

Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind Advisory Council

July 15, 2021

Zoom Video Conference

9:30-12:00

ATTENDEES

Board Members: Amelia Briggs, Kelly Decker, Bill Hudson, Deb Charlea Baker, Julie Stefanski, Kate Parrish, Linda Hazard, Rebecca Chalmers, Sharon Henry, Spenser Weppeler, Susan Kimmerly, William Pendlebury, Megan Tierney-Ward, Danielle Howe, Alex Langevin, Elena Shapiro

Guests: Liz Perreault, Margaret Overman, John Pirone, Laura Siegel

Interpreters: Elizabeth Fox, Lianne Moccia, White Coat Captioning

Council Updates:

Spenser and Will are exploring the sharing of administrative duties to take some of the work off DAIL staff. There was discussion about possibly having a council member act as a secretary for the council to take notes going forward. Spenser and Will will continue to discuss with DAIL and AOE to see how best to continue administrative support for the council.

Updates:

VCIL-

Will Pendlebury informed the council that VCIL is still searching for Laura's replacement. Will asked if anyone knows of anyone that will be interested to apply. VCIL is continuing to spend the money they received from the CARES Act. He estimated about \$900,000 to support people with disabilities. The RISE fund is specifically for anything COVID-related. Will shared some examples such as not having access to transportation, but it must be technology related. They can even pay for connectivity fees for phone services.

VANCRO-

Will Pendlebury shared that they have been working on building capacity with some key stakeholders throughout the state. They are still doing the advisory council meetings every six weeks. Their next meeting will take place on Tuesday July 20th. Vancro's fill rate is at 99%. Interpreters are working remotely. So, for the time being, it's easier to fill in interpreting assignments. They have concerns to share. Once things return to interpreting on site, the fill rate will change. The other concern is the aging population of interpreters. And the interpreting pool become smaller because some have taken on full time positions. That implies they will be less available for freelance work. Vancro is looking to set up a mentorship program. Later at the end of this summer,

beginning of the fall. And they are going to try to have 60% of the members of the mentorship program to identify as BIPOC interpreters. And they are also working on a DeafBlind training and doing a one-on-one mentorship for DeafBlind needs. If you have feedback or questions, you can contact Jessica St. Arnauld, Cory Brunner or a member of the advisory committee. Vancro can refer folks to White Coat Captioning if people ask for a captionist. Many interpreters on Vancro's roster are both in state and out-of-state interpreters. Jessica clarified she is the program manager for Vermont. Vancro has others covering other states. Interpreters can freelance for other work outside of Vancro's jurisdiction.

VTAD-

Elena Shapiro announced there were three things she wishes to share with the council.

- 1) VTAD will have their state conference in October/November. The selection for officers is supposed to take place. The term for officers is limited for two years.
- 2) VTAD also plans to have a meeting to review and discuss the Bylaws which is currently outdated and archaic. The main thing is to change their election structure. Instead of replacing all four officers, they are hoping to do a rotating schedule which allow two experienced officers to train and guide and mentor new officers.
- 3) A lobbyist group in DC reached out about the closed captioning bill. They informed Elena they received 29 signatures from Vermont. This is a nationwide effort for closed captioning. We are working with the local Deaf community and HLAA and VT H7V to collect more signatures. This is a collaborative effort both nationwide and statewide.

HLAA VT Chapter-

Deb Baker shared a few things. **She attended the HLAA national conference in June. It was their second attempt to a virtual convention. They hosted several workshops pertaining over the counter and direct to consumer connectivity listening devices, hearing aids, etc.**

- 1) Every year, HLAA have a national symposium, and this year it was spearheaded by NIDCD and the NIH. The topic was "hearing health care," and "hearing wellness." There were three pilot programs that were presented.
 - a. In Alaska, (spearheaded by Duke University) they use a hub and spoke model, and what they do is, because audiologists can't go out to all of the Indigenous little towns, they actually have trained health care workers in these communities, or in these regions, and they travel to these communities, and they have telemedicine with an audiologist, generally out of Anchorage or Fairbanks, who is present at the meeting tele-remotely. And it's a way of making hearing health accessible to everyone, regardless of where they live.
 - b. The pilot program was on the Arizona-Mexico border. This was also a tele-audiology pilot program. This is with the University of Arizona. And it's hearing wellness. And what they do is they train trusted community leaders, because the Indigenous or local population, are somewhat untrusting, or are ambivalent, about working with professionals in the field. This dual tele-audiology kind of program, where the local leaders, who are trained, work directly with the patients, while the audiologist is

