

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

January 19, 2023

9:30am-11:30am

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Welcome/Housekeeping/Announcements

Friendly reminder of Norms- if you are not speaking cameras off, interpreters will be pinned for viewing, Spenser will pin folks speaking, Will and Spenser will monitor the chat room. The meeting will end early today.

The Council Report has been submitted to the relevant Legislative and Senate Committees as well as the Governor's Office after AHS internal review. Much of the recommendations don't differ from than last year a hard copy will be emailed to the council and it can be found online at the Vermont Legislatures website under reports.

Laura Seigel is on paternal leave. She will be back by the March meeting. While she is out Executive Assistant at the Commissioner's Office [Ashley Bonneau](#) can field any questions or help to redirect.

Program/Organizational updates

Val Hughes- VCIL- Deaf Independent Coordinator at Vermont Center for independent Living

Individuals with mental health crises continue to struggle getting the assistance and access to interpreters, services, counseling, homes, to make the phone calls to economic services, other service providers and partnering with HCRS. HCRS does understand now how to work with interpreters, how to work with deaf clients. Housing is still a huge issue, there is a waitlist for low-income section 8 housing. Working with legal to help with housing as soon as possible. Hospital interpretation remains a huge issue.

Lack of referrals and information all the different services out there I want to make sure that we really are making sure there are improvements on this. When Center of Deaf and Hard of Hearing was around they provided one stop shopping, they had a resource center, they could call into the center and have those referrals- not now and we need it! It's too spread out. It's not all in one central location. So, if we can do that and improve upon that, that would be great. Thanks.

Jessica Hutchins- VANCRO Interpreting Services

The SSP program in Vermont just got started. Please, share the news. Please, feel free to reach out to me directly at any point in time. I can connect you to the right people coordinating it. We're trying to recruit deafblind signers, deafblind non-signers, signers as well as non-signers for particular work with SSPs. We're looking for folks for these four categories. It's a two-year grant. We know there are people out there who would benefit from these types of services as SSPs. And we know there are people out there looking for jobs and different opportunities in this field. Megan Tierney-Ward suggested connecting with 211 and also providing a training with the Area Agencies on Aging. The training is for the SSPs and also for the deafblind participants who may not know how to actually work with an SSP or

haven't had experience yet. Will asked that Jessica bring this back to the Council if enough numbers are not happening.

David Krueger - Vermont Association of the Deaf

Governor Weather Alert – on December 23rd, State employees let out of office at 1 and public told to be off roads by 4:00pm, by notification of radio and TV and social media. Sadly, this information was not accessible/provided for deaf and hard of hearing folks. During COVID Interpreter access was available as it should be for emergency situations and other important announcements including captioning. Governor's Inauguration didn't have the interpreter in the TV frame and no captioning in real time. Continue to try to work with the Governor's office on this issue but they seem to continually forget that interpreters and communication access is needed for all Vermonters. Would like to work with local television stations and have the interpreter in the bubble or have a split screen so they can have both on the screen at the same time. Megan will reach out to Monica Hutt and Department of Public Safety regarding this on-going issue and the upcoming Governor's State of the State- his budget address and the camera setups also includes the interpreter off to the side and captioning.

Yolanda Henry Community Fundraising (Jessica Hutchins presented) housed with VTAB and working together with VTAD regarding the community funding and how to have this be more of a regularly funded. Subgroups have been created – one group is focusing on planning workshops for the deaf community and interpreters as a fund-raising potential having workshop in morning and a performance in the afternoon maybe sometime this Fall. 2nd subgroup is immersion ASL focus working with parents who have deaf children or working with deaf children and maybe deaf adults. They're calling it ASL live, thinking an all-day immersive experience. Have 4 or 5 mini workshops throughout the day. Something for interpreters and the deaf community, but also something that will draw in the hearing community who maybe has family members or associates who are deaf. More information to be shared soon.

VTAD General Meeting is February 4, ASLville it's really intended for hearing people to get exposure and immersion is March 4th, NAD Regional Meeting is April 29th (Region 1 Caucus) same day as VTDBHI plus day so we hope we can get the same venue.

