

Georgia Commission for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing
Thursday, July 29, 2021
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 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, and Mr. Comer Yates

Members Absent: Ms. Dana Tarter

Guests: Ms. Monica Patterson, Ms. Melanie Carter Morris, Ms. Jane Hall, Dr. Brandt Culpepper, Ms. Debbie Brillong

Interpreters: Mr. Dean Evans, Ms. Heather Canny

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 4/29/21 Quarterly Meeting

Motion to approve: Commissioner Amy Lederberg

Second: Commissioner Ellen Rolader

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. Recognition of Outgoing Commissioners

There are a few out going commissioners as a result of term limits.

The Commissioners that will no longer be serving on the Commission will be:

1. Dr. Jiovanne Hughart
2. Dr. Beth Lytle
3. Dr. Chip Goldsmith

Commissioner Jenkins had reached out to each of them and they all communicated how much they have gotten out of working with the Commission and that they are open to assist at any time. The Governor is aware and has written a personal letter to each of them thanking them for their service.

There are now 6 positions that are open for consideration

Process will take some time but will go into further detail later in the meeting.

IV. Russell Fleming – State Coordinator for VR Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf Blind

Mr. Fleming was not able to attend the meeting due to technical difficulties and will present at the next quarterly meeting.

V. Monica Patterson – Pediatric Audiologist / Acting Program Manager Georgia Mobile Audiology Program

Commissioner Jenkins introduced Ms. Monica Patterson who is a pediatric audiologist and the program manager for the Georgia Mobile Audiology Program. Ms. Patterson will give an update on what she has been working on.

Ms. Patterson stated that currently she is wearing two hats, one as a program manager for the Georgia Mobile Audiology program and the other as a member of the Georgia Educational Audiology Advisory Committee in which she will give an update on a feasibility study.

She is joined today with 2 of her colleagues, Melanie Carter Morris, a pediatric audiologist with Georgia Mobile Audiology and Jane Hall, an audiologist with the Atlanta Speech School.

Regarding the Georgia Mobile Audiology (GMA):

*the program started in 2019 and since its inception, close to 500 families have been seen either through testing or through the battery program that's been ongoing in cooperation with the Jason Cunningham Foundation.

*There are also family engagement parent navigation services.

*The program has trained 45 school and nursing staff on school age hearing training. The program actively serves the Coastal Plains Regional Education service agency which is located in South Georgia and is looking to expand those services to the rest of the state with these resources.

*They also work very closely with the EDHI (Early Hearing Detection and Intervention) program.

*Recently began services using tele-audiology which is new in the field of audiology. This is where a pediatric audiologist can provide diagnostic testing services to a family through a computer.

Right now, the focus of the tele-audiology service is diagnostics for infants. It is the Auditory Brain stem Response (ABR) testing. A coordinator contacts GMA when a baby needs a diagnostic. This allows the family to meet at a local health department where the coordinator gets a room, sets the baby up for the diagnostic and the testing is done remotely through a computer and it has gone really well. This makes it possible to see a lot more babies instead of traveling to each area where testing is needed.

Some plans are:

1. Expand the ABR program to other areas where training is currently taking place with EHDI coordinator in Northwest Georgia.
2. Have a new audiology assistant in central or middle Georgia to assist with set up.
3. Thinking about doing tele-audiology for school-aged children screenings as a kind of triage to figure out if they need a full diagnostic test using the mobility van.

They have done over 50 ABR tests since the end of 2019 many of which were done in Fulton County. However, a partnership is being developed with the Georgia public library system to do these tests. The reason for this is because many families are a little frightened to go to a health department and feel more comfortable going to a library and there are public libraries in communities all over the state.

A mobility van that GMA uses is a fully equipped van where full testing takes place. It is basically a clinic on wheels which goes out about once a month and goes where it needs to.

Commissioner Peterson requested to let the Commission know the next time it will be in Atlanta so that the mobility van can be viewed.

The next time the van will be in the Atlanta area will be on Saturday August 7, 2021 from 11am to 2pm in Cobb County and Marietta Square. However, GMA will keep the Commission posted about future Atlanta trips.

Feasibility Study

The Educational Audiologists Advisory Committee that Georgia Mobile Audiology started was in late 2019.

It currently has roughly 25 members and consists of educational audiologists located throughout the state. The committee came together for the purposes of educational audiology which isn't always looked at when audiology is mentioned.

The committee has been able to create an implementation manual that shows some of the best practices for educational audiologists.

It was asked what a statewide mandated mass hearing screens would look like.

