

Georgia Commission for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing
Thursday, January 13, 2022
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Virtual - Zoom

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Ms. Jennifer Clark, Ms. Kelly Jenkins, Dr. Amy Lederberg, Mr. Jimmy Peterson, Ms. Ellen Rolader, Dr. Stacey Tucci, Ms. Deshonda Washington

Members Absent:

Guests Presenting: DeAnna Swope

Interpreters: Anne Zimmerman, Jennifer Bowser

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Commissioner Jenkins called the meeting to order and welcomed all participants of the meeting.

II. Vote on meeting minutes from 10/14/21 Quarterly Meeting

Commissioner Jimmy Peterson indicated an error on page nine regarding a proposed bill that will have the interpreter license by 2023. This is incorrect. Will add "Georgia of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (GARID) and National Alliance of Black Interpreters- Atlanta (NAOBI-Atlanta)". Change will be made.

Motion to approve: Commissioner Kelly Jenkins

Second: Commissioner Amy Lederberg

No further discussion.

All in favor.

None opposed.

Minutes will be posted on the Georgia Commission for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing webpage.

dhs.georgia.gov/gacdhh

III. Committee Reports

1. Legislative / Administrative Committee – Kelly Jenkins

a. Legislative Report / Overview

Updates:

i. OAE code change update

The amendment to the code change will allow an audiology tech to do hearing screenings from birth through 22 years of age. Work is being done towards potential legislation around mass hearing screenings in school, thus those school staff and personnel who are going to be giving these hearing screenings are going to be able to use the most appropriate test and the OAE would be something that would be very

appropriate for school screenings.

-This bill/legislation will be introduced this legislative session by Representative Houston. There is also a letter of support from the Georgia Academy of Audiologists. There will also be a letter of support from the Department of Public Health. DPH has worked with the Governor's office to get approval, so they are able to provide that letter of support.

ii. **Commission Budget Request Opportunity**

The Commission has requested a small annual budget. The Commission will be asking for \$20,000. This will most likely be brought to the house appropriations committee. Representative Houston is assisting with this process.

-Currently, all of the access services funding for the Commission comes through the Department of Human Services. Tactile interpreter, ASL interpreter, and live captioning will still come out of the DHS budget.

However, what the Commission will be asking for with this additional funding is additional funds for the future. If the Commission were able to get the funding, it would give the Commission a chance to do something that it hasn't been able to do in the past.

If this budget is approved, it could get renewed every year upon legislative approval.

One need is the creation of vlogs and public messaging similar to what the state of Minnesota is doing. The Commission currently doesn't have the resources to manage the creation of vlogs or to audit all of the agency web sites for VLOG/ASL access needs. The funding for vlogs would be the production and script writing and basically all of what would be required to create an ASL vlog. It would be nice to have a form on our web site where deaf individuals could request accessibility, not just for government web sites, but maybe there's an event that community members are wanting to go to and they are having a hard time getting services in ASL and the commission could help facilitate that.

Another need is to contract with a project manager. The Commission could use a contractor to assist the executive director and Basic Needs Committee to help with the strategic planning for the commission; someone who can really try to kick start some of the work that we want to do.

The funds also could be used to sponsor events.

If any members of the Commission have ideas on the budget and how it could be used or if there are needs that you see in the commission, please let Commissioner Jenkins or Dr. Tucci know.

iii. **NASADHH dues update**

Another use of the funds would be to pay the annual dues to be a part of NASADHH and send one of our commissioners to the annual conference. The annual dues have been paid. It was requested that someone from the NASADHH come to a future Commission

meeting just to let the Commission know a little bit more about the advantages of being a part of NASADHH and what we can learn from them and what other resources are available to us as a Commission.

iv. GEER II Grant update

Unfortunately DOE did not receive the funding from the GEER II grant to ramp up teleaudiology throughout the state.

This funding is from the CARES Act or COVID Relief funds from which Georgia received \$4 billion. \$47 million of the total funds were allocated to GEER II for emergency education relief. The first round appeared to award to smaller, localized entities that made smaller funding asks. There will now be a second round of awards for the GEER II grants. The second round is going to be looking at those larger ask applications and state agency applications. Information on the round two application process will come out within the next week.

