



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

**Advisory Board Meeting Minutes**  
**November 2, 2022**

**Members Present:**

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

**Members Absent:**

Chris Gregory (excused)

**Staff Present:**

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

**ASL Interpreters/CART Provider:**

Lois Boyle, CART writer  
Bernice McCormack, Interpreter  
Liz Leitch, Interpreter

**NETWORKING – COFFEE & REFRESHMENTS:**

On Wednesday, November 2, 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.

### **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. and 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.
- 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: One correction under Section 6, Ms. Wilbur's name was misspelled; will be corrected. Motion to approve minutes as corrected: Tim Patterson, seconded by Carl Cline.

### **Program Reports:** (see also Program Reports submitted to the Board)

#### Executive – Eric Raff, Director

Director Raff noted the following personnel related items: **A)** due to the recent resignation of the Administrative Assistant, VDDHH is recruiting for that position, with an emphasis on seeking applicants with secretarial skills. Until that position is filled, Linda Thornton has graciously come out of retirement to cover the duties part time. **B)** VDDHH is also conducting second-round interviews with candidates for the position of Deaf Mentor Program coordinator which will be a wage position that would start sometime in January 2023. Deaf mentors are expected to become active in February 2023. **C)** Recruiting for the policy analyst position is expected to begin sometime before the end of FY23. **D)** The SSP Pilot Project, delayed for several years due to the Pandemic, is slated to commence in January 2023 and hiring for an SSP coordinator will begin in the first quarter of the project. Lynn Odom will be overseeing that project.

VDDHH celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an Open House event during Deaf Awareness week in September. The event was a huge success with around a dozen community organizations participating with exhibits, and was very well attended. A more formal celebration is tentatively planned for March 25, 2023 at the Library of Virginia.

Regarding VDDHH's efforts during COVID-19, Director Raff provided Wired Magazine interview and participated in a podcast for Deloitte, the vendor that partnered with VDH to provide ASL call assistant access for the Vaccinate Virginia call center during the COVID-19 state of emergency.

VDDHH participated in a workgroup resulting from the passing of HB 649 related to language assessment for Deaf and hard of hearing children, and the development of tools and resources for parents of DHH children to support children's language acquisition. The workgroup also includes, among others, Terri Nelligan from the Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.

HHR Secretary Littel has established the Language Access Project which includes VDDHH and DMAS among other agencies. The group aims to improve language access and website accessibility for people with disabilities and/or limited English proficiency.

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 not been fruitful. Recruitment efforts will continue via VDDHH's e-news and the VA Relay newsletter. Any interested party can be referred to Ms. Smith.

Ms. Smith presented at several events for 9-1-1 call center personnel which were successful and well received, including presentations at training academies.

Hamilton Relay continues to perform adequately. Consumer comments tend to relate to issues with technical setup rather than customer service or support. Ms. Smith provided customer support regarding TTY to VRS call handling and believes that difficulties across platforms may be more widespread than previously thought. Efforts to increase public awareness continue. Va Relay continues to reach out to aphasia and apraxia support groups. There was a decrease in volume in traditional relay from August to September as expected, with TTY being the strongest performer, but IP relay continues to increase.

VDDHH/VA Relay is working with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DCHC) regarding the Digital Equity Act. Transitions from analog to digital will impact users, and it will be important to alert those traditional relay users prior to service changeover to prevent service disruption. The Attorney General is being consulted regarding a possible MOU between VDDHH and DHCD regarding this activity.

Question: Was the 9-1-1 training material old? A: it is built into the platform, but the in-person training attempts to educate staff on cultural considerations, etc. A board member suggested also reaching out to HLAA (already in progress) and to hospitals and OT departments, throat cancer centers, and Area Agencies on Aging (suggestions noted). Outreach is already ongoing to community centers and audiologist offices.

Technology Assistance Program - Brittany Howard, Manager

VDDHH has hired for Region 3 DHH Specialist (Staunton area) as a part-time, wage position with an office in Fishersville at WWRC. 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.

