



**Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
1602 Rolling Hills Drive, Suite 201
Henrico, VA 23229-5012**

**Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
November 6, 2019**

Members Present:

Traci D. Branch
Carrie N. H. Humphrey, NIC
Kathi A. Mestayer
Colin H. Wells
Susanne B. Wilbur, LCSW

Members Absent:

Shantell D. Lewis, Au.D.
Roy B. Martin, IV
Timothy R. Patterson
Jason M. Zuccari

Staff Present:

Eric H. Raff, Director
Karen E. Brimm, Community Services Manager
Leslie G. Hutcheson, Interpreter Services Manager
Rhonda S. Jeter, Business Manager
Christine C. Ruderson, Technology Assistance Program Manager (morning only)

ASL Interpreters/CART Provider:

Laurie B. Malheiros
Bernadette C. Mayhall
Rhonda D. Tuck, Cavalier Reporting

I. COFFEE AND REFRESHMENTS - NETWORKING

On Wednesday, November 6, 2019 at 9:30 a.m., the members of the Advisory Board of the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) convened in the conference room at VDDHH Central Office, 1602 Rolling Hills Drive, Suite 201, Henrico, VA 23229-5012.

II. CALL TO ORDER

At 10:04 a.m., Chairperson Traci D. Branch called the meeting to order. All members and staff were welcomed and introduced themselves.

Board members were asked to review the Advisory Board membership roster and report any needed changes or updates.

There being no recommended corrections or changes, a motion was made by Ms. Humphrey, seconded by Ms. Mestayer, and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as written.

The Board reviewed the meeting minutes from August 7, 2019. Chairperson Branch requested that Page 2, paragraph 2, line 15 be corrected by striking the word “chairperson” and replacing with “Director Raff.” The motion to approve the minutes as written with one correction was made by Ms. Mestayer, seconded by Mr. Wells, and unanimously passed.

III. PROGRAM REPORTS

Technology Assistance Program: Ms. Ruderson, Technology Assistance Program Manager, reviewed the program activities report and first quarter report. The numbers have increased as more consumers are being reached. A lot of time during the quarter was spent on the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the vendor contracts, and Director Raff elaborated on this later in the meeting.

On 11/05/19, TAP provided a training in Richmond to Speech Language Pathologists (SLP) who submit TAP applications on behalf of consumers with speech impairments for electro-larynxes. The training was held in partnership with representatives from Griffin Labs/Atos Medical Company. The SLPs in attendance were able to earn continuing education units from the training. This was a successful endeavor, and will be offered on 11/06/19 in Norfolk.

Community Services: Karen Brimm, Community Services Manager, explained that VDDHH has been involved with Joint Healthcare Commission work group meetings, as well as interagency meetings, that were affiliated with LEAD-K legislation. The meetings have wrapped up and a final report was made to the Commission. It remains to be seen if the bill will advance, and whether VDDHH will have a role.

Community Services continues to be involved with the I-CAN! Accessibility project in collaboration with Partnership for People with Disabilities to translate their brochure about protective orders into ASL, and assisting with plans for a needs assessment survey for deaf/hard of hearing consumers and professionals.

Community Services has been involved with various aspects of emergency management such as the School Campus Safety Advisory Committee, state shelter planning, and the full activation of the emergency center during Hurricane Dorian.

Community Services also provided training to police departments and worked with the Office of the Governor to release a proclamation for Deaf Awareness Week.

Interpreter Services: Leslie Hutcheson, Interpreter Services Manager, reported on the Virginia Quality Assurance Screening (VQAS) program and the recent increase in the number of performance assessments, primarily due to students taking the assessments as requirements of their college/university curriculums. Although the number of assessments are high, the results are still being sent out within 70 working days.

VQAS held two rater trainings during this quarter (one session for certified interpreters, one for deaf raters) to review new QAS segments and determine acceptable performance standards. The

standardization meeting for hearing raters was postponed due to office renovations, and hopefully it will be held soon, with the new set of materials expected to launch early 2020. The feedback on the new materials has been excellent.

