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

September 15, 2022  
9:30AM to 12:00 PM  
Remote Zoom Meeting

### Welcome/Housekeeping/Announcements

Prior to meeting start- it was asked if there will be an In-Person Meetings. Spenser responded by there are discussions and maybe May and September could be In-Person and virtual meetings, more information to come. Discussion around not being able to see who is at the meeting -this is due to everyone's video is off, unless they are speaking, so that we can pin the interpreters and the presenters.

### Program/Organizational updates

**School-Age Subcommittee-** Sharon Henry and Sherry Sousa

#### **Sharon Henry- Vermont Quality Indicator Tool for DHHDB Services (based on the NASDSE Guidelines)**

Final draft was shared with the Council and submitted (May) to the Agency of Education to be moved through the internal/external stake holder review process and Cassie Santo will give an update in this meeting. Linda Hazard will give an update on the process for the 2022-23 academic year for beta testing the Vermont Quality Indicator Tool for DHHDB Services and presenting feedback to the committee. Then to begin to brainstorm and plan presentations to key groups; one being Superintendents or Special Education Directors which Sherry will speak about. Other States are asking if we would share this tool with them. AOE is figuring out who will "house the data", it doesn't make sense for the vendor who receives a grant to house the data.

#### **Sherry Sousa - Vermont Quality Indicator Tool for DHHDB Services (based on the NASDSE Guidelines)**

Hopes are that this will be fully vetted by May 2023 and do a roll out to districts so that providers use this if they're going to access those services. The tool will be a communication with programs for consistent expectations for all providers. Once it is more vetted it will be on the VCSA agenda

#### **Cassie Santo (AOE) - Vermont Quality Indicator Tool for DHHDB Services (based on the NASDSE Guidelines)**

Internal AOE review was completed at the end of August. Linda and Darren will meet November 10 to review their feedback. As discussed with Jacqui we will have Vermont Family Network, Special Education Advisory Panel and Special Education Administrative Council give feedback. May is a good gauge of how long this process will take.

The Council made recommendations to update the RFP process in the future and Laura is looking to see what other States are doing and has created a master database for this information. Should it be a competitive grant, another way of services being paid for services delivered to students and the State, possible Satellite Day Program- the process would be stakeholder /subcommittee input including this Council.

**Linda Hazard – Grant-** On August 3rd, the Agency of Education awarded this year's grant funding to the Vermont, Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind partnership, which University of Vermont Medical Center is the lead on the grant. It is a combination of the CDCI CARES program as well as the UVMC educational

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services program. The leadership teams of both UVM CDCI CARES and the UVMMC service programs are meeting monthly. Funding is being allocated between the two programs this year they are communicating with districts and families. Service agreements have gone out to districts. They are looking at the single point of entry for intake and referral so that all referrals are reviewed both by both teams. Under the UVMMC DHHDB service program, there are still open positions both for educational interpreters and for communication facilitators. There is a nationwide shortage, not just in Vermont.

Question: single point of entry for intake and referral? Answer: Anyone can make a referral to the program. Linda will get the referral forms out.

### Commissioner's Report

#### **Megan Tierney-Ward- Adult Services Division Director**

Nothing at this time

#### Updates:

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

**Referrals-** late onset of hearing loss or deafness and I'm not sure how to work with them because they don't sign. We're trying to provide resources and really, they're asking for caption phones and things like that. Having conversations with them through email that's been our main mode of communication. Looking at language access to learn ASL, especially at a later age. **Suggestion-** Hearing Loss Association of America and do that referral for the National level or State level just to get them connected.

**Housing-** It's been a busy time with the housing shortage and housing crisis and making sure that people have homes to be in.

**Staff-** staff at VCIL have been turning over. We've got new folks coming onboard

#### **Jessica Hutchins- VANCRO lead program manager for Interpreting Services**

**Requests and Referrals-** we are growing, lots of contracts coming onboard, especially in Vermont. At the same time, sometimes we don't have enough Interpreters. **I'm looking forward to releasing information next week.**

**Deafblind Training,** We received a grant from the State Independent Living Center for DeafBlind training. A self-paced module programming online. We will host an in-person training September 29, 2022 – October 2, 2023, in Jeffersonville, Vermont. I will be facilitating and two presenters, Tara from Helen Keller National Center as well as Renee Pellerin from Vermont.

**Mental Health Equity Grant** – is providing (1) Interpreters for Mental Health Counseling and Therapy sessions (in-person or remote), not insurance, co-pays or transportation. (2) providing training for Interpreting in the Mental Health field. (3) paying for presenters to go to various entities (hearing, counselors, therapists) who don't know how to work with the deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind person, interpreters but want to do so to provide outstanding therapy services. We (I, Kendra Keller interpreter who is hearing, who is well versed and has the mental health qualification certification Lynn Bushnell from Invest EAP she provides counseling and therapy to those who are hard of hearing and deaf part

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time., Amber Schaeffler). Starting with Invest EAP with a 2-hour presentation to folks from Invest EAP around Vermont.

