

Georgia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Tuesday, June 18, 2019
1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Auditory Verbal Center
1901 Century Blvd. NE #20
Atlanta, GA 30345

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Ms. Jennifer Clark, Dr. Chip Goldsmith, Dr. Giovanna Hughart, Ms. Kelly Jenkins, Mr. Jim Lynch, Dr. Amy Lederberg, Dr. Beth Lytle, Mr. Jimmy Peterson, Ms. Deshonda Washington and Mr. Comer Yates

Members Absent: Ms. Ellen Rolader, Ms. Dana Tarter

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Comer Yates.

Edits were requested to the minutes from the March meeting. Minutes were approved pending requested structural edits. Dr. Tucci discussed the Georgia Lighthouse bilingual rack cards created for the hearing aid program. The bulk of them will go to pediatric audiologists who refer parents to the program. She is working with Dr. Bergeron, who runs the mobile audiology program, and is considering how to partner with Lighthouse to assist with facilitation of the referral process. If it can be done through the mobile audiology unit, it can save application processing time. The procurement process for the van has just finished and the van will be delivered to the Georgia Department of Education (DOE) in November or December. There are two full time pediatric audiologists for the mobile audiology program. One is from the Children's Hospital of Atlanta (CHOA) and another is a pediatric audiologist from a school setting. There is a family coordinator position that is staffed by a DHH teacher from South Georgia who has long time connections to the community and will help push information to community-based partnerships. There will be an official MOU between Lighthouse and the mobile audiology unit to work together. Dr. Tucci will ask for a Lighthouse data report to be sent to the Commission through email. Ideally the mobile audiology unit will have a "ga.gov" web address where application can be completed through the website. Dr. Brandt Culpepper can assist with spreading the information to other pediatric audiologists. Currently, Lighthouse has a Facebook page and Twitter account and they work with schools in southwest Georgia through DOE. They have rebranded with a dolphin mascot and the pediatric program is called "Soundwaves." Tonya McConnell from the nonprofit group 2020 Hearing has been sharing that the Lighthouse has assisted getting hearing aids to families she is referring. Ms. Kelly Jenkins talked about Let Georgia Hear. There's a misconception that every child would get hearing aids covered by insurance, but the bill only applies to privately insured children. Let Georgia Hear has a grid showing if a child's hearing aids will be covered by insurance and it has a decision tree. It sends people to 2020 Hearing and Lighthouse. Dr. Culpepper explained that the hearing aid loaner bank with the Auditory Verbal Center (AVC) is underutilized because the reimbursement rate isn't the same as a private sale or a commission. Debbie Brillling, Executive Director of the AVC said that

the bank is used for children with profound hearing loss because they need a three-month trial or because they are going to get an implant in a year. No audiologist will use the bank for a child that is mild to severe because the audiologist won't make money. They wait until the child gets put on Medicaid so that Medicaid will pay for it. Lighthouse is now included in the information given to Early Hearing Orientation Specialists (EROS) when they go into a family's home and give information about next steps shortly after their child has been diagnosed. There are many school-aged children who have late onset hearing loss or progressive hearing loss who could benefit from Lighthouse. Dr. Culpepper said that in Georgia, congenital hearing loss is between two to four per thousand children. By the time a child enters first grade, it's closer to eight per thousand. The state of Georgia doesn't mandate any hearing screenings during the time of school age other than the initial point of enrollment. A request can be made in the annual report that there is data collection of children who have/don't have hearing aids and have hearing loss. Lighthouse is working with DOE to provide hearing screenings for students in low performing schools. Children who aren't served for their hearing loss have poor academic outcomes. Ideally Dr. Tucci would want to see hearing mandates at birth, three and five years old as well as first, third and fifth grade. A request was made to have information from Clayton County School District presented to the Commission. Ms. Deshonda Washington said that the Hands and Voices ASTra program, the primary focus is on children between two and five years old. The original intent of HB 844 was to be an execution of a plan to get children on grade level reading, not a tracking program.

Dr. Tucci discussed the Stakeholder advisory committee, a grass-roots group who influences and advises policy to state leaders and is the foundation for the work of the Commission. When they met for the first time, they determined four deliverables, the first includes a list of milestones necessary for DHH children to develop age appropriate language and grade-level reading. Language assessments will take place for ASL and spoken English and literacy assessments will be added during the school years. The voted leader of the group in that area will be responsible for delivering work products to Stacey. Georgia is specifically looking to impact literacy outcomes and age appropriate language, not only kindergarten readiness. Meetings will have video conferencing capacity. The second deliverable is assessments. A third deliverable is a comprehensive and accurate web-based and print-based resource. The fourth deliverable is an individual report of a child's current functioning a birth to literacy plan. There is access to the Statewide Longitudinal Database System (SLDS) and ideally, parents can log in and see their child's plan. The Commission will review the annual report for changes and feedback. There will be a meeting in late July for the Commission to meet and discuss. It will read like a state of the union for DHH children. Dr. Tucci is working on an ecosystem graphic that looks at access and has a child and family focus. The Marcus Autism Center model is the parent as the therapist as it's the only way the system can financially sustain itself.

Dr. Culpepper discussed progress in the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program. Almost 250 babies were identified in 2017. Previous years identified around 217 children. The CDC gives an estimate of how many DHH children there are using national statistics so DPH can determine how many are lost to follow up. There is significant turnover in EHDI coordinators. Six out of 18 people have been on the job less than 12 months. Dr. Culpepper's focus is to develop standard operating procedures for coordinators. There is a new learning community in Athens and there's a group meeting in Augusta. She is in the process of

purchasing equipment for a second tele-audiology site which will be in Valdosta. There is no special certification for a pediatric audiologist. If you have a state audiology license, you can see children. She can present information helpful to audiologists that will aid them in testing and fitting children for hearing aids. Tele-audiology is non-sedated. CHOA audiologists will remote in from Atlanta to the site and someone local will run the equipment. There is a two-hour on-line certification course through the national center for hearing assessment and management. People performing hearing screenings get a certificate if they pass the curriculum. The training covers discussions and messaging with parents. The website is www.infanthearing.org. It isn't a mandatory training unless the hospital requires it. The Georgia Hospital Association could adopt a policy of mailing those scores to Dr. Culpepper. Many districts have broken equipment or aged equipment. Dr. Culpepper creates partnerships with local audiologists who can perform ABRs for people in district. She presented at the American Academy of Audiology, Georgia Chapter conference.

Mr. Jim Lynch passed around a sheet with venues that have been looped.

Mr. Jimmy Peterson would like to create a sign language licensure task force in Georgia. A board would be able to review complaints filed by clients of interpreters not following the code of ethics. There is nothing currently in place for interpreters to be corrected. The licensure board would investigate certification, and recognition of those certifications, but wouldn't address testing. This would prevent people who don't have certification from interpreting and could clarify the requirement in the ADA. Ten to 15 states have licensure boards. Mr. Peterson will look at using auxiliary members from other Deaf organizations, not interpreting agencies, to potentially draft legislation. The motion was presented and passed.

There being no further business, after a motion was made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned.