

AT Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

September 23, 2020

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

Microsoft Teams Online

10:10-10:20 Welcomes and Introductions

In attendance:

Phil Seiler, Emma Cobb, Tracy Roux, Rose Lucenti, Allie Kelly, Jessie Brennan, Ana Kolbach, Heather Berg, Marjorie Wells, Peter Jonke, Andrea Wasson, Whitecoat Captioning.

10:20-10:35 AT Program Updates

During discussion of a second stimulus bill, AT lobbyists in Washington DC were pushing for more AT funding. Since the second stimulus is no longer happening this idea has been dropped. On a positive note, we are lucky to have strong AT partners to be able to continue our work as a program.

We are in the process of relocating our tryout center in the northwest part of the state from UVM's Mann Hall to the Cherry Street location of Vocational Rehabilitation. As part of that transition, we are also recruiting for a new AT Specialist to run this tryout center. This person will be dedicated 80% to the assistive technology program, and 20% toward Vocational Rehabilitation serving the St. Albans and Burlington offices. We should be reaching a decision point in the next two weeks or so.

We are shifting our time in how we serve the southern part of the state. AT specialist Ben Wimett, employee of CDCI UVM, started a tryout center at Castleton University a little over a year ago. He was at the satellite campus one day a week and was at the Rutland VR office four days a week. We are shifting that to more of a three/two, where he'll be at Castleton more of his time than at VR. He has found that the core services clientele that he serves find Castleton a better space to meet with him. And, so, he's moving some of his inventory, and he'll be splitting his time a little differently going forward.

VT AT Program policies and procedures are currently being updated since it has been about 5 years since we last did this.

10:35-10:45 Database updates (AT4All, NATADS)

The AT4All database we use for inventory, loans and demos, and the NATADS database where we record I and As, Trainings and Public Awareness have both

recently had major improvements to their look and functionality. We are continuing the long-term project of getting closer to housing all of our federal required data, in one database!

10:45-10:55 VR Referral Form

Tracy has updated the VR AT Referral form that we request VR Counselors fill out when referring a client to the AT Program for assistive technology services. This allows an AT Specialist to have detailed information at the point of the first referral. We have also recently updated questions for RCD counselors to obtain more information about these clients. Tracy would love feedback about any accessibility issues that the AT Council sees once they review this form.

Rose would like to know if we can possibly use this form at the VDOL centers. Phil and Rose will talk about this. Allie asked if we could share the document with our council. We will send the form out with the meeting minutes.

Marjorie asked how she can obtain deafened and late deafened client names for a support group she is putting together. AT Program said we can give her contact information if clients agree to participate and share their contact info. Marjorie said please give her email address out as this is the best way for people to contact her. Marjorie mentioned some folks can be very tech shy in this group and Phil encouraged her to have them contact the AT program as we would be happy to give them assistance with any request for service around tech use. Tracy will follow up with Marjorie to give her free captioning/meeting resources.

Marjorie would also like to follow up with us about the new Captel phone. The vendors are trying to sell this new version which appears to no longer have free interpreters for long distance calls.

11:05-11:25 Open Forum: Share with the Council your favorite Resources and/or Advocacy Groups

AT had a well-attended virtual Public Awareness event for a designated agency in the southern half of the state presented by AT Specialist Ben Wimett. It produced requests for service from our program.

Phil attended a virtual VABVI meeting, and they have a pilot project where they are providing one-on-one iOS training for those with visual impairments who want to know more about accessibility features in iOS (Apple products) and other platforms. They identify a goal for the individual and move toward that in the training.

Peter said that VCIL has a new grant called RISE (Resilience and Independence during a State of Emergency). Folks can call VCIL and leave a message that they would like an application mailed to them. A VCIL peer advocate can also help fill these out. There is no income limit and the grant is up to \$2500. Recent grants

have been used for technology, services and even a past due water bill directly linked to COVID job loss. Peter says the VCIL peer works with a recipient who receives technology to be sure that at 3 months, and again at 6 months that the technology is still working.

Heather is finding that DBVI is sending a lot of clients to the AT Program to try out iPads before purchasing. The goal for most of these clients is to maintain independence in their homes. Since iPads are so costly, it allows these clients to try the iPads and apps for the purpose they need it for. This has proved very helpful for her clients. She asked if AT could give a brief presentation about this type of loan to her program.

Andrea said that Tracy Roux is one of her favorite AT connections. Andrea says some special educators on her staff have not heard of the AT Program. She suggested that connecting with the various special ed administrators in the schools would be helpful. She will work to get us a list of the contacts and encouraged us to speak at one of their monthly meetings. Andrea also remarked that the AT box on the IEPs were not getting checked, mostly because there is a lack of awareness about AT to help students.

Allie asked about extra support for parents who were left to handle their child's AT last year when the schools suddenly had to close. Students went from having a strong support system at school to having none. She wonders if there is a way to now support these families remotely. Tracy commented that she has helped families remotely and the positive part of it was that she was able to view their computer screens and see what they were seeing which enabled her to help them directly and with much success.

Tracy said there is a Facebook group called AT Makers. If you are a Facebook user, you can reach out directly to this group to join and get help to adapt things that aren't adapted yet. They offer a lot of open-source software suggestions, blueprints on building your own inexpensive switches and general instructions on how to adapt toys.

Allie mentioned www.askjan.org and said they have really helpful low and high tech solutions for disabilities in the workplace.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:53 PM.

Thank you all for attending, we look forward to our next meeting in December 2020.