



Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
1602 Rolling Hills Drive, Suite 201
Henrico, VA 23229-5012

Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
August 31, 2022

Members Present:

Roy Martin, IV, Chairperson
Carl Cline, Jr.
Traci Branch
Karen Engelhardt
Carrie Humphrey, Vice Chairperson
Susanne Wilbur
Kristin Karmon

Members Absent: Tim Patterson (excused)

Staff Present:

Eric Raff, Director
Karen Brimm, Interpreter Services (IS) Manager
Felecia Smith, Virginia Relay Manager
Brittany Howard, Technology Assistance Program (TAP) Manager
Lynn Odom, Community Services Manager

Staff Present for Introductions:

Amy Ashworth, VQAS Coordinator
Danielle Hubbard, Interpreter Services Coordinator
Shae Evans, DHH Specialist
Paul Stuessy, Community Services Specialist
Brooke Glanzman, Administrative Assistant

Staff Absent:

Rhonda Jeter, Business Manager

ASL Interpreters/CART Provider:

Lois Boyle, CART writer
Bernice McCormack, Interpreter

Liz Leitch, Interpreter

NETWORKING – COFFEE & REFRESHMENTS

On Wednesday, August 31, 2002 at 10:00 a.m., the members of the Advisory Board of the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) convened in the conference room at the VDDHH Central Office, 1602 Rolling Hills Drive, Suite 203, Henrico, Virginia 23229-5012.

I. Call to Order

At 10:00 a.m., Chairperson Roy Martin called the meeting to order. A quorum was present.

- A. Review of communication rules: raise your hand and wait to be recognized which will ensure a pause between conversations and help our CART provider and our interpreters to allow a smooth transition of the communication.
- B. Introduction of Advisory Board members, VDDHH staff, and guests: Introductions were made for the board members and staff present. This included introduction of the new board members, Kristin Karmon and Carl Cline who will be serving as professional members.
- C. Review of Advisory Board membership roster: Chair requested that any changes to the roster be submitted to him for revision by the end of the meeting.
- D. Review of agenda: There was a motion from the Chair to approve the agenda, which was seconded. Motion passed.
- E. Approval of the minutes: Minutes from a special meeting on December 15, 2021 regarding the electronic participation meeting policy. There was a motion from the Chair to approve the December minutes, which was seconded by Ms. Humphrey. Motion passed.

II. Guest Presentation

Lauren Roche, Administrator for the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).

Ms. Roche informed the Board that she works out of DARS offices, but the SILC is an autonomous body and is a nonprofit. Ms. Roche began her career as a teacher, and is herself a person with a disability. She served as a member of the SILC for six years, and also on the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, and the State Rehab Council through DARS. The SILC is actually mandated by the Rehabilitation Act and its amendments along with the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Council is designed to receive input directly from consumers with disabilities and to allow that consumer voice to drive the state plan for independent living. It is a planning body, not an advisory group. Members are appointed by the Governor. At least 51 percent of council members are people with disabilities not employed by the state or a Center for Independent Living. There are ex officio members, and Director Raff is one.

The SILC is charged with developing, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of that federally mandated three-year state plan for independent living. SILC work with Virginia's designated state entity, DARS, and works with Virginia's statewide network of centers for independent living (CILs). They promote the implementation of transition as defined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Transition is a three pronged area which includes students transitioning post-secondary and diversion of people who are at risk for institutionalization for any reason including transitioning from institutions to the community setting of the person's choice. This also includes addressing un- or underserved areas.

Another goal of the SILC is to increase member knowledge, and grow advocacy skills through training, conference participation, knowledge sharing at quarterly meetings (which are accessible both physically and for communication), and opportunities for social interaction. The other prong of this is continued advocacy for a hundred percent accessibility and compliance with the web content accessibility guidelines for state agency websites. During the Pandemic, some funds were allocated for this purpose to make sure consumers could access the supports they needed. There are 17 CILs, but coverage does not include all parts of the state, as there are gaps in coverage especially in the southern area of the state. DARS also has an Independent Living Unit, directed by Kevin Koziol. There is also the Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living (VACIL), and an independent living program specifically for the blind and vision impaired.

