

Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind Advisory Council

May 20, 2021

Zoom Video Conference

9:30-12:00

ATTENDEES

Board Members: Deb Charlea Baker, Kate Parrish, Katy (Alex) Langevin, Linda Hazard, Megan Tierney-Ward, Rebecca Chalmers, Sherry Sousa, Spenser Weppler, Will Pendlebury, Rebecca Lalanne

Guests: Liz Perreault, Megan Fretwell, Laura Siegel

Interpreters: Elizabeth Fox, White Coat Captioning

Introductions:

Spenser Weppler and Will Pendlebury

Will and Spenser welcomed Rebecca Lalanne who will be a Deaf community member representative and Tracy Hinck, audiologist, who will be representing Nine East Network.

Council Vacancies:

Spenser Weppler

The council still has vacancies for a Department of Education and Hard of Hearing Community member. If current council members know of anyone who would be interested, please encourage them to apply for an appointment to the council.

Updates:

VCIL, Will Pendlebury

- The Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL) has been actively working with Hear Hear Vermont on the hearing aid bill being discussed in the legislature.
- VCIL have been assisting people in their homes and doing more outreach to the community.
- VCIL now has access to the CARES act money that is available to help people remain independent.
- The Deaf Independence Program Coordinator position is currently being recruited for.
- The Yoyo Henry Fund helps individuals and businesses fund interpreting services on a limited basis and VCIL is searching for another agency to manage that fund. There is still \$5,000 in the fund and if there is a need in the community, please contact VANCRO to access those funds.

VANCRO, Will Pendlebury

VANCRO is Vermont's new interpreter referral service. VANCRO is soliciting feedback from the community on what is going well and what could use improvement as the company focuses on setting up systems to serve the Vermont community.

Cory Brunner is working for VANCRO and reported that there have been approximately 500 referrals in the past month. However, the assumption is that many of these referrals are recurring needs that were transferred from the old system to VANCRO.

D/HH/DB Director Update, Laura Siegel

On the Vermont Department of Health website for the Coronavirus, there is a link to an ASL video on COVID-19 Vaccines. You can go to this link listed below and scroll down the page to view the video: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19/vaccine/about-covid-19-vaccines-vermont>

HAAA, Deb Baker

1. The Vermont Chapter of Hearing Loss Association of America (HAAA) has been meeting monthly but may not meet in June.
2. Work on the petition for the hearing aid bill that is being considered in the legislature is ongoing. HAAA and Hear, Hear Coalition have joined forces to get signatures on this petition. The petition has been submitted to the legislature and HAAA members have offered testimony on the hearing aid bill. Please continue to share and obtain signatures. The link to the petition is here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfR7XoFTgVQ8cq_A5PhNY5UaoylYrxL7d3JGF892zC1Cmav3Q/viewform
3. HAAA is encouraging the council members to help promote the passage of this important hearing aid bill.
4. Visit the HAAA you can sign up for the bi-monthly newsletter. <https://vthearingloss.weebly.com/>
5. Facebook has been reaching many who are signing up for the VT Chapter: <https://www.facebook.com/HAAAVT>
6. The national website is also an excellent resource: <https://www.hearingloss.org>
7. The national convention is being held virtually again this year over the course of three days. Those days are 6/24, 6/25, and 6/26. For a small fee, you may register here: <https://www.hearingloss.org>

VT EHDI, Linda Hazard

As of May 1, Stacy Jordan and Linda Hazard have resumed VT Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) duties. They are no longer deployed for Vermont Department of Health's (VDH) emergency pandemic response. Since the last update, there were two newborns identified with mild, unilateral hearing loss and a third newborn also with mild but undetermined hearing loss. There are currently 12 other infants in for diagnostic evaluations.

VT EHDI is collaborating with the UVM neo-med clinic and are loaning the clinic screening equipment for hearing and providing training on that equipment. This will give the clinic the ability to follow-up with the high-risk children they work with.

Linda had participated in a project with the National Technical Resource Center for EDHI on tele-health and possibly using this technology to offer tele-audiology in the future.

The annual report to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will include data that is patient-level, de-identified data that will make it easier to compare data state to state. In past years, the data had been aggregate data and that made it hard to compare between states.

Nine East Network, Tracy Hinck

Since Linda Hazard stepped down from the executive directory role, Nine East has been restructuring the leadership team. There will be two program directors and one administrative director. The program directors are Tracy Hinck and Jen Bostwick. The administrative director will be Ilene Tierian.

