

WISCONSIN COUNCIL FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, March 4, 2010
Madison, Wisconsin

Present: Daniel Houlihan, Vice Chairperson; Mary Jane Griffin; Billy Mauldin, Chairperson; Tom Meitner; Stefanie Saltern; Alex Slappey, and Eloise Schwarz, Secretary

ODHH Staff: Linda Huffer and Alice Sykora

Excused: Terri Matenaer

Interpreters: Amber K Mullett and Nicole A Mueller

Captioner: Rose Coulthart

Guests: John Kinstler, Captel Outreach Manager; Loretta Sarro, Steven Florio, and Eric Raff

Proceedings:

• *Meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m. by Chair, Mauldin*

Business Meeting

December 10th 2009 Minutes:

• Meeting Minutes were electronically sent to all Council members and approved online.

Introductions:

• New member to the Council, Tami Klink, representing Hard of Hearing was introduced to the Council followed by round-table introductions of current members and Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) staff.

ODHH Updates:

Budget:

- State budgets continue to be tight with the hiring freeze still in place, as noted by Huffer.
- Two ODHH positions remain open – Wausau/Stevens Point and Waukesha, WI.
- Department of Health Services priorities are to keep the state-wide Centers open i.e. Mendota and Sandridge, with enough staff and safety in mind.
- State focusing on new Family Care Partnership – assure enough staff is available for this program.
- Those currently employed in dept. are taking on additional responsibilities to cover for the open positions that have not been filled.

Open Positions:

- ODHH department have three coordinators covering the entire state.
- All staff in department spends more time outside of office than inside office. Response time to emails and messages are delayed but answered.
- Carolyn Small covers for the open Stevens Point office once a month or as needed. The three share in presentations, trainings and workshops as noted by Huffer.
- The open Deaf Benefit Specialist/ Regional Coordinator for the SE WI region have not been filled. Huffer has obtained some non-state funding for hiring a contractor for the dual role position and is in the process of interviewing.

Mentor/Mentee Program

- First year nearly complete with anticipation of continuing program for improving skills of interpreters attempting to qualify for certification and licensure.
- Hopes of expanding the program to include more than 6 Mentors and 6 Mentees met with disappointment. Huffer stated no applications have been received for expanding the number of participants in the program.
- Klink raised question of approaching schools for potential mentors.
- Huffer identified Advisory Board in place - comprised of Interpretation Agencies, Schools, and WI RID. Dept of Public Instruction has budgetary constraints and has limited involvement.
- Other opportunities for interpreter interaction and possible collaboration for potential new mentors include the ASL weekend, described by Saltern.

Deaf Unity:

- Sykora updated Council on the past year's project goals in providing services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assaults. Grant funds from UW associated with the Health Initiative supported a statewide coordinator position. A Teen Violence Initiative addresses educational and revenge opportunities for this demographic group.
- A federal grant application has been filed for funding program expansion. Recent fundraiser event raised additional funds for the project in support of a part-time advocate.
- The 501c3 application has been submitted. Once non-profit status has been received, Deaf Unity will separate from ODHH. The Board has been operational since January 2010.
- Consider expanding search for funding to the National Institute of Health and various national Hospital Affiliations, was presented by Klink. Sykora noted funding is available through the state of WI, the Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC) and other Sexual Assault Prevention Programs. These programs will be approached first. If no funds or support is received, consideration of NIH and Hospitals will be made.
- Partnering with insurance companies is also an option. Klink to forward information on accessible insurance company fund information.

National Partnership Initiative:

- Budget cuts and downsizing of deaf and hard of hearing departments have affected other states nationwide. An initiative to form a non-profit organization that combines these state-funded offices into one organization is in the works.
- Lead states are: Delaware – Loretta Saryl will apply for the non-profit status; Rhode Island - Steve Freeo; Washington – Eric Brat and Rebecca Rosenthal (Relay Service Business).
- Nationally other disability groups receive federal funding for their Quality of Life programs and services but the DHH population does not receive anything as noted by Huffer.
- This Partnership program would work towards increasing visibility at the federal level by defining who we are and what we do at the state level. A name and specific goals for the partnership have not been decided at this time.
- Identifying the number of DHH in Wisconsin (state and counties) via the U.S. Census should be considered as noted by Klink. The latest census numbers/computing formulas for 2008 are available; 2010 Census results will be available in 2011. This would help with procuring more funding. Klink will forward access information to the ODHH.

Fiscal Budget:

- Department budget cuts will continue when changes in the office of the Governor and the State Houses takes place after the fall election in 2010.
- ODHH staffing is working at the minimum level with budget shortfalls predicted out to three – five years. No successive planning is in the works if any staff member leaves or retires.

- Options to fill positions through contracting are possible as long as funding is available.

Lunchtime Presentation:

Guest: John Kinstler, Captel Outreach Manager for Ultratec, Inc. Madison WI.