- present remotely.
- c. The third program is through Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. It was called "Baltimore Hears," and they've set up a peer mentorship while working with the older population. They find that with the older population, fitting people with hearing aids is the success rate was far lower than they would like to see. An example of training would be as if they had an apartment complex, which was for seniors, and they trained some hard-of-hearing seniors in oral rehabilitation. And the nature of the program is that these seniors go into the apartments, into the homes of the older folks with hearing loss, they give a two-hour aural rehab, instruct them on listening strategies, what is hearing loss, and the acoustic manipulation of your environment, kind of basic rules of the road of hearing loss. Then the people who agree to go through the two-hour training program are given an over-the-counter hearing device. A month later they came back and tested, said, basically, what they are looking for is functional communication. That's what they found lacking is they spend money on hearing aids, but they did not have functional communication skills. So, the hearing aids would end up in the drawer. They went back after a month, and they found that the functional communication capacity of these seniors was equal to those who had high level hearing devices.
 - 2) Another topic discussed at the convention was healthcare communication access. It was mentioned the lack of awareness and knowledge about hearing loss and how to address it. If administrative staff don't see the program or hear about the program, then they don't address it.
 - 3) Deb also shared information about John Hopkins Disability Health Research Center. If you are interested in being a part of that group and happen to have a medical background, you can contact Peggy Ellertson.
 - 4) Some information was shared about InnoCaption and how it works.
 - 5) Companies that manufacture BAJA have been coming up with new developments to allow users to use MRIs without further complications.
 - 6) Hear Hear Coalition is currently in a summertime mode. The petition continues to circulate.

Director's Updates

Panel/Focus Group:

- 1) ARIS: I served on the ARIS panel to share my inputs on things that can be done to improve or what hasn't been done to improve. We had 35 attendees from all over the US. Two from VCIL and one from AnotherWay was also on the panel with me.
- 2) City of Burlington: I participated in a focus group for the city on language access along with several other deaf community members including Rebecca Lalanne. I thought it was very successful to share all our suggestions on what they can do to improve their operations. I will also be joining their Burlington Accessibility Advisory Committee. Already had my first meeting on 21st and was able to share a LOT of recommendations.
- 3) TDI conference – four-day conference virtually on technology access for DHHDB folks at end of July. I know one of our own Vermonters will be presenting at the conference –

Rene Pellerin. I've attended the first two days and will attend today and tomorrow afternoon.

Services for children:

Focusing on finding solutions where to place the PIP and ASL bilingual program. They are supposed to make a public announcement in the beginning of August. Nine East Network's staffs' last day will be on August 13th. It isn't public knowledge yet.

Office of Public Regulation:

Laura will have a meeting with OPR in place on August 4th along with Amy Williamson. Amy was involved last time they tried to encounter AOE and OPR in 2018 but failed. Figuring out a solution that works.

Interpreters:

Many members of VTRID have expressed they want licensing for educational interpreters. Laura explained when it comes to licensing it's for the whole profession, not just one area. Her goal is to figure out if there's a way to create different guidelines under the licensing for each – community, educational, and provisional. She has asked Cory from Vancro to set up a meeting with Lori Breslow from TX to see about purchasing the BEI (board of evaluating interpreters). That would mean if we became a testing site for New England interpreters, all funds we get from interpreters who are interested in taking the BEI will be pooled into our state. We can probably use the funding to support our communities.

Agency of Natural Resources/Wildlife and Fish:

Laura plans to meet with a state employee from Wildlife and Fish to create a training for their 250+ volunteers on how to teach the population Laura serve on fishing, shooting, etc. on August 3rd.

State Employee Training Accessibility:

In process of preparing an e-learning presentation. The goal is to do an actual recording so two colleagues from mine from AHS (Katie Whitney and Heather Hicks) can upload it onto their e-learning system for current/new state employees to view.

Vaccination Clinic Accessibility:

Two guidelines have been posted on VDH's Resources for DHH page on how to use clear masks.