Regarding the current situation for mobile audiology, the funding is there. These additional funds would be used to expand further. GMA (Georgia Mobile Audiology) just opened another site and are still moving forward.

GMA is still doing ABR via remote teleaudiology. A committee of audiologists is reviewing the feasibility of school aged screening which is not mandated in the state though it is mandated in many other states. A report will be given at a future Commission meeting.

If anyone has questions in the meantime, Commissioner Jenkins will be happy to reach out to GMA to get an e mail update and put it in the progress report.

Georgia Mobile Audiology (GMA) has developed new partnerships with even more public health districts. They are certainly starting to see a tipping point where they are going to need some more staff to be able to cover the demand that they are facing.

The Department of Education's State Schools division is looking at onboarding two new parent navigators and another full time pediatric audiologist. They are hoping to do that within the next three to four months. That should help ease some of the supply and demand issues that they're seeing right now.

GMA will continue to seek other grant opportunities.

Monthly meetings between the DPH and DOE and other stakeholders will be starting up in February, initiated by Tina Turner of the DPH. This will further improve communication between the agencies. Updates will be provided.

v. Microsoft Teams test run Meeting with MS rep

Microsoft has offered to do a test meeting with anyone that's interested to test out

their technology and make sure the Commissioners really understand what the accessibility options are. If it is something that works for the Commission, virtual meetings can move from Zoom to Teams. If it doesn't work, meetings will continue to stay on Zoom.

Participants are needed for this meeting, particularly, someone whose primary language is ASL and someone that relies heavily on CART. We will need to have a sign language interpreter as well to see how that works for them.

Eugene Rhee is going to set up the meeting. If you are willing or able to participate, it will probably just be about 30 minutes. We can all vote on how it works for us. Please let Eugene know.

Commissioner Ellen Rolader commented that it will be important that some of the members of the commission participate in the Microsoft Teams. The Department of Public Health is using Zoom and they would prefer Microsoft Teams. The Deaf mentors have found out there's an accessibility challenge with Teams and that Zoom is actually more accessible. It is recommended that for people that use ASL to be able to participate in that meeting. Teams needs to be tested and see whether this will be adequate for the deaf community.

vi. **Commission Appointments**

There are three different bodies that are appointing members to the Commission. The Governor is appointing four. He has selected those four commissioners. They have not been announced yet. Just to reiterate, the role of the Commissioners is not to appoint commissioners. People from our community who have applied are being evaluated for the vacant positions by the Governor's office and then are being appointed by the Governor.

There are two more at large positions to fill after the four appointed members come on board. Those two At-Large positions will be appointed by the Speaker of the House and the Senate respectively.

By the next meeting, the Commission will most likely have a quorum.

One thing that Commission may need to consider is the appointment process and how individuals would apply. This could be communicated via an ASL Vlog that would walk the applicants through the process and it would be posted on the Commission web site. This may be one of the first vlog topics that the subcommittee would implement pending budget approval.

vii.

Another option is a social media presence. Currently, the Commission doesn't have the manpower to manage social media. This would be another option in addition to the vlogs.

The Governor has also reappointed all of the current Commissioners. The Governor will also be doing a swearing-in ceremony. The hope is that all of the Commissioners will be

able to participate in the ceremony.

2. **Basic Needs / Safety Services Committee – Ellen Rolader/Jimmy Peterson**

Commissioner Kelly Jenkins met with both Commissioners Ellen Rolader and Jimmy Peterson to discuss focusing on some agencies within Georgia that are lacking in ASL access. These agencies should fund and produce some vlogs themselves and they are working on reaching out to DPH with regard to COVID content.

Currently, there is a document that Commissioners Jimmy Peterson and Ellen Rolader prepared. Commissioner Jenkins and Dr. Tucci are reviewing it to make sure that all of the information in the document is what the DPH would need. Tina Turner at DPH has agreed to forward that up the chain for the Commission.

There were some resources that were added to the Commission website:

-The Capitol Building accessibility guide

-A video that Commissioner Jennifer Clark shared on what to do if you are pulled over by a police officer.

One of the goals for the Commission is to create a stand-alone resources panel. Once the Commission has collected resources, videos, and other materials, the intention is to have a more robust resources page where anyone can go and find all of the great ASL content. If any Commission members see something that is particularly helpful, please e mail it to Eugene Rhee, Dr. Tucci or Commissioner Jenkins so that it can be posted.

