

ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR DEAF ANF HARD OF HEARING

QUATERLY MEETING: September 20, 2019

PATTAN, Harrisburg, PA

MEMBERS PRESENT: Karen Leslie-Henry, chair, Rebeccah Lorah, Kelly Holland, Lori Leiman, Shatarupa Podder, Amy Letteri, John Hogue, Michelle Paonessa, Jerald Cohen, Russ Goddard, Trisha Mader

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

GUESTS: Shannon Austin, OVR Director, Ryan Hyde, Steve, Pennington, Matt Seeley, Harry Barnum, Nancy Kingsley, Sharon Behun, Janetta Green, Loree Drawbaugh

INTERPRETERS: Cindi Brown, Jessica Bentley-Sassaman

CART: Terry O'Conner

Karen welcomed members of the council and guests. Council members introduced themselves.

Karen thanked Ryan for his support while he served as interim director of OVR. Ryan was presented a certificate of appreciation for his dedication to improving opportunities for individuals who are Deaf, Deaf-blind, or hard of hearing and for his commitment to this council.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Karen introduced Shannon Austin, the new executive director of OVR. She became the director on May 25, 2019.

Shannon spoke about her family including having children with hearing loss and ADHD that required her to be an advocate for them. She is currently working on her Ph.D. in management and leadership. Her goal is to help individuals, especially with disabilities, get access to appropriate systems.

She gave an update on OVR. OVR is just coming through some

financial issues. OVR is looking at internal systems to create consistently through all offices. Trying to partner with other agencies to expand services is being discussed. Collaborating may allow meeting with the same individuals while sharing funds needed to serve them. OVR was recently notified of reallocation funds of 27.3 million dollars. There was also a reallocation of 55 million through RSA administration. These monies need to be used by September 30, 2020.

OVR is working with the Governor's office to develop a budget. There is also a closed order of selection as of July 1, 2019. There are approximately 2800 individuals on a waiting list. There are 36, open cases in the Commonwealth.

At the end of October there will be public meetings/comment concerning the State plan for 2020 to 2024. January 2020 OVR will be looking into implementing a diversity inclusion initiative.

Karen asked Shannon about the ODHH position that was lost. Ryan commented that there is not money in the budget for the position. That position has been swept. Ryan suggested a resolution be made today and a letter be sent to the Secretary to the Governor's office. Shannon added that OVR positions were also swept. The letter should also be sent to secretary Oleksiak. Karen suggested that the community need to make their voices heard regarding the loss of this position.

Action Item: Karen read the following resolution "We're proposing a resolution that the Advisory Council for Deaf and Hard of Hearing will write a letter to OVR requesting that budget funds be reinstated to restore the community representative position that was closed previously".

Shatarupa made a motion to accept the resolution and John seconded. All were in favor.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF December 7, 2018 MEETING

MINUTES: John made a motion to approve and Lori seconded.

NEW APPLICANT: There is a new applicant here today, Loree Drawbaugh. Applications come in and the council interviews the applicants. Then we discuss whether to submit the applicant's name to the Governor's office. Appointments are made by the Governor.

Loree Drawbaugh introduced herself and talked about her past. She wants to join the council to help and to use her mental health and deaf education background.

There was another applicant who was unable to attend today. He prefers a remote interview.

Visitors were asked to leave the room and there was a discussion about the other applicant not being present. It was decided to hold the vote, so council can review the applications again. And to see if a remote interview will be possible.

Loree was thanked for her interview. It is now on record. Once the other applicant is interviewed submissions to the Governor will be decided.

Karen is in USQ. The House position is vacant, and an agency designee is vacant.

REPORTS

PUC/TRS TASK FORCE: Kay Tyberg did not submit a report, so Sharon Behun was asked to provide comments. The commissioners of the PUC established a task force to review TRS in PA which is provided by law. The task force includes members of TRS Advisory Board which meets quarterly. There are individuals representing internet providers and wireless carriers. TRS funding comes from land lines phones. There is an 8-cent surcharge on our land line phone bills which goes to the TRS fund. But so much is internet based now. So why aren't they contributing. The task force began in April and has until November to provide recommendations to the Commissioners. There are sub-committees: technology, relay, and regulatory.

Each sub-committee will make recommendations. The TDDP Program now includes wireless devices now. The device is free but not the service.

PA ASSOCIATION BROADCASTER LETTER: This has gone back and forth. It was sent to Marsha Drenth to get deaf blind input. This is the fourth draft of the letter. This letter outlined best practices to the PA Association of Broadcasters. The letter is to ensure accessible steps are in place at press conferences and emergencies.

The letter is signed by Melissa as the director of ODHH and Karen as the chair. Since the letter is a draft feedback is encouraged. It was recommended that something be added about certified deaf interpreters and to be sure best practices are followed. It was also suggested that "state certified" be changed to "state registered".

The letter needs to be short, so the broadcasters understand exactly what they need to do.

This letter has been on going for two years. The council voted two years ago to write this letter. Michelle and Karen will continue to work on the letter and a request for a meeting.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Kelly Holland, Department of Health. They will be working on submitting a grant for funding for the next four years. EDHI advisory group will continue. Partnership with TIU will continue for the Guide by Your Side program. Deaf mentor programs will continue. Family weekend funding will continue. Support for the Great Start Conference will continue.

Karen thanked Kelly for her support and service on the council as she is moving into a different position.

