

State Directors Meeting  
New Orleans, LA  
National Association of the Deaf Conference  
July 8, 2008

Hosts: David Meyers with Texas and Tom Dillon with the New Mexico Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Attendance: Tom Dillon -NMCDHH, Barry Critchfield -MoCDHH, Alice Sykora – WI ODHH, Ronald Lanier –VDDHH, Heidi Reed – MA Commission DHH, Steve Florio – RICDHH, Cliff Moers – Colorado CDHH, Cynthia Weitzel –MCDHH, Steven Snow – CDHH Idaho, Doug Godfrey – WVCDHH,

Guests/observers: Gary Beene, NMDVR, Lisa McNiven- Deputy Director Albuquerque office Governor’s Commission on Disability, Roy Miller – TDI, Suzanne Anderson Ruble – NMCDHH, Sandra Williams – NMCDHH, Kim Davis – MoCDHH.

The meeting began at 4:15 p.m.

David Meyers started the meeting suggesting we begin with a round robin going around the room allowing each State Director to share with the others on “What’s Happening in your State”.

- Tom Dillon with NMCDHH reported that two years ago they passed legislation requiring interpreters to be licensed they are now in the process of developing the regulations. The NM interpreting community received a mentoring grant which is a huge deal and allowed them to train up to 8 mentors to mentor 8 interpreters (protégés). The DVS program was implemented and it is still in its infancy stage. The NMCDHH created advocacy programs and recently added one office in Las Cruces (South NM near El Paso). They have a budget of 4.4 million dollars which comes from the TRS fund.
- Gary Beene with the NM DVR program announced that his division spends approximately \$11 million dollars on DA and out of that 11 million, 1 million dollars is spent on hearing aids.
- Barry Critchfield (ABC) is currently Missouri’s interim director. Right now the interpreter licensure is being ‘tested’ because a lot of questions and discussions about educational interpreters standards as the law is clear that an interpreter working in the K -12 setting must be a level 3 (Missouri QA ).
- Alice Sykora, Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Wisconsin reported during the 2003 legislation they tried to pass the licensure bill it failed. It was due to misinformation among the Deaf community, so the advocates and the Office did some education/awareness on the importance of quality of interpreters and the importance of having a certified interpreter within the community. Hopefully this year they will be successful. This year they attempted to pass a hearing aid bill but it died, so will try again this year. The Office’s big project this year has been focused on employment due to waiting list via VR services or not being served. Their agency recently got a grant from welfare to work to help disabled people to

transition from work off their benefits. They are developing training program(s); e.g., a training curriculum to educate the community and the state agencies. Another focus was on emergency training, the Office worked with state agencies how to work and train deaf people.

- KCDHH reported the past two year accomplishments. KCDHH is currently working on setting up a Grievance Policy for their KQAS certified interpreters. In addition to this they will implement a public statewide directory on the web by the end of this State fiscal year. KCDHH and the ad hoc committee completed the Deaf and hard of hearing Children's Bill of Rights which will be posted on KAD and KCDHH's web site for parents. Rebecca reported that they were able to install two video phones in the VR offices and one in her office! KCDHH is involved in a statewide task force focused on Interpreter's Education. Right now Kansas is in a crisis mode because one of the Interpreter Training Programs folded so Kansas only has one ITP. It will be a huge issue for Rebecca this year. Due to limited staff and budget KCDHH has done more collaborations with other community based organizations in promoting trainings/workshops, advocacy and etc.
- Ron Lanier with Virginia reported that they were experiencing severe budget cuts. The Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) is an independent agency, unlike some other states. Ron wanted to share with the group that recently Virginia established a Statewide Interagency Team (SIT) which is comprised of the VDDHH, the Dept. for the Blind and Vision Impaired, the Dept. of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) and the Valley Community Services Board. These state agencies have programs specifically for persons who are deaf, hard of hearing and deafBlind. SIT has been conducting town hall meetings; additionally the SIT team will attend the statewide association of the deaf conference to conduct town hall meetings. Virginia's two residential schools for the Deaf and Blind have consolidated to the Staunton campus, resulting in the closing of the Hampton campus. Ron wants to discuss issues he faces in getting interpreters for 12-Step Program meetings because their funding to assist has been diminished. Additionally he is curious how many state commissions oversee relay services. VDDHH oversees the relay contract. As mentioned earlier, VDDHH is still an independent, separate agency but there are some backoffice functions - HR, IT, fiscal and procurement - that have been consolidated successfully with other Disability Services Agencies, under DRS.
- Heidi Reed, Commissioner of Mass Commission for the Deaf. This group has the best email distribution list. She appreciated the list. Heidi reports that she brought "fact sheets" it will give you a mailing label if you want to receive publication of the new book "The Savvy Guide to Hearing Loss". You can request a copy of the book, she feels that this publication was the best thing they ever did as far as educating those who lose their hearing and how to cope. This commission is one of 17 commissions to the governor. It has been a benefit, and they meet monthly with the director of the agency. They have been focusing on health care, which

