

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

March 16, 2023  
9:30am-11:00am  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

## Welcome/Housekeeping/Announcements

Welcome back Laura! Reminded council that members can be reimbursed for your time participating on the council (non-state employee) for meetings and mileage for in-person meetings. Stipend information will be sent to the Council.

## Program/Organizational updates

### Val Hughes- VCIL

Vermont Deafblind/Deaf/Hard of Hearing plus event happening April 29 at Vermont Technical College. Disability Awareness Day is April 19<sup>th</sup>, the theme is, "We are your neighbors" so trying to kind of get that grass roots support going around disability.

### Jessica Hutchins- VANCRO Interpreting Services

SSP pilot program grant we're navigating that process around SSPs and deafblind needs, recruiting DeafBlind folks that are signers and non-signers as well as SSPs and Renee Pellerin became our SSP specialist. We have started to provide services to some people, and they feel a bit more independent. VANCRO is getting the word out to anyone interested, either in becoming an SSP in this program or needs an SSP, someone who has visual and hearing issues it doesn't matter if they're completely deaf or a little bit deaf or completely blind or have a little bit of a sight issue, non-signers or signers. We can take anyone into this program. VANCRO, DVAS, HireAbility Vermont are hosting Vermont Deaf Deafblind Hard of Hearing inclusive day on April 29th in Randolph for anybody who provides services or wants to provide services or wants to learn about deaf/deafblind/hard of hearing issues which will have 10 vendors, if you know of anyone that is not on the list let us know and spread the word about this event, please.

### David Krueger – Vermont Association of the Deaf

VTAD Facebook folks are having difficulty in getting our posts so now posting every to their [website](#) as well. If you have a flyer or events or things that are happening that are important to the deaf community, send it to us and we will post it. Interpreting services at events I think this this council needs to do more activism and put the word out and let the folks know that needs to be part of their planning process (even if they think no deaf/hard of hearing people there), especially public servants having public events. As members of this Council, we need to be the voice for these services for our communities, show up events and promote Interpreting services! The State has the statewide contract with VANCRO. And that means we, state employees and representatives have access to American Sign Language interpreters and captioning. Every agency or department has thought ahead to create a budget for communication access. There needs to be more transparency about access, not just ASL

interpreters but captioning, and any other accommodations people need. If participants need accommodations, they need to know who to contact for events.

Deb Charlea Baker – HLAA

HLAA Membership continues to grow. We've become more and more a place of resources and inquiry. Questions over email which go to Carol our Communications Director, who forwards to whichever steering committee member has expertise in a particular area. FM loop still trying to find where they are, whose getting installed and requests on how to get FM loop around the State. FM Loop locations directory is being formed with this information. Equipment distribution program presentation in January from Peter Jonkey and Nick Moreland. March 28th Andrea Kanib to present about Gathering Sound Network. Attorney General is suing an over-the-counter hearing aid manufacturer who is misrepresenting their product. If you come across anyone who has a question or a concern or is dealing with whatever related to hearing loss, let us know, and we do one on one help. And support for folks.

Kate Parrish – HireAbility - Coordinator for the Deaf Deafblind Hard of Hearing Services

YouTube video posted to our website to set up a design competition deadline is March 31<sup>st</sup>, asking people in the community regardless being D/HH/DB, to send us suggestions for signs that they create that might be the best to represent who we are at HireAbility. We really are looking for a way to brand ourselves, both in English and in sign language. We're trying to do more outreach make people more aware of our mission and what we do. We're willing to address any groups or any constituencies and any gatherings that you have, please be in touch.

Linda Hazard - EHDI/PIP

EHDI conference that was held in Cincinnati, Ohio was last week and had 900 participants, our last conference was March 13, 2020. Vermont had 6 presentations (3 by me and 3 by Michelle John). Michelle's presentations were on Assuming competence, what to do if you don't know what to do. So really, talking about her parent-lived experience, which I heard was phenomenal and Vermont NASDE guidelines. I am nominating her to be a panel speaker for 2024 in Denver! Michele is also now a Parent Ambassador! She presented on engaging family leaders in the Metabolic/blood spot screening (newborn screening) going forward about how to bring the three programs together so that there's better communication and collaboration.

My presentations EHDI 101 anyone new coming to EHDI would have an idea of what EHDI programs do in the 50 states and 9 territories. Progressiveness with our Early Intervention Services - One being a single point of entry. Two, looking at outcome measures and partnering with a CDC project called Odyssey that is looking at outcomes for children between birth and 5 years of age. Birth to 3 screenings because that is something that Congress has asked and HRSA has asked us to come up with a plan and we were well represented at EHDI this year. CDC Progress Report and data has been submitted for this year. May 11th and 12<sup>th</sup> Trauma Informed Workshop, self-care workshop information will be sent out this week to providers. We're bringing in a group from Wisconsin that includes a psychologist fluent in ASL, an EHDI coordinator from Wisconsin, and a parent. DHHDB program in the Vermont partnership we continue to provide services with students, both in consulting and TA, as well as direct instruction. ASL bilingual program we've definitely seen an increase this year of direct services and needs.

There are two positions open for teachers of the deaf for the next school year. We still have 8 educational interpreter communication facilitator positions open. We've had a number of applicants, but they are either not qualified or they want remote interpreting services, which is not going to work in our school districts. The evaluation tool trial/pilot with the two school districts will be getting underway and also attending the Special Educator Administrators Association Meeting in May and doing a presentation there along with the School Aged Subcommittee.

