

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

Mental Health Advisory Committee Meeting

Approved November 18th, 2021

Date: August 17th, 2021

Time: 2pm – 4pm

Location: 4600 Valley Rd, Room 4A

Interpreters: Sharon Sinkler and Ben Sparks

Minutes: Traci Johns

CART: CART Services of ERI / Margaret “Mydge” Heaney

Members Present: Ms. Tracey Minto, Ms. Kathleen Valle

NCDHH Staff Present: Mr. John Wyvill, Executive Director; Mr. Cody McEvoy, Behavioral Health Coordinator; Ms. Abby Giambattista, Advocacy Specialist; Ms. Kim Davis, Advocacy Specialist

Technical Advisors Present: Ms. Sue Czaplewski

Members Absent: Ms. Vicki Steinhauer – Campbell, Mr. Benjamin Clancy, Vickie Frizzell Pratt, Ms. Linda Wittmuss

Technical Advisors Absent: Ms. Diane Meyer

I. Meeting called to order:

Mr. Cody McEvoy, Behavioral Health Coordinator, called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

Cody McEvoy 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 newspaper of general circulation in this state, as required by the Open Meetings Act.

II. Approval of the agenda:

Ms. Kathleen Valle made the motion to accept the agenda. Ms. Tracey Minto seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting aye.

III. Approval of the prior meeting minutes for April 29th, 2021:

Ms. Tracey Minto made the motion to accept the minutes as written. Ms. Kathleen Valle seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting aye.

IV. Discussion:

- Member Committee Updates
 - Mr. McEvoy updated the group that he has reached out to HDAS (Heartland Deaf Advocacy Services) to see if they would be interested in providing a technical advisor for the committee. They are a deaf-led agency focusing on domestic violence and advocacy.
 - Mr. McEvoy also shared that Vicki Steinhauer-Campbell's term has lapsed so that if anyone would like to become Chairperson that it could be voted on at the meeting.
- Updating Behavioral Health Website
 - Mr. McEvoy shared that he has updated all the mental health providers on the website and they now have photographs and bios. Also listed for each provider is accepted insurances.
- Enrichment Grant Update
 - Mr. McEvoy shared that the CDI workshop will be held from October 12th-16th and that it will hopefully be held on the UNO campus, if approved. Also being planned is 15-20 CDIs in the training which will be a tremendous improvement from having zero CDIs in Nebraska now. All four days will need to be attended and there is an exam on the following Saturday that they can take. Cody is in contact with the exam coordinator to find out the details of the exam. The group had discussion around prerequisites for state and national certification.

Ms. Linda Wittmuss joined the meeting.

There was discussion around the testing and competency in relation to national and state level licensing. Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI), a national certification, may take some time to obtain but the Deaf Interpreter (DI), a state certification, can be obtained much quicker after the training. There was questions regarding licensing requirements for a DI. Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator, explained that if the training meets the requirements as outlined in the Title 96 Rules and Regulations for intermediary interpreters, they should get a license if they fill out the documentation and submit the required paperwork and fee.

- Meeting with Alabama’s Director of Deaf Services in the Alabama Department of Mental Health

- Mr. McEvoy learned about training in Alabama and reported that he is interested in developing a grant to send interpreters to Alabama for their mental health training to learn how to interpret in mental health situations. He also learned about a program where if a deaf person comes in to a mental health facility they can request a signing counselor or therapist.

Mr. McEvoy also learned that there are states that would be willing to come and do a training in Nebraska so he is looking to develop another CEU workshop for all interpreters to become more skilled in working in a mental health situation. Mr. McEvoy explained that there are subtle clues that an interpreter can learn about and look for in these situations. Also valuable would be learning specific vocabulary, how to approach assessments and evaluations in these situations and how to handle remote situations. Ms. Minto asked if this training would be beneficial for mental health providers working with the deaf community. Mr. McEvoy said it would be as he has witnessed that sometimes an evaluation or assessment needs to be modified so that the deaf patient can understand the assessment questions due to the difference in languages. Ms. Wittmuss commented that training for psychologists and other professionals on cultural sensitivity and working with individuals who are hard of hearing would be beneficial.

Ms. Wittmuss expressed interest in learning more about the program in Alabama that provides on-call signing interpreters for mental health situations. Mr. McEvoy explained that it is often a lawsuit that provides the motivation for a community to create a program that provides communication access to deaf patients.

- CPS – Statewide training/presentation

- Mr. McEvoy and Mr. Jeremy Daffern, NCDHH Advocacy Specialist, will be going to Ogallala mid-October to give a presentation that teaches the importance of an interpreter for children in CPS situations that isn’t a family member or an educational interpreter. Not having an impartial interpreter could mean that the child isn’t getting to tell their side of the story. Also, as Mr. Wyvill explained, having an educational interpreter leave school and provide services in the

presence of law enforcement and CPS is contrary to best practices and a breach of ethics as it is beyond the scope of their duties. If an interpreter that is not qualified is used, the results may be poor and the window for therapy may close. In addition, training is needed to teach about how to use interpreters and how to work with deaf and hard or hearing individuals, and in some cases how VRI works.

