

Sign Language Interpreter & Transliterators State Registration Act Stakeholder Meeting Summary from April 21st, 2017

Location: 1521 N 6th Street, Harrisburg, Pa 17102; OVR Central Office; 1st floor Conference Room

Time: 10:00am to 3:00pm

Members in Attendance:

Osvaldo Aviles (AOPC); Jen Piring (ERCHL); Jessica Bentley-Sassaman (IEPs); Jeanne Bonnes (IRS); Jerry Penna (PSAD); LaTanya Jones (PARID); Shatarupa Podder (PDE); John Nice (CDIs); Benjamin Moonan (ODHH); Denise Brown (ODHH)

Absent: Corrin Zimmerman (Prov. Interpreters) and Deleda Keiser (ODHH)

Visitors:

Sharon Niccary; Sarah Zera; Matthew Jiron; Melissa Hawkins; Alyssa Meighan; Sharon Behun; Harry Barnum; Liz Hill; Grace Shirk-Emmons; Neil McDevitt

Meeting Summary:

Changes to the meeting minutes on 3/21/17 have been made and the updated minutes are now posted on the ODHH's website.

A quick review from ODHH's meeting with Labor & Industry's Legislative Affairs, William Trusky, and Labor & Industry's Deputy Legal Counsel, Cathy Lantzy, was shared. The most critical aspect that needs to be accomplished to make necessary changes (amendments) is that there must be a clear consensus formed. It was recommended that the group start small and build from there to produce a successful modification/addition to the current act. The lawmakers need to know ALL stakeholders agree on specific items and do not want any "surprises" from happening that may be opposed to the recommended amendments. Also, Mr. Trusky shared with ODHH that no promises will be made that recommended changes would happen. This could be a lengthy process so starting small and simple may be quicker than something more complicated and detailed. If there is a full consensus, it may speed up the process. Again, there are no promises. ODHH staff will invite Mr. William Trusky and Ms. Catherine Lantzy to attend the next meeting to clarify some questions that remain as well as discussing 2 different avenues – through the Labor & Industry's Legislative affairs OR through the Legislature process.

Ms. Jennifer Piring made some remarks from her discussion with the Education Resources for Children with Hearing Loss (ERCHL) committee about the current language of the Act. Ms. Piring stated that the Act exempts the interpreters working in educational settings, in accordance with Chapter 14 of the Special Education Regulations through the Bureau of Special Education of Pennsylvania, and was concerned that the Act may impact the workforce – number of qualified interpreters available – in the educational setting. The first question asked to the committee was regarding the exemption #5 Request form to use a non-registered sign language interpreter. The committee seemed to not fully understand the purpose of the form and don't seem to be in favor in removing the exemption from the Act. Ms. Piring also added that there are some instances where a school district may not have a State-registered sign language interpreter available for a student's IEP meeting or for an after school program that deaf

parents and/or deaf students may attend. When this occurs, it is informed to the school district who may say that they can find anyone who knows sign language to provide interpretation services. Again, it shows that some school districts do not understand fully what Act 57 is and what the entire purpose of the Act is. Finally, Ms. Perring shared that the committee feels that giving people more time (3 to 5 years) is only going to give them more time to do the same thing they have been doing for three years.

The group discussed how the current law is written provides minimal “teeth” to ensure full compliance of the act. One recommendation was to consider making a violation a misdemeanor. Ms. Bentley-Sassaman will gather information from other States that have criminal action within their law to see how they were able to work with local District Attorneys as well as any useful information that may be beneficial to continue this discussion.

At the last meeting, it was agreed that LaTanya Jones and Corrin Zimmerman, in collaboration with PARID, would submit a survey to all PARID members as well as all Interpreter Training Programs, registered interpreters through ODHH. The committee of Ms. Jones, Ms. Zimmerman, and PARID received 124 responses to the survey. The survey consisted of about 30 questions and the results can be found attached to the meeting minutes for your review.

After the survey was being reviewed to the group, ODHH provided a Provisional Registration Fact Sheet to the group for review. The fact sheet will also be attached to the minutes for the public to review.

During the discussion, the group felt that expanding it to 5 years would be necessary and appropriate. The change agreed upon, without Mr. Osvaldo Aviles (left early and did not partake in this discussion), was that ODHH may approve only 4 renewals. Another item that was discussed and mostly agreed upon was to include a late fee for provisional registered interpreters – “if renewals are received late or past the deadline, a fee of \$25 will be imposed.” The final item discussed and agreed upon was to include mentorship hours along with 20 hours of professional development. The recommended language would look like – “documentation of 10 hours of working with a mentor who is approved by ODHH must be supplied”. Since Mr. Aviles did not partake in this discussion, the items will be revisited to determine full consensus on the recommended changes.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 19th, 2017 from 10:00am to 3:00pm at OVR Central Office; 1521 N 6th Street in Harrisburg, Pa. The meeting will take place in the 1st floor conference room.

Public members are welcomed to observe the meetings but are not permitted to make any comments or ask questions.