Nine East is expanding their educational audiology services. All audiologist referrals will go through the audiology department and with the parents and schools, construct a service plan. The other addition to the program is the offering students access to a teacher of the Deaf, an audiologist and speech language pathologist that specialize in working with students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or dual-sensory impaired.

Nine East has been working to process the backlog of students from 2019 through now. They have processed 51 students and are now up to date with the referrals.

The American Sign Language (ASL) and the bilingual program is expanding. Nine East is in the process of hiring five new communication facilitators. Requests for a communication facilitator from schools have increased and the new hires are meant to meet that demand.

Moving forward, service agreements for Individual Education Plans (IEP) will include specific services and the hours of service that each individual student will receive.

Twenty-five students in grades 3 through 6 participated in this year's student remote meetup. In addition to the students, there were six staff members, two of the six were regional captioners. There were three student guest speakers, two from high school and one student who is in sixth grade. The student speaker's communication with the other students was empowering them to stand up and ask for what they need without embarrassment. Nine East received positive feedback from students and parents on how well the meetup went.

D/HH/DB Services Director Update, Laura Siegel

Laura Siegel presented updates since she began her role as D/HH/DB Services Director for the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL).

- Currently working with the Agency of Education (AOE) to coordinate a time to host a community forum.
- Discussions with the Office of Professional Regulation on potentially three licensing categories.
 1. Community interpreting licensure.
 2. Educational interpreting licensure.
 3. Provisional interpreting licensure.
- Working to set up a stakeholder meeting with Nine East Network, Vermont RID, registry of interpreters for the deaf, and VANCRO.
- Collaborating with the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department on how to make the hunting camps and coursework more accessible as well as with any of their documents and technology that they use in their day-to-day business.
- Discussions on training state employees on how to work with D/HH/DB individuals in and out of state government.
- Working with VDH on making vaccination clinics accessible. There is also an open to the public session from VDH on COVID-19 that is accessible for people who are D/HH/DB and have questions about COVID-19.
- Laura developed a remote meeting document that instructs individuals how to host an accessible meeting. The document includes tips and tricks for people to use.
- The State Unit on Aging (SUA) is crafting a survey for older Vermonters to fill out. Laura is assisting in creating that survey. Once the survey is distributed, the SUA and Laura would like to hold workshops for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind folks to gather information that will help shape the Vermont State Plan on Aging.
- There is now a D/HH/DB web page on the DAIL web site. You can find it here:
<https://dail.vermont.gov/services/programs/deaf-hard-hearing-deafblind>

Legislative Update, Council

The hearing aid bill, H266, has been moved into the budget bill that includes language to have insurance coverage for hearing aids. The Department of Financial Regulation (DFR) will study the financial impact that insurance coverage will have on the state budget. DFR will be offering opportunities for stakeholders to give feedback as they conduct the study.

DAIL Deputy Commissioner, Megan Tierney-Ward, recommended the council follow the following bills as well:

- H.439 - An act relating to making appropriations for the support of government (<https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2022/H.439>).
- S.120 - An act relating to the Joint Legislative Health Care Affordability Study Committee (<https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2022/S.120>).

Age Subgroup, Council

Spenser updated the gap analysis that had been done. The Council decided to have each group meet with Laura Siegel to go over the gaps that were discovered. Once those meetings are done, the council will meet with an outside facilitator to develop a plan to close those gaps and then include the final product in the annual report that is due in January 2022.

Other:

Future Presentations

- i. Health (Hearing) Equity Presentation
- ii. Attorney General's office – Consumer/Vermonters Protections
- iii. Court System/Incarceration services for D/HH/DB
- iv. Opportunities to educate consumers on all hearing aid options
- v. Department of Corrections and services for those who are H/HH/DB and are incarcerated

2022 Legislative Report Planning

The report due date is January 15, 2022. Drafting of the report will begin by the end of September to be reviewed at the November D/HH/DB Council meeting.

Public Comment

Julie Porter stated the Audiologist try to give people the best options available when choosing hearing aids and out of pocket costs are talked about extensively with patients.

Linda Hazard reported that the Lions Club has a camp in the summer and want to hire ASL interpreters for D/HH campers. Linda referred the Lions Club to Children with Special Health Needs as a possible funding resource.

Meeting was adjourned 12:05