



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

Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
February 5, 2020

Members Present:

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

Members Absent:

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

ASL Interpreters/CART Provider:

Catherine Clough
Elizabeth Leitch
Laurie B. Malheiros
Bernice McCormack
Rhonda D. Tuck, Cavalier Reporting

1 I. COFFEE AND REFRESHMENTS - NETWORKING

2 On Wednesday, February 5, 2020 at 9:30 a.m., the members of the Advisory Board of the
3 Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) convened in the conference
4 room at VDDHH Central Office, 1602 Rolling Hills Drive, Suite 201, Henrico, VA 23229-5012.
5

6 II. CALL TO ORDER

7 At 10:00 a.m., Chairperson Traci D. Branch called the meeting to order. A quorum was
8 established with more than five members present. Catie Finley, Assistant Secretary of Health and
9 Human Resources, was welcomed and made an introduction. All members, staff and visitors

10 were welcomed and introduced themselves. The communication rules for the meeting were
11 reviewed.

12
13 There being no recommended corrections or changes, a motion was made by Ms. Humphrey,
14 seconded by Ms. Mestayer, and unanimously approved to accept the agenda as written.

15
16 The Board reviewed the meeting minutes from November 6, 2019. The motion to approve the
17 minutes as presented was made by Mr. Wells, seconded by Dr. Lewis, and unanimously passed.

18

19 **III. PROGRAM REPORTS**

20 Executive and Virginia Relay: Director Raff reported on the Virginia Relay. The Relay Manager
21 position was recently posted and includes a national recruitment. The position will be posted
22 until it is filled and recruitment does not have a deadline. Director Raff shared information
23 gleaned from attending two conferences last fall about emerging relay technology such as Text to
24 911 and Real-Time Text. An issue before the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is the
25 transfer of responsibility to the states to screen people for eligibility for captioned phone services
26 and if the states will be reimbursed. There is no decision yet from the FCC.

27
28 The next Virginia Relay Advisory Council meeting will be held on April 16 at Department for
29 Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) Central Office and the board members are welcome
30 to attend.

31
32 The last town hall meeting of the Statewide Interagency Team will take place on March 21 in
33 Staunton. All comments from the town hall meetings are collected and coded according to
34 categories of needs. The Team will be prioritizing needs, based on stakeholder feedback, and
35 writing a needs assessment report, which will help shape future services. The Virginia Board for
36 People with Disabilities has hired a new Executive Director, Teri Morgan.

37
38 Director Raff covered other program initiatives within the agency including Support Service
39 Provider (SSP) for deafblind individuals, and working with the Center for the Assessment of
40 Sign Language Interpretation (CASLI) about the feasibility of becoming a test site for its
41 national interpreting certification test. He also noted that there are tickets available for a semi-pro
42 baseball game in Richmond on May 31 for board members and their families. The host is
43 Friendship Circle of Virginia and the event will promote disability awareness and inclusion.

44
45 Director Raff shared anecdotal stories he received about various issues faced by deaf/hard of
46 hearing people across the state, which reminds us of why we are here to serve.

47
48 Interpreter Services Program (ISP): Leslie Hutcheson, Interpreter Services Manager, shared that
49 the new services agreement for sign language interpreters has been issued and ISP has received
50 about 30 signed agreements. A single document was developed to include both the agreement
51 and a manual for widespread use. A barrier to this process is the length of time required for
52 people to obtain SWaM or microbusiness certifications. Ms. Hutcheson will compile a list of
53 people who are waiting and approach the Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity.
54 The agreement does not expire and will be reviewed annually. The agreement and list of verified,
55 qualified sign language interpreters (VQSLI) will be posted on the VDDHH website.

56

57 Ms. Hutcheson reported that ISP has also been working on database enhancements and
58 addressing some issues found during an IT security audit. Lastly, Ms. Hutcheson announced her
59 retirement, effective August 31.

60

61 The Virginia Quality Assurance Screening (VQAS) program has been working with CASLI
62 about becoming a test administrator and the technical/computer requirements to meet the
63 standards. VQAS is working on a plan for new materials, disseminating the materials, and deaf
64 rater training for the current grant year. It will be laying out a timeline for that in order to be
65 accomplished before August 31.

66

67 Community Services: Karen Brimm, Community Services Manager, reported that Community
68 Services has been working with the Technical Assistance Program (TAP) on the Deaf/Hard of
69 Hearing Specialist contracts and RFP process, and has focused on the forms and monthly
70 reporting so that the data better reflect the needs of the community.

