

## AT Advisory Council Meeting

June 24, 2020

10:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m.

Microsoft Teams Online

In attendance: Phil Seiler, Emma Cobb, Darren McIntrye, Tracy Roux, Ben Wimett, Leslie Ermolovich, Bethan Rowlands, Ana Kolbach, Peter Jonke, Andrea Wasson, Rose Lucenti, Heather Berg, Jessie Brennan, Marjorie Wells, Tim Carpenter, Virginia Clarke, Christine Bricault, Whitecoat Captioning

10:00-10:15 Pre-meeting (Meeting will be open for attendees to test their connection and technology)

10:15-10:25 Welcomes and Introductions

10:25-10:40 Opportunities Credit Union's Independence Fund

Tim Carpenter was our guest today. For the past seven years he has served as the senior lending manager at [Vermont Opportunities Credit Union](#) for consumer, mortgage and business lending.

Q: Have you always included other non-profits in the loan program, or is this something new (allowing them to qualify for a loan)? Some non-profits have a need to make their location more accessible. A: Although not advertised, they do allow loans to non-profit to make their facilities more accessible.

Q: Do items have to be a new item? Adaptive vehicles that are used are they ok to finance? A: Yes, ok to finance.

Q: Does a consumer need to verify a disability when applying? A: There is a part of the application to specify why the applicant needs the equipment.

Q: Does the Independence Fund cover the adaptive driving program? A: Only the technology/parts for loan coverage.

Q: Is there a minimum amount for the loan? A: \$500 but they are flexible on the amount. Have loaned \$300 before.

Phil asked for more marketing in the southern part of the state and Tim agreed this is a good idea.

Tim is happy to follow up with any questions or comments that anyone has. [tcarpenter@oppsvt.org](mailto:tcarpenter@oppsvt.org)

10:40-10:55 AT Program Updates, National and Vermont, during COVID19:

Phil update: State programs are meeting virtually to check in and report out to one another. Many are at different levels of operational capacity and each is run uniquely per state. VT AT offices are closed to consumers at this time due to current conditions. There has been little federal guidance given to our programs about how to proceed with services during this time.

We are making decisions as best we can to keep all safe and keep the programs going. We suspended AT equipment loans in mid-March. Our tryout centers are in various locations and some are closed. This makes it difficult to get the actual equipment to consumers. We have made some exceptions to the loan rule. For example at a southern Vermont hospital, we were able to get essential workers some amplified stethoscopes to continue working with patients.

Margie asked about getting help creating support groups for deafened (not deaf) people who need captioning. Many are isolated and in need of captioning/visual AT and not amplification AT. It requires money and the knowledge of how many deafened Vermonter are in need of this service. It is difficult to determine what the numbers are currently. Margie would like to find out how our group can support the important work she is doing.

Darren shared that [Center for Disability and Community Inclusion](#) (CDCI) provides technical assistance and training for persons who are deaf blind. They have access to deaf blind numbers. [The Nine East Network](#) also tracks data as well.

Margie would like to address the new Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAAIL) hire ([director of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf/Blind](#)) about this group and stress the many nuances of this disability.

Are we requesting that persons who currently have loans with us that they sanitize loan before the loan is returned? Yes, if they can this is always appreciated.

11:05-11:25 Tech Tuesday Newsletter with CDCI Staff

VT AT Program, Assistive Technology Specialists:

Tracy Roux, Ben Wimett, and Leslie Ermolovich who staff our tryout centers. They wanted to determine a way to stay connected to the population we serve during the time of COVID. The idea was born that a monthly newsletter with a theme would work well.

They discussed the format and decided they wanted to do shorter and more focused newsletters. Each month has a centralized theme and each AT Specialist chooses a topic of

that theme for their newsletter. Past newsletter topics included neurological disorders, ergonomic desks, ergonomic keyboards, and ergonomic mice, and sensory AT. For July, each member of the group will do a newsletter about AT and recreation.

[Here is the link](#) to sign up for this newsletter. The newsletter sign-up link is also on our home page at [www.atp.vt.gov](http://www.atp.vt.gov)

We will also use this newsletter to highlight our AT Exchange items, where 2-3 items are highlighted. This will be a monthly newsletter.

Phil suggested a monthly newsletter for the group that Marge is trying to support. Marge says email is the best way to converse about this idea.

Heather asked if the newsletter could include a back to school issue in August. AT for Back to School. Has there been any increase in need/contact our outreach during this time?

Phil asked for education AT Council members to comment on this. Andrea said many students had unreliable internet and needed specialized instruction. There wasn't a request for a lot of AT but she wonders if this fall will there be support needed.

Occupational Therapist perspective-Bethan. She was doing a lot of recommendations of AT for students using items around the house. She had a lot of success suggesting DIY AT since students sometimes had items around the house to create low tech AT they needed. She suggested a "DIY AT at home" newsletter topic.

Darren added that CDCI hosted some open forums. Occupational Therapists (OTs) and Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) participated in these forums to brainstorm remote education needs. Agency on Education ([AOE](#)) now has a template on their [website for distance](#)

[learning needs](#). Family resource consultants at CDCI held an open forum for parents as well. Parents felt more included and liked having more access to peers. Parents mentioned backgrounds on screens were issues for students and the type of platforms used.

11:25-12:00 Other Business/Adjourn

Other business:

Phil: While we are still performing our services, demand is down. We continue to partner and make outside connections. Phil spoke to an AT Program director in the south about the VT AT Program conducting trainings for them.

Phil was invited to join a group on social isolation with Janet Hunt from the Vermont Area Agencies on Aging.

Marge asked Phil if deafened persons had been brought up and who funds the captioning for the support groups. He said there was no discussion of this among state AT directors.

Andrea teaches a course for new special ed teachers each summer. During her prep for this summer, she found the Netflix film [Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution](#). Some have watched this and said it is a very moving documentary. This is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ADA this summer. There are public screenings happening virtually.

Peter said at VCIL they have events around the anniversary of the ADA. All will be remote. As plans develop he will share with the group. VCIL has an Equipment Distribution Program (EDP) program, and Sue Williams Freedom Fund, which funds tech to improve independence. There will be a new fund starting for tech/computers. VCIL acquired this money

through the Cares Act. It must be COVID related. He is trying to streamline the application process. He will reach out to us to share the information once it is ready.

The VT AT Program has a list of accessible recreation areas in Vermont. Please see the very bottom of this [Resources](#) page.

Adjourned 12:00 p.m. Next meeting will be Wednesday, September 23, 2020.