

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

September 16, 2024  
9:30am-12:00am  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

## Welcome/Housekeeping/Announcements

Spenser announced people were going to be late to the meeting. I sent an email around to the Council. I got a seat added for the Parent Advisory Group, Vermont Hands and Voices, that was successfully added to the existing statute language for the Council. Vermont Hands and Voices board will have to decide who participates on the Council.

## Program/Organizational updates:

### Val Hughes- VCIL- Deaf Independent Coordinator at Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL)

I have been traveling extensively to assess individuals' needs and determine how best to support them, including assisting with Social Security-related matters. In terms of homelessness, one individual is currently in a hotel/motel situation, while all others have secured housing.

VCIL is focused on closing out the fiscal year, completing reporting, data collection, and submitting year-end statistics. Our Montpelier office remains non-operational and will likely be sold. We are actively searching for a new location in the Montpelier area that is not prone to flooding and is conveniently located near a bus route for our clients' ease of access.

Additionally, Amber Schaffer is stepping down from our board, leaving a vacancy, which is now posted on the VCIL website.

### Jessica Hutchins- VANCRO Integrated Interpreting Service's (VIIS) Lead Program Manager

Jessica submitted a recording with her updates since she couldn't attend the meeting.

- Apprenticeship program: Two interpreters relocate to Vermont.
- Vermont SSP program: We are awaiting extended funding to providing SSP services for DeafBlind consumers.
- Educational Interpreting: Vancro provides interpreters for K-12 settings, but other agencies also offer these services. We're collaborating with them to ensure statewide coverage, though there's a shortage of interpreters of teachers for D/HH students.
- UVM Medical Center: we're the contract holder for interpretation services and are expanding on call emergency coverage and outreach efforts, offering biweekly staff training and building partnerships with two other hospitals.
- Future Outreach: I co-present with DVAS at the police academy, and we'll be presenting again at UVM's Health Equity Summit. Please, reach out with any questions or concerns.

### **Rebecca Lalanne – President, Vermont Association of the Deaf (VTAD)**

We are still a new board, trying to get our bearings. We had town halls, and on October 19<sup>th</sup> at the Historical Society in Barre from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. We'll get flyers for everybody. Lawson's Brewing Company is hosting with Allen Winfrey and Jacob Veeder a mixer/mingler for our community. Lawson's create a beer called Deaf Glow. It is a phenomenal design, very unique, specifically tailored to our community. If you buy that specific beer, I think every dollar will go to the Yolanda Henry Community Fund. The community fund, it is a fund specifically to help cover the cost of interpreters that events are not under the ADA, like funerals, weddings, reunions, et cetera. We're looking for donors. We're also in conversation about different topics that we want to focus on for our community and how we want to work with the legislature.

### **Deb Charlea Baker – VT Chapter of HLA**

Deb was not in attendance. Rebecca Chalmers spoke on her behalf. We've had really great presentations this year. Next one up will be next Tuesday, and it'll be a professor at Gallaudet, and she'll be talking about communication strategies and how to have better communication access. Some of the other ones we've had this year were about cochlear implants and assistive listening technology, and also, how to get a service provider for the deafblind. Keep spreading the word if you know anybody that might be interested in some of these or if you have an idea for a speaker.

### **Education Services Update – Pam Hoover and Linda Hazard**

The CARES team and the Educational Services Practice (ESP) team have been collaborating to ensure that approximately 450 students with hearing loss in Vermont receive services outlined in their educational plan. CARES consists of an interdisciplinary team of nine consultants with advanced degrees in deaf education, audiology, special education, psychology, and social work. Their role is to provide resources, education, and training to school teams, helping them build the capacity to support students with hearing loss effectively. CARES itself does not provide direct services.

ESP, on the other hand, offers consultation and technical assistance for some students, as well as direct services for other across Vermont. Currently, ESP has a total of 33 statewide providers and is seeking to expand its team by adding more educational interpreters and teachers for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Currently, they serve 18 students with educational interpreters, 32 with educational audiology, 32 student instruction, 6 with spoken language services. Several new students moving into Vermont are in need of more direct services.

To reduce confusion and prevent service duplication, CARES and ESP have been closely coordinating this year to identify areas of need and allocate appropriate providers. Additional services CARES and ESP provide are SLP evaluations, assessments, and services. ASL assessments, Educational audiology. In our direct service area; Peer mentoring, deaf and hard of hearing mentoring, advocacy, sign language interpreting, counseling, psychoeducational assessments. We collaborate with educational teams, families, clinicians, physical and occupational therapists, child services, social workers, care coordinators in medical homes, and equipment companies. We try to provide opportunities for students to come together, Adventure Day has been around for 25 plus years. Usually at Lotus Lake, and is for students deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind between 4th grade and 12th grade.

CARES and ESP are involved with the P2P grant, Partners to Partnership, which is for students who are transitioning to adulthood and self-advocacy.

Referrals for services can be made by anyone as long as the child meets the Vermont state hearing eligibility criteria which is: A student who's documented with a 25-decibel hearing level threshold or worse for one or more of the frequencies in one or both ears as determined by an audiologist.

