

Georgia Commission on Hearing Impaired and Deaf Persons
Tuesday, February 7, 2012
9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Auditory Verbal Center
1901 Century Boulevard NE, Suite 20
Atlanta, GA 30345

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Ms. Mary Reed, Ms. Laura Sarsfield, Dr. Helena Solodar, Mr. Comer Yates

Members Absent: Ms. Robin Ferst, Ms. Lee Ann Meadows, Mr. Chuck Leavell

Staff Present: Ms. Katherine Cadena

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Solodar at 9:40 a.m.

A motion was made to approve the minutes and the motion was seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Solodar updated the Commission on opening a bank account. She was told she needed the tax ID of the agency to open an account by the Private Bank of Buckhead. The initial deposit will be for \$500: \$480 donated from the Adopt-a-Band event and \$20 from the donations of the HD earplugs from Commission members and staff.

Dr. Solodar indicated that Dr. Barry Freeman, from Nova Southeastern University spoke to members of the Georgia Academy of Audiology annual meeting in March and formally announced the AuD program will move forward. The first class will be in Fall of 2013, although a campus site has not been determined yet. The campus is expected to be accessible to MARTA and some medical facilities. The accreditation process does not appear to be a problem. He would like to develop an advisory committee. As Dr. Solodar receives more information, she will forward it to Commission members.

Dr. Solodar stated the film; "Deaf Jam" will be screened as a part of the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival, AJFF. She stated she will be a guest panelist at the screening. While the film will not be looped, the director of The AJFF contacted several staff from other agencies who primarily assist people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, and plans to meet with them and Ms. Sarsfield about how to move forward with looping theaters. Sign language interpreters will be available at the screening. Commission members are invited to attend the film. The film is scheduled to show on February 12 at LeFont in Sandy Springs at 4:50 pm and at Regal Atlantic Station at 2:10 pm.

Ms. Sarsfield discussed the looping public awareness campaign. Jeff Bonnell is now presiding over the Georgia chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America. He assisted with obtaining a one page article on Looping in Pathways Journal, a publication of the Episcopal Church diocese in Atlanta that reaches about 90 churches. Four

churches are interested in looping, and Ms. Sarsfield is assisting with providing information. After some success with churches, Ms. Sarsfield would like to focus on small businesses that could benefit from smaller loops. She also asked if anyone has any contacts in Atlanta area museums, to please forward the information to her. Mr. Yates discussed the potential of having the Atlanta Speech School looped.

Dr. Solodar discussed the Adopt-a-Band initiative on behalf of absent Commission member, Ms. Ferst. Dr. Solodar stated she met with the band director at Georgia Institute of Technology, and discussed the importance of hearing protection. Dr. Solodar shared Ms. Ferst's written report with the Commission that indicated she is requesting feedback from the Commission members prior to the next meeting regarding the current proposal.

Mr. Yates discussed the Georgia Pathway for Language and Literacy Project: A partnership with the Atlanta Speech School, Atlanta Area School for the Deaf, Georgia Area School for the Deaf, The Georgia Department of Education, and the Georgia Parent Infant Network for Educational Services (Georgia PINES). The goal of the project is for each child in Georgia with hearing loss to reach grade level reading by third grade and develop a network for all educators to have access to resources for educating students with hearing loss. The group had two successful town hall meetings through Facebook. Mr. Yates will demonstrate the website portal at a future meeting, as well as have some others involved in the project discuss the outcomes. There are three components to the program: Resources, networking, and mentoring.

Dr. Solodar discussed current Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (UNHS) proposed legislation. Prior to the meeting, she sent out an email asking Commission members their interest in assisting with participating in a writing group for UNHS proposed legislation. Commission member Ms. Reed volunteered. Ms. Reed mentioned Representative Stephanie Benfield shared an interest in adding the request for obtaining aggregate data to current proposed legislation House Bill 745 regarding pulse oximetry, sponsored by Representative Andy Welch, pending approval from Representative Welch. The goal is for the bill to achieve bipartisan support. Ms. Sarsfield informed Commission members she extended an invitation to Ms. Sharon Quarry with the Department of Public Health, DPH, Program Manager for the UNHS, and indicated Ms. Quarry could not offer any DPH involvement at this time. More discussion ensued about language regarding the current UNHS legislation. Mr. Yates will share the intent to propose legislation with select stakeholders.

Ms. Kelly Jenkins, who has severe hearing loss and is a parent of a child who is hard of hearing, spoke to the about proposed Georgia hearing aid legislation called "Let Georgia Hear". The bill would require group health insurance, group health benefit plans and the State Health Plan of Teachers and State Employees to provide coverage for hearing aids and replacement hearing aids for insured people under 20 years old who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. Eighteen states currently have similar legislation in place. Let Georgia Hear is comprised of over 120 members. Eighty percent of language is acquired before a child reaches eighteen months. A study by The Better Hearing Institute cites that sixty eight percent of people do not purchase hearing aids because of financial constraints. Only sixteen percent of parents were able to get any insurance coverage for hearing aids. When hearing loss is not identified and treated early in children, the costs to the state

increase by \$420,000 in additional special education services. The group has met with Representative Ed Lindsay who has agreed to sponsor the bill. Ms. Jenkins indicates the intent is for the bill to be beneficial for audiologists dispensing hearing aids and children. While the legislation is not expected to pass this year, it is a starting point for building momentum next year. Ms. Jenkins indicated she would like the Commission's support on the legislation and would welcome the input of the Commission to make the legislation successful. Mr. Yates indicated he would like for the Commission to support this cause and adopt it as an initiative.

Ms. Debbie Brillling gave an update on the use of the Auditory Verbal Center, AVC, as a loaner hearing aid bank partnering with the Georgia Department of Public Health. AVC would like to purchase 30 sets of hearing aids, mild to high power gain instruments, geared toward birth through three years old, although the contract will have the age specified in months. The contract has not been signed as there are still some areas to work through, including how best to receive hearing aids back from families after the six month time frame has expired. The dispensing audiologist will get reimbursed a minimal fee for up to three visits for participation in the program.

Ms. Sarsfield announced continuing education credits for Babies Can't Wait service providers on February 28 on Newborn Hearing Screening and Early Intervention. Training will be web-based and topics will include the importance of hearing evaluations, risk factors, available resources in Georgia, and types and causes of hearing loss. Data reported in December for babies born in the first quarter of 2011 for 1-3-6 Early Detection and Intervention (EDI) goals: Screening for before one month is 68% from 65.3% from the previous quarter, a 4% increase. Evaluation for 3 months: Screening is up 24%, from 42.2% to 55.7%. For before six months data showed 54% were in intervention, as opposed to 37% the previous quarter, and an increase of 31% from one quarter to the next. Questions about the released data ensued, and it was determined that more information is needed.

Dr. Solodar asked if anyone had a copy of the packet given out from Georgia PINES. No Commission members received it as of yet. More discussion ensued about Georgia PINES. Ms. Sarsfield volunteered to find out the chain of command for the Georgia PINES agency and will share findings at the next Commission meeting.

Action items were discussed for follow up.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 P.M.

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, May 8, 2012 at the Atlanta Speech School from 9:00 A.M. until 12:30 P.M. located at 3160 Northside Parkway, NW, Atlanta, GA 30327.