

Council on the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

MINUTES

SEPTEMBER
14, 2012

10:00AM – 4:00PM

1 WEST WILSON, MADISON

MEETING CALLED BY	Billy Mauldin
PRESENT	Tom Benziger, Gary Ebben, Billy Mauldin, Steve Smart, Justin Dean Vollmar
ODHH STAFF PRESENT	Linda Huffer, Melani Kaplan
ABSENT	Tami Klink, Mary Jane Griffith, Alex Slappey
INTERPRETERS	Maria Kielma, Nicole Keeler
OBSERVERS	None

Meeting called to order at 10:12am by Billy Mauldin, Chair.

Agenda topics

REVIEW OF MEETING NOTES FROM 6/15 MEETING, APPROVAL

DISCUSSION		
Motion to approve minutes as read by Justin Dean Vollmar, seconded by Steve Smart. Motion passed.		
Melani Kaplan – Update on absent council members and possible election. Tami Klink had family emergency, Mary Jane Griffin is sick and Alex Slappey had a work-related emergency.		
Webcasts for Future Meetings – Council discussed options for possibly using technology such as webcasts for future meetings to better allow member participation in the event of illness or inability to travel to the meeting site. This technology would need to be accessible in some way to persons who are Deaf-Blind as well. Melani will investigate the technology with the IT Department at DHS.		
ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
Investigate technology ability at the Department to have webcasts for future meetings.	Melani Kaplan (with assist from Rose Coulthart)	12/14/12

ELECTION OF NEW OFFICERS AND REVIEW OF BYLAWS

DISCUSSION
Election – Postponed election to December meeting due to vacancies and absent officers. Billy will continue as Council Chair until that time. The Council does have a Quorum with the present members constituting a majority of filled seats.
Bylaws Review – Justin Dean Vollmar led the discussion on the following

clarifications:

- **Ex-Officio:** The language of who is serving as Ex-Officio needs to be clarified in that ODHH staffs are not considered Ex-Officio. The language also needs to be clarified that Ex-Officio members do not have voting capability.
- **Voting:** The way the Bylaws are currently written, ODHH staff can participate in the Council voting. As employees of the state, this is not possible. Bylaws should be rewritten to clarify that ODHH staff do not have voting capability.
- **Officers:** Since Melani Kaplan, Human Services Program Coordinator for ODHH, currently serves in the capacity of liaison between the Council and ODHH and largely functions in the role of Secretary. It is proposed that the Council have only a Chair and Vice-Chair position. It is further proposed to add language clarifying that ODHH will provide a staff person to serve as liaison to the Council and outline the duties in this function.
- **Annual Report:** Would not be the responsibility of the Secretary of the Council, but the Liason and Director of ODHH. The report would be submitted to the Council and then to the Secretary of the Department who would then be responsible for submitting the report to higher offices, such as the governor. It was proposed that instead of naming September as when the report is due, that instead it should be "one time a year."
- **Page 2, Article 5:** This was discussed and clarified that the Council can appoint people from the community to sub-committees to work on certain items as long as those sub-committees are headed by a Council member.

It was clarified that funding support for the Council comes from ODHH's budget.

The Council members have clout, being a part of this Council, and can request meetings with political representatives and the Legislature.

ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
Review and create revisions to the Bylaws to allow for clarification and improve the Council's ability to conduct business.	Justin Dean Vollmar (to be assisted by Melani Kaplan)	12/15/12

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

DISCUSSION
<p>Staff (New Arrivals and Staff Projects) – Tom Benziger will be resigning from the Council, effective at the end of the meeting, as he is now the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist for the Southeastern Regional Office for ODHH.</p> <p>Shawnee Thomas will be taking the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist position for the Northern Regional Office in the Wausau/Stevens Point area starting October 8th. ODHH is currently still looking for office space in Wausau.</p>

With the arrival of Shawnee, ODHH will be fully staffed for the first time in a long time. There is more new staff than old staff so it will take time for things to become cohesive. Each staff person will be taking on a special project in addition to their regular duties. These projects are assigned based on a combination of staff interest, complaints from the community, issues that have been identified in the community. For example:

Nancy Harbison: setting up new brochures that are deaf friendly and hearing friendly. Updating the bulletin board designs to reflect the new changes at ODHH.

Melani Kaplan: Her programs will be discussed later in the meeting and is acting as the Director's "right hand person." Melani is also responsible to support each staff member with their special projects as needed, finding funding, etc.

Bette Mentz Powell: working on developing working relationship with the Department of Corrections to improve things for Deaf and Hard of Hearing inmates. She is also working on HIV education in the community.

