figuring out more stable funding. We don't know if the services will continue after that. We did get a grant to extend. So that's great.

But we've been hearing from several folks about the complaints around the limitation of hours. That there's not enough SSPs to provide the services. We've been hearing complaints about kind of living in rural areas. And having to get to services very far away, the SSPs don't want to be doing those kind of travel things.

The budget, we don't have enough training. I mean, enough money in the budget to really provide another training and onboard more SSPs. So we're sort of getting by barely with what we already have. So that's one challenge.

The second challenge is they're all 1099 contractors. So they're not our W2 employees where they have a set schedule and they can go anywhere and do anything within that timeframe. So I just have to clarify, certainly, with the deafblind folks we work with to make

sure they understand.

You know, they may not be able to fit your specific needs because we can't control their schedules as 1099 contractors. So, you know, we've been asking people to talk with their legislators, their senators, their representatives to kind of figure out if we can get a bill of some kind to get passed to sort of get some more funding.

Right now, there's just nothing, there's nothing to kind of hold the government accountable to provide services for deafblind folks.

So secondly, we have an expansion of interest in protactile and tactics. Doing sort of a training of some kind on those communications systems. We have Christina Telford from Helen Keller National Center. And so, we've been in sort of touch with her. And we've been talking a little bit about how we might provide a protactile and tactics training for the community in Vermont.

And not just folks who are deaf and blind, but maybe for the deaf community, for interpreters. Just to be able to have that ability to have those, that communication with deafblind folks. Deafblind signers, this is.

So that's something we're kind of working on. And we're hoping to get that off the ground in 2025. Educational interpreting is still happening, you know, they're still screaming for educational interpreters, mainstream students, schools need it, we're in the process of collaborating very well with the ESP program. The educational Services Project. Under UVM Medical Center.

So, we've been working with them, trying to figure out how to fill some of those gaps in need. For those positions. It's still -- it's been very frustrating, continues to be frustrating. We're worried about the next school year already looking at those needs.

You know, just making sure that those things are field, some of them have been unfielded, what does that mean for students accessing their education? We don't know. We're very concerned. Potentially those students have to go to schools out of state. We may lose the kids as students in the state because we can't provide the services they need.

And there's more services need because we've got more people moving to the state, which is great. We want people to move here, it's thrilling to have new deaf people and new folks, but which I'm thrilled about as a deaf person and a member of the community here. But as a person who fills interpretive requests, it's scary, we just don't have the numbers.

Just growing the field of interpreters is another big need. We provide internship program. We have a second cohort for our Vermont interpreter internship program, apprentice program. And so, we are hoping to get these folks. We get people in the program who

move to Vermont temporarily for that program. And then, we do our best to try to convince them to stay.

Sometimes, they have different goals, which don't include, necessarily, becoming a freelance interpreter, but we do try to work with them to try to get them to be part of the solution. So it's concerning, certainly, overall. Cory Bruner, who is vice president of VANCRO. We're working on partnering and just trying to figure out with leadership if there's a major or minor in interpreting studies. That's possible at UVM.

But that's not a short-term solution. That's a very long-term project. That's at least five years of very specific kind of evaluatory steps, when will it happen? And that's not something that's going to be an immediate solution to our short-term problem.

We have folks, you know, all over the state of Vermont, the northern part of the state is a busy place. We're pulling interpreters from many places just to try to cover requests. And we're trying to be very transparent with the community and transparent with deaf consumers and interpreters and requesters about what the reality is of availability and what's realistic. And try to figure out, you know, when is remote an option? When can we go to our remote list? When is an in-person person really necessary? And how can we coordinate for the folks who can be in person?

And then, the remote people have sort of become our Vermont interpreters now because we rely on them so heavily even though they're in New York and Colorado or North Carolina. And so, we're just trying to be as strategic and careful as possible. So that we can provide the best services for the most people.

We've already hired an east program manager, and so that person will take care of the eastern contracts that we provide services under, under the eastern part of the country. So that person will start December 1st, which means that my position will change a little bit. I will oversee the west and the east program manager and, also, the Vermont piece. That's what I've been doing. So my plate has been very full.