Russ Goddard, OVR. 2019 Summer Academy was a big success. This was the third time for the academy. It is a two-week program at Penn State. There were 21 deaf and hard of hearing kids. They learn critical skills to transition from high school to

college or work. July 2020 is targeted for the next Summer Academy. Students can continue to receive pre-employment transition services under a closed order of selection before they are determined eligible for OVR services.

Shatarupa Podder, Department of Education. Twelve of the last thirteen years PA has been recognized for providing high quality education for students with disabilities. There are seventeen indicators that are reported. Based on these the State is given a rating of meets requirements, needs assistance, or needs intensive assistance.

Governor Wolf wants to revise charter school regulations. When a child goes to a charter school money from State/Federal government goes to the charter school. There may be revisions to allow school districts to limit student enrollment at charter schools that don't provide high quality equitable education. Requiring financial audits and public contract bidding and to develop regulations that allow Department of Education to create a fee for service model to recover cost for implementing charter school laws is being investigated.

Melissa Hawkins, ODHH Director.

A video was shown that included all ODHH Staff and work currently being done. They have discussed what topics should receive the most focus. Also important is the Hearing Loss Expo in November. There will be workshops including a panel with the secretary of Aging, Deputy Secretary of Transportation, and Secretary of Labor and Industry. There are managed care organizations presenting. Russ is presenting on the summer academy. Lori is presenting on I have a hearing loss, now what? There will be free CEU's for interpreters Wednesday evening. There are 65 vendors so far.

ODHH will be focusing on Act 57 which needs improvement. Stakeholders sent revisions to the secretary. ODHH will have videos to clarify the current Act 57, hopefully by November of

2020.

ODHH will also be doing town hall meetings. There has been one in Pittsburgh with 20 attendees.

ODHH has been partnering with the Office of Attorney general to deal with interpreter complaints. The Attorney general's office handles complaints so the partnership is crucial. There is a goal to produce a video with the AG office.

Lastly there is a goal to develop a partnership with community stakeholders.

STAKEHOLDER REPORTS

Nancy Kingsley, HLAA. HLAA holds a Lunch and Learn which focuses on an educational hearing loss related topic. This year was ear, brain, and balance inter-relationship.

The Walk for Hearing is a large fund-raising event. The funds raised are shared between the national organization and the various teams and alliances that walk.

Matt Seely, PASILC. The Statewide Independent Living Council is federally mandated to advocate for all disabilities. Every three years a state plan is written which directs federal funds to the State. One of these programs is SSP.

Steve Pennington, Client Assistance Program. He discussed the law requiring this Advisory Council. He also stated that when the resolution is sent to the Secretary it should be made clear that bringing the position back is imperative so powers and duties can be carried out.

There are two governor management directives:

205-26 from 1992 that deals with the AFDA and how State agencies must comply with the law.

205-25 is from 2009 and deals with employment.

So, the first one deals with the obligation of the State to provide accessible services and the second one deals with employment policy.

The council should review these, and they may need some fine tuning for deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing.

He is a member of the commission for Employment First. If the council has recommendations for the commission contact Mary Hartley (chairperson).

Sharon Behun, SSP. SSP stands for Support Service Provider. It is a person that provides services to someone who is Deaf-Blind. It started as a pilot program using social security monies. Then the CIL was awarded the grant for two years.

SSP has three functions: guide, provide environmental information, and facilitate communication (but not act as an interpreter). The new grant starts October 1 and the CIL has applied. The program has a Code of Ethics and confidentiality is addressed. Training takes approximately nineteen hours.

OVR has a fee code for SSP services. The client gets fifteen hours per month through the program. The Office of Developmental Programs has been contacted to see if services can be included in the waiver system.

Approximately 80 people have been identified that could use the services of an SSP. Approximately 40 of those are using services.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Harry Barnum. The PA community statewide is quiet. There has not been communication and this council is responsible for disseminating communication. There are concerns about independent living, nursing homes, voting, Real ID. Deaf people are behind and need equal access to communication

Sharon Behun. Sharon gave an update on Devon. He had heart surgery and then suffered a stroke. He is now in rehab. She offered assistance regarding the broadcaster's letter. When she was ODHH director she spoke with PEMA who has a good relationship with the broadcaster's association. So maybe the PEMA director should be added to communication regarding the position.

Ms. Behun also reflected on her recollection (during her tenure as ODHH director) about the status of the vacant representative

position. She recalls it became open in 2015. After the Expo in 2016 interviews were conducted. In January of 2017 a name was given to HR. Then in February of 2017 the director position became open. So, there was no director and the position was vacant for a long time and then the position was swept. The money was previously there, and a name was provided to HR. It was put on hold and then swept.

Jerald Cohen. He asked if he could make a motion that we draft a strongly worded letter to the Land I secretary. Feels OVR is being penalized due to the high cost of accessibility. Feels the western part of the State does not have the same access to services.

Melissa then stated that she, as well as Ben and Denise are traveling to fill in the gap. Everyone is getting services. The motion was made earlier in the meeting to prepare the letter. Jerald withdrew his motion.

John asked for the next meeting to discuss closed captioning for movies and funding for hearing aids for children.

2020 MEETING DATES

March 20, 2020

June 26, 2020 (At OVR office)

September 25, 2020

December 4, 2020

Russ made a motion to adjourn.

Shatarupa seconded.