Questions: Chair asked - How does VDDHH interact with SILC, besides Director Raff's membership? Ms. Roche answered that communication comes up during legislative sessions when there are bills of interest, and in order to discuss priorities. The SILC does not lobby, but does relay information to stakeholders. VDDHH also shares items of concern that may be prioritized for attention. Director Raff noted that VDDHH also contracts with several CILs for DHH specialists as part of its outreach and TAP activities. He also noted that Petersburg is an area of interest for the Governor for revalidation of the economy, and it is an underserved area of CIL coverage. Also, Secretary Littel has recently established a work group called the Disability and Language Access group under the HHR secretariat, and that may address some website deficiencies.

III. Program Reports (see also Program Reports submitted to the Board)

Executive – Eric Raff, Director

Director Raff acknowledged the retirement of Christine Ruderson, former TAP Manager, who was the last employee to work under the former director, Ron Lanier. Her retirement marked the end of a full turnover of staff positions for the department, and he commented that the new team has worked admirably thus far. Brittany Howard was recently hired as TAP Manager, Lynn Odom as Community Services Manager, Danielle Hubbard as Interpreter Services Coordinator, Amy Ashworth as VQAS Coordinator, and Shae Evans as DHH specialist for the Richmond area

(wage position working out of central office). One DHH specialist wage position for the Fredericksburg area remains vacant. A new Policy Analyst position (assisting the Director with legislative issues, rulemaking, policy procedures, strategic plan, and performance measures) is yet to be posted, but we hope to fill that this fiscal year. Part time wage positions for the Support Service Provider Pilot Project Coordinator and Deaf Mentoring Coordinator position are in the hiring stages. Clayton Bowen, former employee of many years who served various positions including Interim Director, recently formally retired from a part-time consulting role.

VDDHH continues to participate in the Statewide Interagency Team (SIT), and continues to finalize the most recent Needs Assessment report based on our series of town hall meetings prior to COVID-19 lockdown.

The SSP Pilot Project, delayed for several years due to the Pandemic, is slated to commence in January 2023. Lynn Odom has taken over this project.

The Deaf Mentoring program development is ongoing; the program will involve Deaf adults serving as mentors for families with deaf children as a way to foster language development, beginning with a focus on ASL and then hopefully expanding later to include Listening and Spoken Language and Cued Speech. Lynn Odom will oversee this project as well. This project will be funded by the state for a total of approximately \$238k not including fundraising dollars by some community organizations.

VDDHH will celebrate its 50th anniversary this year, and will host an Open House event during Deaf Awareness week in September. A more formal celebration event will be planned for later in the fiscal year.

Director Raff has been working with a group called the Virginia Higher Education Accessibility Partnership (VHEAP) including four-year colleges and universities around the state in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Colleges and universities are a group focusing on making their college or university accessible, making sure they provide captions, live or remote, usually through contractual agreements.

VDDHH is participating in the Promoting Equity in Healthcare Interpreting (PEHI) grant project, which Karen Brimm will speak about later.

Virginia Relay – Felecia Smith, Manager

Ms. Smith provided an update on the Virginia Relay Advisory Committee (VRAC); there are still four vacancies on the Committee, and so meetings are on hold pending the establishment of a quorum. A couple of referrals for membership have been received and are being explored.

Hamilton Relay continues to provide contracted services satisfactorily, and VDDHH is working with their marketing team to increase consumer awareness about the program, especially to reach individuals who do not already know about resources for people with hearing loss. Of note, Eric Alvillar, Hamilton's outreach coordinator at VDDHH, provided many presentations including to a 9-1-1 operator training center which was very successful.

Regarding overall Virginia Relay traffic, we saw a slight increase and we ended with about 15.20 percent higher in Q4 than we saw in Q3.

Regarding analog-based caption telephone services, traffic flat-lined or had a slight decrease. But for internet based captioned telephone services, from 2020 to 2022 we saw a 320% increase of internet based CapTel services. Virginia Relay's purview is analog services, but we have been working on and discussing the analog to digital transition. We still see 36 to 38 percent of our TRS services are TTYs which is analog based. We already started communication with the Department of Housing and Community Development. That is a state agency in Virginia taking care of the digital equity approach to the broadband expansion initiative. Captioned phones work on copper line, and the transition from copper line to maybe DSL or whatever digital service that's being put in may disrupt service, and DHH consumers may not be aware of the issue without education as to why their devices no longer function.