So I've been looking forward, certainly, to our expansion and we're expanding across the country. But we're hoping, also, we can use our influence to influence other states to follow our deaf preference philosophy in booking interpreters and have some influence on how they interact with requesters.

And how they interact with deaf consumers and hard of hearing and deafblind people as well as interpreters. I'm just -- I'm just looking at the comments here. I see a comment popped up.

Oh, yes. Yes. Brattleboro's a problem, definitely. I see that comment. So we're also trying to figure out how to talk with them. I know that we've been trying to figure that out. But availability of housing is another issue.

Like, housing has been -- the costs of housing, the

availability of housing. There's, there are a lot of factors that are part of the problem. It's not just addressing one piece of the pie. But, you know, the State of Vermont is a complicated system. And just trying to figure some of that out.

There are, you know, there certainly are plenty of jobs, if you're qualified, if you're a good fit. You know, that's great, you know. But like, oh, housing, where am I going to live? OK. Thanks anyway. So, it's difficult. I'm just looking at the comments now. But yes, we certainly enjoy collaborating with ESP. There's a new position under ESP. And we've been collaborating very great with those folks. And so, I really appreciate that work.

I think that's it. I apologize for this distraction. Very upset with me. So, any questions? She's saying milk. She's looking for something to eat.

Any feedback? Or any resource suggestions that you may have? Anything that -- any questions? I'm open to anything. We're looking, we're excited to continue to serve the State of Vermont in the best way that we can.

>> Um... anybody have any questions for Jessica? She covered a lot there. So...

>> I did. I did. And I apologize for that. Hopefully, you're getting some positives. I know there was a lot of things that we're trying to do. But we're just trying to be transparent in all of the whats that's going on behind the scenes that you may not see or hear about, necessarily, but we just want to be really transparent with the work that we're doing.

You know, we're doing a lot, we're growing. But there's also a lot of frustration that comes with that and meeting the needs of the community and wanting to meet the needs. And just thinking about, thinking out over the next five years, what does that look like? If we continue to have people move to the state, which is what we want. We don't have the interpreter community growing at the same rate. Filling the needs and the requests that keep coming in.

Oh, I see Laura's comment. It says interpreters working over 40 hours, many of them. Yes. Yes. Yes. We certainly are telling the interpreters to take time for themselves. We appreciate them, you know, providing the access that they do. But -- and we want them to do everything they are able to do, but certainly, we also want them to be listening to themselves and managing their schedule and we honor that.

If they say we can't do it, we do what we can to make other plans. Luckily we're able to have a good relationship with many requesters and say, well, that date and time doesn't work, but maybe if we get that local person, if they can give us a list of dates and times that work can we pass that on to you? Most of the time they say absolutely. Luckily our relationships with requesters are very



strong, and they're really grateful for our flexibility and we are grateful for their flexibility. And so we do what we can to work together to get things filled.

>> OK. So we will head to the break now. To give the interpreters some rest on their hands and the captioner rest on her fingers. I'm going to make Will the host so that he will continue to move the meeting going forward. So everyone can step off and do a bio break. The meeting will continue to run.

And, I look forward to reading the notes on the next presentation. Will, go ahead. When do you want everybody back.

>> I was just going to say, let's take a break until 11:10. So we shifted the schedule a little bit. But we'll be back at 11:10.

>> OK. I'm going to sign off. Lead the way, buddy.

>> All right. Will do.

>> All right. This is Will, I think we're ready to get started, again. Spenser mentioned he's not able to come after the break. I guess HE had a rough morning. Just kidding, he can't be here. I'll be taking the lead as our chair today.

Next on the agenda, we have a presentation from Laura as well as the VCPM group. So, Laura, take it away.

>> Hey, everybody, this is Laura. So this particular group, I think I mentioned before I was working with a couple of other groups. There are medical students that had invited to come and present. And this is a secondary group I wanted to invite to the mix to work with us and they're all popping up on screen. Great. Thank you.

So glad you can join us today. So I will let this group take it over from here. The floor is yours.

>> Hey, there my name is Kelsey Naro. We wanted to share a little bit about our project and get some feedback from this group. So thank you for having us. And making some time to listen in.