71

72 SSP Pilot Program– VDDHH submitted a grant proposal to the Virginia Board for People with
73 Disabilities amounting to \$300,000 (including in-kind contributions from other partners). That
74 proposal was endorsed by the Virginia Board, however, the federal funds are currently not
75 available. The Virginia Board will meet again in March and VDDHH will then have a better idea
76 of the status and if the proposal needs to be altered in any way.

77

78 I-CAN Accessibility project – Community Services is working with the project to develop a
79 needs assessment in American Sign Language (ASL), which is currently being vetted by the
80 Institutional Review Board.

81

82 Virginia Department for Emergency Management (VDEM) – Dawn Brantley, Strategic Branch
83 Coordinator and advocate of accessibility in VDEM activities, has left the agency to work in
84 Massachusetts.

85

86 Joint Committee on Healthcare- The Committee wrapped up on the LEAD-K bill from last
87 year’s General Assembly and the Committee did not take action. VDDHH was involved as part
88 of the stakeholder group.

89

90 Training to law enforcement and corrections continues in sensitivity, communication awareness,
91 and assistive technology. Community Services continues outreach activities, including being a
92 part of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts disabilities job fair.

93

94 The reporting of Information and Referral requests is being updated to ensure that data on most
95 pressing issues is available. Among the issues noted by Community Services are employment
96 concerns brought up by job coaches about some employers’ reluctance to hire a deaf/hard of
97 hearing person, and deaf/hard of hearing seniors placed in facilities without adequate
98 communication. Ms Brimm also noted that the Richmond area Alcoholics Anonymous is now
99 self-funding interpreter services for weekly meetings. Ms. Brimm provided preliminary data
100 collected on the nature of incoming calls received by the agency’s front desk.

101

102 The Board recessed from 11:00 to 11:10 a.m.

103 Technology Assistance Program (TAP): Ms. Ruderson, Technology Assistance Program
104 Manager, reviewed the program activities report and second quarter report.

105
106 TAP staff attended the Virginia State Libraries conference with a goal of matching libraries with
107 VDDHH services. A pilot display on deaf awareness at the Fairfield Library (Henrico) has
108 resulted in several invites for TAP tables.

109
110 A focus group was held for Speech Language Pathologists in partnership with TAP and
111 Griffin/Altos, a manufacturer and distributor of electro-larynxes. TAP has provided outreach to
112 the Virginia chapters of the Lost Cords support group.

113
114 Request for Proposal (RFP) process – TAP has developed new forms, reporting systems, training
115 manual, presentation scripts and thumb drives which were needed for the recent training
116 provided to the Deaf/HH Specialists. The TAP training manual included instructions on how to
117 use the enhanced database. Cybersecurity training was required of (and completed by) the
118 Deaf/HH Specialists.

119
120 As a side project, TAP has been working with Larry Hubert to look into the benefits, pros and
121 cons of using the GalaPro app in theaters that will show captions on smartphones. Mr. Hubert is
122 actively involved with the Hearing Loss Association of America, Greater Richmond chapter.

123
124 TAP is implementing a plan to hold Zoom meetings each month to have better, more organized
125 information and communication between the Deaf/HH Specialists on a frequent and timely basis.
126 Two facility contractors are no longer TAP sites with the new contract changes, but services will
127 be continuing in those regions.

128

129 **IV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

130 Katherine Malady requested that VDDHH look into a pathway for deaf interpreters, similar to
131 the VQAS, to validate their skills prior to national certification, and provided written
132 documentation.

133

134 Patty Harris commented on the American Sign Language Club at Virginia Commonwealth
135 University (VCU), and the university is not providing interpreters on an ongoing basis for the
136 club's meetings and presentations. Ms. Harris spoke about a deaf individual who does not have
137 communication access within the Catholic church. The church's understanding is that the
138 Americans with Disabilities Act does not cover churches and is an exempt organization, and she
139 asked for VDDHH's advice on the issue.

140

141 Director Raff shared written comments submitted by Jennifer Witteborg.

142

143 **V. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

144 Leslie Hutcheson gave the report. This year in the General Assembly is a long session. VDDHH
145 does not have authority to take position on bills, and only offers comments upon request, or if it
146 is the lead agency on a bill. If it is a lead agency, then it will represent the administration on the
147 bill and be at all legislative meetings. VDDHH is the lead agency on two bills involving open
148 captioning in theaters. National Association of Theater Owners (NATO) commissioned a study

149 of the impact on operating costs, with the report due in the spring, and the bills have been carried
150 over until next session.