Commissioner Peterson added that the interpreter licensure task force met with DeAnna Swope and Ericka Bravon and National Alliance of Black Interpreters, and Jasmin Lowe. There was a discussion in getting ready to make a proposal for a bill. The group is currently in the information gathering stage and are coming up with materials in meetings. Assistance is needed to come up with the language for a draft of the bill. It was recommended to see what other states like Minnesota and Florida have in place regarding licensure legislation.

Secondly, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, which is the body who is responsible for issuing the licensure, will be contacted to see what the process is and how they can be included with the drafting of this bill.

There was also a meeting between the Georgia Public Safety Commission, the Georgia Center for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing, the Georgia Association for the Deaf, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities' Office of Deaf Services. The purpose of these meetings is to develop an eight-hour ASL curriculum which will be ready by this spring. It is going to be implemented statewide. Each county is going to be able to copy that resource. Then there will be more ASL access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals and Deaf-Blind as well.

The issue of looping was brought up by Commissioner Dr. Amy Lederberg and was interested in exploring more about this issue particularly in doctor's offices. Her doctor is interested in implementing looping in their office.

Commissioner Jenkins mentioned that the Auditory-Verbal Center just recently had their conference room looped and that she will reach out to Debbie Brilling to find out more

information from her about looping and the company that she used and see if that is a reasonable person to come and present to the Commission.

3. **Education Committee – Dr. Amy Lederberg**

The Education Committee was not able to meet before the Quarterly Commission meeting however, there will be a committee meeting before the next quarterly meeting.

One of the ongoing topics for the committee is the central website for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community that is being developed.

Dr. Tucci gave an update on this topic:

One of the deliverables is a one stop shop DHH web site for the professionals in Georgia. The Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) is involved in creating a Georgia.gov state government web site for all things DHH.

While state government websites have a particular template and parameters around what can be included, Dr. Tucci has been working very diligently with GTA to make this DHH web site more consumer friendly, a little less governmental and more family friendly. She has drafted a mockup of the landing page, the Georgia PINES home page and is working on a draft for the Georgia Mobile Audiology home page.

This web site has the ability to expand to incorporate all of the DHH resources that are available. The team working with the GTA has gone through several rounds with parents and professionals. What Dr. Tucci would like to do is share these mockups with with the Commissioners by making a separate account so that Commissioners and can also see the work that is being done.

On the webpage, the team is trying to make sure ASL videos are embedded as much as possible. They are also trying to limit the number of links that someone would have to click on to get to the ASL video. The intention is to make those ASL videos as accessible and as as possible as consumers are moving through the web site. They are working on making the web site as actionable as possible so it does lead parents and professionals to the next step.

Some of the things that will be on the website will be:

- a single link for an audiologist.
- There will be different pictures. They are going to try to use pictures from Georgia children, Georgia families and Georgia teachers.
- The pathway to literacy and five major transactions.
- How to find out where a pediatric audiologist is in your location and how to schedule an appointment.
- There will be the banner at the bottom that will lead parents or professionals to additional information.
- There are going to be different learning courses; different types of communities of practice.
- There will be home pages for each of the major programs that are going to be connected through moving through the literacy trajectory
- There will be different options for scrolling newsletters and updates
- Will be able to make a direct referral through the web site.

Some of the things that are in discussion are:

- A link to Babies Can't Wait is one of the major program placeholders.
- Do we want to have vocational rehabilitation services, VRS?
- We're working on a new logo for Georgia Pines.

It is really a web site that's being used so that parents and professionals can take action. They can do something within the web site that leads them to the next step in the literacy trajectory. If there are commissioners that would like to work with the education subcommittee to help start the work through some of the content-based decisions as well as the aesthetics of the web site, the committee is definitely open to engaging more stakeholders.

While the website is still in its development stages, the current mock-up is basically just a template. There is not necessarily a limit to having content or having information or having a direct link to an external web site. The team hasn't worked with those partners yet to build out the content around how would we link this to the various resources. This is just a very early draft mockup of what the content is going to look like in terms of structure. But it isn't an authentic representation of the actual content that will be there when the web site goes live. Also, there is no timeline on this. There is time to work through this process and to share the product with constituents so they can give feedback and those changes can be made. Even once the web site goes live, it is not a static web site. Modifications can constantly be made.