So, we are a group of, we're all Vermont state employees, and we are halfway through, a little over halfway through of the Vermont Certified Public Managers Program. So in the second year, the focus is on a consultative project. And we were excited to join

Laura on this project around information gathering.

So, I think we'll all be able to chime in unless someone's mic isn't working and we'll troubleshoot that as it goes. I think Maggie, if you're doing the slides, could you move on to the next one? There are other team members that will chime in as we move through the presentation.

But just a little introduction to what are we working on? The central issue that we wanted to address that Laura wanted to address that we are helping her address is the lack of data for adults in this community. Understanding what their needs are, I think. And we heard a lot about what some of those needs and issues, common issues are. And I think they're more well known in this community.

But there isn't data to really demonstrate that need, to really show that demand to even do a needs assessment. And so, the first step was to gather some of that data. And so, we did a lot of thinking about the best ways to go about that.

And so, we wanted to create a survey that wouldn't just capture a moment in time, we wanted to create something that could live beyond our project timeline, which we'll wrap up in May. So we will be collecting data starting, we'll get into a little bit more of the nitty-gritty of the survey itself down the road, but we will be starting to collect some data in the new year and be able to provide a little bit analysis of that.

But the intent of our survey is for something that uses automation. And is able to continue to live and collect data and analyze and present information so that Laura and whoever else needs it can use this information to demonstrate that need, to help share what some of the issues that folks are facing are.

OK. Looks like we're troubleshooting some tech. Andrea is up next.

>> Do you want to just take it?

>> Sorry, Michael, were you offering? Or do you want me to keep going?

>> Either way. It's up to you.

>> Jump on it.

>> OK. So, one of the challenges that was coming up with deliverables that we could actually deliver in the time constraints that we have, we basically have ten months for the project, depending on which way you look at it. But we realize right off that we had to have something that would be sustainable for Laura after we were done. Because we were not going to be able to do her entire project.

She had asked for a bunch of really important items to be assessed and, you know, some plans and stuff. But you know, we're trying to concentrate on getting good data. So, we're trying to, then, create a plan for Laura that she can use to maintain the data and also, continue to ingest the data and process it and use it, you know, to the best of her ability.

We are going to help provide, you know, a report on the initial data that we get. And then, hopefully, some sort of plan or some ideas for the next cohort to take over and just take it from where we are, you know, we're leaving it off.

We want to leave it in good hands and, you know, in good way. So the survey, we started creating it that couple of weeks ago, and it's definitely a work in progress. A lot of input from different places, different, different types of surveys from states like Colorado and Connecticut.

Demographics, home safety, you know, health care, where you can get services, access to our state services or, you know, their state services. And it includes something like branching and you may be familiar with this, depending on what they select, they will get different questions.

So the survey can be fairly short or depending if they select, you know, certain answers, they might get all of the questions. And the reason for the branching is hopefully limit it to what people really need to select and actually answer.

Instead of throwing dozens of questions at them and, you know, they get frustrated and kind of leave the survey.

So I think I'm turning it over to Victoria, yeah.

>> Victoria. Yeah. I'm Victoria with the State of Vermont, also with the Health Department. So this is the process of how the survey will communicate the responses back to the program, specifically, Laura. In this process, the Vermonter completes the survey, and we use an application called power automate to create a SharePoint list, like a fancy Excel spreadsheet but posted just line. And then, we will send Laura an email notification with a link to the new response. So she can view the response in realtime.

And optionally, we'll send an email to the survey submitter with their responses, as well. We are going to develop, basically, a dashboard of the survey responses. This is how the dashboard will be created. It'll be fancy excel charts. And they can be displayed on the two Sharepoint sites you see here.

Optionally, Laura can choose to aggregate the results and put a report out on the public site for Vermonters. That's just the basic diagram of how the project will continue on after the team is done and it'll continue on to Laura after people complete the survey. Next slide, please, Maggie. Thank you.

So this is what the survey looks like. We are passing it through accessibility reviews, as well. Microsoft Forms is HIPAA compliant. Meaning that the survey completers will be secure and their data, the information that they enter will also be secure. No matter where they complete the survey.

