

Department of Rehabilitation Services  
67 Prospect Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Hartford, CT 06106-2980

Advisory Board Meeting: June 8, 2015  
Minutes

Members in Attendance: Lisa Hofferth, Mary Silvestri, Jeff Bravin, Harvey Corson, Jane Whitehead, Lewis Letang, Carl Moeller, Mary Lynch, Colleen Hayles, Terri-Lynn Johnston, Amy Mirizzi, Matt Ranelli

Members not Present: Sandra McGee, John Lamb, Bill Rivera, Bernice Zampano, Patti Clay, Khampasong Khantivong, Luisa Soboleski

DORS Staff Present: Commissioner Amy Porter, Patricia Clark, Sara Gerhold, Melissa Dennis-Duchscherer, Andrew Norton, Mary Ann Dayton-Fitzgerald

Guests Present: None

Interpreters: Heidi Catalan, Sarah D'Agostino

Call to Order, Acceptance of Agenda, Minutes and Adjournment time:

Meeting was called to order by Commissioner Amy Porter at 1:36 PM. Current meeting agenda was accepted. Minutes from the April 6<sup>th</sup> meeting were accepted after corrections from Harvey Corson regarding the wording of "CCOSD"; the addition of CAD, CRID and P&A in the legislative report. Also to clarify that during the meeting, there was a question regarding advisory board members asking if the advisory board could submit a letter or document in support of a House Bill and it was missing House Bill 6765 and other bills. The issue at the time was finding out if the advisory board can submit letter or other documents in support of the proposed legislation.

**Counseling unit:** Melissa Dennis reported for the months of April 1 – May 31. Updates were reported on the counseling unit and the changes in the types of calls that they are receiving currently. During that time 35 meetings were attended; 63 counseling sessions. This means more meetings and less counseling sessions than previous quarters. One hundred six CM situations were reported within counseling sessions. More consultations reported with educating hearing agencies or schools who don't have awareness of deaf or HOH. Increase of referrals for school students in mainstream including Fairfield County. It is hard to find appropriate matches for those students. Of the 44 phone / Videophone calls / emails, there were 9 CM requests, which we do not have. Subjects of new calls are BRS employment, hearing aids, and substance abuse.

**Interpreting services:** Sara Gerhold gave an Interpreting Unit report on current personnel: new hire of office assistant Tina Tyson, the loss of two interpreters, one retirement and one resignation.

Report handout provided showing the number of colleges and universities that are being served and the number of college students as well as services to RCD's (Rehabilitation counselors of the deaf who work for BRS as well as providing interpreting services to two K-12 school districts. New contracts are being developed for the July 1 – September 30, 2016 cycle with a change in hourly rate to \$55.00/hr.

Questions followed regarding the % of requests related to schools. It is estimated that there are about 55% of the requests related to schools. Further questions related to the number of requests expected before the fiscal year end. It is estimated there would be approximately 1,000.

Preparation is underway for the move to the BESB building which will happen sometime in summer or early fall.

### **Legislative Report:**

Andrew Norton checked to be sure that everyone got his legislative updates.

A review of the non-pass of HB-6941 – HB-6765 State first bill was amended to put in a “reasonable amount of time” as 2 days. However the budget was the last bill to be discussed and there was a lot of time spent on the budget when time ran out. It is not clear if the bills would have been passed if there had been time. There were a number of bills that died due to time running out. (309)

An explanation of the qualifications of the interpreter categories was provided– there were lots of useful parts but it did not pass.

HB 5525 - Testing for Cytomegalio virus was signed by the governor and will begin January 2016. Also passed was a bill to encourage hearing tests in birth to 3 programs.

There was a bill to give DORS \$5 million to provide equipment in homes did not pass. Legislature focusing on saving existing bills and not passing the development of new bills.

Discussion on the process for bills, special sessions for the implementation sessions of bills. The process was given for when bills die and how the committee would need to submit the bill as they did last year however the more familiar the legislature on the bills the more likely they are to pass it.

### **Old business:**

Jane Whitehead was checking on the question posed previously on the ability to send letter to the legislature as a member of the board, or as a group. Amy Porter will check with Patti on this.

### **New Business:**

Jane Whitehead stated that she would like to propose again that we have a topic that could be identified for the following meeting so that a focus could be on proposed items. Suggestion that the group pick 1 – 2 items over the summer to bring back for the fall.

Maryann brought up that CODA's were an invisible population and the nuances of living in a deaf household are not currently handled due to not enough counselors to work with this population. The

agencies that provide these services are not effective. There is also a gap in the service of providing interpreters and agencies are not being accountable.

Harvey Corson suggested that we may need to modify the function of the Advisory board due to its development many years ago; we may need to update the language.

Jeff Bravin asked that we focus on the mission of the advisory board and Harvey Corson asked that the language regarding the function of the board be updated.

Mary suggested the Interpreter bills, hearing aid bill and counseling since they come up often.

Colleen stated that the new DOE Commissioner, Diana Wentzel-Roberg who was interim Commissioner was selected 2 months ago. Bureau of Special Education has a new Bureau Chief Dr. Isabel Rodriguez who is from Massachusetts, as well as Morna Murray is the new commissioner of DDS.

Discussion on durable medical equipment.

**Guest speakers**

None

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 2:33

**Next meeting**

September 15<sup>th</sup> meeting will be at 1:30. Location at DORS interpreting Unit conference room.