### **David Kruger- Vermont Association of the Deaf**

**National Association for the Deaf 5 Items we want to work with in Vermont.** (1) Deaf children's education and making sure we are uplifting that. Rebecca from DVAS created a group to discuss a bill of rights for deaf children (culture and ASL as a language) in Vermont. Dr. John Prone, Nick Lalanne and Elizabeth Fox involved in new organization ASL Vermonters.

### **Dr. John Prone- ASL Vermonters (Guest)**

ASL Vermonters, the association of sign language Vermonters. We call ASLVT first. We just got established, working on getting our 501(c)3 not for profit organization status. Our main focus, to ensure that we are having access, children and adults and the like to our language and also promoting information and awareness about sign language and encouraging people to learn sign language. The Council will have more information forthcoming as we progress in our process. But we just got started.

### **David Kruger- Vermont Association of the Deaf (continued)**

**Yolanda Henry Community Fund** - VTA, we're strongly involved and that is utilized for provision and interpreting services for any situations covered by the ADA. This can be access by anyone who is deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind in Vermont for weddings, funerals, social gatherings, etc. Again, when there's no organization or business involved that is not held to the standards of the ADA, something that is outside those, then we can have provision of interpreters through the Community Fund. The problem is, we have a high rate of requests for the Community Fund (which runs low time and time again). Some people want to take classes not covered by the ADA, so interpreters are not covered by the ADA. Working diligently on fund raising. Deafblind interpreters usually volunteer. We don't just want people to volunteer their time, we'd like to pay them as professionals.

**Substance abuse recovery. And NA meetings, AA meetings, etc.-** Winter/Spring article about the lack of services for people in recovery, has generated funding! Any deaf person can ask interpreters for any meeting they want to and VANCRO is taking care of that right now.

**November 5** - General Meeting in Burlington for the Vermont Association of the Deaf.

### **Deb Charlea Baker – HLAA**

**Hearing Loss Association of America Vermont Chapter** - Last year was really a huge push to get the legislation through and working with everyone. It's been a long, long time, we take a tiny piece of the credit for that.

**Over the counter Hearing Aids** - in some quarters controversial. Many people do not have funds or insurance to buy hearing aids. It as a steppingstone to people then going to audiologists. Folks are reaching out to us by phone, email asking questions, it's nice to get them connected with services and help and let them know they're not alone.

**Steering Committee** – met in August and focused on Hearing Loops (technology that makes is so a person standing in the back of an auditorium can hear as if someone is standing next to them- Bluetooth does not replace) to create a directory where they are available in Vermont. Our meetings will be every

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other month virtually, newsletter goes out every month and presenters and training opportunities for people will be scheduled. There is legislation that if you have a Municipal or State building that is being renovated, a loop must be part of that accommodation.

**The National Research Symposium-** has posted the June Cochlear implants presentation and available on the [Hearing Loss Association of America \(HLAA\)](#) website. Excellent resource for someone considering a Cochlear implant give them that resource. I am on the leader list, I get notifications of every webinar, meeting, chapter meeting, get together, all over the country. So rather than everybody be inundated if there's a particular topic or something that you're interested in, please contact me. I'm happy to add you to the list. Just contact me directly and I will do that.

### **Linda Hazard - EHD/PIP**

**Vermont EHD updates-** I was able to participate with the CDC and HRSA in the last six weeks as well as our National Technical Resource Center in providing a manuscript or a general article to the journal of Early Hearing Detection and Intervention on the COVID impact for the births of 2020 for the 50 States and 9 Territories that will be established in probably another month.

**Hands and voices** - in Rochester, New York, I and several parents and board members will be attending.

**Early Intervention Program, Parent-infant program** - infants receive screenings by one month of age, diagnosed by 3 months of age and into Early Intervention this year a number of parents have declined services. We are working hard with audiologists, providers, other providers in the area, including social work to help with care coordination of families to ensure that these children are receiving early intervention services. We will need to address it at the council level because the sustainability of early intervention is a critical piece in ensuring that children and families are receiving services.

### **Break**

### **Cassie Santo- Agency of Education (AOE)**

**AOE website** - we are working on a weekly field memo and getting the website updated so that all the contact information is up to date. We're adding a bunch of resources to a section on the website particular for students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing so there's one area we can direct parents to where all of the resources will be linked.