Deb Charlea Baker – HLAA

Governor Weather Alert – I did not get very far in trying to convince the Governor's Office to reinstate the captioning after COVID. I think it's very important that we understand that anything that goes out to Vermonters should also be accessible by our communities and the governor's office should understand that, too. The legislature now, even though you're accessing the committee hearings via YouTube, they're not streaming captions.

HLAA meeting is January 31, 2023, from 12:00 to 1:00. Peter Jonky will be presenting. Everything is captioned. March 28th, lunchtime meeting we will have a presenter from ALDA, the Association for Late Deafened Adults

Audiogram measures - Several different sources asking when it's appropriate to mention HLAA to a client or to a family member. We welcome everybody. Example- I was going to refer my cousin but she's really become quite deaf. And really, the basic question is what is her language? what language do they communicate in? What language are they comfortable in? We do encourage people to learn sign language if they show an interest, and we do refer them to places where they can learn sign language.

The Central Massachusetts HLAA Chapter has folded, and their members are dispersing into other Chapters. They took their Chapter Funds and distributed it to several surrounding area Chapters. And we were the beneficiaries of their kindness. We welcomed them to join us because virtual, Zoom is great. As time has evolved, more and more people are attending chapters from other States, including us.

Newsletter if you are not signed up, we welcome you to and to keep tabs on what we're up to. If there are any projects that you're interested in, we encourage our members in various places we encourage that you join us.

Steering Committee Meeting still working on the created project ideas. 1) A directory created for hearing accessible places around Vermont of places in their area that have a loop or FM system, which has bit of a challenge as the previous list only had physical accessibility. 2) Being mindful of not only being accessible for English based and captioning but promote protocols to hiring interpreters while sharing so that's readily available.

Linda Hazard - EHDI/PIP

Congress passed the EHDI legislation for another 5 years and was signed by President Biden at the end of December. We will continue to receive funding through CDC and through HRSA the health resources services administration. October through March is a very busy time for EHDI programs. We are in the constant mode of writing reports to our federal partners that include patient level de-identified data for newborn hearing screening, diagnosis, and early intervention services.

Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program Conference is in Cincinnati, March of 2023 has two presentations during this conference this year, so prepping for that! EHDI program be hosting a Trauma Informed Self-Care Workshop for parents and teachers, audiologists, providers in May. Sky High Deaf Mentor Training in March or April. 6 New England States along with New Jersey are working together to provide this training. More information to come.

NASDE Coalition led by Michelle John many participate in this committee. Cheryl Deconde-Johnson joined to work with us on educating us on the NASDE guidelines. It was a great opportunity for providers, special educators, families in Vermont.

Parent Infant Program has been receiving our funding this year through Children's Integrated Services. There are sustainability concerns around funding of this program due to Medicaid rates dropping four years ago. This needs to be discussed more in depth with the legislature. We have the ARPA funding through March 31st, after that we have no additional funds for children who are identified as deaf and hard of hearing, low incidence population, around 22 (up to 35) children are receiving services through this program.

Vermont partnership with both the UVMMC and CDCI CARES will looking to pilot the Quality Indicator tool in the next month or so. Have identified two key districts to participate with the quality improvement initiative (Plan, do, study, and act) and identify the strengths, the growth opportunities and looking at outcomes for students. NASDE training Cheryl Deconde-Johnson talked about the tool, and she was extremely impressed.

Cassie Santo- Agency of Education

Quality Indicator external reviewers looking at the tool and providing feedback, that's complete with VTRID, HLAA, and VANCRO and Vermont Hands and Voices are still reviewing. VCSA was delayed and back on their agenda will continue to keep the Council updated. Sharon and Sherry will present the tool to the Superintendent's Association, and the Vermont Special Education Administrators Association in May. The tool will not be mandated but the goal is to get buy in by school districts and special education teams to want to voluntarily use the tool. The information Linda collects by piloting the tool will help add to that discussion and improving the tool and essentially getting buy in from the school districts.