Ms. Howard attended a recent TRIAD conference hosted by the AG's office, along with Ms. Smith and Mr. Alvillar from Hamilton Relay. The event includes law enforcement representation, community groups and various organizations to learn about preventing fraud and strengthening community connections. TAP also attended WWRC's recent Open House event.

TAP reports have been recently consolidated and revised for greater accuracy and efficiency. Positive feedback has been received from specialists regarding the improvements. Additionally, equipment is now being inventoried using a bar code scanner for greater accuracy and efficiency. Regarding equipment,

TAP is taking steps to add e-tablet availability in order to better meet consumer need. Tablets would come preloaded with apps and settings (apps to be determined depending on licensing, usability, consumer need, etc.). VA Relay has provided tote bags to promote TAP as a 'walking advertisement' in order to improve visibility of the program. TAP also hopes to begin setting up displays in audiologist offices to increase consumer awareness.

TAP activities have increased overall since last quarter, including troubleshooting, warranty repairs, assistance with filling out the application, etc. Some regions continue to lack specialist coverage, so activity in those regions is reflected in the Statewide category.

A board member requested that TAP develop a list of trusted communication apps (suggestion accepted) that could be given out as a 'packet' of information by email and posted on the VDDHH website. Another board member noted that a disclaimer would be needed that the list is for information purposes and not an endorsement.

- Program reports were suspended to allow guest speakers to present.

#### **Guest Presentation:**

**Wanda Council, Ed.S.**, Specialist for Sensory Disabilities, Department of Special Education & Student Services at the Virginia Department of Education

Ms. Council provided each board member with a packet including: Superintendent Memo No. 25122 regarding the annual requirement that the Department of Education provide information to school divisions to post on their websites to ensure that parents had current information about different programs and services to support children who were deaf or hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired, and are aware of VDDHH, VA School for the Deaf and Blind, and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired. The packet also includes a list of resources in Virginia to support children with sensory disabilities. (Ms. Odem commented that VDDHH can cross-post and distribute these resources as well). This resource information is updated every seven years or so; helpful to schools as well as parents of deaf/hard of hearing children. This information is available on the VDOE website. There was also a 2019 update to the Special Education Guidelines which was recently published, included in the board packets and available on the VDOE website.

VDOE provides financial support via grant funding to provide resources, including the VQAS program, and training for educational interpreters, and VDOE collaborates with several colleges who have interpreter training programs for workshops and professional development. There is a scarcity of qualified educational interpreters and teachers of the deaf/hard of hearing in Virginia. VDOE is conducting a Grow your Own Project: a grant program for school divisions who have teachers who are not yet qualified: tuitions costs are available. Radford University provides such services. Traditionally, teachers who are hired by the school, have a master's degree, and able to teach adjunct at the community college; however, with ASL it is difficult to find instructors.

As Mr. Raff mentioned, legislation was passed in 2022 regarding language development for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and we are working on implementation. We have an Advisory Council with 16 members, 7 designated members from agencies, 9 members who are parents of deaf/hard of hearing

children, a speech language pathologist, and a coordinator of an infant toddler connection, a proper balance.

Question: what is the typical ratio for student to interpreter? A: it varies by school district, and student need. The same is true for Cued Speech Tranliterator coverage.

Question: how are ASL teachers hired? Is there a pathway from ITPs to becoming ASL teachers? Answer from Carrie Humphrey: Not every high school offers college credit for ASL classes, some interpreting students change paths and become interested in Deaf education rather than interpreting. dual enrollment is very popular between local high school and the college. Tradition dual enrollment means the teacher who is hired by the school system has a master's degree and is able to teach as adjunct at the community college. So that means the instructor in the classroom with the students at the high school is paid by the school system but holds the qualifications to be able to satisfy teaching at the college level.

Chairman Martin invited Ms. Council to return to present additional information/topics in the future.

