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

**Tuesday, December 12, 2016**

**1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

**Atlanta Speech School**

**3160 Northside Pkwy.**

**Atlanta, GA 30327**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present: Dr. Jiovanne Hughart, Mr. Jim Lynch, Dr. Beth Lytle, Ms. Cathy Torie and Mr. Comer Yates**

**Members Absent: Mr. Chuck Leavell, Ms. Mary Reed**

**Staff Present: Ms. Katherine Cadena**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Yates at 1:45 The Commission and guests were invited to listen to the Anne & Jim Kenan preschool students at the Atlanta Speech School sing holiday carols. When the school program was over, the members and guests returned to the Boardroom. Mr. Yates explained that the preschool was developed to determine if children enrolled in the Katherine Hamm School were ready transition to their local mainstream school. This allows for the children who are deaf to spend time with children who were typically developing auditory because, statistically, the child who is deaf may not encounter other children who are deaf in a mainstream classroom. Several years ago the Speech School saw historically white children from affluent backgrounds who were identified in the system in a timely manner and receiving early intervention in the first few months of life. Often the school experienced these children of affluence go to rigorous private independent schools. However, there have been plenty of experiences where the children coming into the Speech School are four year old minority children living in poverty who have no language and their auditory systems and neural connections for language and the brain have already been compromised so badly that they will be enrolled in special education for the rest of their life. It is the Commission’s work to try to break that cycle. Every child in Georgia deserves the right to meet his/her potential. Potential shouldn’t be limited to zip code, race and ethnicity.

Mr. Yates thanked everyone for attending. He had guests introduce themselves and welcomed them to the meeting.

Dr. Peter Moresi, Ms. Shetera Turner and Ms. Alison Kuhlke spoke on behalf of the Georgia Lions Lighthouse Foundation. There have been changes in leadership but the relationship between the agency and the Commission will continue. There were changes made to the pediatric provider hearing aid agreement on October 1, but those changes have been reversed. The providers will receive an updated packet that will explain the changes are no longer effective and the agreement will revert back to what was in place before October 1. Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA) and Pediatric Nose Ear and Throat of Atlanta (PENTA) were major contributors to the program and have agreed to continue with the partnership for the Hearing Aid program. PENTA agreed to refer patients who had been turned away with the changes made back to the program. Four families were denied access to the program under the changes and GLLF will be reaching out to those families to determine if they still need assistance. For the adult program, nothing has changed and staff will readdress funding issues if needed in the fall of 2017. For the pediatric program, this fiscal year, which runs from July through June, there were 35 applications between July and November 30. Nineteen pediatric patients received 26 hearing aids. That is an increase, almost double from last year. The goal is 100 hearing aids a year. They have increased marketing to add an email list and emails, but they need to increase participating audiologists outside of the metro area. Mr. Yates asked GLLF staff to forward adult program numbers to Ms. Cadena as soon as they are available and Ms. Cadena will forward the information to Commission members. Ms. Lytle will send an email to Mr. Yates regarding attempts to receive information from the Public Service Commission regarding funding for the program. GLLF is working toward identifying children who would be eligible for hearing aids through Medicaid coverage and providing a loaner hearing aid until coverage. There is a gap with coverage for about 25 children aged birth to five who need a bone anchored hearing aid. When those children are identified, they will be routed to GLLF. Staff would like to review reimbursement rates for audiologists for the adult hearing aid program. Dr. Hughart discussed the joint Adopt-A-Band account, where fundraising money can be kept. She asked for clarification and transparency. Mr. Yates stated three percent of Georgia’s children who are deaf or have a severe hearing loss are literate or reading proficiently. The broader illiteracy epidemic is that children without hearing aids is a life determining circumstance. Dr. Tucci stated there’s a huge discrepancy between outcomes of children in rural areas v children in the metro area. Often times, children fall through the cracks and aren’t known until they show up in the school system. If children are identified sooner, they can get into early intervention and begin developing language where they can move toward age appropriate outcomes. Dr. Dundon stated the Early Hearing Orientation Visit us being reframed and the existing binder of information is being replaced with a small booklet with an attachment on how to get a hearing aid. That will allow parents to see the information and not be overwhelmed.

Dr. Dundon introduced Erin Osborn, program coordinator for the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening who joined the Department of Public Health (DPH) in February 2016, supports the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program spoke on behalf of the Department of Newborn Hearing Screening. Dr. Dundon spoke on projects that will help improve the outcome of children diagnosed with hearing loss. She discussed the implementation of the ASTra (Advocacy Support and Training) program though National Hands and Voices, a parent advocacy group for children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. The program is designed to assist with the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) process and transitions to the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Without guidance, some families may not know their rights and services which children may qualify. Two national trainers provided an open training to professionals and families. Next steps are how to market the program and how families can contact families who participated in the training. It will be tied into the 100 Babies Program when families transition off Part B to Part C Medicare. This is a national program, but Georgia is the sixth state to adopt it. Dr. Dundon spoke of the tele-audiology program and Waycross, GA will have a site connected to CHOA. The CHOA audiologist will train the EHDI coordinator. It will be used for diagnostic tests and the data will be monitored. It is expected to start in April. Medicaid has not approved tele-audiology but is considering telemedicine as a whole and might make a blanket statement about it. The billing code exists, but isn’t reimbursable. A workgroup has been established around Guide by Your Side and the Early Hearing Orientation Visit (EHOV) with stakeholders. The EHOV takes place from Georgia PINES. Georgia PINES is contracted though DPH. The visit is being reworked to only take one hour and it will focus on language and communication, including the importance of communication and additional resources to assist with language. The binder will be discontinued and a new condensed version will remain. A new training is being developed to take place in April to train the EHOV specialists.

Dr. Tucci spoke about Georgia Pathway and LEAD K. LEAD K is legislation that is rooted in kindergarten readiness and state accountability for children who are deaf or hard of hearing up to the age of five. The ultimate goal is English language reading proficiency by the end of third grade. There have been two large group meetings with stakeholders. She hopes that a bill will be ready for presentation to Dr. Fitzgerald, Commissioner for DPH, by August 2017 so that it can be presented in conjunction with the early intervention evaluation of Georgia PINES. The director of deaf services in the state of Washington is also a part of the meetings so that the process can be replicated there. The bill has been passed in California but there’s no implementation plan and it appears to be an unfunded mandate. This bill is about how to assess children in way that are appropriate so it can be determined where children are in regard to age appropriate language development and cognitive development that makes them ready for kindergarten and reading on a third grade level. It is not a language mandate.

Mr. Lynch spoke about looping and the technology challenges, as well as physical requirements and Bluetooth technology.

Dr. Hughart and Mr. Yates discussed Adopt-A-Band. Mr. Yates sent an email to the president of the Georgia Music Educators Association, however, he hasn’t received a response.

Meeting dates for 2017 were discussed. The meeting dates for 2017 are: March 21, June 20, September 19 and December 12.

A motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting was presented and passed.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed.

The next meeting is planned for March 21 from 1:30 until 4:30 at the Auditory Verbal Center.