



Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
1602 Rolling Hills Drive, Suite 203
Henrico, VA 23229-5012

Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
February 6, 2019

Members Present:

Traci D. Branch
Shantell D. Lewis, Au.D.
Roy B. Martin, IV
Timothy R. Patterson
Susanne B. Wilbur, LCSW
Carrie N. H. Humphrey, NIC
Kathi A. Mestayer
Colin H. Wells
Jason M. Zuccari

Staff Present:

J. Steven Burkarth, Administrative Specialist
Leslie G. Hutcheson, Interpreter Programs Manager
Eric H. Raff, Director
Christine C. Ruderson, Technology Assistance Program Manager
Paul E. Stuessy, Community Services Specialist
Rhonda S. Jeter, Business Manager

Members Absent:

None

Guests:

Daniel Carey, M.D., Secretary of Health and Human Resources

ASL Interpreters / CART Providers:

Laurie Malheiros
Emily Haynes McGee
Rhonda D. Tuck, Cavalier Reporting

I. Networking – Coffee & Refreshments

On Wednesday, February 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 the VDDHH Central Office.

II. Call to Order

At 10:00 a.m., Chairwoman Traci D. Branch called the meeting to order. The members of the Advisory Board introduced themselves followed by staff and guests.

No corrections or revisions were requested to the Advisory Board membership roster.

No corrections or revisions were requested to the meeting agenda. The motion to approve the agenda was made by Ms. Humphrey and seconded by Mr. Martin. The vote was unanimous.

No corrections or revisions were requested to the meeting minutes from November 7, 2018. The motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. Mestayer and seconded by Mr. Zucarri. The vote was unanimous.

III. Health and Human Resources Secretariat

The Chairwoman introduced Virginia Secretary of Health and Resources Daniel Carey, M.D. Secretary Carey provided an overview of his background and spoke about the strategic plans and priorities of the Health and Human Resources Secretariat under his leadership. He discussed three aspects that the administration refers to when making policy decisions: 1) strengthening the economy; 2) ensuring that every individual, including children, has the opportunity for a safe and healthy life; and 3) maximizing the impact of taxpayer dollars. Agency strategic priorities are Medicaid expansion implementation, behavioral health and developmental services, substance use disorder treatment and prevention, reproductive health care and chronic disease, and children's services and education.

The secretary proceeded to take questions from the members of the Advisory Board. Topics discussed included:

- the possibility of requiring the provision of sign language interpreters in Medicaid and Medicaid expansion policy,
- communication barriers in hospital settings,
- employment opportunities for deaf/hard of hearing professionals,
- the importance of deaf/hard of hearing advocacy in the General Assembly and among key legislators,
- equitable and statewide education for deaf/hard of hearing children,
- resources and supports for parents of deaf/hard of hearing children,
- utilizing regional resource teams to assist deaf/hard of hearing individuals in various health care systems, and
- early identification and screening children for hearing loss with appropriate and prompt follow up.

Secretary Carey thanked the board members for the important work that they do and for sharing impactful experiences with him.

At 11:07 a.m., the board recessed for 13 minutes.

IV. Board Member Reports

The Chairwoman recognized Ms. Humphrey, who offered a report. The Virginia Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (VRID) will be hosting a mini-conference on June 28 and 29 in Richmond at Reynolds Community College.

Ms. Humphrey also shared information from Reynolds about the Governor's G3 grant: Get an education, Get a job and Give back. The goal is for students to complete a program within two semesters (maximum) while obtaining a working credential. The curriculums will be stacked, that is, every credit along the way will build into an associate's degree. RCC is working to develop a training program for support service providers for deaf-blind individuals and interveners for deaf-

blind children. She asked for the board's ideas for other types of training. Mr. Wells suggested a classroom aide curriculum for individuals assisting deaf/hard of hearing students.