Public Education/Training:

They have purchased 300 clear masks, ensured captioning are on all TVs. Our next move is to set up a meeting with Rebecca and TSA.

A presentation for the VT JEDI, VT Chapter of NASW.

Holly Rioux from Greater Nashua of Mental Health Services is willing to do a presentation of the model her program has for Maine, NH, and VT. So, Lynn Stanley the ex director of NASW and I will be working to set that up.

A co-presentation with Vancro for VABI in October. I recently helped them with updating their protocol for interpreting services and captioning services. That prompt me to ask if we can do the same for all six divisions. I am hoping to add this to my agenda for the next upcoming DAIL management team.

Laura is working with VT League of Towns/Cities to send out survey to all cities and towns offices to collect information on what they are doing and what they already know or don't know. The goal is to do a presentation for them to educate further.

A presentation in the lineup with VR in the works.

Presentations of three lunch webinar through VT medical society possibly in the works.

Remote Virtual Platform:

Documents as well as a disclaimer has been added onto the webpage.

Older Vermonters:

OV Series are all set. My colleague, Conor O'Dea will send out flyer.

Hearing Aid Bill Coverage:

Added context to EHB presentation. Unsure who the stakeholders are. They are focusing on different benefits such as vision, dental, durable medical equipment in addition to hearing aid coverage. Received feedback from a few to get inputs on how to incorporate.

Mental Health:

In process of establishing the initial meeting with folks from VPA, VTMHA, DMH, NASW, VA & Brattleboro Retreat on how to improve mental health access.

DeafBlind Services:

Met last week. Follow up meeting this Friday. HKNC offered together old RFPs from other states, so we can create one of our own to send out and see if anyone is interested in getting a SSP program established.

DAIL's Updates:

- 1) Monica White, who was the interim commissioner, has now been made the permanent commissioner for DAIL. Currently, we are hiring for other key leadership positions in Division of Developmental Services. Two will be retiring – Amy Roth, the assistant director of Developmental Services Division and Clare McFadden, the deputy director of payment reform at DAIL.
- 2) **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding:** The overview:
 - a. 10% FMAP for Medicaid assistance.
 - b. Wendy Trafton is leading this project. This is designed to give our state additional match for Medicaid funds for certain services that we provide across the agency over a period of time. Normally, Medicaid gives the state a federal match which is roughly 50%. Our home and community-based service such as choices for care, developmental disability services, etc. will allow the federal government to give the state an additional 10% match for expenditures that occur between April 1st, 2021, and March 31st, 2022. They will give us an extra 10%.
 - c. The state must respond quickly to this request for ideas about Vermont in 30 days. The deadline is June 14th.
 - d. A list and proposal on Vermont’s global commitment registry is where you can post for public comment. It is accepted through August 16th. After all public comments have been received, then the agency will convene an internal work group to work through the public comment and come up with a process of how we’ll determine the usage of the money.
 - e. The state will accumulate that money for a year and can be used for about three years.
- 3) **Category:**
 - a. Improve new or additional services, increase payment process, address COVID-related concerns.
 - b. Promote a high-performing and stable workforce. Training, recruitment, and retention will take place.
 - c. Utilize systems and data to improve care and promote value-based payment models and support program oversight. That focus is about quality improvement activities, usage of technology, improvement on care coordination, and addressing social determinants of health and how the state administers all of that.

Public Comments-

John Pirone: He has a list of suggestions.

- a) The meeting announcement be posted anywhere for the public to access.
 - a. Spenser shared our meetings are usually on the third Thursday of every other month from 9:30 to 10 am and going forward the agenda will be posted on the council’s new website through DAIL.
- b) A lot of discussion on speech, hearing, technology for hearing amplification. He wanted to see an equal amount of attention paid for Deaf ASL users.
- c) Information should be conveyed in ASL and not just in English.
- d) Presentations on ableism, audism, oppressions that exist within the system.

e) Language access in ASL for Deaf children in K-12 system.

Kelly Decker:

Announcement: VT RID is hosting a barbecue on August 21st.

Deb Baker: Can there be better indication who is the interpreter for the non-signers at the barbecue?

Meeting was adjourned: 11:54