Carolyn Small: working on Hard of Hearing issues and transitions. Carolyn is also part of a group of ODHH staff helping Melani to revise the website making it more Deaf friendly and adding ASL videos.

Karen Dishno: working on updating our list of state and national resources, removing old information and looking for new ones.

WITA – Amber Mullett and Chantel Young have been working with the WITA Advisory Board on updating and improving the testing process. The first testing under the new process is aimed to begin in January of 2013. The WITA is mainly for Wisconsin residents and for the Wisconsin interpreter licensure. However, if a resident of a bordering state can show proof that they work in Wisconsin, they can take the WITA test.

Mental Health – The Mental Health Steering Committee is working on different aspects with the goal of improving access to mental health services for people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind. They are also waiting to hear if they have funding from federal funds received by the state in order to continue their work.

Deaf-Blind Equipment Support – ODHH in partnership with the Public Service Commission and the Center for Deaf-Blind Persons in Milwaukee wrote and received a grant to create a program similar to TEPP to help them receive adaptive equipment. It is currently in the planning stage for creating a system of procedures and policies.

Roundtable Discussions – Nancy Harbison and Tom Benziger will be hosting Roundtable "Meet & Greet" types of meetings in their regions to better understand the issues in those communities.

Wisconsin Association of the Deaf (WAD) – The Director continues to meet with the WAD President, Jenny Buechner, on a regular basis to hear their concerns and issues and to find ways in which to partner with them.

Deaf Awareness Fest – (update from Tom) ODHH is partnering with WAD for the Deaf Awareness Fest at MATC in Oak Creek on Saturday, September 29th. Tom has created several surveys aimed at gathering more information and feedback from the community as to issues they may be experiencing with which ODHH could assist.

Justin Dean Vollmar asked Linda Huffer to have announcements and have a personal presence on the ODHH website to have more visibility in the Deaf community.

Tom Benziger commended Jennifer Koehn, Deaf Disability Specialist for ODHH, for being an exceptional and hard worker after sharing an office with her since starting his new position with ODHH.

OLD BUSINESS

DISCUSSION

Disaster Preparedness – Melani Kaplan met with Susan Burleigh at the Office of Emergency Management and Jan Devore. They have not finished their process of getting their materials together in which the Council would like their information incorporated. The meeting led to an invitation for ODHH to be a part of the Functional Assessment Services Team (FAST), which assesses people who are in need of shelter services following a disaster. The assessments look for every need or special consideration people might need, from special equipment, to medication, to transportation. Tom Benziger will be the lead person with them and Melani will support as needed.

Mental Health Steering Committee – The committee has divided their attention to work on several issues:

- **Licensing and Telehealth:** This workgroup is looking at barriers for licensing of mental health providers who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind. There are issues with inter-state reciprocity in recognition of licenses from other states. This group is also looking at how to best establish a system of providing services via telehealth – especially to rural areas or areas in the state which do not have a service provider that is culturally or linguistically competent for Deaf Culture or ASL. Telehealth is currently in use for medical and mental health situations in the hearing community – particularly in rural settings. Another issue is determining which health insurance companies will or will not cover telehealth services. Consideration for establishing procedures also needs to be applied to confidentiality and what to do in case of an emergency or life-threatening situation.
- **Tool Kit & Information:** This workgroup is working on developing a tool kit to inform mental health professionals about the unique needs and issues of people with a hearing loss. This group will also be working on educating the Deaf community about mental health, what it is, when and how to seek help, and work to remove the stigma of mental health in the community.
- **Boards & Councils:** This workgroup is working to get professionals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing on various key Boards and Councils in mental

health related areas, both statewide and private. The goal is to give further voice to the needs of the community in the mental health field.

- **Funding:** This workgroup will be looking for grants and funding opportunities for projects created by the Committee or the various workgroups.

Members of the Council are invited to join any of these Workgroups and the Committee if they are interested. They are also asked to refer anyone they may know or come across who would be a good fit for this area of work.

If anyone has any questions or needs more information, they can contact Melani Kaplan who will either answer or refer to another member of the Committee who can answer the question.

The Committee will eventually put together a list of resources, but the issue is that right now, there just aren't any resources with which to create a list.

ODHH staff can provide training and informational support with mental health and medical professionals who are new to working with persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf Blind, interpreters, the different culture, etc.

ODHH will also be looking for additional sources of funding to support interpreters in the state to attend the specialized training for Mental Health settings.

Website – The website is still being redesigned. The process has been slowed by old software that isn't able to do some of the things we want. Once the aspects of the new design are brought together, Melani Kaplan will be following up with Justin Dean Vollmar for his experience in creating ASL videos for the website.

