

STATE OF COLORADO



Colorado Department of Human Services

people who help people

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Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor

Karen L. Beye
Executive Director

COLORADO COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING October 25, 2007

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the Regular Meeting to order at 3:00pm.

2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Commissioners Joe Benedetto (Chair), Susan Elliott, Debbie Mohney, Terry Sims, Nancy Jean Eubanks, Shelley Strickfaden, and Vickie Thomson,

CCDHH STAFF PRESENT:

Cliff Moers, Director, and Cheri Davis, Legal Referral Specialist

DIVISION OF BOARDS AND COMMISSION STAFF PRESENT:

Mary McGhee, Director

INTERPRETERS/CART REPORTER:

Danelle Jansen, Shelly Gray, and Brandon Morgan, Interpreters
Claudette Mondragon, CART Reporter

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The Chair announced that Lorrie Kosinski of the City and County of Denver, will not be able to attend. Without objection, the agenda was approved.

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Without objection, the minutes of the previous meeting (June 7, 2007) were approved. (Approval was given at the end of the meeting.)

5. REPORTS

Report of the Chairman, Deacon Joe Benedetto

- The Chair welcomed the Commissioners, Staff and the public to the quarterly Commission meeting.
- The Chair extended thanks and appreciation to the interpreters and CART reporter for their professional services.
- The Chair extended a special note of thanks and appreciation to the DHS Staff and our Commission Staff for their dedicated service.
- The Chair welcomed our new Director, Cliff Moers to his first meeting as Director and extended his congratulations.
- The Chair stated that the challenge before the Commission is to unite with the new Director and the CDHS and to work together for a future of enhanced services and new programs for our Deaf/HH Citizens.
- The Chair announced the presenters for this afternoon's presentation: Janet DesGeorges, Rebecca Herr, and Dave Frank.

Report of the Director, Cliff Moers

Legal Auxiliary Services: Legal Referral Specialist Cheri Davis reported that the budget was completely spent for the first year, fiscal year 2007. They are averaging 92 requests per month and an average monthly payment of \$16,000. The rules were adopted by the Legal Auxiliary Services Committee and will go into effect on November 1, 2007. The statistics were presented (attached). Director Moers added the Committee would be working on the policies and procedures, increasing the pay scale for the interpreters and interpreting agencies, and providing the scheduling through the Commission.

Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (TEPD): Director Moers explained that the contract is being negotiated with the Marion Downs Hearing Center. Dr. Robert Baldwin of Marion Downs reported that he and Director Moers attended the TEPD Annual Conference. Dr. Baldwin shared statistics (attached). He said the Uniphone is going to be eliminated because it is no longer produced. Relay Colorado, in collaboration with Sprint, has been advertising CapTel and this has increased the request for this equipment to an average of 15 calls per day. The staff has been meeting with audiologists to encourage them to share information with their clients. The MDHC had a teen program this summer and they provided outreach to this group. They hope to do more outreach to high schools. Dr. Baldwin has become a member of the Colorado Healthcare Association, which represents most of the nursing and retirement homes to outreach to the elderly. He suggested that regional demonstration sites might provide better opportunities for people to see and try the equipment. He described Ubi-duo, which is a new technology that allows people to communicate face to face using mini laptops. Telcom is a new product by Phonak that hooks into the phone and directly links to the individual's hearing aid. Dr. Baldwin has 15 units & he is going to ask interested parties to try them and he will come back to the Commission with a report. He will not add new technology without our approval. TEPD would also like to consider high-speed internet or wireless technology. Currently since the eligibility for the program is so low, many clients do not have computers, Internet, or telephone service. He addressed staff turnover and reassured everyone that funds were only spent for TEPD purposes. He clarified that the MDHC may change brands of equipment due to better pricing, services, or elimination of models but the Commission will need to approve new technology added to the list.

Mental Health Task Force: The Commissioners received a report via Director Moers from Mental Health Task Force Co-Chairs Ami Gary and Rick Durity, who were recently appointed by Chairman

Benedetto. There remain issues and concerns that need to be addressed. The Co-Chairs would like the Commission's full support for the task force. The Chairman has given the Task Force three charges: to solicit members from the professional, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and public communities to serve as members of the Task Force; to draft a White Paper on the State of Mental Health for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Colorado; to draft a State Plan to effectively resolve or improve the Mental Health situation. The white paper and state plan on the issues and potential solutions will eventually be taken to the legislature. There was discussion that the paper should be completed and presented to the Commission for Commission approval by next summer in order to meet legislative deadlines.

Commission Retreat: The Commissioners will meet all day on November 10th. They should send any agenda items to the Director by email.

Report of the Boards and Commissions Director, Mary McGhee

Director McGhee thanked Director Moers and Specialist Davis for their hard work. She explained that the budget will be sent over to the Governor's office on November 1st for approval. She will send it out as soon as it is approved. The JBC approved a .5 FTE to provide accommodations for the director. She gave .2 of the FTE to Specialist Davis to give her full time employment. They are monitoring the staffing needs and hiring additional interpreters as needed. Director Moers will be meeting with Karen Beye the Executive Director of Health and Human Services.