D/HH/DB Director Update - Megan Tierney-Ward-Deputy Commissioner DAIL

Annual Report Data - Laura received about 164 referrals throughout the last year, which is the first full year of tracking this information. 20% of those calls were about interpreter services, how to access them, how to pay for them, anything related to interpreter services. 15% were related to technical assistance for other state agencies or departments. 15% was around assistive technology. They will share, to show how they were all categorized.

Upcoming Priorities:

Expansion of ASL services

Modernize Title 1a statute that is for referring interpreters for court proceedings. It's very outdated, we're going to update with language to accurately reflect the current system.

Needs Assessment still exploring, upon review want to get recommendations from the Council the council could say, what are the questions we should be asking? These are the questions I'm thinking about, what are we missing? So, more to come on that at one of our next meetings talk about whether the Council wants to give feedback or a Subcommittee formed when Laura returns.

Communication access across State Government work exploring hearing loops and it covers a whole lot of other things.

New State Director on Aging at DAIL Jason Pelopida is replacing Connor O'day. Jason is the designated Director for all of our Federal Older Americans Act funding and services. Also covers the long term care program that's available to people in nursing homes and residential care homes, nutrition services Meals on Wheels and Senior Centers funding. He would be a great contact for the SSP program too.

New Vermont State Plan on Aging was approved by the Federal Government at the end of last year. It went into effect October and will be in effect through 2026. This is a Federal Government requirement for each State have a plan.

Vermont's State System of Care Plan for Developmental Disabilities Services was recently renewed and online. We had a lot of Stakeholder input last year.

Housing options there's a Stakeholder steering committee. There's a status report due to the legislature about that housing work group.

Our Money Follows the Persons Grant - We've had a grant with the Federal Government since 2016. It is designed to help people who are in nursing homes to transition to community-based living. And that's for people on our Medicaid long term care program called Choices for Care. That program exceeded their goal and helped transition 72 older Vermonters and adults with disabilities from out of nursing

homes. Its Choice-Based and based on if the individual is choosing and wants to transition to community living with supports. The program has been extended by Congress through calendar year 2027.

HCBS FMAP Funding recently been approved for some funding at the agency level, which includes DAIL is \$350,000 to help with communication access of important documents related to our Medicaid programs, especially our long-term care Choices for Care, Developmental Services. For example, video translation translating brochures, translating important information, making documents accessible services will be provided by State employees and already contracted entities.

FMAP Funding doesn't have to be a new service directly to the person. It can be an improvement effort around those services It is a one-time only cost not an ongoing cost. It has to be time limited within that window of time. Unless the plan has been submitted to figure out sustainable funding after that time period's up. And I think there's some flexibility on how that service or how that money is spent. But it does have to have some direct link to improving services or for those people in those Medicaid home and community-based services in Vermont.

Suggested Inviting Wendy Trafton to one of the next meetings to give an update around the HCBS FMAP funding and what types of things are being done so far. We only have a few years that this money is available.

Council Discussion

Suggestion for having people come to the board for different presentations. Maybe trying to incorporate more deafblind people to give presentations and having those folks take the lead on the committees and subcommittees, making sure the representation is there and giving folks a place to lead and be seen. That was one just thought I had for everybody.

In particular the deaf community, the signing deaf community. There is no access, oftentimes and it's a health equity issue when we're not getting access to our medical care. If there's no sign language in these situations or we're limited, then our mental health is impacted. Our physical health is impacted.

Suggested the National Association of the Deaf, present to help us have better access for deaf hard of hearing and deafblind children in Vermont. Especially with parents not getting the support they need, children not being heard.

Legislative session update committees are basically getting an orientation now. Recommend you look up your Senator and Representatives on the Legislative website for your town district; reach out to them, try to set up a meeting with them, tell them who you are, what you do, who you represent.

And getting up to speed on what the community view and what their focus is on. Will let you know if there any Bills that may be of interest and vice versa please share bills if we haven't (as we are busy and may have missed).

