

**Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Quarterly Meeting, March 22, 2017
PaTTAN, Harrisburg, PA**

Members present: Don Rhoten, chair; Russ Goddard, Devon Grant, Kelly Holland, Nancy Kingsley, Lori Leiman, Karen Leslie-Henry, Dale Long, Shatarupa Podder, Trisha Mader, Donna Reinaker

Excused: Sam Trychin

ODHH staff: Denise Brown, Dee Dee Keiser, Ben Moonan

Guests: Peter Bailey, PSD; Julia Blackwell; Mckenzie Clare, CAP; Harvey and Mary Ann Corson, PSAD; David DeNotaris, OVR; Melissa Derr, PUC; Marsha Drenth, DBLWS; Steve Farmer, WPSD; Melissa Hawkins, Disability Empowerment Center; Tom King; Lee Lippi; Jessica Marks, WPSD; Margaret McKenna, CAP; Gerald Penna, PSAD; Cathy Rhoten, ERCHL; Grace Shirk-Emmons, PSAD; Rick Walters, OVR; John Waterhouse, WPSD

Minutes for December 9, 2016: Russ moved to approve, Karen seconded, and the motion passed.

ACDHH Bylaws Review

Nancy discussed several proposed bylaws amendment. Devon moved to adopt them with one revision, Shatarupa seconded, and the motion passed. The changes are:

1. Restore the lettering and numbering of provisions as given in the 2013 bylaws to make it easier to cite specific bylaws provisions.
2. Article V, Section 2: Have elected officers take office at the next meeting, as in the 2013 bylaws, not immediately.
3. Article VI, Section 2: Allow special meeting notices to be emailed, as in the 2013 bylaws.
4. Article VI, Section 6: To allow public time to be scheduled anytime during a meeting, delete “ the end of” from “Public participating and comments are welcome and may be encouraged through a public time at the end of a formal meeting,”
5. Article VII: Eliminate "Thirty (30) day" from the last sentence, since there is a 14-day email provision.

Action Point: Nancy will update the bylaws with the amendments.

OVR Hearing Loss Training Update—Russ Goddard

The OVR videoconference training was postponed to April 26 due to the recent winter storm. Sam Trychin developed most of it to explain hearing loss psychosocial aspects, including behaviors a general VR counselor should look for when helping a customer who may have a hearing loss, hearing loss coping methods, and assisting customers to accept their hearing loss.

Action Point: Russ will have the videoconference recorded for use by OVR staff that missed the session or want to review what they learned. CAPTION IT?

Deaf & Hard of Hearing White Paper—Nancy Kingsley

The goal to provide an ACDHH position paper that can make the public aware of the differences between people who are culturally deaf and people with other hearing loss, since there is often a mistaken assumption that the needs of these groups are the same.

Action Point: Nancy and Karen will make revisions to the white paper, including a statement that not everyone fits into the categories described.

Schools for the Deaf Updates

Pennsylvania's schools for the Deaf have new heads, who shared information about their school.

Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (PSD)—Peter Bailey

PSD, which is located in Philadelphia, is the third oldest school for the Deaf in the U.S. and will celebrate its 200th anniversary in 2020. (The Connecticut and New York schools celebrate their bicentennials this year.) The student population is diverse, including children from the inner city as well as from counties surrounding Philadelphia (26 school districts). Some students have additional disabilities and/or arrive at an older age, and all prospective students are assessed to be sure that PSD is a good fit for them. Enrollment has been stable at approximately 175 students for the past few years. Graduating students go on to college, vocational programs, or directly into the workforce. PSD is the 2017 ESDAA Division II Champion for both boys and girls basketball, a first in 40 years for the boys and 37 years for the girls.

Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (WPSD)—Steve Farmer

WPSD will celebrate its 150th anniversary in the next two or three years and was the first U.S. day school for the Deaf. There are almost 180 students in Pittsburgh, about 70 at the Scranton school (its highest enrollment), and around 100 in the Choices for Children early intervention program. A preschool program was started a few years ago in Hershey with one or two students, with nine expected by the end of the year. WPSD and Scranton students attend an online class together via videoconferencing. A "Commitment to the Community" meeting is held every three to four months with local mayors and legislators, and WPSD will host a week-long junior police academy for the second year this summer. The Pittsburgh Pirates will have a softball and baseball clinic for the students on the PNC field this spring. WPSD also offers sign language classes for the public.