151

152 LEAD-K – SB 564 was introduced that would put the responsibility of a language acquisition
153 measurement program under the Early Hearing and Detection Intervention (EDHI) program. It
154 was amended to remove the Department of Education and sent to Appropriations and Finance
155 Committee due to fiscal impact. VDDHH is not the lead agency on the bill.

156

157 Other bills of interest to VDDHH - The bill on mandated health insurance coverage for hearing
158 aids for minors has been continued. There is also a bill related to the relocation of call centers to
159 foreign countries and the notification requirements of such. It is unclear if this bill could have a
160 potential impact on the Virginia Relay Center. The bill addresses state business activities while
161 the Relay was established for people to conduct their private phone conversations, which may
162 include state business activity. There would clearly be fiscal impact of centers having to set up in
163 Virginia.

164

165 Communication access in the General Assembly – VDDHH met with deaf consumers, the Senate
166 Clerk’s Office and the House Clerk’s office to discuss communication access. The consumers
167 clearly presented the problems of using iPads with video remote interpreting (VRI) to meet with
168 General Assembly members. There is a lack of strict credentialing of VRI interpreters. VDDHH
169 will continue to work with the General Assembly to resolve the issue of communication access.

170

171 Chairperson Branch announced that a public comment was received by email from Jennifer
172 Witteborg and was included in board packets.

173

174 The Board recessed and the meeting resumed at 12:35 p.m.

175

176 **VI. BOARD REPORTS**

177 Ms. Humphrey reported that the VRID-hosted Region II Conference planning is progressing
178 well. The conference, slated for July 16 -19, will include training requirements for deaf
179 individuals in preparation for the national interpreting test. For more information about the
180 training and sponsorships, the website address is
181 www.vrid.org.

182 Reynolds Community College – The pathway to a bachelor’s degree with VCU was approved
183 and students can now register for that. This includes a pathway for Associate of Applied Science
184 (AAS) degree students, which is a new and exciting opportunity.

185

186 Roy Martin shared that the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) Chapter in Norfolk
187 has been reinvigorated. Director Raff stated that he is available to present to the group. The local
188 parents group is joining with Sertoma camp to provide a four-day summer camp in 2020 for
189 deaf/hard of hearing children at no cost. Mr. Martin referred Safe House Project, which had a
190 case of a deaf girl who was sex trafficked, and thanked Director Raff for recently providing
191 resources to that organization.

192

193 Ms. Mestayer noted that Director Raff will present on March 14 at the Greater Richmond
194 Chapter of HLAA. She has filed a formal complaint with the Department of Justice regarding
195 William and Mary and the lack of captioning at its film festival.

196197

197 Ms. Wilbur is involved with Shelter for Help in Emergency (SHE) in Charlottesville, which is
198 “deaf friendly.” The organization recently received a grant award and is interviewing for a
199 project manager.

200

201 Director Raff will attend the Unconference at the University of Virginia which will bring
202 together various offices for students with disabilities to address higher education and
203 accessibility.

204

205 Tim Patterson reported that families who are transitioning their deaf/hard of hearing children
206 from early intervention to the IEP, but are struggling to qualify for an IEP and continue services.
207 Ideas and input was shared by the board members. The chairperson encouraged members follow
208 up with Mr. Patterson by email.

209

210 **VII. STRATEGIC PLANNING ACTIVITY**

211 Ms. Hutcheson explained the strategic planning process and engaged the board in a discussion
212 focusing on ISP and VQAS.

213

214 Who are the stakeholders? The members identified state agencies, deaf consumers, interpreters,
215 families of deaf consumers, businesses, public education system, healthcare, law enforcement,
216 public-at-large, schools outside of the classroom, local governments, deaf staff of VDDHH,
217 nursing homes, General Assembly, Community Services Boards, courts, and non-profits.

218

219 How well is VDDHH serving the stakeholders? Ms. Hutcheson explained that in Interpreter
220 Services, the metric has a target of 96% of coordination requests filled, but the program exceeds
221 that and the rate is 97% to 98% filled. Discussion ensued about the filled request metric versus a
222 referral to resources. A question was asked in regard to consumer satisfaction survey. A member
223 commented that VDDHH needs to take into consideration what the requestor is looking for, e.g.
224 getting a request filled, being satisfied with the qualifications of the interpreter, and
225 requesting/obtaining the services of a deaf interpreter. The agency could break up interpreters as
226 stakeholders into distinct groups as their experiences are different, e.g., interpreters new to the
227 field may not be getting work and experience, or fully understand how the coordinating process
228 works.