Deaf Awareness Fest – Fliers about the event were distributed to the Council. The Anderson Twins will be performing during the event. With the exception of Bette Mentz Powell and Carolyn Small, all ODHH staff will be in attendance.

NEW BUSINESS

DISCUSSION

Bylaws – Justin Dean Vollmar moved to create a committee to address and update the bylaws, seconded by Tom Benziger. Motion carried unanimously. Billy Mauldin nominated Justin as the Chair of this committee. Justin asked Steve to Co-Chair. Both accepted their positions. Melani Kaplan will assist as needed. The goal is to be able to vote on the revisions by the next Council meeting in December.

Independent Living Centers (ILC) – Following an invitation to the Council from the Council for the Independent Living Centers of Wisconsin to attend their meeting in August, Melani Kaplan and Carolyn Small attended. No Council members were available. This has the potential to form a partnership between the Councils. There is an issue with people with a hearing loss knowing what services the ILCs provide and the ILCs being prepared to provide such services. There are 8 ILCs in the state of Wisconsin, only two of which have employees who are deaf. After a discussion, it was decided that the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialists in ODHH will work with ILCs in their regions to begin referring people to them.

Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) – Motion by Justin Dean Vollmar that a letter from the Council in support of ratifying the CRPD is sent to state congressmen. Seconded by Tom Benziger. Billy Mauldin will compose the letter with support from Melani Kaplan.

Art Exhibit – ODHH is hosting an art exhibit at their building, 1 West Wilson in Madison, during March and April in recognition of Deaf Awareness Month. At the beginning of the exhibit, ODHH will be hosting an opening celebration for the community and artists to come view the display. Council members are asked to spread the word that we are looking for artists in Wisconsin who have any kind of hearing loss or are sign language interpreters or captionists to contribute artwork. Council members will also be invited to the opening celebration to represent the Council. Once that is determined, the Council will be informed.

Signs at the Zoo – ODHH will be partnering with various other agencies and Deaf associations to host a “Signs at the Zoo” event in September of 2013 at a zoo in recognition of Deaf Awareness Week. The response from the Henry Vilas Zoo in Madison has been very receptive and we are currently waiting for the official “go ahead” from them. The program would be on a weekend, staffed by volunteers who would teach signs to the public at each animal enclosure about that particular animal. The day would include activities and entertainment as well. Billy Mauldin has volunteered to be a part of the event with his wife.

Public Access Video Phones, Captel Phones & Caption Call – Tom Benziger would like to explore making Video Phones and Captel Phones in more public access locations such as libraries. Research is needed to determine if libraries would be the appropriate place. However, Independent Living Centers should have them. The research will need to determine who has such equipment and who doesn't; who is interested in installing this equipment; where to best install the equipment; and how to let the public know the sites of the equipment.

Election – Billy Mauldin nominated by Justin Dean Vollmar to continue as Council Chair for the next year until the next official Council election at the September meeting in 2013. Seconded by Steve Smart and Tom Benziger. Motion carried unanimously.

DISCUSSION OF PROJECTS FOR COUNCIL'S FOCUS

DISCUSSION Discussion for Council members to consider as they plan what they want to accomplish.

Interpreting in Courts and Legal Setting Issues – Council members discussed the state of accessibility to the Wisconsin legal system for people who are deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind. Equal communication needs are falling through the cracks due to a variety of causes. The formation of a new position that would serve as an equal communication access liaison for people who are deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind and the legal system. The position would work with the courts and attorneys to make ensure that equal access is provided from the beginning of any interactions with the courts all the way to ensuring that court-ordered actions are accessible as well. In order for the council to work on this, the following would need to happen: Assemble a written proposal of the idea and a budget; find partners for this plan of action and incorporate their perspectives; then it can be

pursued with the state legislature. Initial qualifications for the position and rough numbers for what this would cost were briefly discussed. Steve Smart and Melani Kaplan will put together a rough idea of the position and submit it to the Council for their consideration. Other Council members will go to their constituency to gauge their response to this idea.

ODHH Affiliation with Wisconsin Association of the Deaf (WAD) – Justin Dean Vollmar mentioned that WAD will host a round table meeting on November 3rd. Linda Huffer is representing ODHH at that meeting. Tom Benziger asked if ODHH could sign on as an affiliate with WAD. Linda Huffer will check with the Department to see if that would be approved.

Next Meetings – The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, December 14th. A tentative meeting will take place on either March 14th or 15th.

Meeting adjourned at 3:57pm by Billy Mauldin, Chair.