V. Staff Reports

The Chairwoman recognized the following members of the staff:

Director Eric H. Raff presented the director's report and covered these topics:

- The life cycle and patchwork of services for a deaf person (graphic);
- Staff Updates: Rhonda Jeter joined as Business Manager in late November, Gary Talley retired and recruitment for his position is underway;
- Statewide Interagency Team (SIT) has held three town hall meetings to date in Tidewater and Richmond, with the latter being in conjunction with the Richmond Chapter of Hearing Loss Association of America. The next town hall is being planned for March 23 at the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons in Fairfax. SIT is planning a town hall in Salem (near Roanoke) on May 18 and another one in Abingdon (Southwest area), date to be determined. Ms. Mestayer asked if a town hall was being planned for the Williamsburg area, and Mr. Raff replied that nothing is being planned at this time but it is something to consider. Mr. Zuccari inquired if a town hall meeting schedule could be sent out to the board and Mr. Raff will send out the following week once details are finalized.

Director Eric H. Raff presented a report on Virginia Relay.

- Relay Manager position will be posted soon.
- Virginia Relay Advisory Council (VRAC) held a meeting on October with new members in attendance; the Council has one vacancy for someone who is an internet user.
- Next VRAC meeting will be at Longwood University on April 11 to have the meeting in the community, and if anyone is interested in attending, Mr. Raff can provide further details.

Interpreter Programs Manager Leslie G. Hutcheson presented a report on the Interpreter Services Program (ISP) and the Virginia Quality Assurance Screening (VQAS).

- General Assembly – The Clerks of the House and Senate have worked extra hard to arrange coverage for committee meetings and meetings in legislators' offices using Purple Communications and Video Remote Interpreting (VRI); if anyone has concerns, please contact the Clerks' Offices directly, as this was their first experience with these and they are seeking feedback.
- Ms. Hutcheson has been working on an unique interpreter situation for court with a need for certified legal interpreters and certified deaf interpreters to perform a language assessment; she worked with the Supreme Court of Virginia to obtain permission because the assessment was outside of courtroom and not the actual case; it has worked out well and the Supreme Court is working very hard to ensure effective communication in unusual situations. The Supreme court has also began approving remote CART in Virginia courts.
- Directory of Qualified Sign Language interpreters – Ms. Hutcheson has been getting requests from interpreters who live out of state, asking to be included in the directory. She explained that the directory is for use by people in Virginia seeking on-site interpreters, and out of state interpreters (not bordering Virginia) will not be included as that would not be user-friendly. VDDHH will be looking into the issue more and find out what criteria other states are using for their directories.

Technology Assistance Program Manager Christine C. Ruderson presented a report on the Technology Assistance Program (TAP).

- The busy season is coming up with requests for presentations and trainings.
- TAP has been working on a partnership with Jen Care Medical and preparing events for Richmond and Norfolk; the staff at Jen Care is aware of VDDHH and Purple Communications and providing accessibility for each individual.
- A question was raised about the numbers shown on the second quarter report for “exhibits” versus number of “contacts,” and Ms. Ruderson explained that she is working on getting truer numbers.
- Ms. Ruderson asked the board for referrals of any businesses and/or organizations that may be interested in TAP equipment.

Community Services Specialist Paul E. Stuessy presented a report on the Community Services Program. Mr. Stuessy presented the written report from Gary Talley, prior to his retirement.

- VDDHH, the Virginia Community College System and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired surveyed eleven workforce centers for communication access, and the results were disappointing; recommendations were made.
- Mr. Talley chaired the Accessibility Taskforce.
- Mr. Talley consulted with Hampton University about accommodations for a deaf student and made assessments and recommendations.
- Mr. Talley participated as a panelist at Virginia Tech’s School of Public and International Policy to talk about careers in public service.
- Mr. Stuessy reviewed the various trainings held across the state for law enforcement officers, 911 staff, and ADA Training.
- VDDHH hosted a legislative training on November 3 with a national-level trainer, Kim Bianco-Majeriat, and presented in ASL. The afternoon session was a brainstorming activity that narrowed down two top issues: 1) establishing regional centers for the deaf/hard of hearing; and 2) improving educational access for deaf/hard of hearing children.
- Ongoing collaboration with No Wrong Door and SIT.
- Working on obtaining a grant to produce signed videos of the I-CAN Protective Orders brochure.