V. NCDHH Executive Director Report – Mr. Wyvill

- The rules and regulations have finally been approved and passed and are effective as of August 1st. Abby Giambattista is the only apprentice license in the state.
- Jackie Novak is the new budget and finance manager. She comes to NCDHH from the Crime Commission.
- NCDHH is working with Amy Rhone with the Department of Education to address the inappropriate use of the educational interpreters in a community setting, mental health setting and other settings. Once the review is complete NCDHH will be working with the Department of Education to see how to address the issue. NCDHH may also be addressing this type of situation with the local school districts, as well as with law enforcement. Mr. McEvoy just recently did training with the Omaha Police Department.
- The deaf wrestler that NCDHH has been working with has qualified for the Deaf Olympics and we are excited about his career and journey. Mr. McEvoy and Lindsay Darnall Junior provided training to NSAA referees and officials last week.
- The Omaha office has reached out to Filmstreams and they are having a showing on Friday of a new movie called CODA (Child of a Deaf Adult).
- On September 11th there will be an OAS/NCDHH softball game.
- In Scottsbluff, the Keith Wann event will be on October 7th. We also have a newly licensed community interpreter in that region that will be providing interpreter services.
- Western Nebraska will have their zoo event on September 11th in partnership with the Educational Service Unit in that area. October 3rd is the date of the Omaha zoo event.

- NEAD Conference (Nebraska Association for the Deaf) is at the end of August and our agency will have a booth and strong presence there.
- Sharon is working on a workshop that will be in November for interpreters on ethics.

VI. Agency Updates

Nebraska Department of Education – Ms. Sue Czaplewski

Ms. Czaplewski reported that they have had social get-togethers over Zoom with different people and topics. They held their transition summit in June where they touched briefly on some mental health issues and self-care. They had fifty-five students at camp this summer at Fort Robinson, and it was good to see the kids interacting together again. Ms. Czaplewski shared that they continue to have team meet-ups via Zoom so students from all across the state can meet every other week and have in-person meetups at least once a month. They rescheduled last year's D.C. trip because of COVID and it will now be in March or April next year. Hopefully this year's space camp in Kansas will take place.

DHHS- Div. of Behavioral Health - Ms. Linda Wittmuss

Ms. Wittmuss shared that their Rules and Regulations have been signed and went into effect in June. They are working to get service definitions out of regulations in order to be more nimble if they need to be changed in the future. They have reworked the service definitions for the ones that are funded through the Division of Behavioral Health, and there is a new continuous care manual that will go into effect October 1st if approved.

Strategic planning is completed and focuses on systems change to integrate and streamline the divisions of DHHS. Particularly important is integration of data to help with planning and grant applications.

Ms. Wittmuss presented last week to the joint advisory committee to solicit ideas on stigma (mental health, addiction, Deaf and Hard of Hearing) and is looking for ideas on addressing these stigmas.

September is Recovery Month and she is interested in highlighting a Deaf or Hard of Hearing individual on a Facebook live presentation that has experienced substance abuse and recovery.

CHI Report - Ms. Kathleen Valle

Ms. Valle reported that their LaVista clinic received a huge compliment from a deaf patient that it was a deaf-friendly clinic. In addition, all the hospitals and clinics have been given the information on how to order transparent masks for their patients and providers.

With COVID numbers rising again, Ms. Valle shared that they are again having a big campaign to get the message out about the COVID vaccine. The videos in several languages and ASL can be found on their YouTube channel.

Ms. Valle also reported that all the healthcare systems in Lincoln and Omaha jointly decided that all would be requiring staff to get their COVID vaccine so they are expecting that some individuals will resign over this requirement.

Mr. Wyvill commented that data regarding hospitalizations of vaccinated vs. non-vaccinated would be helpful data to communicate as the increasing use of masks affects communication access for the deaf community tremendously.

Ms. Tracey Minto

Ms. Minto reported that she again is getting very busy with COVID related work. Ms. Minto also had questions regarding billing insurance companies for Wavello sessions and how that would look after the insurance companies stop making COVID-related concessions on telehealth sessions.

Ms. Kim Davis & Ms. Abby Giambattista

Ms. Davis shared that NCDHH has seven support specialists and that there are now two specialists that cover seventeen counties in southeast Nebraska. In Lincoln, they split the areas of responsibility by O Street. Abby covers north of O Street and Kim has south of O Street.

Abby shared that that in addition to the advocacy responsibilities that she handles the Hearing Aid bank which consists of handling applications, hearing aid donations, questions and trying to meet the needs of applicants that don't meet the program requirements. For the hearing aid banks, Abby works with Dr. Stacie Ray at the Barkley Center at UNL. Abby also is able to interpret for NCDHH staff now that she has her Apprentice license.

Next Meeting Dates / Meeting Time from 2p – 4p:

- Next meeting date November 18th (Omaha)

Meeting Adjournment:

Ms. Sue Czaplewski made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Linda Wittmuss seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting aye.

The meeting adjourned at 3:42 pm.