

Georgia Commission on Hearing Impaired and Deaf Persons

Tuesday, June 21, 2016

1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Atlanta Speech School

3160 Northside Parkway, NW

Atlanta, GA 30327

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Dr. Jiovanne Hughart, Mr. Jim Lynch, Dr. Beth Lytle, Ms. Mary Reed, Ms. Cathy Torie and Mr. Comer Yates

Members Absent: Mr. Chuck Leavell

Staff Present: Ms. Katherine Cadena

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Yates at 1:33.

Mr. Yates thanked everyone for attending. He had guests introduce themselves and welcomed them to the meeting. A motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting was presented and passed.

There are no updates on Let Georgia Hear.

Dr. Kelly Dundon from the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), Early Hearing Detection & Intervention (EHDI) unit discussed the universal newborn hearing screening program. She passed out a data packet from which she presented. It is mandated that every baby born in a Georgia hospital be tested for hearing loss prior to discharge. Most babies not passing the screen are required to get a follow-up outpatient screen or go straight to an audiologist for diagnostic testing. At that point, if they are identified with hearing loss, they are referred to intervention before six months of age. Ideally, diagnosis occurs prior to three months and diagnosis prior to six months. The Hundred Babies Project is about collecting data and using that data to improve a statewide system delivery of care. She provided performance indicators that were shared with the Centers for Disease Control. There were slight improvements in having children identified by three months of age. There was an increase in infants enrolled in intervention by six months from 2009 until 2013 but then a drop off for 2014. Dr. Dundon explained reasons for the drop and discussed Medicaid Part C, which is in legislation as everything birth until three years of age. The DPH 100 Babies Project identified 199 children with hearing loss in 2014. DPH Babies Can't Wait program managers provide service coordination and support for parents. Some public comments were made by meetings guests regarding Part C and Babies Can't Wait. There was discussion around Georgia PINES (Parent Infant Network for Educational Services) and serving babies with hearing loss. Georgia PINES might work on strategies for a child and work with the parent and model how to know if a child is responding to the localization of sound. The goal is to have the provider model what the parent should do independently so that the parents can continue care. PINES has a limit of four visits

per month. Services aren't standardized. Mr. Yates discussed the Marcus Autism Center and how the model has changed to develop and focus on parent capacity. Public comment included how there is a paradigm shift now where children are the outcome of parents or caregivers and the interventionists are parent coaches. If you don't change the adults that the children interact with, then you won't change child outcomes. There will be an extensive audit of PINES starting next month. Mr. Yates discussed the Atlanta Speech School is eliminating preschool classrooms and focusing on parent acquisition of the ability to serve and return language with their children. This is also the primary goal of the DPH Talk to Me Baby program. The goal is grade level reading by third grade. Mr. Yates discussed cultural differences, specifically cultures that are compliant and accepting of authority, such as noted in Hispanic culture. Dr. Dundon stated that audiologists are mandated to report visits within seven days. EHDI is developing an automatic feed to PINES, saving about five to seven days in the process. Currently, there are delays from the audiologist to DPH to PINES. The majority of children are falling somewhere between 30-60 days before they have an early hearing orientation visit.

Dr. Stacey Tucci discussed Georgia Pathway to language and literacy. The goal is grade level reading at third grade by 2020 for all children, regardless of modality or income. It is under the umbrella of Governor Deal's Get Georgia Reading campaign. Pathway works with the 100 Babies Project by looking at assessments, and track the babies to intervene with the families as soon as possible. Incentives for families has been established; food cards or transportation (gas) assistance to continue participation in the program. Pathway is also trying to push out the intervention to children statewide, not just in the metro Atlanta area. The PINES evaluation is to restructure how PINES works to increase effectiveness and efficiency; and to increase the ability to reach children throughout the state. A report will be submitted to legislation so that the plan can align with budgets to hire new staff or contract with private providers. Birth to five is around the preparation of the reading brain, which depends on a child's access and acquisition of language.

Ms. Torie gave a report on the work group addressing access to hearing aids for children and adults. The group includes members from Georgia Hands and Voices, Georgia Lions Lighthouse Foundation, DPH, EHDI, and Commission members. The membership is expanding. The focus is on categories of access and funding of services, reimbursement and eligibility and marketing and collaborations across organizations and education. Examples of current projects include marketing the GLLF program for hearing aids to achieve greater awareness. GLLF is reimbursed to see 800 patients this year and they have currently seen over 700 people. They are going to run out of money. Ms. Lytle said GLLF did not reach their goal for pediatric hearing aids last year. They are at 50% now and don't expect to reach it. They want to help their marketing director disseminate information to audiologists. A big problem is marketing outside of Atlanta. And CEU eligibility for any programs regarding Pathway. There's a lack of clarity around Medicaid reimbursement. The Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC) collected \$3,046,764 in taxes in 2015. It is distributed among four different agencies. GLLF received 19%, or \$578 of that money. Hamilton Relay and GACHI receive 70.54% of that money. Audible Universal Information Access Service, (AUIAS), which is print services for the blind and low vision population received 6.67% of that money.

The Commission will consider understanding the state's investment in these programs and

determine the return on investment. PSC reimburses GLLF \$3,240 for pediatric patients, maximum. PSC reimburses GLLF \$742.50 per adult patient, maximum. GLLF raises money from outside fundraising efforts. There was discussion around how GLLF screens for eligibility of the hearing aid program. PSC denied GLLF additional funding when requested because they said they didn't have the funds as they stopped the .11 cent surcharge when there was a surplus. After they ran out of money, the surcharge started again in January and they collected \$1,075,676 in a penny surcharge on top of the .11 cent tax. Ms. Torie and Mr. Yates both agreed that Ms. Green from GLLF should be invited to the next meeting to give a status report. Mr. Bowles, the director of telecommunications at PSC was invited to attend the meeting, but he did not reply to the telephone or email message. He will be invited again to the next meeting.

Mr. Yates stated that respectfully having conversations around teaching how lack of access to language is interfering with Governor Deal's plan would be a clearer way to think and comprehend the information. Survey monkey would be a good way to get information back from audiologist re: GLLF providers. There was public comment regarding feedback from audiologists.

Dr. Hughart discussed Adopt-A-Band. A committee of educational audiologists will be formed to work on the endeavor. Funding might be a variable.

Mr. Lynch spoke on looping and the Georgia in the Loop committee.

Ms. Reed brought up Lead K legislation from other states. There was some outside commentary and input. Mr. Yates said that he was not comfortable discussing the issue without looking at it from a broader point of view. It is not a fair way for the Commission to analyze the subject matter. He suggests asking for input from the director of state schools for the Deaf about the subject.

GLLF was discussed again and reimbursement rates were mentioned as 35% of the market rate. The survey using survey monkey can be sent next week.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00.

The next meeting is planned for September 20 from 1:30 until 4:30 at the Auditory Verbal Center.