### **Guest Presentation:**

**Tracy Yurechko**, Project Director for the Technical Assistance Center for Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Partnership for People with Disabilities, Virginia Commonwealth University  
Ms. Yurechko stated that TAC-DHH, grant cycle dates runs October 1-September 30. Ms. Yurechko oversees 26 consultants or professionals in the Virginia Network of Consultants (VNOC). VNOC provides support to school divisions, ongoing professional development for professionals who work with DHH children, runs a center on literacy and deafness intervention, and provides tools to teach reading. Tteachers of deaf/hard of hearing students meet with Ms. Yurechko to discuss guidelines, evaluations, etc. This year we had evaluations in all school divisions. They observed that school psychologists with signing skills are very busy, and most school divisions do not have educational audiologists. Students transitioning from high school work with Traci Branch and Mary Nunally of DARS. TAC-DHH talks with parents, offer testing, but a signed consent form from parents in an IEP meeting is needed. TAC-DHH also supports students with multiple disabilities. Seventy nine out of 132 school divisions have utilized this program.

TAC-DHH realizes this information does not reach the people who need it in some rural communities. Many parents and school systems contact TAC-DHH for information about IEP meetings. We need to share this information, pass it out through professional and personal networks, including cue camps, or camps for deaf kids, or silent dinners, or local deaf events.

Chairman Martin invited Ms. Yurechko to return to present again at a later date.

- **Board member reports** were offered during the Working Lunch

**Carrie Humphrey:** 1) There has been recent interest in making language fluency screenings available for adults in Virginia. There are two standardized language screening systems: the ASLPI from Gallaudet (proprietary, they do not train outside individuals to provide the screening), and RIT's, SLPI-ASL (Sign Language Proficiency Interview for ASL). There have been a series of training in Virginia to train interviewers and raters for the SLPI-ASL. Four of us took and passed the training this past January, and we are setting up a screening system for individuals

who take ASL classes in high school and pass with an intermediate or higher; they can qualify for the bi-literacy seal on their diploma. 2) Virginia Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (VRID) is working to reestablish a new board and get active again to support individuals with professional development. There is a scarcity of interpreters working in the community, a lot of those interpreters are tired and burned out. VRID is a volunteer organization.

**Carl Cline:** Noted some community needs in Franklin County. His organization did a survey about needs in the community. The top suggestion is access to medical care, dentist, and services.

**Kristen Karmon:** Noted a nonprofit in her area that is training on a variety of topics related to deaf and hard of hearing. Free resources at [languagefirstlab.org](http://languagefirstlab.org).

**Suzanne Wilbur:** She and Dr. Greg Farber will give a presentation at UVA about language deprivation and the impact of COVID. The presentation will be part of their Deaf Culture event series.

**Traci Branch:** DARS is still recruiting for an RCD position in southwest. We have a tough time filling positions with qualified counselors in the area.

**Roy Martin:** Last summer there were issues with a public school in Norfolk for not providing captioning for a Zoom French class for a child. We learned that the burden is on the school guidance counselor to let Virtual Virginia know that the child has a 504 with a hearing loss.

Brief discussion regarding board positions:

Mr. Martin's and Ms. Humphrey's terms will be ending soon, consider whether any present members would like to serve as Chair or Vice-Chair. A calendar for 2023 meetings will need to be decided.

Susie Wilbur: It feels like your term has been very short perhaps because of COVID. How can we make up for that time? We have new members, and we must reconfigure the Board again. We have a strong group now, stronger than we had in the past.

Eric Raff: We are supposed to have elections every two years, and this is already Roy and Carrie's second term.

Susie Wilbur: I think we should move ahead with the election and keep the two-year term. We will be voting again in December.

Mr. Martin: We are happy we had this discussion. In February, when we elect new officers that does not mean they will take over right away. We will see our term out and we have two more meetings.

