

Bureau of Rehabilitative Services
Commission on the Deaf & Hearing Impaired
67 Prospect Avenue, 3rd Floor
Hartford, CT 06106-2980

Advisory Board Meeting: April 9, 2012

Minutes

Members in Attendance:

Luisa Soboleski, Board Chairperson
Raymond DeRosa, Parent of student enrolled in public school
Susan Pedersen, President of CCOSD, Ex-Officio Member
Gloria White, Deaf Member
Matt Ranelli, Parent of student in oral education program
Amy Mirizzi, Designee, Department of Public Health
Jane Whitehead, Designee, Department of Developmental Services

Members Not Present:

Edward Peltier, Executive Director, American School for the Deaf, Ex-Officio Member
Jeff Bravin, Deaf Member
Astread Ferron-Poole, Designee, Department of Social Services
William Rivera, Designee, Department of Children & Families
Mary Silvestri, Deaf Member
Lucy Trusock, Parent of student enrolled at ASD
Bridget Kemmling, Designee, Department of Labor
Mary Lynch, Hard of Hearing Member, Office of State Comptroller
Colleen Hayles, Designee, Department of Education

Vacant Positions:

Designee from DMHAS
Consultant for Hearing Impaired Programs, Ex-Officio
Otolaryngologist licensed to practice in the State of Connecticut
Deaf / Hard of Hearing Member
Deaf / Hard of Hearing Member

BRS/CDHI Staff Present:

Amy Porter, Director of Bureau of Rehabilitative Services
Sara Gerhold, Interpreter Coordinator
Melissa Dennis, CDHI Counselor
MaryAnn Dayton-Fitzgerald, CDHI Counselor

Guests Present:

Harvey Corson, Michael Fiorino and Bob Backofen

Interpreters:

Colleen Hajdasz and MarySue Owens

CART Reporter:

Diana Huntington

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

Luisa Soboleski began an informal meeting at 1:22, as a quorum had not yet been reached. Acceptance of the agenda and minutes were tabled.

Discussion about Board Membership

Although the minutes were not approved due to a lack of a quorum, a discussion ensued about membership. A couple of suggestions were made for consideration by the Board:

- Ensure that Ex-Officio members are identified as such in the minutes
- Ensure that members who have resigned or their terms expired are removed from the list (ex: John Garvin)
- Ensure that the vacancies represent the full list of Board vacancies
- Address changes in the role of Board members (ex: if a member was on as a parent of a child in school but that child has since graduated, their role on the Board needs to change to reflect this reality)
- Continue to operate in accordance with existing statute, but consider whether any changes should be made as a result of the Commission's new position within the Bureau (one example that has been brought up in the past was to look at hard to fill roles such as that of an ENT and maybe consider an alternative such as an audiologist; another would be to look at changes in the field since the time the Board was created and include members that reflect the new reality, such as individuals with cochlear implants)

Report on Town Hall Meeting

Luisa Soboleski and Amy Porter presented a summary of the Town Hall Meeting that was held on March 21, 2012. This meeting brought together leaders of the deaf and hard of hearing communities to talk about the future of the Commission's services in the new Bureau. Participants at the Town Hall Meeting expressed concern about access to services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. They also viewed community outreach as a priority service.

There will be continued opportunities for this type of dialogue. When the CDHI Board comes together at the next meeting, we can talk in more detail about the best mechanism for continuing to solicit input and share ideas for strengthening both access and services.

Interpreting Department Report

Sara Gerhold provided an update on the Interpreting Department. Sara reported that the Avianco system is allowing the Interpreting Department to gather more data, and helping the Department to run more effectively and efficiently. Staffing numbers have changed slightly since the last report, with 4 new interpreters hired at the end of February, 2012 and two interpreters resigning. As for interpreting assignments, Sara presented data for two different time periods. The first time period is the beginning of the State Fiscal Year to date, and the second is assignments between the last Board meeting and this meeting. See handouts for the specific details.

Counseling Department Report

Melissa Dennis and MaryAnn Dayton-Fitzgerald joined the meeting to provide an update on the activities of the Counseling Department. As background information, they shared their start dates with the Commission, with MaryAnn beginning work with Commission in December of 2009, and Melissa beginning in April of 2010. The two counselors are tasked with covering the entire state, as well as fielding phone calls, walk-ins, and crisis intervention. They have been focusing on partnerships as a way to increase their reach in the community, and to build a system of care. They do some case management, but it is very time consuming, which is why partnerships become critical. Their most common partnerships are with BRS, CTWorks, DMHAS, DCF, CAN, and the Court System. In Norwich, there is a model that involves one of the CDHI counselors, a BRS counselor, a representative from AVS, and one from SMHA. This team model is working well, and may form the basis for future grant proposals.

The counselors are working to develop a database to collect some more detailed information about the individuals they serve and the issues that they are addressing most often. At this point, their ability to report their own data is limited. They indicated that they spent approximately 1200 hours on individual counseling sessions last year, and also conducted groups, met with walk-ins and managed crisis calls. They see about 4 or 5 individuals a day, with an average caseload ranging from 19 to 25 individuals. They hope to have some data to present at the next Board meeting.

Executive Committee Report: None.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business: None.

Announcements:

- Susan Pedersen announced that CCOSD would be hosting a breakfast for legislators on Thursday morning, April 12th. The bills that will be addressed include 5357, the Deaf Child Bill of Rights, 202, which is a Hearing Aid bill, and HB5141 which is a general bill about smoke detectors, but there are implications for the types of detectors required.
- Luisa Soboleski announced that the American School for the Deaf will be holding Founders Day tomorrow, April 10, at 12:45 in the Gym. The ceremony will include a mock groundbreaking for the new building.
- Amy Mirizzi announced that Connecticut now has a chapter of Hands and Voices, a parent support organization for families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. The organization provides education and social support, and embraces all communication choices. If anyone is interested, more information is available at the Connecticut family support network website at www.ctsfn.org.
- Jane Whitehead announced that the NEAT Marketplace would be hosting a “Deaf Communication and Employment Exposition” on April 25th. This Expo, designed for occupational and physical therapists, educators, and related service personnel, will focus on the latest in communication technology and devices.
- Amy Mirizzi announced that the 2nd Annual Walk for Hearing will be held in Hartford on June 2nd.

Adjournment:

The next advisory board meeting is scheduled for June 11, 2012.