VI. Public Comment

No public comment was offered.

VII. Working Lunch – Update on Interpreter Licensure

The Chairwoman recognized Ms. Hutcheson, who provided an update on the matter of interpreter licensure in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Board members received a copy of the letter from the Board of Professional and Occupational Regulation about the meeting on March 4, 2019. Ms. Hutcheson spoke with Kate Nobsch of the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) for specifics. The Board will take up the interpreter licensure issue and that is the only item on the agenda. Public comment will be taken and DPOR encouraged a coordinated reply and not repetitive, generic statements. DPOR asked for a written statement from VDDH with key points and the history of the issue. There is no expectation to provide public comments, as the study will be done.

Discussion ensued about the content of the comments, obtaining feedback from other organizations such as VRID, the Virginia Association of the Deaf, and National Association of the Deaf, and effective outreach strategies to deaf/hard of hearing individuals while conducting the actual study. Mr. Raff summarized the board’s discussion by outlining four points for the board to consider for public comments: why the study should be done in the first place; ensuring inclusivity of the study with communication accessibility and a blog in ASL; providing appreciation to DPOR for doing the

study; and recommending a subject matter expert to include individuals already experienced in the interpreting industry.

A motion was made by Ms. Mestayer and seconded by Ms. Humphrey that the board approve that individuals from the board make comments at the March 4 meeting covering the four points. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion ensued about board members who are able to attend the meeting:
Ms. Branch – as board chairperson
Ms. Humphrey –as board member
Mr. Raff – as agency director

The three individuals will confer prior to the March 4 meeting and discuss the best way to put forward the four points.

VIII. Legislative Updates

The Chairwoman recognized Ms. Hutcheson, who provided a status update on several pieces of legislation that were introduced in the 2019 session of the General Assembly of Virginia.

HB 2137: The bill, introduced by Delegate Thomas, seeks to change the language throughout the Code of Virginia from hearing impaired to deaf/hard of hearing/hearing loss. VDDHH is lead agency on the bill. The governor has no position on the bill thus the agency has no position. The bill also has an amendment (from “loss of hearing” to “hearing loss”). Mr. Raff and Ms. Hutcheson attended the committee meeting to offer technical assistance, but none was called for.

SB 1741: This is the “LEAD-K” bill. VDDHH is not the lead agency. The governor has no position on the bill. The bill was referred to the Joint Commission on Healthcare and the Commission will report to the General Assembly in 2020. VDDHH will follow the Commission’s activities and try to share information as it becomes available. The General Assembly passed the bill by indefinitely, meaning there is no carry over from short session to long session. If this bill comes back in a future session, then someone will need to introduce a totally new bill.

HB 2601: Health insurance coverage for hearing aids for minors. VDDHH is not lead agency. The bill was tabled by the committee so it is dead for this year. The insurance lobby in Virginia is powerful and mandated benefits are not well received.

HB 2296/SB 1302: Mr. Raff explained that this bill regards website accessibility of banks and financial institutions. It would require that a person who is vision impaired or deaf/hard of hearing give a notice and provide 120 days to allow the entity to fix the website problems. Virginia Board for People with Disabilities is lead agency, and the governor has no position on the bill. The bill relates to complaints under the Virginians with Disabilities Act only (not Section 508 or the ADA). The House Bill passed with amendments and will go to the Senate; the Senate version of the bill died. Several consumer groups have serious concerns about the bill.

IX. New Business and Future Meeting Agenda

No new business was offered nor was there any discussion regarding agenda items for future meetings of the Advisory Board.

X. Adjournment

At 1:45 p.m., a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Martin and seconded by Mr. Zuccari. The motion passed unanimously.