Council Membership will be reviewed to see what vacancies need to be filled. Will and Spenser will be reaching out to those community members and others that are appointed to verify they want to continue participating on the council.

Members of the Council, are either appointed by the Governor or are statutorily required. Those that are statutorily required are seats such as representative from the Vermont Association of Deaf, HLAA.

Any of the State government agencies and programs servicing D/HH/DB. The rest of representatives as segments of the community population that are, deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, and parents of D/HH/DB who are appointed by the governor and have to apply for appointment.

Geriatric Screening - new director for senior agency. I would really like to see that there is a protocol for screening seniors. In state licensed nursing facilities, living facilities so there isn't that confusion between having a hearing loss, symptoms of hearing loss and dementia and people are appropriately treated for what they are experiencing.

The second step is to make sure these facilities are accessible for people with hearing loss; there's captioning on their televisions, equipment available iPads, or whatever. And that the staff is trained in resources and tools. A protocol set up, so people are screened, identified and their living situation is accessible. And really looking at; is this done? Is it a requirement in other states? a little bit of research on it to see how we can try to move it forward. Have the council have an Older Vermonters Subcommittee to start to tackle gathering information and, you know, pushing it out to the medical field and the department of health.

Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Closure - several members mentioned this topic: specifically that nobody stepped in to take over that one stop shopping referral center and as a result Resources are too spread out to thin. Linda Hazard noted that the partnership is working on a number of initiatives along with the AOE, utilizing the grant funding that is currently split between the two programs. Some expressed concern that they felt that if a hard of hearing person went to the Vermont Center of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, they were required to use ASL. We almost need a 211 for deaf and hard of hearing services. A centralized (it can't all be Laura), but something in her department. A number or a portal that people can get information. Or something different or what used to be the Vermont Center or come at it from the perspective of multiple touch points within a community. Concerns of siloing of services- by deaf people versus hard of hearing, versus deafblind people, et cetera. There are two groups that meet once a month - Laura's group, which entails folks that are focused on professional aspects of the community and the other group which are more community based entities who talk about what we see and how to bridge these gaps and talk about our concerns for our greater community regarding education or legal situations or human services in general. It was mentioned that it would be nice to have a 3rd group for the hard of hearing folks and Kate Parrish noted that she serves a lot of the hard of hearing population under HireAbility, maybe she can set up something that focuses specifically on the hard of hearing. Others noted that maybe one- stop shopping isn't what is actually needed but rather a focus on how do we get our needs met through the organizations we have? How do we share those concerns with each other as professional organizations or agencies? And how do we make those connections?

School Age Subcommittee Sharon and Sherry provided a written update of the education subcommittee work to date via email to Council.

Action Items/Future Topics/Closing

- Email: - Spenser will send the Legislative report out to everyone.
- In Person Meeting: - Working on May and will send along information as we finalized it.
- Agenda Item: - Invite Wendy Trafton to one of the next meetings to give an update around the HCBS FMAP funding.

- Agenda Item: - States' Needs Assessment status upon Laura's return.
- Agenda Item: - VANCRO an in-depth PowerPoint presentation, about the grant funding and exactly how the program works so that we can all become more educated about it and referring to people to them.
- Agenda Item: - Attorney General's Office representative from the Consumer Protection Division presentation on how they are monitoring and tracking over the counter hearing aid market.
- Agenda Item: - Health Equity Office around Mental Health access to Mental Health Services
- Next meeting: - March 16, 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Will Pendlebury (Co-Chair)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kate Parish	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rebecca Lalanne
<input type="checkbox"/> Bill Hudson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cassie Santo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracy Hinck
<input checked="" 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 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 type="checkbox"/> Sherry Sousa	<input type="checkbox"/>

Guest Attendance

Name	Organization
Elizabeth Fox	Interpreter
Kristal Haynes	Interpreter
Jessica Hutchins	VANCRO
Michelle John	VT H&V
Diane	Captioner
John Pirone	UVM
Val Hughes	VCIL