We saw a decrease in remote conference captioning requests from Q3 to Q4, but compared to last year there was a drastic decrease. Ms. Smith's suspicion is because COVID restrictions have been lifted and more in-person meetings are conducted than virtual so remote captioning requests will likely continue to decline.

- The Chair paused for Public Comment at approximately 11:30am (no comments were put forward), followed by a short Recess to allow for CART and interpreter breaks.

Interpreter Services Programs - Karen Brimm, Manager

Ms. Brimm noted the retirement of Elaine Ziehl and Pamala Dorman during the prior fiscal year, and their positions being filled as of April 2022.

VDDHH is participating in the Promoting Equity in Healthcare project and that is being run by Idaho State University and Gallaudet University in partnership. That is a five-year grant worth \$2.1 million and we are as of right now four states who are participating. Idaho, Kansas, Arizona and Virginia are the states that are currently working with PEHI team to recruit interested interpreters of various levels of education, certification and experience to provide them with training in healthcare interpreting. They take it through an online sort of asynchronous presentation of training material, mentoring with experienced healthcare interpreters in order to gain some supervision and guidance that may include shadowing, observation and really

expanding the candidate's knowledge of healthcare interpreting and best practice both on-site, clinics and doctors' offices but also online because video remote interpreting has grown in the healthcare environment and that has been sometimes to the benefit and sometimes to the detriment of the deaf community depending on the stability of the technology and the ability of the interpreter to manage that interaction.

Ms. Brimm continues to serve as VDDHH's liaison to the Virginia Emergency Support Team with the Department of Emergency Management; as a side note, she concurred with the earlier observation that website accessibility was a noted barrier during the State of Emergency for many state agencies.

We are in the process of updating our Memorandum of Understanding with the Supreme Court of Virginia regarding coordination of interpreter and CART services for courts across Virginia. Service request fulfillment for courts and state agencies continues, with some last minute requests being satisfied through the Court's VRI contract, or resulting in no interpreter being available.

Regarding assessment, VQAS slots are consistently filled, and we are preparing to relaunch the proctoring if the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA), both Written and Performance. We are working on re-standardizing rater reliability performance through a series of training updates, and are developing new VQAS performance materials for the launch of a new version of the test slated for spring 2023.

Question: What does the listing of 'freelance' or 'student' mean in your statistical report?
We have agreements with several interpreter training programs who include the VQAS as part of their required curriculum, so we accommodate their testing needs while balancing the need of the working interpreter community (freelancers and educational interpreters).

- The Chair called a Recess at 12:10pm for a working lunch (question and answer regarding the upcoming Open House and 50th Anniversary event planning). Reconvene at approximately 12:40pm.

Community Services – Lynn Odom, Manager

Ms. Odom joined VDDHH on April 25, 2022, and has begun attendance of various boards, committees, workgroups, etc., as required for networking, stakeholder involvement, and liaising. This has included participation in the Regional Interagency Team meetings for the Northern Virginia region.

Community Services Program (CSP) is currently working with DARS IT to develop a new website with revised and improved content and usability, including the addition of vlogs and

signed versions of English content. On the current website, there were 15,518 page views during the last quarter resulting from interactions with 7,010 users. Social media data indicates that VDDHH reached 10,089 individuals, mostly through the website and Facebook. CSP hopes to increase the number of viewers and subscribers to the department's YouTube channel as well. A digital newsletter was launched via the web service Constant Contact, and there are currently 200+ subscribers.

CSP provided multiple presentations, webinars, and training sessions during the quarter including partnering with the Disaster Distress Hotline for a webinar on dealing with the aftermath of emergency situations, and presenting to the Virginia State Police Academy regarding Deaf interaction and awareness. CSP handled a volume of requests for information and referral as well, as indicated in the Program Report. The collection of I&R data is being refined for accuracy, with the Virginia Relay, TAP, and CSP managers collaborating to improve data collection tools.

