

ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
QUARTERLY MEETING: MARCH 15, 2019
PATTAN, Harrisburg, PA

MEMBERS PRESENT: Karen Leslie-Henry, Chair, Kelly Holland, Trisha Mader, Devon Grant, Shatarupa Podder, Marsha Drenth, Lori Leiman

ODHH STAFF: Dee Dee Keiser, Melissa Hawkins, Director, Denise Brown

INTERPRETERS: Cindi Brown, Jessica Bentley-Sassaman

CART: Terry Brown

GUESTS: Steve Pennington, Client Assistance Program, Jeff Iseman, PASILC, Nancy Kingsley, HLAA State Director, Gerald Penna, Ryan Hyde, Acting Director OVR, Dale Long

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 7, 2018 MEETING MINUTES

Minutes were reviewed. Kelly Holland's name was added as an attendee. Shatarupa made a motion to approve corrected minutes. Kelly seconded the motion. Minutes were approved.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There are three new advisory council appointees. Karen thanked Dale Long and Sam Trychin for their service since 2013. The three new members are Michelle Paonessa, John Hogue, and Amy Letteri. They are filling one vacancy and two expired terms.

GUEST SPEAKER

Karen introduced Steve Pennington, Executive Director of the Client Assistance Program (CAP). CAP is the statewide advocate for people with disabilities seeking services from OVR. In the summer of 1977 Mr. Pennington wrote a 504-manual outlining the federal government's responsibility to provide accommodations to people with disabilities. Which led to an opportunity to meet with the Deaf community. In 1985 the person in charge of the "Law Center" moved and Mr. Pennington took over where he remains today. In addition to being the CAP advocate he has represented many people who are deaf in ADA cases. The staff at CAP is Mr. Pennington, two advocates, an outreach person, and two administrative people. CAP's approach is based on what the Rehab Act requires. CAP works in support of the OVR system and tries to resolve issues that arise. The main issue now is the OVR fiscal crisis.

Contact information: To access CAP services call 215-557-7112. Mr. Pennington's cell phone number is 215-564-2363. His email is steve@equalemployment.org

REPORT: Ryan Hyde, Acting Director OVR

OVR is having financial issues. They have a \$190-million annual program budget to cover the entire state. There are four bureaus: **1.** Bureau of Central Operation. This handles the policy and planning of fiscal reports. **2.** Bureau of Vocational Rehab which services the general

population of people with disabilities. **3.** Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services who serves people who are blind and visually impaired. **4.** Hiram G. Andrews Center which serves several hundred students throughout the year.

The budget is broken up across those four bureaus. In 2014 the Work Force Innovation and Opportunity Act was passed by the federal government. 15% of the budget must provide pre-employment services which are restricted to just students with disabilities age 14-21 years. Two years ago, 14,000 students were served. Last year was 25,000. This year 25,000 students have already been served with one quarter of the fiscal year remaining. Twenty million dollars must be reserved for pre-employment transition services.

On March 6, 2019 there was a meeting with the PA Rehab Council. The next day with the PA state board of OVR. A vote passed allowing the exploration of closing the order of selection. So OVR is working with CAP to close the order of selection and to see if there needs to be a change in the order of selection.

The order of selection has three categories; most significantly disabled, significantly disabled, and non-significantly disabled. Clients get put on a waiting list until funds are available. But students still need to be served. There will be public comment time regarding any changes. This is still being worked out.

Ryan answered a question regarding SWEEP funds. These are re-allocation funds. The federal budget determines how much money is available nationally for VR funds. Then grants come out to the states. If a state can't match or is unable to use their funds the money is turned back in and other states can purchase the funds if they can show they can match the funds. So, in the first few years PA got significant money. However, that pool of money is shrinking.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Future of OVR budget. Because of changes happening this cannot be discussed.
2. Does the state have facilities where hearing assistive technology equipment can be demonstrated and tried by consumers. There is PIAT which has changed its name to Tech Owls. There are resource centers throughout the state. But who is there to train a person on the use of a device? Also, the website is confusing. People don't always know what they need. What is missing is a person that meets with a consumer to discuss needs.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Devon Grant - The next Governor's Advisory Committee meeting is May 31, 2019 at the Dept. of Education Bldg., 333 North Market St. The committee has formed work groups for employment, education, transportation, and budget/funding.

Shatarupa Podder - There are 17 special education indicators that need to be reported to the Federal Government on how the state is meeting criteria for students with disabilities,

graduation performance, transition from early intervention to school age, transition to post-secondary. For the past ten of eleven years PA has met the criteria. Future Ready PA Index is a new system to measure school performance. There are 3 categories; academic performance, student progress, and college and career readiness. The aim is to have all students ready for these by graduation.

Trisha Mader - Nothing to report

Kelly Holland - Hands and Voices had a family event in February. There were 140 people who attended at the Eden in Lancaster. There was also a third learning community which was held in the Lehigh valley. Denise was the facilitator. The fourth will be in Pittsburgh in early April. The next infant hearing screening advisory meeting is April 25, 2019 at 1:00 pm at the old State Hospital grounds DGS Complex.

