

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

Advisory Board Meeting: September 14, 2015
Minutes

Members in Attendance: Luisa Soboleski, Lisa Hofferth, Harvey Corson, Lewis Letang, Carl Moeller, Mary Lynch, Terri-Lynn Johnston, Amy Mirizzi, Matt Ranelli

Members not Present: Sandra McGee, John Lamb, Bill Rivera, Bernice Zampano, Colleen Hayles

DORS Staff Present: Commissioner Amy Porter, Patti Clay, Khampasong Khantivong, Patricia Clark, Sara Gerhold, Melissa Dennis-Duchscherer, Mary Ann Dayton-Fitzgerald

DORS Staff not Present: Andrew Norton

Guests Present: None

Interpreters: Anita Benjamin, Cindy Ward

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. Harvey Corson had a question about the second page of the legislative report Bill 5525 and Carl Moeller addressed his question. Harvey Corson made a motion to accept the minutes and Terri-Lynn Johnson seconded it. The motion passed. Luisa reported that Mary Silvestri has given her resignation as a board member. Mary thanked us for allowing to her to be on the board. Patti Clay asked members to feel free to email her and/or call her to suggest a new replacement for Mary Silvestri. Luisa recommended Barbara Cassin who is interested now that she is retired. Luisa asked DORS to send her an application. She also recommend consideration of a mother of an ASD student who has shown interest to be a board member.

Amy Porter/Patti Clay Report: Patti reported that there have been some personnel changes. David Doukas is now the Director of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and will be overseeing the Vocational Rehabilitation Division and the Community Living Division. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Counseling and Interpreting Units are part of the Community Living Division. Harvey Corson asked about whether or not there is a re-organization of the agency in regards to Dave Doukas being the new Director of BRS. Amy Porter stated that it is not a re-organization, but now that the position is filled, she is no longer the acting Director of BRS and Patti Clay will be reporting to Dave Doukas.

Press Release: Patti also shared that DORS and the CT Distance Learning Consortium have developed Distant Learning Modules (CTDLC) over the last three – four years. These are free, on line modules that cover many topics including independent living, benefits counseling, pre-employment counseling and more. CTDLC, which is part of Charter Oak, has worked with BRS to develop several modules in ASL. Anyone can access these free online modules. They will be promoted to schools for independent living goals. Folks in the community will also have access for social skills and employment information. Amy Porter stated DORS had talked about having them translated to Spanish and wanted to also have them fully available in ASL. It was a huge undertaking for those doing it, but they had fun with it. The modules are available at: <http://www.ct.gov/connect-ability/cwp/view.asp?a=4473&q=524650>

Patti Clay also reported the moving of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services office scheduled for early December is on track. If you have any questions, please let us. We are excited that it gives greater access to services within the same building. BRS, BESB and DSS will be in the same building. We have clients in common and it will be nice for people to have multiple services in one place. Department of Transportation has worked to increase availability and safety access. Target date is December 1st, 2015 or at least by February, 2016.

Luisa Soboleski asked if there would be meeting room available for our meetings. Amy Porter responded that there is a conference room but not technology access. It is not a big room and BESB also has their meetings there. DSS may have a conference room on their side they can share. Accommodations have been in terms of public transportation and not going against traffic. The new DORS offices will be on the left hand side of the building.

Patti Clay asked if we have the right accommodations for this meeting. She asked members to talk with her after the meeting if anyone needed or would like to talk about an accommodation. Luisa's example is a good example. The Council may need different accommodations at this time.

Legislative Report: no report. Andrew Norton was not present.

DORS/DHOH Interpreting Unit Report:

Sara Gerhold: See attached DORS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Interpreting Unit Report.

DORS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Counseling Unit:

Melissa Dennis – Duchscherer: See attached DORS DHOH Counseling Unit Report.

Strategic Planning:

In response to discussion in several prior meetings, Luisa stated she and Patti met to discuss strategic planning. Luisa would like volunteers to work between now and next meeting in November to look at the mission of DORS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services and 2 or 3 strategies to make it stronger. It would be a nice opportunity for this committee to redefine goals and develop work groups to look at officers, by-laws, etc.

Harvey Corson asked if a motion was needed having heard a discussion about priorities at several meetings. Harvey moved to have a Board retreat to discuss goals in form of Mission Statement, some strategies, and look at By-laws with recommendations for changes. Mary Lynch seconded the motion.

Luisa Soboleski expressed concern in setting up a By-Law Committee and questioned if there should be an all-day retreat.

Amy Porter indicated DORS has a mission statement which is to maximize opportunities for people with disabilities to live, work, learn independently. She also indicated a motion was not needed, that the group would plan where to go from here.

Mary Lynch talked about having subcommittee meetings on separate days and then bring recommendations and discussion back to the larger meetings. She suggested that what has worked best with this group would be to email the board, get feedback, come back and restructure from those opinions.

Patti Clay offered a copy of the bylaws, and Harvey Corson that a copy of the DORS mission statement and anything else that would help us – the state statutes as well, should be shared.

Mary Lynch suggested a subcommittee could meet from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. - followed by the Advisory Council Meeting. Harvey Corson suggested there could be a focus from 1 pm to 5 pm to talk about items under retreat.

Amy Porter asked about State Agencies and Reps - Maybe one of these meetings that we should add to it...something to consider. She suggested the group put out a couple suggestions on email. Shouldn't spend too much time if the group doesn't know how it wants to proceed.

Pat Clark asked about the goal of the board and if the development of DORS, changes the goals of the board? It would be helpful to know this to discuss mission statement.

Luisa Soboleski talked about CDHI purpose and past history – set up in 1974. 1st in the country with job placement, counseling and interpreting training, advocacy for the Deaf community, referral service. It was 1-stop shopping. Budget cuts led to other cuts and it is very different now. Having everyone in one place with the move to Windsor should be helpful to the Deaf community instead of traveling to many places and it is accessible.

Amy Porter added the statute says we advise the Commissioner of DORS for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. The Commission needs to decide if it wants to provide information, sponsor legislation, and decide on priorities and how to advise. Luisa Soboleski suggested the group cut down on one meeting out of five to focus on “retreat-type meeting.

Harvey Corson said part of the problem is the representation on the board. Who is representing the Deaf community sitting here? Me. All of you are agency representatives. That is the problem. The issues are not all brought here to be honest. Amy Porter responded that DORS can't fix all of the issues in the Deaf community and asked “What are the 3-5 things we can focus on? Then get input from the Deaf community.”

Mary Lynch said she will work with Patti to do a bullet point for the next meeting. Everyone will be asked to comment, and provide information from their different perspectives. Patti Clay agreed with that suggestion. One is the structure and mission of the advisory council; then look at goals and gather information.

Summary:

1. Patti Clay and Mary Lynch – with a subcommittee to follow up on setting up goals and gathering information.

Respectfully submitted by:

Mary Ann Dayton-Fitzgerald
DORS DHOH Counseling Unit

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:07 pm.

Next meeting

November 9 meeting will be at 1:30 at DHOH Large Conference Room.