

**Georgia Commission for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing
Quarterly Meeting
Thursday, April 13, 2023
12:00 p.m. - 3:00 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, Ms. Deshonda Washington, Dr. Melanie Morris

Members Absent: N/A

Interpreters: Ms. Anne Zimmerman, Mr. Chip Penland, Ms. Lori Civello, Ms. Tanesh Foster

Captioning: GISN Services

Call to Order and Welcome

Commissioner Lederberg called the meeting to order at 12:06 pm and welcomed all participants to the meeting.

Approval of January 26, 2023 and March 1, 2023 Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes from January 26, 2023, and March 1, 2023 were unanimously approved after a motion from Dr. Lederberg.

New Business

Since last meeting on March 1, 2023, members voted electronically for the new Chairperson of the Commission, Dr. Lederberg. 7 members voted to approve while 3 members did not respond, thus approving the nomination of Dr. Lederberg as the Chairperson of the Commission.

There were 8 “yes” votes for a letter in support of Senate Bill 278, the establishment of a commission for the blind and visually impaired. There were two members who did not respond.

For vacant positions within the Commission, there are 3 applicants for the At-Large position appointed by the Georgia House. Dr. Tucci advised if the House were to look for additional nominations, they will reach out through the Deputy Director of external affairs at the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS). Dr. Tucci advised that she will follow-up with the Deputy Director to see if the House will be opening up the applicant pool for additional applications, or if they will choose from the existing 3 applicants.

Dr. Melanie Morris was introduced as the newest Commission member. She will be serving as an At-Large member appointed by the Senate Committee on Assignments.

Mark Rosica informed the Commission that they would be receiving a \$7500 grant from the William G. McGowan Charitable Fund to be used for initiatives as the Commission sees fit. Kurt Bryan provided an update regarding the \$20,000 allocation approved for the Commission through the State legislator. Mr. Bryan advised that the funds have been received by DHS, but that DHS was still awaiting the coding to be established for use of the funds. Mr. Bryan will request that the funds be reserved so that they may be used in the State Fiscal Year 2024.

Dr. Lederberg spoke about nominations for the Vice-Chair position and explained that the Vice-Chair position is selected by a simple majority vote among the Commission and they serve a one-year term. Dr. Lederberg advised that the Vice-Chair would fulfil the duties of the Chair if the Chair is unavailable and will serve as a member of the leadership team. Nominations for Vice-Chair will be sent to Mr. Bryan with a deadline of close of business on April 21st. Once all nominations are submitted, there will be an electronic vote for the position with the goal of bringing on the Vice-Chair by the beginning of May.

Commission Initiative Process

Ms. Jenkins provided an overview of how the previous subcommittee structure came into existence. Five major sectors were established and when Ms. Jenkins became the Commission Chair, the Commission formed subcommittees based on these five sectors. However, working on these sectors proved challenging as the scope of the sectors were not focused enough. Ms. Jenkins commended the effort of the Commission in moving forward with a more focused approach in having specific projects and tactics.

Mr. Rosica had introduced a process to move forward with initiatives for the Commission.

1. The first step involves a lead for the project with the starting initiative, who creates a SMART Goals form and presents it to the Commission for approval.
2. The Commission then votes on initial approval based on whether the project aligns with the Commission's mission statement.
3. The lead then forms a working group, consisting of internal or external stakeholders, to create an action plan with specific steps for the initiative.
4. The working group presents the action plan to the Commission for approval, which can be given for the whole action or specific actions.
5. The lead updates progress reports on the action plan, which are accessible on Google drive for the Commission to monitor. The use of Google Drive was discussed with clarity to its usage being provided by Dr. Tucci and Dr. Lederberg.

It was discussed how this new process offers clarity and direction. The Commission can decide how much control it wants and how much to delegate to the leads of the working group. External partners can be included in the working group to bring more ideas. The responsibility of choosing a leader or group for a workgroup lies with the lead who is initiating the project and not with the Commission.

Dr. Lederberg offered instructions on initiative voting which includes two votes: one on the mission goal and one on the action plan. The second vote is more complex and considers whether the action plan is feasible given the Commission's time, expertise, and funding. It was noted that grants are a possible funding source, but at this point, the Commission is not approving funding

usage. The role of the project lead was discussed, who is not responsible for all the work but rather acts as the instigator of the idea or champion for the mission. The Commission previously reviewed eight initiatives, discussed five of them in depth, and approved action plans for three of them. This included a letter of support for the establishment of a Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, but at this time, that initiative is on hold as it did not make it out of the most recent legislative session. The Commission will review the remaining seven initiatives, vote on them, and create official working groups for them. There will also be a discussion of any draft action plans for initiatives.

Text to 911

Ms. McQuade discussed the initiative to increase availability of text to 911 throughout Georgia and ensure that the D/HH and DB community are aware of them. The purpose of the initiative is to enable people to contact 911 via text message instead of calling. There was a motion and a second that this initiative is mission-aligned. There was an unanimous vote to approve. The working group is Ms. McQuade, Ms. Rolader, and Greg Whitaker (external). The first action discussed was to provide a letter of support for the initiative that had been previously approved on 3/15/23. There was discussion regarding the expansion of the initiative beyond the D/HH and DB community, with the involvement of external stakeholders such as domestic violence centers. Ms. McQuade spoke about a survey to assess how many Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) had adopted text-to-911 functionality, which would be conducted by Greg Whitaker from the Georgia Communications, part of GEMA.