229

230 ISP receives about 150 to 200 requests a month, with court as the top customer. VDDHH works
231 with the Supreme Court of Virginia, and ISP can use private agencies and VRI to fill court
232 requests, as needed.

233

234 How can the program improve? The recommendations of the board were to track data, provide a
235 pathway for following up, and gather feedback from the interpreters. Questions raised were
236 replicating data collection from the private interpreting agencies, and the agency’s social media
237 presence. Other stakeholders for VQAS include the Virginia Department of Education, raters,
238 school systems and training programs. Discussion ensued about VQAS diagnostics and if
239 stagnant interpreters are being served by testing every three years, but their skill level may not up
240 to the point of taking the national test.

241 Do ISP and VQAS programs support the mission of VDDHH? Members agreed that the
242 programs support the mission.
243

244 What are the values of ISP and VQAS? The board identified these values in ISP and VQAS
245 programs:

- 246
- 247 • Transparency in how the programs function
- 248 • Clear and effective communication
- 249 • Meeting diversity needs
- 250 • Meeting the needs of individuals
- 251 • Accountability
- 252

253 Are the two programs living up to these values? The board recognizes that the staff strive to meet
254 these values, but the members were not sure if the general public is aware of the work that goes
255 into the programs and services. Specific areas mentioned were the courts, law enforcement, and
256 emergency personnel. VDDHH staff has worked steadily on increasing awareness of the
257 programs over a long period of time, but barriers and limitations remain.
258

259 New Possibilities – What could ISP and VQAS do if they could not fail?

- 260 • Website and educating stakeholders on how to use the information there
- 261 • Real-time chat for users to ask questions and obtain answers quickly
- 262 • Artificial intelligence, video-on demand/holographic interpreters
- 263 • “Grow your own program” for both hearing interpreters new to the field and deaf
264 interpreters
- 265 • Recognize the BEI as a credential in Virginia
- 266 • Update the written test to reflect current code of ethics
- 267 • Addressing the VQAS diagnostic
- 268 • Evaluate customer satisfaction through a town hall approach
- 269 • Create more diversity in the resources and services to include foreign language fluency
- 270 • Add another staff person to ISP
- 271 • Provide interpreters for AA meetings and funerals (reinstate)
- 272 • Implement a scheduling management system
- 273

274 The Board recessed and the meeting resumed at 2:15 p.m.
275

276 What are the things that the programs need to stop doing?

277 Stop using an inefficient, manual data entry of requests process and use online forms.
278

279 Looking back from February 2023 to now, what has happened to make us feel satisfied with the
280 progress? What would the board members like to see in three years coming out of this meeting?

- 281 • Having a vibrant supply of professionals who are helping each other and networking
- 282 • Getting feedback and ways to improve from existing projects and efforts
- 283 • Supporting the development of more deaf interpreters in Virginia
- 284 • See what can be done with the results of the Department of Professional and
285 Occupational (DPOR) report
- 286 • Ethical accountability for VQAS interpreters

- 287 • Licensure for interpreters in Virginia
288 • Database to collect information about the performance of interpreting programs
289

290 Ms. Hutcheson explained that the board will go through the same process at the next meeting,
291 focusing on Community Services and TAP.
292

293 VIII. NEW BUSINESS AND FUTURE MEETING AGENDA

294 There was no new business.
295

296 Director Raff touched on two points for further consideration regarding the licensure of
297 interpreters. DPOR recognized that adverse harm could happen to deaf individuals specifically in
298 medical, legal and financial situations. The report included two recommendations: 1) robust
299 registration (that is open to interpretation); and 2) VDDHH to administer a certification program.
300 This could be considered a window of opportunity, to ride on this report and make suggestions to
301 the legislature. Doing so would require input from the Advisory Board, stakeholders, deaf
302 consumers, staff and interpreters, which could be a long process but VDDHH is willing to
303 pursue.
304

305 Chairperson Branch announced that Ms. Mestayer will be rotating off the Advisory Board
306 because she has served two consecutive terms. Her last board meeting will be in May, and she
307 was thanked for her service to VDDHH.
308

309 Mr. Patterson's and Ms. Wilbur's first terms are expiring as of June 30 and they were asked if
310 they wish to continue through reappointment.
311

312 IX. ADJOURNMENT

313 There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was made by Mr. Martin,
314 seconded by Mr. Wells, to adjourn the meeting at 2:45 p.m.
315