will enable them to be more active in health care reform. One of their best strategy is they are able to do MOA with other agencies, most recently they did moa with the dept of which will allow them to work with the screening programs to be able to follow up with the families. She shared a copy of the new press release about this effort. Dept of social services and the commission collaborates with each other in dealing with situations such as abuse is setting up budget for accommodating those with hearing loss. The commission is allowed (pursuant to statute) to collect fees for interpreting services. Mass has a full time ADA coordinator at their capitol. The funding that created the position is a plus for the Commission because the ADA coordinator will contact the commission to coordinate the interpreting and other related support services. Steve asked about the status of Massachusetts interpreter licensure bill, it did not go through due to people want to push for such legislation.

- Steve Florio, with Rhode Island reported acknowledge two people from Rhode Island who are on the Commission board and the new director of the RI School for the Deaf, the school has a mental health services. State of RI is facing serious budget cut about 7 percent of the budget is in the hole which is forcing state agencies to make cuts and merge. His agency is facing this reality but the commission is not willing to be consolidated with another agency but is taking a risk in not merge with the other agencies. The plan was to move the commission under the dept of elderly affairs agency. Steve spent time and energy educating the legislators why it is beneficial to be independent. Two weeks ago the legislators agreed to leave the commission as independent, the reason they put this on hold so they can study other states to see what is the best for RI. Steve is temporarily relieved and can now focus on his priorities/programs. Steve is proud of recent legislation passage, the Hearing Aid bill which covers children up to \$1200 every year (??). Another accomplishment adding captions for campaign advertisements. There was a piece of legislation related to emergency management to be over seen by various agencies, RICDHH was successful in getting the Commisison added to this piece. This will allow the commission to address Deaf and Hard of Hearing issues related to emergency. This committee meets regularly so it provides opportunity to meet with the governor more often. Steve reported that the recent legislation provided money for building a new State School for the Deaf; it will be “state of the art”.
- Cliff Moers with Colorado reported he started his position last August, replacing BJ Wood who retired March 2007. Colorado is under the Division of Boards and Commissions, which is housed within the human services department. The CCDHH does not have direct connection to the legislature; he has no power to do legislative lobbying. However, he feels he arrived at the right time because of the TABOR law (tax bill of rights that passed years ago), which hurt the state budget a lot. Currently, this bill has an amendment to suspend the TABOR for five years so the state can “rebuild” their budget. It is with hope that the Commission can increase their budget. Colorado’s government is now run by Democrats after 41 years of being dominated by the GOP, the State of Colorado is known to be conservative. Two years ago, they had a bill on “permanent” funding from the general fund and the Disabled Telephone Users Fund. The budget may be able to

grow steadily with this funding so it is not a one-time deal. When Cliff was hired, he had one full time staff member who is also his 'on call' interpreter. Now they have an interpreter who works 12 hours a week for the office. Currently, he has 2.3 full time staff (FTE) and the soon-to-be hired .5 TEDP coordinator. With the new executive director of the department of human services, support provided to the Commission has been tremendous. He is able to submit a plan to expand staffing which has been initially approved. Hopefully, the staffing will increase from 2.8 to 4.3 FTE within a year. The Commission is bringing the TEDP back to the office for accountability purpose and for the office to connect directly with consumers. Colorado set up a mental health and substance abuse task force. Currently, the state of Colorado does not have adequate mental health services accessible to D/HH. The Division of mental health services under the Division of Human Services committed \$30k to the task force. It is with hope this will change the system. A TV and Online Media Access Committee was formed, too. One of their goals is to set up a television channel accessible for Deaf and hard of hearing. Colorado recently passed the hearing aid bill with strong support from the coalition of the Hands and Voices chapter. A few years ago with a Republican Governor, the Governor vetoed the bill but this time (last session), it was passed due. There is language work that needs to be done for Colorado's statutes as well. Updating the laws is in plan.