Most of the referrals to CARES come from clinical audiologists or ENT doctors. And most of the referrals from ESP come from schools. After a referral is made, CARES or ESP contacts the point person at the school, the school educational team along with one or more members of CARES or ESP meet to discuss eligibility and services.

This year, CARES and ESP will work together regarding Academic data related to our student falls within their respective grade level is available to the public through outcomes on statewide assessments, for example, IEP versus non-IEP students.

Council members discussed what they just heard. Refer to [0919 transcript](#).

Linda and Pam are asked to be prepared to come back in March to do a 6-month update and provide status update much like this.

### **Break**

### **Presentation from Dr. Khan - University of Vermont Learner College of Medicine.:**

Dr Shamima Khan's PowerPoint Presentation: [Public Health Projects: Welcome & Orientation January 4, 2021](#) I'm working with Laura Siegel this semester on a very exciting project "communication accessibility issues in health care". We have separate medical students who also work on their projects in collaboration with their community mentor and faculty mentor. Laura Siegel and our group meet on Fridays and we're making sure that the project is done, and according to the objectives and we are also working together with our course director Dr. Jan Carney as well as Dr. Thomas Delaney.

Students will be performing an in-depth analysis of existing communication practices and the health care setting for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind. Using objectives: objective one: is to assess where the situation is right now. Second objective will be to explore the assistive technology that can enhance accessibility to engage individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind. Third will be to explore and develop training programs for health care individuals so they can be more cognizant of the issues and challenges that are faced by the deaf and the hard of hearing and the deafblind community. Our most important obligatory goal is the students must complete a project, and the project must be able to finish within the time frame January 2025, and it must be presented as a poster at the Robert Learner College of Medicine annual poster session and community celebration.

Council members discussed what they just heard. Refer to [0919 transcript](#).

### **Legislative Report**

We want to improve the process around the development of the Legislative Report and have it completed in a timelier manner and have the ability for the Council to review before submitting it to a Legislature.

We want to have a preliminary draft of the report in November to share with the Council for review. We will send out the Legislative Report that was submitted last year for everyone's review. We will ask people to at least respond to us with an email letting us know they plan to give us an update to be included in the Legislative Report by the end of October. We will correlate and compile them into a draft to share with the council by our November meeting. At which point, we can review, update, discuss, and then refine as ac Council. We can then share a final copy prior to the holidays.

### **D/HH/DB Bill of Rights Update and Next Steps**

The recommendation is we could look at the ongoing Bills and where it could be as an amendment.

### **Sharon Henry - Co-Chair of the School Age Subcommittee**

The School Age Subcommittee has presented three times on the checklist that the Subcommittee has developed. Sessions in November of '23 and March of '24 were held in collaboration with the Vermont Hands and Voices, the Vermont coalition for the guidelines and the ESP program. I'm editing and splicing together the video segments from the March 26th session to be used by professionals and other organizations for teaching or having watch parties. Data Standardization, Spenser letter sent states; how the council voted for support of this minimum data set. And he will keep us posted if he gets a response from the Governor, the Secretary of Ed, or from Heather Willis. The subcommittee is meeting in September, to begin to focus on is the assessment piece, we also want to know how well they're doing. We need outcome data and look forward to getting the data from AOE and UVM CARES team and UVM Medical Center Education Services Program, once the fiscal year is closed.

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

#### **D/HH/DB Director Update – Laura Siegel**

#### **Legislative Update:**

- Will suggested sharing everyone's email with Dr. Freeman to stay connected and continue to talk about this idea of working with the Legislature.

#### **Other Business/Closing**

- The Legislative Report will be sent today to the council. Will and Spenser will follow up with a timeline for the next steps.
- Spenser will talk to Cassie regarding November presentation.
- Spenser will put in the request for the AOE report and send it to the Council.
- Next meeting – November 21, 2024, from 9:30am -12:00pm

### **Agenda topic**

9:30 – Welcome, Announcements, Reminders –**Spenser Weppler/William Pendlebury**

9:35 – General Updates (5 minutes each)

- a. VCIL – Val Hughes
- b. VANCRO – Jessica Hutchins
- b. VTAD – Rebecca Lalanne
- c. HLAA – Deb Baker

10:00 – Presentation: Education Services Update – **Pam Hoover/Linda Hazard**  
-Group Discussion

10:50 – Break

11:00 – Presentation: UVM Med School Public Health Project: **Dr. Shamima Khan**

11:15 - Director of D/HH/DB Update – **Laura Siegel**

11:30 – Council Business - **All**

- a. Legislative Update and Process.
  - a. Draft for review by November Meeting
  - b. New Recommendations/Keep existing
  - c. D/HH/DB Bill of Rights Update and Next Steps

11:55 - Public Comment

12:00 - Adjourn

**Public Comment**

None

**Council Attendance**

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

**Guest Attendance**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Val Hughes	VCIL
Elizabeth Fox	ASL Interpreter
Kristal Hiers	ASL Interpreter
Pam Hoover	UVM CDCI CARES
Jessica Hutchins	Vancro
Michelle John	VT Hands and Voices
Diane Scott	White Coat Captioner
Shamima Khan	UVM Medical School