Regarding the Interpreter Services Program, Ms. Hutcheson's focus has been on court-related matters, having made two first-time presentations to the lower courts in Virginia in August and September. At the judicial conference, she emphasized how to appropriately use interpreters and coordinate with other courts that may also have a need for the interpreter on the same day. She covered placement of interpreters in the courtroom, especially in cases that may have 6 to 8 interpreters present. The feedback was excellent, and there may be plans to make the presentation a regular feature. At the clerks' conference, Ms. Hutcheson presented on the process of requesting interpreters. The conferences provided VDDHH with the opportunity to reach every lower court in Virginia.

Ms. Hutcheson attended a two-day training that the Supreme Court offers for spoken/foreign language interpreters and is working with the ADA Coordinator to develop the training for sign language interpreters who wish to work in courts of Virginia. The training could increase the number of court-qualified interpreters in Virginia.

The discussion regarding the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) study on licensure was held later in the meeting, under Ongoing Initiatives.

Executive and Virginia Relay: Director Raff reported that David Bahar is no longer with VDDHH, having accepted a similar position in Maryland. The Relay Manager position was posted and advertised but interviews were not held because the applicants did not meet the minimum qualifications. The position will be re-advertised in January and Director Raff will continue to cover Relay Manager responsibilities until the position is filled. The Virginia Relay Advisory Council meeting was canceled and rescheduled to April 2020.

Two Statewide Interagency Team (SIT) town hall meetings were held in Abingdon and Martinsville this past quarter with good turnouts. The meeting scheduled for Staunton last week was canceled due to an anticipated low attendance, but will be rescheduled for the spring of 2020 and will conclude the town hall meetings.

Director Raff shared that Ms. Virginia Melville was hired as the Administrative Assistant.

IV. BOARD REPORTS

Ms. Humphrey reported that the number of interpreting students at Reynolds Community College continues to increase. The Virginia Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf will host a Region 2 conference at the Delta Hotel in Richmond, July 16 – 19, 2020 and will include trainings for certified deaf interpreters.

Ms. Mestayer shared that she attended a wellness conference in James City County and gave out information about hearing loss and VDDHH to other assisted living and senior centers present there. She attended the Here2Hear Award Gala and was subsequently invited to attend the advocacy roundtable with the Department of Justice next week. An article written by Ms.

Mestayer about hearing loss and hospitals were recently published in Hearing Health magazine, and Director Raff requested that she share the link with the Board.

The Board recessed from 11:02 to 11:15 a.m.

V. ONGOING INITIATIVES

SSP Workgroup and grant: Ms. Brimm explained that VDDHH had convened a work group to investigate various options to set up a Support Service Provider (SSP) program in Virginia. The opportunity became available to apply for funding and VDDHH submitted a letter of interest to the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD). The letter was accepted and VDDHH subsequently developed the full grant application, which was completed and submitted on October 31. The proposal included matched funds from VDDHH, Reynolds Community College and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, and was just shy of the \$300,000 maximum. The proposal was fast-tracked as the overall structure for a statewide SSP program had to be concrete and viable to write into the grant. The funding would support a pilot SSP program in Virginia, spanning January 2020 through 2022. It is anticipated that a decision will be reached by VBPD and the awards announced on/before December 12. The ultimate goal is for the SSP pilot to become a permanent program.

TAP RFP/Contracts: Director Raff gave background information regarding the TAP specialist/outreach contracts. The contracts were rewritten to improve clarity, service provision, reporting and monitoring, and the RFP process was initiated through DARS procurement. Under the contracts, there will be some changes, such as new position titles (“Deaf/Hard of Hearing Specialists”), and a redesigned service area map (e.g., “planning districts” have been eliminated and replaced by eight regions). A pre-bid conference took place on August 28th for interested parties, and the proposals are being scored and finalized. There will be an announcement in December about the organizations that will receive contracts, effective January 1, 2020.

ISP Service Agreement: Stricken from the agenda.