Some of the content was created by Dr. Heidi Evans, and the team has worked on some of the content that is going to be used for the deaf mentor program. Dr. Monica Glapion is working with her pediatric audiologist and family content engagement coordinator.

If there are any Commissioners who are not a part of the Education Committee that would like to take part in contributing to the website, please contact Eugene Rhee indicating to him that you want to either help the team or provide feedback for the website.

Commissioner Lederberg asked on behalf of the education committee about the concern within the annual report regarding lost babies. Has there been any feedback about that report? Any action items that came out of it?

While there hasn't been any feedback or action items, Commissioner Jenkins is planning to meet with the Governor's policy advisor about the report.

Dr. Toomey of the DPH did send a letter reminding everybody on the current law mandating reporting on newborn hearing screening compliance as well as for children through age five who are identified with hearing loss. As a result of the letter there was an increase of 25% of the audiologists that had an account. This doesn't mean they are reporting. They just signed up for the audiologist account. The HERSA grant also assisted with this.

IV. DeAnna Swope – GAD presentation

GAD has been in place for 112 years and focuses on advocating for the needs of Deaf and DeafBlind individuals. The mission is to promote awareness of issues for the Deaf, hard of hearing, and Deafblind communities and to advocate for the rights of citizens to promote the social, technological, moral, and intellectual advancement of persons who are DHH and DB in Georgia. The state organization is affiliated with the National Association for the Deaf.

They had their first town hall meeting last summer. They will have one this upcoming Saturday that is going to be held in Macon. This is where they can interact and meet community members face to face and get a feel for what they would like and how they would like for GAD to support them.

They have a quarterly newsletter that they send out and have sent out three issues thus far, if there is any interest in being added to the mailing list one can e-mail Ms. Swope which will have her contact information at the end of the presentation.

They have scholarships that they offer. They have fundraising and social events. They are hoping to have a fundraising event soon. They want to start with the fundraising at the Deaf Nation Expo which is coming up this May. They will have a mini conference that's going to happen before their big conference. The mini conference will possibly be during this summer.

There is a resource center on the web site with the organization with information benefiting individuals who are DHH and Deaf-Blind individuals.

The National Association for the Deaf has three regions. They meet quarterly. GAD is in region three which includes Alabama, Mississippi and the whole southeastern quadrant.

They also have the ambassadorship which focuses on the ins and outs of the organization to include the different roles, budgeting, mentoring, that applies to the youth leadership camp that they will be having with the National Association for the Deaf. This will be held this summer in Florida.

They also have education advocates which identify gaps in the educational system as it relates to Deaf and DeafBlind children. They then work with the Department of Education to improve the education system here in Georgia for individuals who are DHH. Those advocates will be going to the National Association for the Deaf conference to get additional training to learn about current efforts in the state legislature. Hopefully the bills that are submitted will be passed.

They have five top priorities that they want to focus on.

- Achieving equity in Deaf education.
- Campaign to spotlight the adverse impact of language deprivation.
- Dismantling racism in the Deaf community
- Eliminating barriers to quality care for Deaf senior citizens.
- Foster care Bill of Rights for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing individuals who want to foster care.

Ms. Swope also mentioned the recent protest at the Atlanta School for the Deaf where students wanted to have Deaf leadership after the former deaf superintendent resigned. The superintendent was replaced by someone that was not Deaf. 80% of the individuals in the school were greatly impacted and surprised there was not a Deaf individual in leadership. The protest was led by four seniors at the school. They wanted to make sure that they would hire more people of color and more Deaf individuals within the administration. They also wanted inclusion. They wanted to be included in the interview process. Georgia Association of the Deaf was involved to facilitate that interaction with the young senior students and with the Georgia Department of Education and were involved to make sure they were heard. So far, the Georgia Department of Education has kept an open mind. They are working based on GAD's suggestions. Hopefully that will come to fruition. They wanted an equitable hiring process.

They are now working on gathering data on the number of Deaf senior citizens in nursing homes and determining accommodation needs.

GAD website: www.deafga.org

Email: President@deafga.org

V. Public Comments / Announcements/Other Updates

No public comments, announcements or other updates.

Meeting adjourned: 2:40 p.m.