Hiring for the SSP Pilot Project Coordinator and Deaf Mentor Coordinator is ongoing, with interviews planned to commence in October. The Deaf Mentor program will also involve training on the SKI HI curriculum, and planning for that training is ongoing.

The bill related to LEAD-K initiatives which passed in a prior legislative session will require that a steering committee be established with, at minimum, participation from VDDHH, DBHDS, and VDOE in order to create an advisory committee. The focus will be early childhood language acquisition and related resources.

Technology Assistance Program - Brittany Howard, Manager

VDDHH recently hired Shae Evans as a DHH Specialist for Region 7 (Richmond area) as a part-time, wage position. The Region 5 DHH Specialist position is being advertised once again, since the candidate search for that position did not yield a hiring in the last recruitment effort.

TAP revised the Application Form for the program, streamlining the documentation needed for proof of qualification, and creating fillable .PDF and printable versions, and a planned large print version, to make the application process more user friendly. Next TAP hopes to revise and update the Consumer Satisfaction Survey process, and along with that to continue to update the equipment choices available from the program. A delegated email address, TAP@vddhh.virginia.gov was created to streamline communication with consumers. We are not currently meeting application volume goals, and will be examining ways to promote, improve, and expand the program to meet current consumer needs. That will involve the changeover from analog to digital devices as Ms. Smith mentioned in her report, and more effective marketing of the program itself through collaboration with Virginia Relay's marketing team. Efforts to increase the number of Veterans participating in the program will also be explored, since there

were only 30 Veterans served during FY22. Collection of service and equipment data is being improved through report revision, process refinement, and the development of new reports through the Power BI platform which is newly available to the department.

Board member inquired about: the equipment available through the program, concurring that the selection should be updated to meet current consumer needs; the goal numbers for new applications per month, commenting that the number may need to be adjusted depending on geographic area demand differences. Positive comments regarding the effort to revise the program and improve consumer engagement were made by several board members.

IV. Board Reports

Karen Engelhardt reported that she had taught several Deaf sensitivity classes to law enforcement in the Northern Virginia area, and noted that many LEOs were unaware of the range of hearing loss and accommodation needs in the DHH community.

Kristin Karmon: Reported working with Early Intervention, and one particular school district that needed guidance about providing appropriate accommodations. She noted the disparity of knowledge and understanding of DHH needs across school systems, and cited this as an area of concern since that disparity directly impacts the types of supports and challenges that families face depending on where they live, and depending on which school personnel are involved in the IEP and evaluation process. This also has later impacts as the student transitions out of high school without needed resources. Board members concurred that they observed this disparity as well, and suggested that a future topic for a Guest Presenter might be someone from the Department of Education or other state agency involved in Early Intervention to enlighten the VDDHH Advisory Board on current approaches and efforts to fill the knowledge gap across school districts. VDDHH can also attempt to fill the information gap through the website revision project that is ongoing by providing information, resources, and links to relevant agencies and programs on its website.

V. Budget Report (See Report submitted to the board for detailed data)

General funds total around \$1.3M, and both Non-General and Federal funds total around \$2.6M. These funds allocated are slated for use for Virginia Relay, TAP, and several grant related activities already mentioned. Staff will receive a 5% salary increase from the General Assembly, and there have been small changes in appropriations to address the changes in various program needs and grant activities.

VI. New Business

From Susanne Wilbur: Inquired about the possibility of making the Advisory Board meetings more accessible for online attendance to widen the community's ability to participate, and also making the meeting schedule more widely known to the public. Director Raff responded, noting

that the meetings are posted online through the state site, the VDDHH Facebook page, email, and newsletter announcements. VDDHH could consider including an email address with the announcement in case people want to submit public comment that way. We can also share the minutes after the meeting. Bylaws can also be reviewed to determine what virtual options are available/allowable.

From the Chair: Regarding bylaws, suggested bylaws be reviewed and consider modification to the rigid meeting frequency required, specifically which day of the month the meetings must be held on; Director Raff suggested that the Secretary of the Commonwealth be consulted for review of the administrative handbook on the virtual options question and the meeting frequency question.

- The Chair requested that the attendance sheet be completed by all Board Members, and all requests for reimbursement for travel be submitted in a timely manner.

VII. Meeting Adjournment

Being that there was no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 2:48pm.