-- from. A public library, their home, their workplace, and so on. It's also very mobile friendly and can be completed on the phone, tablet, or desktop.

Next slide, please. Thank you. As we stated before, the survey sections will ask general demographics, nonidentifiable means that we're not going to ask them their name. But they can optionally choose to indicate their county, their city, and so on. We'll ask them basic questions about living in Vermont and access to state-based programs and services.

Employment and accessibility, ASL interpretation, and health care and emergency services. These sections, as Mike was explaining, are optional. So our largest sections that we're hoping to get data on would be living in Vermont, access to state-based programs, and ASL interpretation.

Next slide, please. Our roadmap is, oh, I think, yeah, sorry. I put in fancy animations. I'm sorry. So our survey roadmap is that we would welcome any advisory council feedback. And we're going to release that survey back to you in the next couple of days. So just still reviewing it at a high level.

We're going to soft launch the survey to groups on the 9th of December. And a full public launch, including social media will occur on the 15th of December. In January, we'd like to come back to the council to show you the dashboard and the survey distribution plans to continue through 2025.

And then, the next cohort of VCPN will come in, take the data that we've gathered from the last year, and continue providing Laura the requests that she made of us in the original ask.

So although it will take a yearlonger than we wanted, we'll have a great data pull from Vermonters in 2025. And I think it's over to you, Maggie.

>> Great. Thank you, Victoria. Just a summary of the next steps, again, we're going to do our soft launch in December followed by a full launch, and then, hoping to come back to this council in January with our outreach and survey distribution plan.

Some good news that we got recently was that our funding request for \$750 was approved. So we're hoping to use this to create a video and do video editing, possibly interpreting, captioning, have a gift card as a survey incentive, and then, have a little bit of budget to help mail things out.

So again, we'd really love feedback from the council once we have a job survey in a good place, and then throughout our process. So that about wraps up our short presentation for today. So, we're happy to take any questions or feedback that you all have now based on our, based on today's presentation. Thank you.

I'll stop sharing.

>> I see, Sharon, you've got your hand up, go ahead.

>> Hello. Everyone, thank you for your work here. Could you just share with us how you will identify to whom to send the surveys? How you will identify the recipients?

>> We're going to utilize our departments at the state, our

HireAbility, which is out of DAIL, which is Laura's division. We will utilize the health department's Instagram account to kind of do a social media push across Facebook, Instagram. And then, we're hoping to do direct outreach to community-based organizations, as well as the health department's district offices. That can be in a flyer that they post on the wall with a QR code to take the survey mobily.

And then, we'll continue that outreach push through the quarters of 2025.

>> Thank you. So a thing to consider, and this is a longer term piece of work, but you could partner with audiologists and through a various permissions that are received from respective institutions, you could get names and addresses of people who are seeking hearing aids and other audiological services. That way your reach could potentially be greater.

Just a little bit more work, but definitely very doable.

>> Excellent idea. Thank you so much.

>> This is will, I've got a question, as well. So I do know that you're going to be starting this process in December. But I do wonder do you think it's going to be great and you'll get adequate responses even over the holiday period?

>> The holiday period, great question. The holiday period is going to be slow. So our goal is to continue that soft launch, but in January really start a hard push with the flyer, with social media, and so on.

>> Deb? Deb, you want to pop on?

>> Hi. OK. So in terms of the survey, you are looking for people who need to be able to access health services. And you mentioned ASL interpretation. You might also include something like captioning or assistive listening devices or other means of... the vast majority of people who are hard of hearing don't sign.

I think it's important to get the broad spectrum of ways that people communicate.

>> Thank you. Agreed.

>> OK.

>> All right. Laura?

>> Yeah, it's actually not Laura, it's Kate. Hey, this is Kate Parrish. Couple of things. What are the -- when do you expect results to start coming in? I'm just thinking, we've got an event in May on the 3rd that might be a really great benefit where a ton of people from our community are going to be coming together. That might be a good spot to send it out. Or if you have results to send that there and share that with them.