- **Return to Program Reports**

Interpreter Services Programs - Karen Brimm, Manager

ISP is working on two overarching initiatives: Promoting Equity Healthcare Interpreting (PEHI) project (will be starting the mentor recruitment phase in early 2023); working with the Supreme Court of Virginia to update our memorandum of understanding (MOU). We are waiting to hear from the Court about increasing the pay rate to a more appropriate industry standard. There is a scarcity of availability for CART providers, and some courts don't have the infrastructure to support virtual services; in those cases, we have to reschedule a time when a CART provider is available onsite.

Question Traci: About the interpreter Service Agreement, was there a resolution on the video agreement issue?

Karen: During COVID we had a change in how we provided services because the existing agreement did not specify anything about virtual services. VDDHH made available video conferencing for Zoom meetings, which was a stop-gap measure, because, for example, courts had to conduct business. We received feedback from interpreters, and when the emergency agreement lapsed, ultimately videoconferencing assignments were billed with the same terms as other assignments. Hopefully, during this fiscal year, or the following one, we will update the agreement. First, we need to revisit the document since the industry standards have changed, cost of living increases, and, of course, we want to pay an appropriate interpreter hourly rate. As a follow-up to that discussion we sent out two surveys, one to court interpreters, and another survey was sent to interpreters who work under the Service Agreement to cover state agencies for non-legal assignments.

ISP is working on fliers with basic information, a fact sheet for consumers. The brochure will explain how to get an interpreter for court, or for a doctor's office for a patient.

Regarding assessment, VQAS slots are consistently filled, and we relaunched the proctoring if the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA), both Written and Performance. We completed 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.

#### Community Services – Lynn Odom, Manager

Ms Odom reported a total of 824 requests for Information and Referral, with the top three request topics being #1 TAP, #2 ISP, #3 hearing aids. CSP offered 23 Outreach trainings which impacted about 900 people, and we provided large group trainings for the Department of Corrections and the State Police. We participated in Deaf Field Day at Liberty University which involved interpreting students, ASL students, and other students who came to learn about deafness.

Regarding the Deaf Mentor Program, the coordinator position received eleven applicants, seven were selected for an interview, however three declined an interview. A second round of interviews is scheduled for November 7, 2022. Next, we will recruit for deaf mentors. The SKIHI training is planned for February 2023.

Question: Susie Wilbur, what kind of qualifications are you looking in a mentor?

Lynn Odom: at a minimum: experience working with children and families, early intervention, and experience teaching ASL.

Regarding the SSP pilot project, we are working on the curriculum with Reynolds Community College in preparation for the start of the grant activity next year.

- Break

#### **Guest Presentation:**

**Terri Morgan**, Executive Director, Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD)

VBPD's vision is that people with developmental disabilities direct their own lives and choose how they live, learn, work and play. Our mission is to create a Commonwealth that advances opportunities for independence, person decision-making and full participation in community life for developmental disabilities. Our authority comes from the Developmental Disability (DD) Act which is a federal law, and VBPD is one of 56 DD councils in the US. Most of our funding is 87% is federal from the administration of community living. We have a supervisory Board, an Executive Committee, ten full -time employees and three part-time employees.

There was discussion regarding DD services, challenges, and success for people with developmental disabilities.

**New Business:**

Regarding the meeting schedule dates for 2023: Wednesday, February 1, Wednesday, May 3, and August 2, 2023 were proposed. Kristen Karmon made a motion to accept; Carl Cline seconded the motion. The dates were accepted.

Tim Patterson suggested asking Wanda Council to be added to our next agenda, but it was decided to wait in order to compare schedules for Ms. Council and Ms. Yurechko to come back.

- Rhonda Jeter asked board members to make sure their address is correct on their travel voucher, and that mileage is documented correctly. Between now and the next meeting, members are required to file a Conflict of Interest form for the 2022 calendar year. This form should start January 1, and it can only be submitted electronically.

**Meeting Adjournment:**

Ms. Humphrey moved for adjournment, Mr. Patterson seconded, all in favor.

Being that there was no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 2:50pm.