- Cynthia from Minnesota reported. Minnesota is a little bit different they have two state agencies the DHHS is under the department of human services. The commission is under DHHS but very independent and Mary Harnett has direct connection to the Governor. Their budget finally increased two years ago, it quadruple from 75k to 400k and the commission has always had one staff, and after the budget increase, they now have three staff. Minnesota recently passed 12 bills; one of the bills address EDHI, early infant hearing screening which hires a coordinator to follow up with families, families guidance (mentoring), hearing aid loan bank, deaf mentoring program to be matched with hearing families with Deaf child. Hearing aid coverage insurance was expanded to include all ages and on set of deafness is not an issue. Funding for the transition program – their funding was at risk but it was saved during last legislative session. In addition to the bills they received funding for Support Services Provider (SSP) services. We have four bills related special education. Minnesota was able to get Deaf community health workers, which will provide patient advocacy, not act as an interpreter. Each state is different in some cases the CHW may be independent or work for a hospital. Often times the hospital or the clinic will pay for the CHW. The department of health conducted a six month study on interpreter issues including spoken languages and sign. After they completed the study a report was sent to the Governor recommending legislation requiring certification for spoken languages but for sign language it is not an issue so they looked to the sign language as a model. Minnesota passed a captioning bill requiring all media to caption campaign advertising. Amazingly enough this bill took up a lot of time, and energy! Another accomplishment the commissioner are able to meet thru video. Real time captioning for live news we passed bill to expand to include all of

Minnesota but this bill will go thru sunset law. Soon the airports replaced all of their TTYs with VP.

- Steve Snow a recent hire for the Idaho commission. Idaho is one of the most conservative states (RED). Really the Idaho Commission office is a “token”. Steve Snow went thru a culture shock because he came from Gallaudet to Idaho. The budget is very small for instance when the Commission was established they had a budget of \$11,000 and two years ago the budget increased to \$23,000. Also two years ago the legislation wanted to close the School for the luckily the board of education commissioner asked permission to set up a deaf education summit to provide a report to the State board of Education regarding the closure of the school. Hopefully this summit will provide invaluable information. The unemployment rate in Idaho is the best in the United States but for the Deaf and hard of hearing the unemployment rate is about 80 to 90 percent. Of course, the statistic is unofficial. Someone asked for clarification Steve responded this includes unemployment and underemployment. He is currently working with the state dept to collect data to show proof that the unemployment and underemployment is high among the Deaf and hard of hearing. Steve is in the process of setting up Town Hall meetings to collect data, get a feel about their concerns and etc. The meetings have been successful thus far. He worked with the state in getting them to provide captioning next year on all forms of media. Steve’s goal is to get legislation requiring all public places that provide TV must leave captioning on all times. Emergency preparedness is another goal for Steve. Steve is the first Deaf employee on the state level, which is the opportunity for him to raise awareness. His time energy is spent educating the state level.
- Doug with WVCDHH reported that their was a legislation mandating that all interpreters in schools must have EIPA certification. This has raised concerns because not many interpreters can pass this test. WVCDHH is working on mentoring programs to help these interpreters improve their skills. The commission is making effort to provide trainings to the interpreters so they applied with RID to become a CMP. One of their biggest challenge is awareness among the Deaf and hard of hearing since West VA is very rural not many Deaf and hard of hearing people know about their agency. In addition to this challenge due to the HIPPA law people need to find them so it’s a challenge. Recently all state agencies underwent an Audit review, their agency has three staff so now down to 2 staff so they are afraid that the audit review will think they do not need three (additional) staff. The third challenge is working with the birth to 3 groups in educating the parents in providing informed choices. Lastly, the registry of interpreters has been a challenge. They are currently working on two bills.
- Texas Commission reported that since their consolidation of agencies under one dept. Five years later they are still suffering throughout the blending of various agencies. Since they merged with the other agencies, they were able to receive matching funds from VR. The downfall to the “merging” he is unable to go to the legislature to advocate/lobby. Right now, the deaf community is in limbo in how to advocate for themselves. Due to this “limbo” they created a position program resource specialist; their goal is to increase this and have 14 resource specialists across the State. They hope to have 12 positions for hard of hearing

and 14 for deaf resource specialist. It will make an impact by reaching out to the deaf. Because they are in close proximity with VR the TX Commission does most of the awareness and advocacy training to VR staff. Recently TX created a new certification system, which is validated. They hired this group based in Arizona. They are very pleased with the new system. Also in the process of setting trilingual interpreter program and they recently received a grant to develop this test. Received grant from the dept of education to develop a test. TX Commission conducts full time ADA training, leadership , senior citizens program. Briefly, that is the TX program.

Discussion Session:

1. Kim provided info to Steve about Missouri Commission worked with their State Emergency management agency in providing CERT training to D/hh.
2. David Meyers asked others if there would be an issue for other states accepting the TX certification. Mixed responses because it depends on the State's licensure law.

Round table discussion:

Steve Florio volunteered to chair a committee to establish this organization formally. Rebecca volunteered to join this committee. a study to establish a more formal organization.

David Meyers suggested that since the 2010 NAD conference will be held somewhere within the Region1 that Steve Florio be the point person to organize the next State Director's meeting. Steve accepted the responsibility. Steve accepted and will utilize the other State Directors for assistance as needed.

Meeting adjourned at 6:57 pm!  
See you in two years!!