And again, if people are coming, you can just work with that group. You could set up a booth, and you know, talk to people about results and/or get more surveys filled out. Yeah, so if you're interested, you're welcome to also contact me or Laura, through me

and we can get you connected through that. Yes.

>> Thank you so much, Kate. We were hoping, it's not finalized yet, but we were hoping to come back in the new year to this group to share the final survey and see if you all could help with some of the sharing and some of the distribution. We're still working on that, that process, as well. So hopefully, stay tuned, and we'll be back would love to hear more about those events and places where we can make sure it's available for folks.

>> All right. This is Will. Any other questions? Or comments for the group? All right. So the survey questions are in the chat. There's a link there. Feel free to take a look the a it. Feel free to send your feedback, contact Laura or anyone else if you have more questions or concerns.

Thank you to this group. I really appreciate you being here and sharing the work you're doing. Great job, and good luck with the rollout. All right. Quick interpreter swap.

>> All right. So I think we'll turn it over to Laura, again, for her director's report.

>> Unfortunately, I don't really have a lot of updates. You know, the one main, I have one sort of main update. Last time, you remember the legislative report recommendations was around better emergency communication.

And since that was the -- end of the last legislative session, and until next month. And a group of us have been meeting every couple of weeks, and I am the point person to kind of represent that group to make sure that we document get the recommendations, I think that's due December 15th.

It's around spoken language recommendations are also included in this to make sure that we have better communication out to folks. We're making recommendations, but we have no idea, you know, what the budget might look like. So that's one of the downsides to this. We have a lot of recommendations, but many of them are based on, you know, in theory, if you give us this much money, then we could do this, and if we got this much money, we could only do these things. There's no guarantee any of it will happen.

But one of the positive things, after we submit those recommendations, this group wants to continue meeting until we're really determined to make this process better and make sure that we get a better system in place for getting emergency announcements out to everyone.

So that's good. Also, now, we're sort of at the end of the year. The number of referrals I've got has grown exponentially, I've been contacted over 400 times and I'm only one person. I don't know how I'm going to manage all of those things.

I sort of do my best. And I also work to really kind of strategize and refer people out to other folks if it's not directly related to my work. Some of the things I get are very quick questions that need to be answers, other things are more long-term and require a little more work.

But I've worked one-on-one with a number of different agencies and departments doing some monthly check-ins with folks, talking about issues that come up and talking about how to strategize and brainstorm around solutions.

And so I've been doing a lot of work behind the scenes. And hopefully, you're seeing a difference on your end and sort of seeing things change and shift, hopefully,. So I think that is probably all I have to share. Thank you for listening to me and for listening to the group that just presented. I'm excited about the potential of really getting some good results.

And to give -- so we can really have some data to base our actions on and really make a plan to move forward. So I'm excited about that possibility.

Any questions for Laura? All right. I don't see any questions. Certainly, be in touch anytime, I'll be available. If things occur to you later on, certainly, let me know. All right. 24/7, you heard it here, Laura's available 24/7.

>> No, not 24/7, I need time for my family and myself. I'm available, but not that available.

>> All right, thank you, Laura. Appreciate your time. All right. And I'm happy to share the presentation that the group just ran through, those slides. I assume they'll send that to me and I can get that out to everybody just so you'll have it. It's the same project that Dr. Quan had talked about at previous meetings. And we'll upload that to the council website.

All right. Thank you.

>> Thanks, Laura. The next piece of the agenda. We have a couple pieces of council business next on the agenda. The legislative report is going to be due soon, so our plan is to kind of collect all of the pieces and all of the updates of everybody's parts of the report. And I know that some folks have already sent Sharon and Sherry had mentioned they've already sent their part of the report. And so we'll collect the rest of those pieces over the next couple of weeks. And then, my understanding is that Spenser, we hope to set a special meeting on the third Thursday in December, which we're looking at looking at potentially 9:30 to 11:00 with that. And we'll confirm that timing.

But the point of the meeting would be to really take a look at the legislative report and to go through that and make any final changes or edits and to the draft that we'll be provided prior to that meeting and then, get it ready to really just be sent along to the legislature.

So that is the plan. For the report.