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

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

**Language Access** - The State is looking at an agenda to deal with budgeting for language access. Won't know until January if some of that can go for signing. Department of Public Service already has a Vermont statute that covers captioning services (funding for that comes deducting 2.4% fee from consumer telephone bills) it only covers CapTel, Equipment Distribution Program and Telecommunication Relay Services.

Working with the Director of the Office of Racial Equity (Xusana Davis). She had hosted two brainstorm language access sessions (one in April and one in August). I've shared my input on what needed to be incorporated in her proposal. That proposal will eventually be submitted to the Secretary of

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Administration for the Governor's office. The purpose of the proposal is to enhance language access (both spoken and ASL). That also includes captioning services).

**Accessibility Map** – started looking into State Office buildings Loop systems around the State- Only one has like a written description for folks who are either low vision or blind. Guy Norwood from AHS is working on adding more accessibility maps. So, the only thing Laura noticed as these maps have been created, there's no mentioning of hearing assistive technology. We have over 300 State owned and rented buildings around the State.

**H720** - a bill to develop a committee to advise the Division of Developmental Disabilities for planning for granting for housing options statewide housing for folks who they serve. A Steering committee have been established. Laura shared the appointed names with the council via the chat.

Laura shared a PowerPoint showing the number of inquiries she received in her role over the past year and what the subject of those inquiries were. So far, she has received 84 inquiries.

**State Plan of Laura's job duties** – Laura reviewed her document that explained her job duties. She went into depth to explain each section. She then shared this document after the meeting.

**Other Business/Closing-** Spenser Weppeler

**Continue Next Legislative session topics-** I'll send out the legislative report that we submitted last year so people have that as a frame of reference to see what we're recommending.

**Over the counter hearing aid dispensing discussion** - another avenue for access! There's concern messaging and education for the public as well as appropriate oversight and consumer protection. Whether or not we think we want to be advocating or recommending that there be some sort of guardrails around selling, the dispensing of over-the-counter hearing aids and promoting folks shouldn't self-diagnose and they should get their hearing checked and Dr. consultation/awareness. Both Rebecca Chalmers and Laura Siegel shared links to the Council the day prior the Council meeting.

**Discussion** –

**Protocols-** Is there a way the State Health Department establishing a protocol in terms of recommending that someone has a hearing test before they go out and buy anything? Medical community step forward and say there should be screening at a certain age. Geriatrics and the Family Physician's offer a simple screening and refer as needed as a standard protocol.

**A Bill of Rights for deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind children in Vermont** - Laura shared NAD's link that shows 17 States have this Legislation. Which is discussed. Will, will send the historic notes/information from Hearing Aid Task Force work on a bill of rights for people with hearing loss. Will suggests VCIL and some other big key stake holders that have a lot of power and clout and get them onboard to really push this through.

**More Interpreters and have backgrounds with ASL** - Mentoring program or Internship training program through the college system or UVM? We can reuse recommendations and just reinforce the need to continue to focus on that.

**Regional Day Program for deaf students** - What's the ideal educational model? Parents want their child to be in that learning environment? talk about that at a high-level policy and this needs to start to be

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explored and push the legislature and the administration to start thinking about that. Including AOE. Numbers and demographics, the individual students' needs, ASL or not need to be considered. Willie Ross School in Massachusetts reached out to officials because they noticed an increase in applications from Vermont. Should we be asking AOE to required schools to offer sign language course? Thinking about DEI, diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice and thinking outside of the box a little bit and thinking about how some of that connects to this topic and this work? Parents feel districts are not listening to them, which results in them looking elsewhere including outside of Vermont.

**Hearing Screening** - a hearing screening for any senior citizen who goes into a day program or residential care program or anything that is state run and certified to establish whether or not they have hearing loss and that they do have hearing loss.

Next Council meeting is November 17th. Spenser and I will develop the agenda for that and follow-up on some of the topics that we talked about today.

### **Public Comment**

No Public comment was made.

### **Council Attendance**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spenser Weppler (Chair)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Julie Porter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Krueger
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Will Pendlebury (Co-Chair)	<input type="checkbox"/> Kate Parrish	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rebecca Lalanne
<input type="checkbox"/> Bill Hudson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cassie Santo	<input type="checkbox"/> Tracy Hinck
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ralph Gallo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Megan Tierney-Ward	<input 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>
Laura Siegel	Director of D/HH/DB Services
Sabine Perry	Council Admin (AOE)
White Coat Captioning - Diane	
Interpreter – Kristal Hayes	
Interpreter – Elizabeth Fox	
Jessica Hutchins	Vancro Integrated Interpreting Services
Val Hughes	VCIL
Michelle John	VT Hands and Voices
John Pirone	UVM