Melissa Hawkins - In 2018 ODHH got a total of 2592 calls. In January this year there were 273 calls. There are 465 state registered interpreters and approximately 75 provisional. Melissa will be meeting with the Director of Aging (Robert Torres) to discuss getting a representative on the council. We also need someone from the Senate and House. ODHH is working on identification cards for drivers to have with them. Once approved the cards will be free if requested. OVR and ODHH are working to ensure that Commonwealth accessibility is a priority including the captioning of videos. The Hearing Loss Expo is in the fall at the Radisson in Camp Hill. [Trisha mentioned that there is a site (healthbridge.info) that lets a person create an accommodation card]

OLD BUSINESS

Karen spoke of council appointments. Last meeting three people were nominated; Nancy Kingsley, John Hogue, and Liz Hill. Liz thanked everyone but declined the invitation to be nominated.

Letter to PA Broadcasters

Karen attended a PA emergency preparedness meeting and shared the letter. They asked for clarification about deaf-blind access. Karen will contact Marsha for input. The letter had three or four best practices for press conferences about emergencies. We are requesting live interpreters and captioning and that press conferences are posted for later viewing.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Karen stated that comments will be kept to five minutes.

Nancy Kingsley

Regarding assistive technology New Jersey could be a model. NJ has people that demonstrate equipment which was mentioned earlier as a concern. PA HLAA has 3 people trained to do assistive technology training.

Kay is the chairperson of the telephone relay service advisory board. There is an effort to get TDDP to cover wireless devices. PUC has ok's this. They set up a TRS task force.

Regarding continuing care retirement communities most people living there have late onset hearing loss. Meeting rooms need to be accessible. They are regulated by PA Insurance Dept. Nancy stated that she thinks PA Dept. of Aging should investigate this.

Jeff Iseman

He is from the PA SILC. He works with 17 centers for the CIL in PA. He and his boss Matt Seeley will attend ODHH stakeholder's meetings. Their website is www.pasilc.org Their next board meeting is May 23, 2019 at the Hershey Harrisburg Sheraton.

Harry Barnum

He is a Deaf community activist for Liberty Resources, Inc. He is not in favor of a special license plate, but his group likes the idea of a placard. He stated that he was disappointed that there is no culturally deaf representation on the ODHH advisory council. Karen commented that appointments to the council are open to everyone. The Deaf community is encouraged to apply. He stated that he has viewed many webinars with captioning, but he prefers interpreters.

Gerald Penna

He stated that he sent a letter to the Secretary on February 13 because of concern for ODHH. The letter was read aloud. The letter stated his concern that the ODHH position is not being filled. Two people cannot cover 67 counties. This will cause burn out and collapse of ODHH. The letter also stated concerns about how the director position was filled. He feels ODHH was not transparent with the hiring of the director. He feels that many do not know a director was hired. He stated that he would like to know the short and long-term goals of ODHH. He feels the Deaf community has lost faith in ODHH, he feels ODHH should be separate from OVR.

Sharon Behan

Regarding the broadcaster letter she feels the issue is the camera men. Managed care rollouts are coming in January. She wanted to know ODHH's role to make sure deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf blind understand the changes. She is also interested in ODHH's role with the Office of Long Term Living (OLTL). She stated that advisory council members are appointed by the Governor. ODHH is the eyes and ears to be sure services are provided to deaf and hard of hearing.

Steve Pennington

All of the state boards need Deaf representation. He also stated that what has happened to ODHH has less to do with the director change and more to do with changes at a higher level. He also feels enough time is not given for public time to speak at state boards. ODHH should be the first council to say that deaf and hard of hearing community members have a say in how things are run.

Karen Leslie-Henry

The council welcomes deaf and hard of hearing communities to participate in meetings. If there are issues about ODHH these concerns need to be brought forward. Denise, Ben,

DeeDee, and Melissa work very hard. Karen thanked visitors for coming. She encouraged people to continue to recommend individuals to apply for the council, but reminded all that it is the Governor's office that makes the appointments.

NEW BUSINESS

Marsha Drenth

She discussed Deaf-Blind communication at this advisory council meeting and offered these tips:

- With introductions slow down and pause between people.
 - When speaking state your name first each time
 - Let the interpreters know your sign name
 - Breaks are very important as well. Five minute breaks between presentations are appreciated
- Denise suggested discussing communication rules at the beginning of the meeting. Marsha is encouraged to be proactive if a break is needed or communication rules are not being followed.

Karen

PSD is having a transition resource fair on April 6, 2019. There will be 30 exhibitors. It is free and open to the public and all are invited.

Shatarupa

Are there any existing vacancies or USQ's? Do we have any recommendations?

Melissa answered there is one public vacancy and one person in USQ. The House, Senate, and Aging positions are open. Karen stated that we need a cycle so everyone's term is not ending at the same time.

Motion to adjourn was proposed by Devon and seconded by Shatarupa. The motion carried.

Lori Leiman

Lori Leiman, Secretary