

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

Advisory Board Meeting: November 10, 2014
Minutes

Members in Attendance:

Luisa Soboleski, Board Chairperson
Bernice Zampano, Designee, Department of Labor
Jane Whitehead, Designee, Department of Developmental Services
Matt Ranelli, Parent of student in oral education program
Harvey Corson, Deaf Member
Jeff Bravin, Executive Director, American School for the Deaf, Ex-Officio Member
Mary Silvestri, Deaf Member
Terry-Lynn Johnston, Designee, Department of Social Services
Raymond De Rosa, Parent of student enrolled in public school

Members Not Present:

Sandra McGee, President of CCOSD, Ex-Officio Member
Coleen Hayles, Designee, Department of Education
Mary Lynch, Hard of Hearing Member, Office of State Comptroller
William Rivera, Designee, Department of Children and Families
Amy Mirizzi, Designee, Department of Public Health
Dr. Carl Moeller, Otolaryngologist licensed to practice in the State of Connecticut

Vacant Positions:

Designee from DMHAS
Consultant for Hearing Impaired Programs, Ex-Officio
Deaf/Hard of Hearing Member
Parent of a deaf child
Parent of a student enrolled at ASD

DORS Staff Present:

Andrew Norton, DORS Legislative Liaison

Guests Present:

Michael Fiorino

Interpreters:

Karen Hollant
Mary Sue Owens

CART Reporter:

Sharon Masse

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

Luisa Soboleski called meeting to order at 1:36. Acceptance of the agenda. There were questions on the minutes from the prior meeting. Corrections were made on page 2-3 to attribute appropriate information under Sue Pederson's information on CAN, and the minutes were accepted as corrected.

DORS Report

Andrew Norton presented a brief department update on behalf of Commissioner Porter. Patti Clay has been promoted to the position of Bureau Chief of the Community Living Division. This division will oversee both the interpreting unit and the counseling unit, along with other units. Patti will be attending the next meeting.

Dwight Godwin has transferred into the role of interpreter, leaving a vacant interpreter coordinator position, which has been posted. Applications are being accepted through Nov. 17 and the posting is available on the DORS website. DORS is in the process of making job offers for three part-time interpreter positions. DORS is also in the process of recruiting for a fiscal administrative assistant to support the payroll and billing functions of the interpreting unit.

The interpreter legislation task force - Mary Sue Owens, Beth Leslie, from the office of Protection and Advocacy and Amy Porter met with staff from the State Department of Education to address the issues relative to educational interpreters. There are gaps in terms of the availability of data. We will be attending a meeting of the special education directors on November 19 to get input on how we might go about collecting that data.

Andrew reported on current legislation and indicated that the interpreting legislation is waiting on the work from the task force to move forward with any legislation. Andrew further reported that he would be on the lookout for other bills involving deaf issues. He also invited the committee to monitor bills as they start to roll out January 7 at www.cga.ct.gov.

Interpreter Unit Report: Sara was not in attendance but a report was passed around with statistics and there were no questions.

Counseling Unit report: there was none as there were no representatives from counseling services. A report will be forthcoming at the next meeting.

Jeff Bravin questioned the new structure, indicating he hadn't seen anything on Deaf and Hard of Hearing services in general in an announcement on the changes. Luisa Soboleski indicated that those services fall under Community Living. There was a further question on finding those services if they're not labeled Deaf Services. Andrew Norton asked about the specific announcement to track it, and did clarify that the website is service-driven so people can easily find the services they are looking for, rather than having to wade through the DORS structure to try and find it. There was more discussion on making sure deaf services is emphasized as a critical component so those services do not get lost, and a possible future meeting with Nancy Wyman by members of the Commission for that purpose.

Jeff Bravin also asked about finding qualified interpreting services in CT – gave as an example a class being taken at Central Connecticut State University where there's an interpreter for an "English as a second language" course where the interpreter isn't qualified. Harvey Corson explained the task force is working on addressing these issues in making sure qualified interpreters are in education settings, and

went on to explain more details of how anyone who is providing interpretive services needs to be registered, regardless of what title they are given (communications facilitator etc.) and trying to ensure Connecticut catches up with National Standards in requirements for interpreters. Jeff Bravin went on to clarify that it wasn't just the standards he has concerns with, but also the need for more qualified interpreters in Connecticut. Harvey indicated that an aging, retiring population of interpreters, budget cuts and lack of schools who offer degrees in interpreting may all contribute to this.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

There was no new business.

Announcements

Jeff Bravin is now an ex-officio member, Harvey Corson is now a member as a person who is deaf, and there has been an appointment of an ear, nose and throat doctor (Dr. Carl Moeller, name was unknown at the time of the meeting).

Guest Speakers

Cristi Alberino and Janet Stuck from the State Department of Education spoke on assessments and accommodations in Connecticut, especially regarding discussions around students who are deaf or hard of hearing. A PDF of the presentation is going to be sent to Luisa for distribution to the group, which focused on the changes to national and Connecticut testing, as well as discussion on the future of the testing, especially for those students with disabilities. There was discussion about the "listening" test, for which Connecticut now has ASL interpreters and is working on getting captioning for the one-minute audio. On other portions of testing Connecticut is working on getting accommodations beyond ASL or a human assistant for lip reading. In some states you can use a human signer, which would be signed English, ASL, cued speech or lip reading. The difference is in the type of testing that is used (Smarter Balanced or PARCC). Connecticut continues to field test captioning being used and other accommodations.

There was discussion after the presentation. Matt R indicated that he doesn't believe testing is ready to roll out, as it does not provide kids who are hard of hearing equal access. They would get an incomplete. And not having it count doesn't work, nor does having them not take the test- that just conceals the flaws in testing. A video should be available as an accommodation. Cristi indicated the videos were done, and done well, but the issue there is schools not having the bandwidth to use the video as part of the test. Matt stated to make the video part of the accommodation, not the test. Only provide the video when requested as an accommodation. So it doesn't have to be done in every school – only where requested. Cristi said the test with accommodations is not a bad test – you need to get feedback that shows where the child is, where we are now, what we should do next. So we are working very hard on this.

Matt asked if the timetable was realistic to get a video ready by spring, as captioning isn't a solution. Cristi said captioning is good if you're used to it. Janet said that is why they're looking for a human signer. Cristi added human reader for those who lip read. The problem is for those who don't use captioning or lip reading or ASL video or fit in any of these categories. And the manager of the State Department of Education is behind us fighting this with us.

Mary S added that these tests are supposed to show how a school is doing, and if you have deaf and hard of hearing students not doing well it will bring the school's scores down. Additionally, you typically can't graduate without passing the smarter balanced test. Janet and Cristi said there are ways to graduate without taking the test but there are hoops to jump through.

Matt asked whether it had gone to the Attorney General for an opinion on if this satisfies the ADA. Harvey asked about IDEA requirements as well, and if Connecticut could go away from the national and have their own accessible approach. Janet said through what we call a special petition process allowing human readers to read the passages to the students, or students who don't do ASL to have a signer, signed English if they needed that. The only problem was we couldn't address the listening piece because we didn't have access to a script.

Terri-Lynn J. said she would think there would be a huge fear that parents would be filing lawsuits for not providing accommodation for their child, and Cristi said PARCC was sued by BESB, the other consortium. That was during the pilot test. But not smarter balanced, no.

Christi and Janet welcome any questions on the testing presentation.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 3:07 p.m.

Next Meeting

Next meeting is scheduled for February 9th at 1:30 p.m.