

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

Advisory Board Meeting: June 9, 2014
Minutes

Members in Attendance:

Luisa Soboleski, Board Chairperson
Raymond DeRosa, Parent of student enrolled in public school
Mary Lynch, Hard of Hearing Member, Office of State Comptroller
Colleen Hayles, Designee, Department of Education
Mary Silvestri, Deaf Member
Amy Mirizzi, Designee, Department of Public Health
Jane Whitehead, Designee, Department of Developmental Services
Bernice Zampano, Designee, Department of Labor
Jeff Bravin, Deaf Member

Members Not Present:

Edward Peltier, Executive Director, American School for the Deaf, Ex-Officio Member
William Rivera, Designee, Department of Children & Families
Sandra McGee, President of CCOSD, Ex-Officio Member
Matt Ranelli, Parent of student in oral education program
Terri-Lynn Johnston, Designee, Department of Social Services

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
Parent of a deaf child
Parent of a student enrolled at ASD

DORS Staff Present:

Amy Porter, Commissioner
Sara Gerhold, Interpreter Coordinator
Dwight Godwin, Interpreter Coordinator
Melissa Dennis, Counselor
Maryann Dayton-Fitzgerald, Counselor
Andrew Norton, DORS Legislative Liaison

Guests Present:

Patty Wilson
Lisa Hoffeith for Bill Rivera, Department of Children and Families

Interpreters:

MarySue Owens and Pam Crawford

CART Reporter:

Sharon Masse

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

Luisa Soboleski called meeting to order at 1:35. Acceptance of the agenda.

DORS Report

Commissioner's Update: Amy Porter presented a brief department update. There are no personnel changes at the Department level. The Interpreting Unit will report out on their changes. Amy introduced Andrew Norton, legislative liaison for the Department. Andrew is in attendance to address questions that came up at the last Board meeting. Amy provided a brief overview of the interpreter legislation, which passed in a different form than was originally written. The Department is now charged with conducting a study on interpreter qualifications, including those interpreters working in educational settings. The legislation also directs the department to work with the Office of Protection & Advocacy and the State Department of Education.

Interpreting Unit Report: Sara Gerhold and Dwight Godwin presented a brief report for the interpreting unit. They indicated that they had difficulty accessing and printing their standard report for this meeting. They indicated a few changes in staffing, with the retirement of one of our Part Time Permanent interpreters, and the resignation of one of our Certified Deaf Interpreters. They also indicated that they have been working with Human Resources to get some of the vacant interpreter positions posted.

Counseling Unit Report: Melissa Dennis and Mary Ann Dayton-Fitzgerald presented a brief report for the counseling unit. As with the Interpreting Unit, they had issues in accessing and printing their report for this meeting. However, they spoke in general about the trends. They noted an increase in counseling referrals from all over the state, many reaching out through videophone. With this increase, counseling referrals have now replaced requests for hearing aid resources as the number one type of call. They also continue to receive the same number of calls about hearing aid resources.

Old Business

Mary Silvestri inquired about the status of the interpreter bill, and Amy indicated that it had not yet been signed by the Governor, but that the groups had already had some preliminary meetings to address what was outlined in the bill.

Mary Silvestri also inquired about the Hearing Aid legislations and whether it had passed. There was some discussion about the different viewpoints on the bill. Jane Whitehead explained that CBIA had provided testimony against the bill because of the associated costs. There was no indication that members of the deaf or hard of hearing community testified during the public meetings. This year's legislation attempted to expand to all individuals, going beyond the current law of 12 years or younger. Andrew Norton will follow up with the Department of Insurance to get a better understanding of the role of the state if any new service (such as hearing aids) is mandated to be covered by insurance companies.

New Business

Mary Silvestri talked about the Smarter Balance Testing (Statewide) and the impact of the listening component. It is not accessible for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. While accommodations exist, Mary indicated that there were not many individuals who were deaf or hard of hearing involved in the development of the test, so the accommodations were not as helpful as they could be. BESB has advocated for voicing for students who are blind, and that accommodation is being provided. Jeff Bravin added some context about a lawsuit in New York, which addresses some of these same issues. He indicated that this year's test was a field test, designed with adaptations. And even though adaptations are built in (such as sign language interpreting), a student can still petition SDE for additional accommodations to be listed on the IEP.

Luisa Soboleski reviewed the current list of Board members. Amy Porter indicated that two names have been submitted to the Governor's office for consideration, and Terri-Lynn Johnston will be joining us from DSS. After this meeting, Jeff Bravin will move into an Ex-Officio slot as the Executive Director of ASD. Ed Peltier's name will come off the list, and Jeff's current slot as a member of the deaf community is now vacant.

Luisa Soboleski asked if we could create a certificate for Ed Peltier, as he is retiring. Amy Porter will put one together and get it to Luisa.

Mary Silvestri went back to the discussion about the interpreter bill, and has questions about the word "qualified". Amy Porter suggested that Mary pose her questions to the group that is working on the bill. If she sends an email, we can direct it accordingly.

Announcements

Patty Wilson provided an update on the Communication Advocacy Network (CAN). The Executive Director recently resigned, but CAN is still moving forward with service provision. Patty is serving as the interim director. This Saturday, they will have a walk-a-thon at ASD, starting at 8:30 a.m., to support individuals who are deaf-blind.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 2:46 p.m.

Next Meeting

September 8, 2014