

**Georgia Commission for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing**  
**Quarterly Meeting**  
**Thursday, January 26, 2023**  
**12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.**  
**Atlanta Speech School Board Room**  
**3190 Northside Parkway, NW**  
**Atlanta, GA**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Mr. Ibrahim Dabo, Ms. Kelly Jenkins, Dr. Amy Lederberg, Ms. Anne McQuade, Dr. Alison Morrison, Ms. Ellen Rolader, Dr. Stacey Tucci, Mr. Jimmy Peterson Ms. Jennifer Clark, Dr. Paula Harmon,

**Members Absent:** Ms. Deshonda Washington

**Visitors:** Ms. Meghan Cowin, Ms. Danielle McIntyre

**Interpreters:** Ms. Anne Zimmerman, Mr. Chip Penland, Ms. Laura Clark, Mr. Tristan Galloway

**Captioner:** GISN Services – Clara Wang

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**Call to Order and Welcome**

Commissioner Jenkins called meeting to order at 12:07 pm and welcomed all participants to the meeting.

**Approval of October 13, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

Meeting minutes from Oct 13, 2022, were approved after a motion from Commissioner Anne McQuade.

**New Business and Introductions**

The new LEP(SI) coordinator from DHS, Kurt Bryan was introduced. Kurt has been in the role for two months and has been DHS for 13 years. Mr. Mark Rosica was introduced and has joined the Commission for the next 12 months to help focus the team's efforts. This will be Kelly Jenkins last meeting as Chairperson but she will stay on as a Commissioner. An update was provided regarding the State Fiscal Year 2023 budget allocation to the Commission and a future meeting will be held with the Commission and DHS regarding the disbursement of these funds.

**Presentation from Dr. Alison Morrison on Medical Code Efforts**

Dr. Alison Morrison is a pediatric audiologist who has been working on a project aimed at improving outcomes for children who receive Georgia Medicaid or a Medicaid CMO. Through her work, she identified significant barriers to timely and appropriate treatment related to insurance constraints. To better understand the issue, she conducted research to compare Georgia with neighboring states (Alabama, South Carolina, Florida) by accessing publicly available

Medicaid documents and consulting with pediatric audiologists. She also engaged a focus group of pediatric audiologists in Georgia to ensure that her recommendations were based on shared experiences.

Dr. Morrison identified two barriers that she considered as recommendations for change: (1) the requirement of a physician's order for ordering and billing ear molds and (2) the requirement of a physician's order for dispensing hearing aid batteries. Both of these requirements create a delay in the treatment process and can be improved by removing the requirement for physician's orders. Dr. Morrison discussed the barriers to Medicaid providers dispensing hearing aids in the state of Georgia. One of the barriers is the requirement of a certification to dispense hearing aids, which costs \$455.00 the first time and \$255.00 each year. This certification is not required for other audiologic services and is a barrier for providers to become Medicaid-enrolled. Dr. Morrison recommends removing this requirement.

Another barrier is the frequency limit on diagnostic ABR services, which is only covered once per year. Oftentimes, more than one ABR is required to confirm hearing loss diagnosis in children. Dr. Morrison recommended increasing the limit to three times per year to match other infant diagnostic codes used in the state. The requirement of a certification to practice audiology was discussed, and it was explained that licensure is still required to practice audiology. Dr. Morrison also mentioned the removal of hearing aid follow-up visits as a covered code, which imposes a barrier on families with Medicaid and providers who cannot bill for follow-up visits. Dr. Morrison recommended adding this code back with a service limit of no less than six units per year. Dr. Morrison discussed the fact that many Medicaid recipients are already economically challenged, and these barriers are increasing their vulnerability.

#### **Presentation from Ms. Meghan Cowin on Educational Interpreter Violation Effort**

Ms. Meghan Cowin reports that about 90% of deaf and hard of hearing students in Georgia are served in the public school system and have the right to a qualified educational interpreter. However, there are concerns regarding the quality of educational interpreters in the school system, with some inconsistencies in the minimum qualifications and violations of the Georgia licensure law. The impact of this on the education of these students is a lack of learning. To be licensed, an interpreter needs to hold international certification or score at least 3.5 on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment and have a four-year degree or higher. For fiscal years 2017 through 2021, on average roughly 30% of these interpreters are underqualified.

The data compiled by Ms. Cowin shows that there have been several violations of the licensure law in the state of Georgia, with 57 of the 69 counties reporting violations. Some counties are not reporting the employment of interpreters, and some are paying them very low wages, which might help explain why they are unlicensed. Some of the proposed solutions would include; (1) paying interpreter's a teacher's salary, (2) standardized and skill-based assessments, (3) targeted support working with the interpreters and personalized training, and (4) professional learning opportunities.

#### **Presentation from Ms. Danielle McIntyre on the Georgia Commission for the Blind Effort**

Ms. Danielle McIntyre is an advocate for people with visual and hearing impairments and is working on legislation (Senate Bill 8) to establish a Commission for the Blind in Georgia. The

aim of this Commission is to provide services for people with visual and hearing impairments from cradle to grave, without having to go back to work as a pre-condition for receiving services. The Commission would be staffed by blind members and would have funding allocated from the state budget. The main sponsors of the bill are Senators Davenport, Butler, and Johnson. The legislation passed the Senate last year but did not get passed due to questions about funding. Ms. McIntyre's goal this year is to have a clear document about the allocation of funds ready for the legislators. More information regarding the bill can be found at [GACommissionForTheBlind.blog](http://GACommissionForTheBlind.blog).

**The meeting was adjourned at 1:13 PM.**