

**Sign Language Interpreter & Transliterators State Registration Act
Stakeholder Meeting Summary: August 25, 2017**

Location: 1521 N 6th Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102; OVR Central Office

Time: 10:00am – 3pm

Members in Attendance:

Jessican Bentley-Sassaman (ITP); Benjamin Moonan (ODHH); Neil McDevitt (Referral Agencies- filling in for J. Bonnes); Jerry Penna (PSAD); John Nice (PARID); Denise Brown (ODHH); Shatarupa Podder (PDE/BSE); Jen Perring (ERCHL); LaTanya Jones (PARID)

Interpreters: Cindi Brown and Nichole Wade

CART: Hillary Walsh

Visitors: Nicole Moran; John Blasco; Libby Berlin; Jo Madden

Meeting Summary:

Ben Moonan welcomed everyone and reviewed the communication expectations of the meeting. He explained that the previous meeting minutes were short due to discussing two specific issues and will post soon.

Ben Moonan introduced a special guest from Labor & Industry's Legislative Affairs, Bill Trusky. Bill is the Legislative Director at the Department of Industry. He discussed both the legislative process and how to work with the governor's office and also explained the process to the stakeholders to make those changes possible. Bill acknowledged Jessica Bentley-Sassaman who is with Bloomsburg University because Bloomsburg is one of the schools that provides certification. Bill explained that Senator Gordner from Montour County represents Bloomsburg and suggested that the stakeholders get a group in front of him to start the discussion.

Bill explained that policy and legislation work hand in hand. He will forward the information discussed today to his boss to ensure that he is aware of what the group wants to ultimately accomplish. Bill stressed the importance of everyone being on the same page when going before the Senator which will make it more of a priority. Since Senator Gordner has worked with OVR in the past and is familiar with the issues, he would be a good start.

Jessica Bentley-Sassaman explained that the changes they are proposing in the law would have to match the regulations. Bill emphasized that getting the legislation passed first is key and then changes to the regulations can be made.

Denise Brown discussed acquiring a revolving account so the money that was not used could roll over instead of being put back into the general fund. The reason behind a revolving account is because of the expansion for provisional registration from three years to five years. Making it five years would allow for more mentorship, training, etc. Denise explained that the goal is to

have provisionally registered interpreters pass the test and become state certified and registered. Shatarupa explained that registered interpreters have fees that are due in December and if that money is not spent by June of the following year, it is put back into the general fund and is unable to access.

There was discussion about making the fees due in July but Dee Dee expressed that the current law states that the fees are due the end of December every two years. Because the stakeholders are looking to expand the provisional registration from three years to five years, money is needed to make that happen. The money obtained from the interpreters who want to work in Pennsylvania could be used to provide training.

Neil brought up the question of dealing with the regulations and legislation and what would be the appropriate approach. Bill explained that he favors legislation over regulations and again stressed that everyone being on the same page is vital to getting a law passed.

Denise explained that there's been some confusion from people and that they are confused about being able to make public comments. She clarified that the advisory council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing does allow the public to come and make comments. The stakeholders group was set up by the ODHH to get feedback from the community about Act 57. The stakeholders represent various entities in Pennsylvania. The community can then go to their stakeholder and present their comments to the stakeholders and then the stakeholders can bring those up in the next meeting. If members of the community do not feel as though their needs are being met, they can come directly to the ODHH to express their needs.

Jessica stated that they are developing a survey that will be sent out to interpreting teachers, interpreters throughout the state of Pennsylvania, and the deaf community to get a better idea of what the community wants to bring to the stakeholder meeting. Latanya also sends out the meeting minutes to the public so they are aware of what is discussed in the meeting.

Shatarupa asked the group to contact their individual legislators and senators from their area and ask them to support the bill because the more people that support the bill, the easier it is to pass. Jessica is going to talk with Bill about the language of the email to send to legislators and senators. This will help so the email can contain similar information to ensure the group is all on the same page.

Denise expressed that the goal is to be as close to completion as possible by October before the holidays and if the group has to come back after to make some adjustments, they can make that happen. Denise would like sponsors identified by October so contacts can start being made.

The group discussed how to obtain responses from the Deaf community if there are not a lot of responses from the survey. The next step would be to set up town hall meetings where only Deaf people are in attendance where they are provided the same questions, but in an area where they are more comfortable.

The group then discussed the language changes to the law. The law and regulations were shown side by side. The regulations were more specific which was contrary to what Bill thought should

be done and have the law be more specific. There is more flexibility in the regulations than the law. Adding mentoring was discussed and how the program is built on mentoring so it is important to add that in the law. Increased fees were also discussed. The fees were increased to “make it hurt more” for not turning in the necessary documentation on time.

The rest of the meeting was focused around the survey and language of the questions. Cindi was asked to step out of her role as an interpreter to explain the intent of the questions so everyone remains on the same page. There is a set of questions for CDI, set of questions for a Deaf individual, set of questions for interpreter educator, and so on. When taking the survey, the individual cannot pick two for how they identify but can take the survey twice. If they are taking it twice, it is important that the individual remembers which they are identifying as because the questions are different for each. The questions that are linked with identifying as Deaf will have the English portion and also a video that will be in ASL that asks the question. The responses are anonymous! There will also be a paragraph and a video about what exemption 5 is so it is clear when people take the survey.

Future meeting dates will be discussed through email and at the next meeting.

The next meeting is on Friday, September 29, 2017 from 10am-3pm.