

AT Advisory Council Meeting Notes

June 16, 2021

10:00 a.m. -11:50 a.m.

Microsoft Teams Online

In attendance: Peter Jonke, Marge Wells, Andrea Wasson, Bill Hudson, Quinby McLellan, Ben Wimett, Emma Cobb, Phil Seiler, Caelan Manning, Rose Lucenti, Heather Berg, Laura Siegel.

Absent: Darren McIntyre, Allie Kelley

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

10:15-10:20 Welcomes and Introductions

10:20-10:50 Guest Speaker: Laura Siegel to discuss her new position and role

Laura Siegel is the new director for DAIL [Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind Services](#). She began in March 2021 and has been busy, making recommendations, proposals, and trainings for agencies at the state and businesses (stakeholders)in Vermont.

Marge and Laura will meet to discuss the needs of deafened Vermonters of all ages that have not been represented.

Heather welcomed Laura saying we need Deafblind knowledge for consumers.

Peter Jonke mentioned that outreach will benefit the Deafblind community and those who have other significant disabilities that impact them in other ways too.

Laura will meet with [Gaullet University](#) "to explore the idea of what we can do at the state level to assist hearing organizations/agencies to ensure any employees they hire working with those that relies on ASL have their signing skill assessed. It is to avoid working/hiring

those who claim to know ASL when in fact they don't. Or at least take up ASL to become proficient enough to carry on basic conversations.”

Phil mentioned the AT program is working with Laura on how we can serve this population with assistive technology and identify gaps in service/delivery.

Laura is working with VDH to ask them and go ahead and purchase clear masks for employers and distribute them to the vaccination sites.

Anyone in the health care system should use them for folks who depend on lip reading and prefer to communicate this way.

The best way to get in touch with Laura is text, email, or phone call.

Email: Laura.siegel@vermont.gov

Call: 802-560-5170

Text: 802-904-3241

Website: <https://dail.vermont.gov/services/programs/deaf-hard-hearing-deafblind>

Peter said that there should be training in making virtual meetings accessible to deaf attendees.

10:50-11:00 Return to in-person meetings

Vermont's COVID Emergency authorization has expired. We can consider having quarterly meetings in person going forward. How do people feel about this?

Bill asked if we are in person would the meetings happen in Waterbury? Phil said traditionally we held our past meetings there.

Peter asked if every other meeting can be person? He suggested in person meetings focus on demonstration of certain assistive technology so that people can hold it and pass it around to one another.

Heather agreed with Peter. She offered that if we do return to in person meetings, the hybrid option be made available to attend remotely for members.

Phil said we recognize that we will need to be sure we have all the technical aspects set up for these meetings.

Marge wants to meet in person.

Phil will make future meetings as inclusive as possible.

Rose also agreed that we can have a hybrid meeting to meet all attendees needs.

An updated September meeting invite will be sent to all members.

11:10-11:30 Program Updates

Heather shared that her co-worker appreciates our AT Newsletters and shared the [AT newsletter sign-up link](#) with others.

RFP for core services for the next four years is coming up. RFP will be posted on the [BGS bids website](#). Phil will send the link once it comes out.

UVM is starting an Occupational Therapist doctorate program next year. A student who works at the program has been in touch with the AT Program. She came from the AT program in NY before her current role at UVM. We have no concrete ideas on how to work together yet but the initial conversations have been positive.

Bill said this is great news and hopefully the two entities can work together.

Heather said this is great news as we will be able to show students in that program hands on access to assistive technology devices.

Marge said she is wondering why captioning services are not offering their services for free for in person support groups. She said these companies should not be asking people to pay for these services.

[Money Follows the Person](#) program has a supplemental grant and we proposed to them that we wanted to fund a contracted position for a number of years that would support our [No Wrong Door](#) project in order to maintain management of this valuable program.

If this position is funded, it will allow us to build greater AT capacity throughout the state.

Peter asked that VCIL be included the No Wrong Door group. He says younger people with disabilities can fall through the cracks. Phil thanked Peter for identifying this gap.

11:30-11:50 Other Business/Adjourn

Phil said we are seeing an uptick in our VR clients as the state continues to open. He is proud of our team being for able to adjust during this time.

Peter said there are some changes to the [RISE fund](#). The funding expenditure time has been extended a year from this September. Still accepting applications related to COVID.

[Equipment Distribution Program](#) is still active at VCIL as well as the [Sue Williams Freedom Fund](#) which is currently out of funds but more funds are coming October 1, 2021.

VCIL Started a free cell phone project with [Good Samaritan](#) for people experiencing homelessness at a Barre shelter so that they can have a way to contact service providers. Now they are also serving shelters in in St. Johnsbury and St. Albans, Morrisville, and Brattleboro. So far they have distributed over 100 phones to people experiencing homelessness.

We still need users of AT to join our council please direct them to our [website form](#) or contact us at dail.atinfo@vermont.gov in order to apply.