

Georgia Commission on Hearing Impaired and Deaf Persons
Tuesday, September 17, 2013
1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Auditory Verbal Center
1901 Century Blvd. Suite 20
Atlanta, GA 30345

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Ms. Mary Reed, Ms. Laura Sarsfield, Dr. Helena Solodar, Mr. Comer Yates

Members Absent: Mr. Chuck Leavell, Ms. Lee Ann Meadows

Staff Present: Ms. Katherine Cadena

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Solodar at 1:38 p.m.

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the May 14th meeting. The motion was seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Solodar welcomed Commission members and guests to the meeting. She asked members to consider additional initiatives for the Commission to take on as projects: Specifically, initiatives that address adults with hearing loss. Dr. Solodar also requested that members brainstorm about a possible replacement for a hearing-impaired member vacancy. It is preferred that the replacement be someone outside of the Atlanta area who has no affiliations to any current politics or business already represented by existing Commission members.

Dr. Uehlin from the Department of Public Health, Universal Newborn Hearing Screening and Intervention program gave updates on the program. Data is stable, no significant increase or decrease the screening numbers and follow-up. Hands and Voices of Georgia produced a video called “Loss & Found” and UNHSI is currently seeking hospitals to pilot showing the video to parents of children who refer on the screening. The policy and procedures manual has been completed and will be available for hospitals and audiologists. New UNHSI coordinators shadow seasoned coordinators and also spend an additional day with UNHSI program staff to assist with job training and development. The current DPH, UNHSI website is being revised and updated. Program staff will receive numbers of all children who are screened for hearing loss, not just the numbers of children who are referred. The results will be on the electronic birth certificate and possibly the blood spot.

The word “retest” may be introduced as a substitute of “refer” for parents.

Dr. Solodar stated there may be exploratory interest in an audiology program; however, it is too early to report any information. She asked all members to continue to put out feelers for interest.

Ms. Sarsfield discussed the “Loop Across America” initiative. An article discussing the initiative will be published in the AG Bell newsletter. She announced in order for any venue in the City of Marietta to receive a certificate of occupancy there has to be a loop in the building. She is tasked with trying to determine how that was conceived and if it can easily be replicated by other cities, counties, or municipalities. There will be two looped rooms in the Aderhold building on the campus of the University of Georgia. Georgia Hearing Loss Solutions has looped five classrooms at Life University. A discussion ensued about the use of Bluetooth technology as a substitute for looping. Bluetooth will cause battery drain and looping is more cost effective/efficient at this point in time. Ms. Sarsfield will also create a list of facilities that are looped to share with the Commission and the general public. She stated that the purpose of “Loop Across America” is not to promote looping over other avenues to access sound, but that it is much more cost effective than using FM waves. A meeting will be scheduled for other stakeholders in mid to late October to discuss next steps.

Dr. Solodar gave an Adopt-a-Band report. There are two school bands with earplugs in the Athens/Clarke County area and Central Gwinnett High School has them on order. There may be a dedicated booth for Adopt-a-Band at the United Music Educators of Georgia conference.

Dr. Solodar discussed the Commission’s website and the desire to make it more prominent and user friendly. She asked that Commission members review the website for content and layout and make suggestions to Ms. Cadena by Friday.

Mr. Yates discussed the Georgia Pathway initiative. Mr. Yates stated he and Mr. Kenny Moore from the Georgia Department of Education and Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald from the Georgia Department of Public Health are tri-chairs of the policy and funding access team. The 100 Baby Project will track the first 100 babies identified by a full audiological exam as having hearing loss to follow their progress. The project is expected to start on January 1, 2014.

The next Commission meeting will be rescheduled from November to Tuesday, December 10th from 1:30 until 4:30 and will take place at the Atlanta Speech School. Ms. Cadena will contact the school to guarantee meeting space.

Mr. Yates stated that the Let Georgia Hear campaign is gearing up for the next Legislative session and looking forward to support the Commission can give the bill. The campaign is to mandate insurance coverage for hearing aids for children.

There was discussion that most CapTel machines are run on analog systems however; most phone lines are now digital. Dr. Solodar will put a call into Oaktree products to see if there’s an alternative.

Dr. Solodar will invite Mr. Bob Smith and a representative from the Georgia Lions Lighthouse Foundation to the next Commission meeting.

Hands and Voices Georgia Chapter was selected to host the annual National Hands and Voices Leadership Conference that will take place September 19-21, 2014 in Savannah.

With no further business, a motion was presented to end the meeting. The motion was seconded and passed. The meeting was adjourned at 3:51 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 10, 2013 at the Atlanta Speech School, in the boardroom, located at 3160 Northside Parkway Northwest, Atlanta, GA 30327-1598