Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH)

**Mental Health Advisory Committee Meeting**

**Draft 1, Current Version as of 5/22/2023**

**Date:** Thursday, May 18th, 2023

**Time:** 2:00-4:00 PM

**Location:** 4600 Valley Road Room 4A, Lincoln, NE 68510

**Interpreters:** Sharon Sinkler and Ben Sparks

**Minutes:** Gina Petersen

**CART:** N/A

**Members Present:** Mr. Cody McEvoy, Ms. Vicki Steinhauer-Campbell, Ms. Briana Stradinger

**NCDHH Staff Present:** Ms. Sharon Price, Behavioral Health Coordinator; Ms. Arlene Gunderson, Executive Director of NCDHH; Ms. Kim Davis, Advocacy Specialist Team Leader

**Technical Advisors Present:** Ms. Diane Meyer, Ms. Linda Witmuss

**Members Absent:** Mr. Erik Decker

**Technical Advisors Absent:** Ms. Ronda Rankin, Ms. Sue Czaplewski

1. **Meeting call to order:**

Ms. Briana Stradinger called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM.

Ms. Stradinger announced the notice of the meeting was duly given, posted, published, and tendered in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, and all board members received notice simultaneously by email. Publication of official notice of the meeting appeared in a legal documents, local documents and general circulation in this state, as required by the Open Meetings Act.

1. **Approval of the Agenda**

Mr. Cody McEvoy made a motion to accept the agenda. Ms. Vicki Steinhauer-Campbell seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting aye.

1. **Approval of prior meeting minutes for Thursday, November 17th, 2022**

Ms. Sharon Price made the motion to amend the previous minutes by striking Ms. Kathleen Valle and Linda Witmuss from the attendance record and adding Ms. Ashley Wulf, Ms. Candace Arteaga and Mr. Jeremy Daffern.

Due to an absence of members from the previous meeting and the chairperson being unable to make a motion, acceptance was tabled until next meeting.

1. **New Business**

Ms. Sharon Price welcomed Ms. Arlene Garcia-Gunderson, Executive Director, to her first MHAC meeting.

1. **Discussion:**
   * **Member committee updates:**

**Ms. Sharon Price – Behavioral Health Coordinator:** Ms. Price shared some observations made during her past year of work. She noticed that there is still work to be done on language reinforcement in the Deaf/HOH community. Additionally, she identified seven individuals who have mental health needs but don’t have a complete understanding of their own mental health, noting that there is a lot of work to be done in that area as well.

Ms. Price shared that she updated the counselors list by meeting with several Deaf and/or ASL fluent counselors to assess their background with signing and their experience with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) population.

Ms. Price met with the Medicaid board regarding telehealth for Deaf/HOH consumers and the lack of access to therapists who live out of state.

*Brief Discussion on Nebraska’s Interstate Counseling Compact (LB 752)*

Ms. Price discussed a conference in which counselors discussed how to make 988 available on videophone. Ms. Briana Stradinger and Ms. Diane Meyer brought up DeafLead and Purple, respectively, as resources to work with. Ms. Price confirmed that she is working with all providers.

Ms. Price announced two events coming up: a mental health workshop on Saturday, May 20th and The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness day on Friday, June 2nd at the Stormchasers game.

* + **Agency Updates:**
    - **Ms. Arlene Garcia-Gunderson – Executive director of NCDHH:** Ms. Gunderson Announced that a management team for NCDHH has been identified, with lead supervisors that will have their own team and budget. She noted that two big issues are deaf education and interpreting, which impact mental health. To help combat this, Ms. Gunderson stated that she plans to restructure the agency itself and expand more resources. In the behavioral health/education field, Ms. Gunderson plans to hire two new positions: a youth and family coordinator and an education advocacy specialist, both statewide. Ms. Gunderson has been told that there are some weaknesses in this committee. Ms. Briana Stradinger questioned what those deficiencies might be, to which Ms. Gunderson answered that the committee members would know best.
  + **Open Discussion:**
    - Ms. Briana Stradinger suggested developing subcommittees and meeting more often. Agreement from group. Ms. Gunderson stated that she would consider bringing it up in the board’s next meeting.
    - Ms. Linda Witmuss brought up conducting some sort of data collection as a starting point. Ms. Gunderson agreed, suggesting that this be the committee’s concrete goal. Mr. Cody McEvoy recalled an earlier mention by Ms. Witmuss of collecting data through a needs assessment.

*Discussion on developing a needs assessment.*

* + - Ms. Sharon Sinkler stepped from her role as interpreter to suggest that herself and Ms. Sharon price develop a rough draft of the assessment for the subcommittee meeting.
    - **Tentative Subcommittee meeting date: Third week in June**

1. **Next Meeting Date:**
   * August 17th, 3:00-5:00 PM at the Omaha Association for the Deaf in Omaha, NE
2. **Meeting Adjournment:**
   * Ms. Briana Stradinger adjourned the meeting at 3:54 PM.
   * Note: Meeting was ended early due to a Fire Alarm going off.