>> All righty. So let's see, what's next here? The next piece was about council membership. And we just had Janet Dickinson here, unfortunately, she had to go for another commitment, but she is going to be our new representative for the interpreter community.

We had had previously Kelly DEKer, I don't know if you remember her, she was previously the representative for the community and she actually moved out of state. We've now got Janet on deck for that.

She's got the calendar of meetings and she's all set to come. She comes with many years of experience working as an interpreter and with the interpreter community. So Spenser and I have been starting to reach out to a couple of the members on the committee who haven't been attending meetings and just so that we can really confirm that they are interested in continuing to be on the committee. And if not, we'll get them to step down from those roles and work, then, to refill those seats.

So we're working on that process over the next couple of months. Just to make sure that our council remains strong. And to be strong, we want to make sure we have everybody at the table and that people are engaged and participating in our meetings.

So if you have any questions about membership or any of that process, please reach out to Spenser and myself, and we can certainly clarify. Any other comments about council business? Or anything else?

>> Hi, this is Rebecca Chalmers.

>> Hi.

>> Sorry, internet troubles, I didn't get to hear everybody. What -- two quick comments, one is, could we have the draft legislative report in some kind of shared electronic format where people can add comments to it, suggestions? So we can kind of peck away at it? And then, use that together time for discussion rather than more tiny comments?

>> Yes, I will talk with Spenser about that. And see if that's something he can do. It's obviously, the most important part is to get your sections to him so he can kind of put them together in that format.

But I'll ask him about creating a space and making it editable online so people can make comments and edits there.

>> Thank you. Something like Sharepoint, or I'm sure there's formats that you could work on.

And the other thing, what was the status with the council membership? I didn't understand. I know I reached out to Spenser like months ago and he hasn't responded, that's why I just wanted to be totally sure we hadn't all expired like it looked like. And I wasn't quite understanding if that was answered today.



>> Yeah. So basically, Spenser and myself are trying to just, at this point, just confirm that members who are currently on the council are still interested in being on the council. Especially, those who have not come to meetings in a while. And if they don't want to be on the council, we'll just make note of that and look at replacing them.

I think we did also take a look at terms, and the expiration of terms, and I don't have that information right in front of me. But I remember we did check into that, and it did look like everything was OK for right now on that front. But I'll double check with Spenser on those numbers and get back to you.

>> Will, I think that if you check on the council's website, all of our terms expired in 2023. So, I think that you and Spenser need to do something if you all want us to legally still continue to participate in a... in keeping with the rules that be.

>> OK. Yeah. That's -- thank you. Obviously, that definitely needs attention. Any other comments? Oh, Sharon, again. Yeah?

>> Yes, thanks, Will. In reading, scrolling back through the chat, there's been a suggestion, and I had made this suggestion several times over the last year or so that, perhaps, we change the format of the council meeting. And the people who are reporting during the first half an hour or so should be required to submit their report in writing a week ahead of time.

Because I don't believe that we're using our council time well. Just listening to reports. That could be supplied in writing. And instead, we could use our time discussing solutions. I've made this suggestion at least three times. And to the school-age credit, the committee's credit, we have always submitted our report a week ahead of time so that we can discuss the difficult things that need to be discussed in order to advance the work.

And I think it could be true for all of the other people who are reporting and the reporting some of the challenges that they're having, but the council's collective expertise is not being utilized to help them begin to solve or mobilize resources to solve their challenges.

So, that's one of the many reasons why I think the council has been ineffective. So I'd love the council leadership, once again, hear their feedback that we change the format of the meeting to be more productive, to better serve our population in Vermont.

>> OK. Great. Thank you. For that feedback.

>> Hi, I really appreciated Sharon's suggestion. I also value the opportunity to have a discussion together. Would it be helpful to, I guess my impression is, if everyone was able to give a report

ahead of time, is it in writing going to work for people? Or do you think some people need to have it signed?

I wasn't entirely sure. Is that... would be something that would be helpful to some folks. Are we... because maybe you could look into that. Would you be willing to look into that? Whether a written report ahead of time would provide enough accessibility to the council members that then we could use the council time for more collaborative effort?

If it doesn't work, how could we make sure that everybody gets the communication in a mode that works for them?