There are three obstacles to this:

1. looking at costs – i.e. equipment (portable), calibration cost to maintain the equipment, possibly doing a co-op where equipment can be borrowed like a library for those school districts that can't afford to pay; investigate funding sources for bulk equipment purchases

2. Looking at training – who would need training to oversee a mass hearing screening for school districts; creation of an online training portal (housed on the Canvas website of the Dept. of Education?); creation of a best practice guideline and putting together a tool kit to utilize resources;

3. Suggestions for OAE code changes – Georgia has a code that regulates Otoacoustic Emission (OAE) screening which states that only licensed audiologists or licensed physicians could complete the screening on children who are older than the age of three months, which has posed to be a challenge for school districts who may want to use equipment to screen students either for special education eligibility purposes or children who are entering the school system.

Unfortunately, some of these districts because they're not allowed to use OAE screening, have started using questionnaires, or functional assessments that aren't very evidence based. So, the educational audiology advisory committee has proposed a revision to that statute code within that portion of the statute that specifically states, three months of age. This will allow school districts or whomever to receive the proper training and the use of OAE screenings which will be a game changer for school districts, especially for those who do not have educational audiologists on staff.

The committee created a 2 pager informational brochure for legislators to look at and this has also been shared with the legislative policy staff within the Dept. of Education. It has also been shared with Legislative council Chairperson Penny Houston and to the Dept of Public Health policy staff.

There currently isn't any statewide data in regards to the screenings. There is only about a third of the school districts that are actually doing the screenings and most of those districts are concentrated in the metro Atlanta area. What could be possibly done is getting the data from the school districts that are

performing the screenings and see how many kids are discovered.

There is a form 3300 that parents are asked to provide in order to enroll their child in school which includes a hearing screening, however there generally is no follow up and it doesn't say you have to pass. This could be one source of collecting the data.

It would be interesting to look at another state that has mass hearing screening, like Colorado, and look at their data.

Dr. Tucci stated that there is a fully executed contract with the Georgia Technology Authority to create the DHH one stop shop website which is looking to include professional capacity building courses and training possibly in the next six to ten months.

Commissioner Jenkins stated that she did meet with Miranda Williams, the chief policy advisor to the governor and is aware of this initiative and is confident that it is a loophole that needs to be fixed. The bill is currently with the legislative council and it looks like Chairman Penny Houston may sponsor it.

The American Speech and Hearing Association as well as AAA are supportive of screenings for school age children and for children who cannot complete traditional hearing screenings

One of the things that is taking place throughout the state is what is called a functional hearing test. Ms. Patterson did not know what this was until she started working with schools. This screening comes in the form of a questionnaire to the parent or caregiver where the questionnaire is just asking them rudimentary questions about their child's hearing and what they noticed at home. Things like ringing behind child's ear or a whisper test were techniques that were being used in these functional assessments.

There was legislation that was recently passed that is now collecting the special education eligibility category or the disability eligibility category connected to the 504 plans for all students in the state of Georgia. Students who are receiving services through a 504 plan are now tracking 22 eligibility criteria. The first 21 of 22 are specific to a disability category like DHH or autism. Also, DHH students who are receiving services are able to be located through a 504 plan.

Ms. Patterson wanted to communicate to the Commission on behalf of the Georgia Educational Audiology Advisory Committee that a little more time is needed to work on the feasibility study which hopefully will be by the end of the year.

What was recommended is getting a report from GMA and then getting the word out because this is a great resource.

What was also recommended was having the parent navigator program work with the committee and/or GMA, which GMA is currently doing. GMA is working closely with other agencies but tend to focus more on rural Georgia where services are more limited than metro Atlanta. They also work very closely with Access to Language, Georgia Pines, and the EHDI program.

Additional information regarding the parent navigator program:

- Parent navigators work full time as opposed to parent advocacy service providers who are working as hourly contractors outside of full time jobs, which makes it difficult to provide support that the family needs.

- Parent navigators are able to go to appointments with families during the day.

- They have a more expansive scope around support.

- They are not limited to serving a family after the diagnostic is complete and are able to intervene at various points.
- They have identified the wraparound services that are acting as barriers to achieving transactions.
- Families that was served through parent navigation are Medicaid eligible, which includes transportation free of charge.
- There is a fully executed virtual course to train additional parent navigators
- The Fulton County EHDI coordinator and Fulton County Health Department have been an integral partner in the Parent Navigator program.

VI. Introduction of guests of the meeting

Alexa Murzyn – Doctor of audiology at the Auditory-Verbal Center
Jane Hall – Educational Audiologist at the Atlanta Speech School

VII. Committee Reports (if able)

1. Legislative / Administrative Committee – Kelly Jenkins

Application

There is an application for open positions within the Commission to fill 6 positions. The application is due on 9/30/21.

The open positions are:

- *Late Deafened (After 18 years)
- *Parent of a Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child - Primary language is English
- *Otolaryngologist or Audiologist
- *Private Provider of Services for Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- *Two At-Large positions with no specific criteria requirements

The application is on the website.