Client Assistance Program (CAP)—Margaret McKenna

CAP is mandated under the federal Rehabilitation Act to provide free statewide advocacy for people with any disability who are seeking services from OVR. The program is administered by the Center for Disability Law and Policy in Philadelphia, CAP is becoming more involved with the deaf and hard of hearing populations and can speak to any group of deaf and hard of hearing individuals about the OVR process, OVR customer rights and responsibilities, and CAP's role as the advocate CAP can also help people with disabilities, whether or not they are OVR customers, who are looking to file an ADA Title I employment claim because of being terminated or not properly accommodated. . The program has a Facebook page and a website [www.equalemployment.org] and recently posted captioned videos.

Deaf-Blind Living Well Services (DBLWS) Update—Marsha Drenth

Marsha is the program manager for the DBLWS support service provider (SSP) program. DBLWS recently trained 18 SSPs in the Scranton, Altoona, and other new areas. The DBLWS monthly report indicates counties with consumers, counties that need SSPs, who is on the waiting list in that county, and the different activities by category, e.g., medical, social, food shopping, eating out, educational, work-related, and religious. Since November, there have consistently been over 300 hours of services for 42 consumers. SSP committee meetings are held quarterly, and Marsha promotes the program at outreach events. She is on the advisory committee for the deaf-blind PaTTAN project and will develop videos with them. The American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB) has an SSP white paper, and DBLWS has been preparing one for Pennsylvania to describe deaf-blindness, what an SSP is, what an SSP can and cannot do, etc. The paper will be provided to the ACDHH. DBLWS is exploring grants to provide technology to persons who are deaf-blind and working to get information out to legislators.

ODHH Update—Denise Brown, Dee Dee Keiser, and Ben Moonan

Ben and Shatarupa attended the stakeholder meeting on Act 57, the Pennsylvania Sign Language Interpreter & Transliterator State Registration Act passed in 2004 to ensure that interpreters are qualified. The stakeholders group has nine members. Shatarupa represents the state's Department of Education, PSAD has a representative, and PARID has three (one for state registered interpreters, one for provisionally certified interpreters, and one [for certified Deaf interpreters]). There are also representatives for the courts, Educational Resources for Children with Hearing Loss (ERCHL), interpreter training programs, and interpreter referral agencies. A list of concerns that need addressing has been developed. Terry Roth from the Disability Advocacy Support Hub (DASH), which is part of Disability Rights Pennsylvania, spoke about how a bill becomes a law so members would know how to get amendments passed. The meetings are open to the public. Information and a PowerPoint about Act 57 are on the ODHH website.

Action Point: Karen will check her availability to represent ACDHH at the Act 57 meetings.

State interpreter registrations all expire at end of every even year. There are about 365 registered interpreters and 49 provisional registrations, which are for one year with the option to renew twice. The Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) worked with Jessica Bentley-Sassaman, Bloomburg University's interpreter coordinator, to set up legal interpreting training for sign language interpreters.

ODHH asked Kay Tyberg and Bill Best, who presented at ODHH's Hearing Loss Expo in November, to give presentations for several videos to be produced by Commonwealth Media Services (CMS) in Harrisburg, which has low rates. Presenters, CMS services, and completing the videos will be funded from the interpreter registration money, since unused funds go back to the general funds on June 30. About 10-15 people will be in the audience to make the presentations more natural, and there will be an interpreter and captioning. The video will be available to anyone who wants to know how to communicate with hard of hearing people or learn about hearing assistive technology.

In January, ODHH's contact log was updated to indicate how people found out about this agency.

Two ODHH positions are vacant, director (for the past month) and central office representative (since October 2015). Someone was found for the latter position in December and is waiting for approval from the governor's office, but there is a hiring freeze. The video for the Department of Aging and the Act 57 stakeholders group are ODHH priorities, but various other services are impacted by the vacancies. Training and education had to be deprioritized, the time for travel and giving presentations has been reduced, and ODHH cannot quickly return calls.