>> OK. Thank you. That's a good point. Jessica?

>> Hello. Rebecca's point about accessibility for the reports and stuff, so just one idea would be to use a platform that can put video. So my last report, the video was very small, but I used a similar thing. So that platform has a number of different things that you can adjust. You can sort of embed a video so there is video that accompanies, you know, the PowerPoint or other things.

So, there's technology available for that sort of thing. It's Canva that we use, and that's something you can kind of do all sorts of things and you don't have to worry so much about editing, uploading a video.

And Microsoft PowerPoint can do that, but you kind of have to do a little few more steps of embedding the video. But there is technology and platforms out there that I've used before and so I know they're available for providing that.

>> So, you said the program that you mentioned is that cloud-based? So whatever information is in the cloud? That you utilize?

>> Yes, both of them can, Microsoft can also be converted to PDF or some other format. But the video, I don't know about the video itself. In a PDF, you couldn't just press play. But both of them could have a live link. They have that ability so that you can have the slide show with the video available at a link.

And then, you could just press play or you could set it to automatically play and automatically click next. So the platform has a number of things that can be done. And you could sort of play around with it to figure out, you know, making sure that you had videos embedded for full access.

Could you kind of either put that in the chat or just send me some information and a link about that program that you're talking about for using? Yeah.

>> I can absolutely do that.

>> All right. I see Laura and Kate.

>> Really, it's just me. It's Laura. So, I'm just thinking I don't know if -- this only works if everybody has a Zoom account. Does everybody have a Zoom account? Because an idea is if everybody

has a Zoom account, you can kind of show the slides and the video -- or I mean show the slides and kind of record it with yourself on the video and then send that sort of that, and then you could send the physical copy of the slides or the paper. I don't know. That maybe is too much work.

But I was just thinking that might also be a way to solve the accessibility problem. So... might make it easier for me to upload things to the website. I'm thinking about, you know, what would work. Just an idea that might also be a solution. All right.

>> I think if I remember correctly, Jessica, you did one presentation with like you had a video of yourself kind of presenting because you couldn't come to a meeting or something. So she made a video and then sent that to Spenser and then, Spenser was able to kind of share his screen and show that video during the meeting.

And then, the interpreter here at the meeting voiced that for the group. And then, it was accessible. But yeah, you could put that on the web is what I'm saying.

>> But yeah, so Jessica, I think we just left it Jessica's going to send me information about that and I can kind of take a look at it and think about what's possible.

>> And one other thing, this is Laura, and Jessica maybe you don't know the answer, but that information that you're planning to share, does that mean that the link would be available and open forever? Or is that link time limited somehow?

>> It could be either. But mostly, I think, it's kind of open. Anytime you press it, you get to the live link, there's no limit. But you can limit it if you wanted to.

>> One other thing, this is Laura, is if you have a video as related to the commissioner's YouTube channel, they would also help us count how many people actually watched it if we connected it somehow to that YouTube channel.

>> That's interesting.

>> I just thought of that. Maybe you could test my previous presentation in a live link. Maybe you could put that on their YouTube channel just to experiment and see what it looked like. That is a live link. I'm assuming. So that might be, I could be wrong. It might be something to try it out.

>> Yeah, if I can't find the link, I'll get in touch with you.

>> Sounds good.

>> All right. Any other business?

All right. Seeing nothing. Any -- anyone want to make comments under public comment? Anybody who's not on the council? I think there maybe was only one person here who was not a member. I don't know if there's anything you want to say in this public comment section. You certainly don't have to, but I'll give you the opportunity if you want.

>> No, but thank you for having me on, and I appreciate it so much for the opportunity to join your call.

>> Great. Yeah. Welcome. Happy you were able to join us. All right. So if there's nothing else, no further comments or questions, I think we can wrap up a few minutes early. I will email Spenser with some of these suggestions that we talked about. And then, I'll also talk, reach out about this meeting that we're looking at in December to talk fully about the report.

So thank you for all of your feedback. These are really great ideas and I'll talk with Spenser about incorporating them. So I hope you enjoy the rest of your Thursday. And the rest of your week. Thanks.

Bye-bye everybody.