There are some requirements for the applicants and those are listed on the application. The hope is to get the applications approved by the next quarterly meeting on October 14, 2021. It also depends on the Governor's Office of Appointments.

It is important not just to share this with people associated with the Commission but with the broader community. There needs to be an effort to push out the application and the web address, put it on Facebook pages. A link to the website with the application will be sent out.

Application is in both English and Spanish.

Policy advisor meetings

One of roles of the Commission is to communicate with the Governor and to let him know what the needs are for the DHH community and give him possible solutions including legislation.

Commissioner Jenkins met with Miranda Williams and was able to identify all of the policy advisors and the goal for Commissioner Jenkins is to meet with all of them as soon as the legislative report is finished.

Commissioner Jenkins would like to work with each of the chairs of the committees to talk about some of the things that need to be communicated with the policy advisors and to eventually speak with the Governor

himself and talk about the DHH community.

Commissioner Jenkins presented the **Progress Tracker**. This is to track the progress of each initiative of the Commission. A link will be sent out to view the Progress Tracker. The Commissioners are encouraged to view the Progress Tracker and offer feedback.

The chairs of each committee will make up the executive committee that will go through all of the items withing the Progress Tracker and identify importance, synergy, and priorities.

The logo of the Commission was finalized and introduced to the rest of the Commission.



A letterhead for the Commission as well as Powerpoint templates were created if Commission members need to either send a letter or make a presentation on behalf the Commission respectively. A Language and Literacy Report template was created as well for the Commission annual report.

The acronym of the Commission has changed from GCDHH to GaCDHH so that it will distinguish from and not be confused with the Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GCDHH) which uses the same acronym.

The GaCDHH webpage address on the GA DHS website has also changed and has been shortened to make it easier to access.

<http://dhs.georgia.gov/gacdhh>

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

Commissioner Peterson presented the update for this committee.

The committee met 4 times focusing on basic needs and services.

The focus has been on E-services, 911, getting pulled over by police and EMT.

When the committee meets, a report will be written up and emailed so that the rest of the Commissioners can see what took place.

Regarding healthcare, Commissioners Peterson, Rolader, Jenkins and Dr. Tucci met with Deloitte which is the vendor that provides an ASL Call Center for the state of Virginia and looking to see how this can be incorporated in Georgia.

One of the goals for the committee/Commission is to get Vlogs all over the state so that any Deaf or Hard of Hearing person can get the information they need, i.e. driver's license, transportation, food banks, any government information.

A contact at DPH was established to discuss what the possibility is on setting up an ASL Call Center for COVID-19 information.

When it comes to VLogs, it would be upon each agency to provide funds to do this work but the Commission can assist in coming up with DHH specific content to make sure they understand what needs to be communicated. It has to be made sure that if the Commission starts doing their own content it needs to make sure that it does not duplicate information from other agencies. This would be a waste of time and resources.

What could be done is list about 10 things that are most important in terms of information that needs to be communicated and then the Commission can give DPH or any other agency/organization guidance that there are these things that are not in ASL and that they need to be. Deaf blind constituents need to be considered as well.

Accessibility for websites: userway.org

There is also a group called Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) that outlines requirements that websites must follow to provide access to people with disabilities across a wide range of accessibility needs. The Georgia Technology Authority has a task force or an internal group that is now looking at how the state websites are compliant with WCAG content.

One thing that the Commission needs to work on is make all websites accessible in ASL. This should be a priority.

Interpreter Licensure Task Force was established and the first meeting will be in August. The next steps for this task force is the drafting of a bill to have interpreter licensure in the future for Georgia.

Regarding the structure of the committees, there isn't anything specific in the legislation. It would be the chairs of the committee to determine who would be on their committees.

Right now the Basic Needs/Safety Services committee consists of Commissioners Peterson and Rolader. If there is anyone else who would like to join, please join.

3. Education Committee – Dr. Amy Lederberg

The committee has met only once so far.

One of the goals is looking at transition from early intervention to school.

Another goal is to figure out diagnostics, which has been a huge focus in the past.

Discussion around the Progress Tracker took place and it is a great tool to track the progress of each initiative.

4. Employment / Civic and Community Engagement – TBD

Commissioners Peterson and Tarter are part of the committee but have not had the chance to meet yet.

VIII. Announcements

Commissioners were reminded again to send out applications for the open Commissioner positions

In regard to the next Quarterly Meeting, the poll that was conducted indicated Zoom virtual meetings are preferred, so the next Quarterly Meeting in October will be a Zoom meeting and the meeting may be extended to 3 hours instead of 2 hours.

Meeting adjourned: 2:55 p.m.