

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

Advisory Board Meeting: November 5, 2012

Minutes

Members in Attendance:

Luisa Soboleski, Board Chairperson
Raymond DeRosa, Parent of student enrolled in public school
Kathy Britos-Swain, Designee, Department of Public Health
Jane Whitehead, Designee, Department of Developmental Services
Jeff Bravin, Deaf Member
Mary Lynch, Hard of Hearing Member, Office of State Comptroller
Bernice Zampano, Designee, Department of Labor
Len Erasmus, Designee, Department of Social Services

Members Not Present:

Edward Peltier, Executive Director, American School for the Deaf, Ex-Officio Member
Mary Silvestri, Deaf Member
William Rivera, Designee, Department of Children & Families
Lucy Trusock, Parent of student enrolled at ASD
Colleen Hayles, Designee, Department of Education
Susan Pedersen, President of CCOSD, Ex-Officio Member
Gloria White, Deaf Member
Matt Ranelli, Parent of student in oral education program

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

Guests Present:

none

Interpreters:

Cindy Ward and Mary Sue Owens

CART Reporter:

Diana Huntington

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

Luisa Soboleski called meeting to order at 1:47. Acceptance of the agenda. Minutes from Nov 2011 were reviewed, with 2 changes suggested to the list of attendees. The first change is to add "Ex-officio" after Ed Peltier, and the second change was to remove John Garvin from the list of members, as he is no longer a member. April 2012 minutes did not need to be approved, as there was not a quorum. September 2012 minutes were approved without any changes.

Review of Advisory Board Vacancies

There are four vacancies that need to be filled. They include the seat held by John Garvin, an individual who is hard of hearing, a seat of a parent of a child who is deaf, a seat from an ENT specialist, and possibly a seat for an audiologist.

Update of Deaf Services within the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)

At the last meeting, members requested that we create an organizational chart that shows where deaf and hard of hearing services fall within the new Departmental structure. A draft organizational chart was shared with the Board. Only one change was recommended, which was to add "Sign Language" to the block for "Interpreting Unit". A copy of the updated organizational chart is attached. The organizational chart simply demonstrates the units or programs specific to deaf and hard of hearing services, although individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can access other cross-disability programs within the Department, such as Independent Living or benefits counseling.

Jeff Bravin asked for an update on the Town Hall meeting. Amy Porter talked about the meeting as being productive. There was a high level of frustration, but it was linked more to the gradual diminishing of services over time for people who are deaf and hard of hearing than to the merger of programs into the Department of Rehabilitation Services. There is also a clear request for a "leader" of deaf and hard of hearing services within the Department, but the Department does not have the position or the funding to make this happen at this point in time. Luisa Soboleski added that there were concerns about lack of access on the Department's website, but explained that the website has a very clear identification on the home page about services for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. Melissa Dennis explained that she and Sara Gerhold have been working with the Department to be sure that the services are easy to identify.

Jeff Bravin asked for an update on increases in the counseling staff. The counseling unit is still working to collect data about the numbers served, and any potential gaps. They hope that by next year at this time, they will have better data to support any type of request. A discussion ensued about strategies for creating a data collection tool for the counselors.

Role of the Advisory Board

Jeff Bravin asked about the role of the Board. There was a discussion about the role in the past, and what has changed in the Board's mission. The group agreed that this would be a useful discussion for the next meeting. Some of the issues discussed included identification of gaps, strategies to focus more on the needs of individuals who are hard of hearing, and the role of the various agencies and organizations. There was discussion about strategies such as consumer

surveys and public service announcements. These ideas will be looked at once we know the areas we will focus on. The group will also look at the by-laws.

Interpreting Department Report

Sara Gerhold provided an update on the Interpreting Department. Sara reported that the number of office staff changed, as the second Interpreter Coordinator resigned. The position is posted, and we will be hiring as soon as possible. There are 41 interpreters right now. We will be recruiting again for interpreters, as it can be difficult to fill assignments on nights and weekends. The office is also working on the annual interpreting registry. There are 147 registered interpreters in the State. As discussed a bit earlier, Sara is also working on the Department's website to make sure that it is fully accessible. They are considering the future use of video logs and having a person signing on the site. Sara shared statistics from July 1 through November 1. Most of the trends remain the same as what was reported in September. Sara's report is attached.

Counseling Department Report

Melissa Dennis joined the meeting to provide an update on the activities of the Counseling Department. She did not have any statistics to share, but indicates that this continues to be a priority for them and they will have data for the next meeting. Melissa reported that she is in New Haven one day a week. She started a group in the fall for individuals with cochlear implants, but the interest wasn't there, so they might try again or advertise in different ways. MaryAnn is in Norwich one day a week. She is running a wellness group for women. There is an increase in calls from people who are elderly and need hearing aids. There are calls from all over the state. They continue to focus on getting the website current.

Review of Meeting Dates for 2013

Dates for future meetings were reviewed and approved. They include:

Monday, February 11

Monday, April 8

Monday, June 10

Monday, September 9

Monday, November 4* (*changed from 2nd Monday because of Veterans Day)

Executive Committee Report: None.

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business:

Amy Porter indicated that there is still work to be done around the need for interpreters during major events, such as the most recent hurricane. If anyone has specific stories about how the interpreters were able to provide information in a way that was different from the captioning, those stories would be helpful.

Announcements: No announcements.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 3:09 pm. Next meeting scheduled for February 11, 2013.