

**Georgia Commission on Hearing Impaired and Deaf Persons**

**Tuesday, August 14, 2012**

**9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

**Atlanta Speech School**

**3160 Northside Parkway, NW**

**Atlanta, GA 30327**

**Meeting Minutes**

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

**Members Absent: Ms. Robin Ferst, Mr. Chuck Leavell**

**Staff Present: Ms. Katherine Cadena**

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Solodar at 9:25 a.m.

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the May 8, 2012 meeting. The motion was seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Solodar announced that Ms. Robin Ferst has resigned from the Commission.

Ms. Kelly Jenkins presented information regarding the Let Georgia Hear initiative. The goal is to pass legislation in Georgia that would allow for hearing aids for children to be covered by health insurance. A motion was made to write a letter of support in favor of proposed legislation provided by Let Georgia Hear with the option to put an amendment on the bill for anything in the future. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Dr. Solodar and Mr. Yates proposed that a letter be written to Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health, DPH that invites her and her staff to future meetings and to ask for data regarding the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Intervention, UNHSI, program to assist with the efforts of Let Georgia Hear and Commission initiatives.

The Commission set dates for the 2013 calendar. The dates, scheduled on Tuesdays, are as follows: February 12, May 14, August 13, and November 12.

Ms. Sarsfield discussed her involvement in the UNHSI stakeholders meeting. She said that there has been much progress in the output of the group, thanks in large part to the new staff with the DPH, UNHSI. Two subcommittees have been combined into one: There is a manual being developed for hearing loss, which includes protocols, policies and procedures for newborn screening and it should be given to all the hospitals. Also, there have been changes made to the hospital reporting form, which should help with the number of newborns reported as screened. Northside Hospital is currently testing the feasibility of the new electronic form.

Dr. Solodar and Mr. Yates discussed the importance of the Commission working with DPH to advance current outcomes for children who are identified with hearing loss, including looking to DPH Commissioner, Brenda Fitzgerald for her leadership.

Dr. Solodar stated that the Commission has a partnership with the Georgia Lions Lighthouse Foundation, GLLF, in the Adopt-A-Band, AAB, initiative where any donations achieved through joint collaborative fundraising efforts can be deposited into GLLF's account and be earmarked for the AAB initiative. However, the Commission is also in the process of opening a bank account through the Georgia Department of Human Services, DHS. Ms. Cadena explained that the chief financial officer for DHS is reviewing the request to determine the best course of action for the Commission. Ms. Cadena informed the Commission that her recommendation to the CFO was for the Commission to have its own checks and to have access to make deposits.

Dr. Solodar discussed updates on the clinical AuD. Audiology program from Nova Southeastern University that will be located in the Atlanta metropolitan area. She stated that she was informed the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools approved the program to be in Georgia. However, she does not know the site of where the school will be located. A preliminary curriculum has been completed. The school is still expected to be operational by the fall of 2013.

Mr. Yates introduced Ms. Jessica Bergeron to present information about the Georgia Pathway Project, GPP, focused on achieving grade level reading for children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing by third grade by the year 2020. The program participants launched a website that serves as a community of practice for educators. The website has a professional development section, called a mentoring section, a knowledge center section, a library of resources, and a virtual teacher's lounge. Not only is early intervention and identification important, but parent engagement is also imperative. The upcoming changes to the website will include adding a search engine and recategorizing links and resources. One of the biggest obstacles to ensuring children can read at third grade level is identifying children who are lost to follow-up after being referred in the UNHSI program. Staff participants in the GPP are researching other states to identify how those states address loss to follow-up cases. The website, and program participation is available to educators all over the state of Georgia and nationally. Currently, over 300 professionals who serve children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing are registered to use the site. Any teacher, mainstream and/or teachers for the deaf and hard-of-hearing can register to use the site.

Ms. Sarsfield discussed the Loop Across America public awareness initiative. A meeting was held with stakeholders to regroup and reassess issues that have come up in the past. The stakeholders discussed creating a list of certified contact installers from the state and adding an audiologist from the Georgia Academy of Audiology to accompany site visits to provide education after a venue expresses interest in installing loops.

Dr. Solodar discussed the AAB public awareness initiative. She stated at the International Drum Corps show in July, 115 ear plugs were sold, and donations collected added up to \$1150. Two Athens-Clarke County area high school bands have been fitted for ear plugs. Mr. Yates, Ms. Ferst, and Dr. Solodar's company, Audiological

Consultants of Atlanta, have committed to adopting a band. The initial investment is \$10 per plug per band member.

Commission members discussed the Georgia PINES parent packet. There was some discussion about how frequently the material contained in the packet is updated. Dr. Solodar and Mr. Yates will request a meeting with Mr. Kenny Moore, with the Georgia Department of Education, to discuss packet content.

Action items were discussed for follow up.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:30 P.M.

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, November 13, 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.