Action Point: For the June meeting, Ben and Denise will make a list of ODHH services that cannot be provided because of the 40% staff vacancies, so the ACDHH can advocate for filling the positions.

OVR Update—Russ Goddard

The deaf summer academy will be held from July 9-21 at Penn State for 25 deaf and hard of hearing high school students. About 10 primarily use ASL, 10 use spoken English, and five use both. The Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) and OVR formed a partnership to provide training in May to enable up to 15 culturally Deaf people to become certified peer specialists working in various mental health agencies throughout the state. Russ planned to attend the American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association (ADARA) conference in Portland, Oregon in May. He hoped to get approval to attend a similar workshop in Austin, Texas hosted by the National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes, which won a five-year federal grant to study how to help deaf and hard of hearing high school graduates improve their postsecondary outcomes, since they have a higher drop-out rate regardless of reading level.

David DeNotaris

OVR has 21 district offices and 900 staff (with the Hiram G. Andrews Center included, over 1100 staff). Since October, OVR hasn't been able to get any positions filled due to the state's budget situation. In November and December, the state furloughed 523 employees, and all human resources and information technology departments are being merged to save \$9-10 million. The hiring freeze isn't expected to affect filling the ODHH director position. ACDHH members can suggest interview questions.

Action Points: (1) The ACDHH will develop a list of qualifications for the ODHH director and Don will email them to David next week (2) The ACDHH will send a letter to David and one to Secretary Manderino (if Don obtains David's agreement) about hiring an ODHH director ASAP. (3) Donna will compose the letter(s).

Department Reports

Department of Health—Kelly Holland

The Department had applied for a \$250,000 EHDI grant but received only \$143,000, so there will probably be fewer trainings. Additional funding might be awarded up to the full \$250,000.

Department of Aging—Donna Reinaker

Sam is working with the Department's ombudsman program to do the same type of training that needs to be on video for people who work with hard of hearing seniors. He will give two presentations for the program on May 3 on the signs that someone may have a hearing loss and how to accommodate it.

Action Points: (1) Donna will ask the Department of Aging about videotaping and captioning the May 3 ombudsman trainings. (2) Denise and Ben will coordinate the ODHH video plans with the ACDHH committee that has also been working on creating videos about hard of hearing needs, perhaps having Bill Best and Kay Tyberg do the technology presentations and Sam do those on identifying and coping with hearing loss.

ACDHH Meeting Location

The ACDHH agreed to hold the next meeting at PaTTAN's Harrisburg location again. David had suggested to Don that the ACDHH consider rotating the meetings to different parts of the state to give consumers from each location the opportunity to participate. Since this would cause increased travel, hotel, and meal costs and logistics issues, members preferred to continue meeting in Harrisburg and annually transmit the meeting via videoconferencing to remote locations that are accessible via an assistive listening system, captioning to the participant's laptop or iPad, and interpreting. PaTTAN or OVR offices could be used for the remote site meetings.

Action Points: (1) ODHH will ensure that the PaTTAN room for the next meeting has a board table and large area assistive listening system and is set up to enable Sam to participate remotely by phoning in. (2) Dale will chair a technical committee (with assistance from Russ) that will check into looping the meeting room. (3) Denise and Ben will check into having OVR acquire a portable loop system and provide additional portable microphones for its first floor conference room in Harrisburg. (4) Russ will check whether OVR's Polycom videoconferencing equipment can be used outside OVR's district office system, whether OVR can help with captioning remote meetings, and the feasibility of using OVR district offices for the remote meetings.

ODHH Director Qualifications

The ACDHH discussed various qualifications that should be required or desired in the next ODHH director and obtained additional feedback from Denise and Ben.

Action Point: Don will email a draft of proposed qualifications to the ACDHH on Monday, get feedback, and send the final version to David.

Agenda for Next Meeting

Action Point: Don will invite state and municipal police representatives to give presentations and ask Eric Jeschke to give an update about the telecommunications relay service (TRS).

(Meeting concluded at 2:20 p.m.)