- Background history of company and products provided for deaf and hard of hearing consumers identified the progress of technology that enables communications
- Demographics served include Baby Boomers and Seniors who are dealing with their hearing loss and defining how to stay independent
- Ultratec is a national company offering products including TTY, amplified telephones, alerting devices, baby alarms and captioned telephones (Captel).
- Captioning telephones continue to evolve with use of Call centers (2 in WI), voice-recognition software and transcribers; one or two lines; analog or cable phone lines.
- Access to 911 and available calling assistance available (24 hours – 7 days week – 365 days a year) was posed by Saltern. Kinstler noted two-line Captel phone connect directly to 911 call centers and the one-line phone call changes over to VCO mode with beeps.
- Captel services are mandated by FCC with specific requirements and service providers
- Webcaptel is also a feature available for telephoning and internet captioning, currently available through Sprint and Hamilton Relay. Ultratec partners with these companies.
- Costs for Captel telephones vary depending on who is purchasing them and what funding is available for their purchase.

Interpreter Licensure Bill

- Brief history of legislative activities for sign language interpreter's bill was provided by Houlihan in reference to his attendance at one of the two public hearings recently held in the Senate.
- An Amendment, exempting educational interpreters, had been added but was tabled due to generalized opposition. [this group is licensed through the Dept of Public Instruction].
- The bill passed in the Senate without the amendment; has moved to the Assembly.
- Collaborations with Dept of Regulation & Licensure was completed with Huffer prior to public hearing with the understanding that there were no upfront costs associated with start up and maintaining the licensure for these interpreters.
- The DRL representative testified and noted department did not feel interpreters required licensure based on the cost of supporting this vocation. Funds needed for licensure come from the fees associated with licensure application and maintenance fees.
- Attempts to add new amendment during the open hearing were noted but not successful.
- Huffer posed options available for Council members – approach your legislator and key committee members and encourage them to vote for passage of bill.
- A letter of support has not been sent prior to this meeting but will be sent out by Mauldin on behalf of the Council for Deaf & Hard of Hearing.

Council Updates:

Website Update:

- Schwarz noted ODHH's website is dated and requires a few updates. New member pictures will be completed and sent to Huffer for posting. Letters, proclamations and other supportive documents also are needed. Huffer will collaborate with Schwarz for updates
- Huffer noted past achievements and projects of the Council. New directives are needed – council members should identify two-three topics or subject that could be projects for the coming years.
- Collaborations - brainstorming between Council meetings via electronic mail is one means in keeping the conversation moving; Houlihan noted increased communications with the current licensure bill.

- Discussion on variety of ways to share in new ideas, activities that are similar for both deaf and hard of hearing and increasing our networking capacity was noted by all. Responding in a timely manner to any electronic mail received, is respectful and courteous.

2010 Conferences:

- Hearing Loss Association of America's national convention is in Milwaukee on June 17 to 20th. This is the first time in Wisconsin. Schwarz encouraged Council to consider attending. More information can be found at www.hearingloss.org Prior to the convention, HLAA-WI – Milwaukee Racine Chapter is hosting the first annual Walk4Hearing walkathon on May 16th. Invitations have been sent out. Schwarz is available for further information.
- Wisconsin Education Service Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's state-wide Professional Conference is scheduled for March 12th & 13th, then parent's conference follows the next 2 days with staff, teachers, school audiologists, speech therapists, and other professionals in Madison. The parent's conference focuses on family matters, education, networking and socializing.
- The WisASLTA organization will be holding their conference June 18 and 19th also with focus on teaching American Sign Language. For further information: www.wisaslta.org

New Business:

Council Attendance:

- Mauldin questioned rules of understanding regarding absence from attending Council meetings and direction to take in correcting this infraction. Slappey provided historical significance, with knowledge that all members are appointed by the Governor.
- Huffer noted, bylaws can be changed but the Governor's appointment always supersedes what the Council does in appointing or not asking member to return to the Council.
- Sykora noted one position is still open on the Council – Member at Large. Meitner will not be returning as a member and will work with Sykora to complete his term.

Other Issues:

- Huffer encouraged Council to think about, collaborate with each other, and bring specific ideas to the next meeting. With the election in the fall (new Legislators and a Governor) awareness of the Council is important as well as projects of requests unique to our needs and wants.
- Sykora requested ideas on working lunch time for May meeting – instead of hosting a speaker, could use the time for small group collaborations. Suggested topics: public health – emergency preparedness - <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/> , H1N1 - <http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1FLU/> other health issues, quality of life in nursing facilities, community wellness, transportation, and employment issues. Healthy People 2020 - <http://www.healthypeople.gov/> (looking for public comments) would also be an option. [HLAA is currently working to have hard of hearing references be included in the national directive]
- New term meeting dates will be discussed/shared at the May meeting.

Announcements: none

Public Comments: none

• Meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

• Minutes submitted by Secretary, Schwarz

Next Meeting: May 13, 2010 @ 10:00 in Room 751