Sharon Henry- Co-Chair of the School Age Subcommittee

School Age subcommittee is responding to our legislative mandate to assess services for deaf/hard of hearing/deafblind. We have created the Vermont Quality Indicator tool, and we will be presenting, educating, when to use it, how to use it, and to solicit their feedback them to the tool this coming May to VSA/VCSEA annual meeting. Meanwhile we have two school districts right now, beta testing the tool in those school districts. Last June, we submitted the tool to the Agency of Education for their review and consideration of adoption. While AOE will not adopt nor mandate the tool, they reached out to stakeholders to review the tool and we have received their feedback. This June we will review the feedback that we've received and make revisions that are warranted based on the actual NASDE guidelines.

Cassie Santo- Agency of Education

Vermont Quality Indicator feedback was given to the subcommittee. Although we are not mandating it at this time and understand edits will be ongoing and hope to circle back around after those take place. Thanked the council for stakeholder feedback on the D/HH/DB Educational Services AOE Grant RFP. Feedback is being review and edits are being made. We expect the RFP will be available sooner this year. Special Education Rules is a big focus at this time. We are working right now with the Vermont Family Network to offer parent information sessions in May and June. We will ask for some support with this council as we advertise this with families. [Special Education Rule Changes | Agency of Education \(vermont.gov\)](https://www.vermont.gov/education/special-education-rule-changes)

**Commissioner's Report**

Megan Tierney-Ward Deputy Commissioner

Federal Public Health Emergency is slated to end May 11<sup>th</sup>. What that means for DAIL is that if we had any Federally approved program flexibilities that we need to evaluate those and determine whether they need to end with the Public Health Emergency. The Federal Government is giving states six months after May 11<sup>th</sup> which is November 11th to make those changes. An example is Medicaid programs as issues with people maintaining consistency of care giver, we gave broader definition of who could be a care giver to allow for more flexibility. We will work with Medicaid policy folks regarding some of those things will be ending and some will be built in. FMAP funding Enhanced funding we're receiving by the state for home and community based services. The Agency of Human Services has a request for proposals to hire a contractor who would help the state to manage applications from the public or directly from providers. If there's an entity that wants to submit an application for the funds, that process will be announced within the next couple of months. Next Council Meeting could have guest such as Wendy Trafton or Frank Hodgins to share about the one time expenditures that could help enhance home and community based services for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind.

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

*Laura Siegel - D/HH/DB Director*

Has been back since March 1<sup>st</sup> and plenty to catch up. Hearing Induction Loop Project the proposal made is now on hold until the summer. Hearing Induction Work Group is meeting next week. We sent surveys out and had 51 responses. We will look at the responses and then see how that might impact our next steps.

Developmental Disability Services will be sending out the RFP, related to alternative housing for individuals with developmental disabilities and intellectual disabilities. Once the RFP is released, they receive some bids, and see how that whole project moves forward for housing. Three workshops in May for people who work in developmental disabilities and people with intellectual disabilities. Which will focus on how to work with deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind individuals. Mental Health Work Group a survey was sent, and 6 responses were received. I think we have to reconfigure and step back and think about what the next step is. See what we do to engage more people and see whether we can get the data that we're looking for, which would help us figure out whether or not we have a basis to set up a mental health program for Vermont. March 30, I'm going to be co-presenting with Linda Lee through the NFI an all-day presentation in the morning, panels and workshops in the afternoon. Health Care Work Group we're focusing on developing Communication Access Policy template, the goal of that is that we can share that more widely to have a standardized approach across the state for accommodations.

Other Committees and work groups that I have been invited to are: Digital Equity Core Group that will be focusing on rural areas where people don't have access digitally. They will be focusing on underserved people and certainly deaf hard of hearing deafblind, that's in progress. An RFP was just sent out, I can share the link and you can find out more about that if you're interested. If you know stakeholders who are interested and who can apply, please share this information widely.

Burlington Advisory Accessibility Advisory Council main focus has been on Parks and Rec in the Burlington area, I can share the link with their information. DAIL Accessibility Group new to this and will report out next time. I'm assuming that some of the content will be the same as the group I was previously with the AHS accessibility committee. And I think that is focusing on state employees and access for state programs. Vermont Language Justice Project looking at many, many languages other than English that are used by immigrants and refugees and asylees. Vermont Emergency Telepsychiatry Network focusing on emergency departments that need rapid responses to make accommodations for people who may show up in their emergency rooms, I can share their link. Their meetings are recorded, posted, captioned and easily accessible. Vermont School Crisis Planning Team that's focused on school safety and use of restraints, legislature currently has a bill that they're debating, and I can share that information. Two bills were introduced last week, H.468 Representative Sarah Austin relating to language access across State Government Agencies and H.463 a bill creating a position within the legislature that will focus on Americans with Disabilities Act, providing services and improving access to the State House. Office of Regional Equity on March 18<sup>th</sup> will be hosting 2-hour event talking about language access proposal, sharing the link to register.

Rebecca Lalanne-Deaf Vermont Advocacy Services

Updated that a Deaf Children's Bill of Rights (modeled after the State of Maine's Deaf Bill of Rights) is being drafted now by a State Senator. Also a petition will be drafted to collect signatures to support the bill. These will be share with the Council.

**Action Items/Other Business/Closing**

- Stipend information will be sent to the Council
- FMAP funds guest speakers at next meeting Wendy Trafton or Frank Hodgens
- Office of Consumer Protection from the AG's office guest speaker possible next meeting
- Next meeting In-Person Waterbury State Office Complex: - May 18, 2023, from 9:30am - 12:00pm

**Council Attendance**

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

**Guest Attendance**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Lianne Moccia	Interpreter
Kristal Haynes	Interpreter
Jessica Hutchins	VANCRO
Michelle John	VT H& V
Val Hughes	VCIL
Diane	Captioner
Sabine Perry	AOE
Laura Siegel	D/HH/DB Director (DAIL)