The Chair announced a short recess prior to the presentations.

Hearing Aid Legislation Presentation, Janet DesGeorges

Ms. DesGeorges explained that effort have been ongoing since 2003. The House and Senate passed legislation requiring insurance companies to pay for hearing aids for children. Governor Owens vetoed the bill. The group has reconvened as the Hearing Aid Coalition and is headed by family support organizations such as Colorado Families for Hands & Voices, AG Bell, and professional organizations such as the Colorado Academy of Audiology. The Coalition is looking for support from agencies to endorse the bill. The current bill is in the same format as the original bill. It would require private insurance companies to cover hearing aids every 5 years for children birth through age 18. Director McGhee explained that the commissioners can individually support the legislation but the Commission will need to submit a formal proposal or letter of support to the Governor's office. Carol Blum (visitor) suggested the Coalition suggest using typical insurance language for children e.g. 19 years or age or 25 years of age for a full time student. Ms. DesGeorges will check into this language.

Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) Presentation, Rebecca Herr

Ms. Herr explained there was a core group of people who developed this program to train participants how to help people who are deaf and hard of hearing in a variety of emergency situations. This training was provided in Denver, but they hope to provide the training in other areas of the state. Ms. Herr described kits the core group developed and assembled for these emergency preparedness trainings. The kits include such items as flashlights, glow sticks, blankets, and shovels.

Denver 911 Task Force Presentation, Dave Frank

Assistant Denver Fire Chief Dave Frank explained that the program is designed to have someone in the 911-Communication Center wear a two-way pager. The system is designed for people who rely on CapTel or TTY and may not be near that equipment. The person who is deaf or hard of hearing would contact the 911 using a special pager number. Currently discussions focus upon developing this system

for the Denver-Metro area, but there are plans to encourage other communities to institute this program. Everyone agreed this is important issue that should be addressed at the state level. Deacon Joe serves on the State 911 Task Force.

Committee Reports

Standing Rules Committee, Chair Susan Elliot

Under consideration was the amendment to the Standing Rule Number 9, which pertains to the length of time a committee member may serve.

Commissioner Elliott asked Commissioner Eubanks to provide the Commission with a summary. Commissioner Eubanks discussed changes with the Legal Auxiliary Services Committee under the Interpreter Committee. The Legal Auxiliary Services Committee has requested a two-year term limit on membership. Members may be re-appointed to another term. Without objection, the amendment to Standing Rule Number 9 was adopted.

Finance Committee, Chair Terry Sims

Commissioner Sims explained the three budget sheets: Fiscal Year 07, Fiscal Year 08, and CCDHH Budget Report Expenses State Fiscal Year 08 (attached). The commissioners will discuss a plan to make the budget easier to follow in the future at the retreat.

TEPD Program Committee, Chair Debbie Mohney

The committee has been working on the rules for the TEPD Program to make them clearer for everyone to understand. Commissioner Mohney will send the revised rules out as soon as that is complete. The committee is looking into the potential for Internet charges to be covered. Internet charges are regarded as a service not 'equipment'. The committee would like the TEDP to be available to anyone regardless of income level. Director McGhee suggested the committee should start with the original legislation, which was designated for a family with a cap of \$50,000 rather than 185% of poverty. This will increase the number of eligible applicants. There is concern that if the cap is completely lifted there is not an increase in funding to cover additional equipment that would be requested. There is also an issue regarding the use of state dollars for non-residents (e.g. undocumented).

Interpreter Committee, Chair Nancy Jean Eubanks

Commissioner Eubanks clarified that the Commission, according to the Attorney General's Office, has the authority to establish, "Committees", not "Councils". The term "Legal Auxiliary Services *Council*" is not correct and therefore this body must be referred to as the Legal Auxiliary Services *Committee*.

Legislative Committee, Chair Vickie Thomson

No report. The Commission Chairman hopes for an update on the status of Hearing Aid Legislation to present at the Commission meeting in January.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Rebecca Herr announced that there are 4 chapters of the Hearing Loss Association of America (Northern Colorado, Boulder, Central Denver, and Southeastern Colorado). The Boulder chapter received a \$5,000 grant from the Boulder Aging Services Department to increase awareness of hearing loss in the elderly population.

7. NEW BUSINESS

None

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Mohney announced that the Colorado Hearing Loss Association of America will be having their annual conference on November 3, 2007 at the Ben Nighthorse Campbell Conference Center at the University of Colorado, Fitzsimmons Campus in Denver.

Commissioner Thomson announced that the Hands & Voices Annual Gala will be held in Denver on October 27, 2007 in conjunction with the Colorado Symposium. This is the Colorado chapter's annual fundraising event.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:18pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Vickie Thomson, Secretary