Medicaid Coding

Dr. Morrison provided an overview of this initiative and discussed changes that should be made to Georgia Medicaid and Medicaid CMO to improve access to audiological services, especially for pediatrics. Ms. Jenkins proposed a motion that the initiative is aligned with the Commission's mission and Dr. Morrison seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

The Commission discussed the proposal for a letter of support from the Commission to support the initiative. Dr. Morrison proposed a motion to move beyond writing a letter of support to a more active, direct role and that the Commission specifically and formally make the request that the Medicaid changes be made by Dept of Community Health (DCH). Ms. Jenkins seconded the motion. The vote was 11 for approval for the motion (unanimous vote). The working group for this initiative will include Dr. Harmon, Dr. Morrison, Dr. Morris and Dr. Tucci. The working group will investigate various strategies to approach DCH.

DB/DHH Community Engagement Panels

Ms. Clark provided a brief overview of this initiative, explaining that it will be an event for the community to hear from adults from the deaf or hard of hearing community and share their success stories and achievements. The Commission will host this panel which will have one to five events/sessions. The primary goal of the initiative will be to inspire and educate middle and high school students, young adults, parents and children who are DHH (along with educators and administrators) about school and career journeys which led them to these positive outcomes. It was discussed that there will potentially be a financial cost with this initiative. Dr. Tucci mentioned that a secondary goal may be to increase the visibility and the branding of the

Commission. Dr. Tucci suggested that the Department of Education also may be interested in partnering with the commission to support this initiative. Mr. Dabo proposed a motion that the initiative is aligned with the Commission's mission and Ms. Clark seconded the motion. There were 10 votes for passing the motion, 1 abstaining vote. Dr. Tucci, Ms. Washington, Mr. Dabo and Ms. Clark will be on the working group. The Commission discussed drafting the action plan and Dr. Lederberg proposed a template of two action items; 1) organizing the panel, and 2) market the event(s). The action plan was discussed by the Commission, and it was the consensus that the working group should discuss the action plan and meet to finalize it. The action plan will need to be voted on by Commission. Dr. Tucci reminded the Commission that they can have interim meetings between quarterly Commission meetings.

ASL Website Videos

Ms. Rolader provided an overview of this initiative. The goal is for the Commission to have an ASL video on the its website as a model for state agencies. A second SMART goal will be to develop a guiding document for other state agencies to follow when they create ASL videos for websites. Dr. Tucci spoke about static messaging being public information that doesn't change. The other category of public information would be emergency messaging and it was noted that the current administration works with GEMA in developing emergency messaging. The Commission unanimously voted that the initiative is aligned with the Commission's mission. Mr. Peterson, Dr. Tucci, Ms. McQuade and Ms. Rolader will make up the working group. This working group will come back to the Commission with a more specific action plan.

Hearing Loops

Mr. Dabo spoke about this initiative and provided a brief overview of how hearing loops can be a major help to the D/HH community areas such as airports. The initiative goal is to encourage and facilitate the installation of hearing loops in public places. Mr. Dabo made a motion that the initiative is aligned with the Commission's mission, and it was seconded. The Commission unanimously approved the motion. Dr. Morrison, Mr. Dabo, and Dr. Lederberg will comprise the working group with Ms. Washington tentatively joining. Two action items were proposed; 1) facilitating the installation of hearing loops in the GA Capitol building, and 2) targeting other public locations for hearing loops. It was suggested by Ms. Washington that the second action item may need to be discussed further before it moves forward. Dr. Morrison made a motion to approve the first action item. Ms. Washington seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved action item number one, and action item number two will be further discussed by the working group. A third goal of raising awareness and education about hearing loops was suggested.

Interpreter Licensure

Mr. Peterson provided an overview of this initiative and stated that the goal of this initiative is for the Commission to support an initiative that creates a pathway for licensure of professional interpreters in the State of Georgia. The goals of this initiative were discussed and it was suggested that a draft bill be created by another organization and then the Commission could review the drafted bill and make suggestions. Dr. Morrison made a motion that the initiative is aligned with the Commission's mission, and the Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Mr. Peterson and Ms. Rolader will be part of the working group. The working group includes three external stakeholders (Georgia Association of the Deaf, National Alliance of Black Interpreters, and Georgia Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf). The next steps will be for the working group and Mr. Peterson to develop an action plan that specifies what role the Commission would take in this process.

SSP Services for DB Adults

Ms. McQuade spoke about supporting the creation of a Support Services Provider Program for DeafBlind adults in the state of Georgia. She believes that the best way to do this would be through the legislative process. A question was raised regarding whether these services would be available for children and not just adults. It was clarified that to use these services, the individual would have to be fully capable of self-determination, which would typically preclude children. Ms. Rolader proposed a motion that the initiative is aligned with the Commission's mission, and the Commission unanimously approved the motion. The working group will consist of Ms. McQuade and Mr. Peterson. The working group will develop an action plan and bring it back to Commission for review.

Other Business

Dr. Lederberg clarified that when an initiative is approved by the Commission, commissioners can perform work as a representative of the Commission. On the other hand, work done that is not approved by the Commission may not be represented as Commission work. Commissioners may take on work as a private citizen or as a board member for another organization for the DHH community but should not attribute to the work to that of the Commission.

The use of Google Drive was discussed and it was agreed upon that Commission members will send their preferred email addresses to Mr. Bryan so that he may compile an email list for Google Drive.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.