DPOR Licensure: Topic added to the agenda. Ms. Hutcheson provided an update licensure study. She and Director Raff attended the public comment hearings with the exception of Roanoke. The information on the hearings is in the report, and there was better participation than previously. The final conclusion is that there is a moderately high public risk associated with the profession of sign language interpreting. Their bottom line recommendation is either that VDDHH have a more robust registration system or possible certification administered by VDDHH. The report will go out to each member of the General Assembly and members can consider submitting legislation on their own. Individuals may contact their own senator or delegate and bring their attention to the report as a way of progressing this through the General Assembly. Discussion ensued about what constitutes harm, how harm could be quantified, and how the Board could support the deaf community in pursuing the issue. The Board could consider recommending that the agency include the issue in strategic planning. Director Raff also plans to have a conversation with the Secretary of Health and Human Resources on this issue. Pursuing legislation would have to be carefully planned and considered.

The Board recessed and the meeting resumed at 12:35 PM.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was offered.

VII. WORKING LUNCH: INTRODUCTION TO STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Ms. Hutcheson shared that although VDDHH has not received guidance on the strategic planning process, it will proceed with a timeline which will allow more input from the Board, starting with a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) discussion. The timeline includes a review of the three service areas: consumer/interpreter/community support services, technology services and administration. Each service area plan will be drafted with input from the Board. The Board will have the opportunity to review the full Plan and Executive Summary before the final product is submitted in August/September. The Strategic Plan has to support the code authority and mission of VDDHH, e.g., the agency must have the authority to carry out the tasks.

VIII. STRATEGIC PLANNING ACTIVITY

Ms. Hutcheson facilitated the discussion in a brainstorming session and asked the Board for input to go into the SWOT analysis:

Strengths – technical expertise (assistive technology), seasoned staff, trust with community, networking, strong partnerships, resourcefulness, follow-through, committed and dedicated staff, presence on boards and at various events to increase visibility and awareness of VDDHH and the deaf/hard of hearing population in general, relationships with other organizations, coordinating interpreters, state screening for interpreter candidates, getting the work done such as the grant to VBPD and new screening test.

Weaknesses – Lack of public awareness of VDDHH activities, agency name recognition, expectations and confusion in the community, website may be confusing and could be more consumer friendly by use of vlogs, social media and keeping up with the various avenues to connect with the community and get recent news out, staff overworked or taking on more responsibility, some staff nearing retirement and institutional knowledge may be lost, access to other state or government services and what is the role of VDDHH in providing that information to the deaf/hard of hearing population.

Opportunities – Social media presence, increased awareness at voting polls, educating poll sites, broader distribution of information, DPOR study and the opportunity to have data collection and possibly licensure, opportunity to educate other state agencies and make changes, police and fire department training, resources for families to learn sign, opportunities to partner with other organizations and provide resources, community education and outreach to medical professions and families of deaf/hard of hearing children (early screening), updated resource booklet for parents on website and balanced information.

Threats – Handling and responding to negative reviews on social media, potential for budget cuts and having data and justification ready, technology and third-party companies could be a threat to the interpreting profession in getting screened/certified/qualified interpreters, automated speech recognition for telephone captioning and taking the human out of the process which may impeded accuracy and speed.

Data needs – Data about the Virginia deaf/hard of hearing population has not been easy to find. Ms. Mestayer mentioned that NIACS has qualified epidemiologists on the staff that could provide the data. Ms. Jeter mentioned that VDDHH keeps a call log and reasons for incoming calls are documented. The Board could look at this data to see the needs for information and services coming in from the public.

Stakeholder input – The Board was asked to consider the questions: Who are the stakeholders? How does VDDHH get additional information from them that will be useful in planning? VDDHH has gathered input from stakeholders through town hall meetings and members were asked to consider other ways to reach deaf/hard of hearing consumers. Members were asked to send their replies to Director Raff and Ms. Hutcheson.

IX. NEW BUSINESS AND FUTURE MEETING AGENDA

There was no new business. Ms. Wilbur asked if the Board would be willing to change the dates of the meetings in order to allow for better participation. The Board could look at the bylaws and vote to change the dates, if needed. The dates for the 2020 meetings were included in the meeting packet and Director Raff has sent out invites electronically.

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was made by Ms. Wilbur, seconded by Mr. Wells, to adjourn the meeting at 1:55 p.m.