

**FLORIDA COORDINATING COUNCIL
FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
Virtual Quarterly Meeting**

Thursday, November 2, 2023
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Members Present: Glenna Ashton (FAD), Cory Parker (DOE/VR), Gina Halliburton (FRID), Jenny Rojas (Department of Elder Affairs), John Jackson (Department of Children & Families)

Department of Health: Sean Isaac, Anna Simmons, Gabrielle (Gabby) O'Sullivan,

Service Providers: Donna Flanders, Kelly Gagain, and Caleigh Collins (Interpreters), Lisa Johnston (CART), Netza Rodriguez (A/V)

Minutes from August 10, 2023, meeting:

Glenna Ashton made a motion to accept the minutes with corrections and it was seconded by Gina Halliburton. The minutes were voted on and accepted with corrections being made.

Staff Updates: Anna Simmons, Sean Isaac and Gabby O'Sullivan provided DOH updates.

- 1) The next quarterly meeting will occur in Tallahassee, FL on February 8-9, 2024.
- 2) The Department needs a headcount of (councilmembers) who plan to come.
- 3) Anna Simmons introduced Gabby O'Sullivan as the new Council Liaison.

Organization Updates:

- 1) Jenny Rojas (Florida Department of Elder Affairs) had no updates to report.
- 2) Glenna Ashton (FAD) reported they had their first in-person conference since COVID and 74 people showed up.
- 3) Gina Halliburton (FRID) reported the Election Committee meeting is coming up.
- 4) John Jackson (Florida Department of Children and Families) had no updates to report.
- 5) Cory Parker (Department of Education/the Division of Vocational Rehab Services) reported that the VR system is transitioning, and the Deaf-related focus is working on creating partnerships to develop opportunities for the children in the pre-ets system.

Committee Updates:

- 1) Budget: Reported there is \$31,304 in the expenses budget, \$2 have been spent. The total budget for contracted services is \$75,320 for vendors, \$1,530 has been spent.
- 2) EMOT: No updates to report.
- 3) Legislative: Reported a special session scheduled for November 6-9, 2023, and additional funding for students with disabilities (Bright Futures Scholarship).

New Business:

- 1) Glenna recommended a review of when the Council has an in-person meetings in Tallahassee because it is always in February. She stated when the legislature starts early the Council should host its Tallahassee meeting in November. She recommended the in-person meeting in Tallahassee should alternate to reflect when session starts.
- 2) Glenna wanted to explore topics to include in the 2025 biennial report.
- 3) Gina recommended including FRID information in the 2025 biennial report such as how to locate interpreters in Florida and to include the leaders of FRID in the report. Glenna agreed that there should be a section dedicated to interpreters, how to get one and what

makes them qualified as well as a section on how to pay for hearing aids. Both Gina and Glenna want to include information indicating Florida has more certified deaf interpreters than any other state.

- 4) February meeting layout can remain the same. The council can visit people on Wednesday and have meeting start Thursday and Friday. Ideas on who to invite to do a presentation include asking someone from a department (agency), Gwen Black, and Shawn Norris.
- 5) Glenna requested the drafts of the legislation being worked on for FTRI, the names of the legislators, and the law from Ceil Bradley.

Public Comments:

Cara Wilmot, with the NTID Regional STEM Center, made a comment about the Cogswell-Macy Act and stated it would be great if it could get support as it has been put up twice before and she hopes it will go through this third time it is being put up. She explained more about the Act and shared how it would improve the assessment of students who are deaf and hard of hearing by making sure they have proper accommodations. She also spoke about the work of the Pre-Employment Transition Service committee which is trying to figure out why the deaf and hard of hearing community is the one of the smallest populations taking advantage of vocal rehabilitation. This committee offers five different services for students aged 14-21 which helps students want to go to college, want to get into a career, stay with a career, and try out different careers.

Katrina, an educational audiologist, commented about how sharing available resources are an important part of helping parents advocate for their children. She wanted to comment on how in her work with parents of deaf and hard of hearing children, that the reassurance that there is hope is sometimes what it takes to help. She stated how thankful she is for the resources in Pinellas County for deaf and hard of hearing individuals and their families.

Anthony Verdeja, executive director of the Family Center on Deafness (FDC), commented about the Deaf Service Centers that have shut down and how there is a lack of resources for deaf and hard of hearing adults who are seeking help in the Pinellas County/Tampa Bay area. He stated the FDC does everything they can to get them connected to help but more help is needed. He was wondering what the council could do, if anything, to try and re-establish deaf service centers throughout the state.

Glenna Ashton, chair of FCCDHH, commented on her experience with her husband at the hospital as a deaf individual. She explained how difficult it was for her to communicate with doctors and hospital staff due to the lack of training and the fact that many hospital staff were wearing masks. This made it difficult to lipread and some hospital staff refused to lower their masks to help her understand. She stated she had to do a lot of educating of the staff and sees room for improvement in the hospital setting for deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Glenna did notice there are now signs placed on deaf and hard of hearing patient's doors which seems like a move in the right direction.

Cecil Bradley, executive director of the FTRI, commented on the funding he has supported so FTRI can catch up with technology. The Telecommunication Access and Systems Act was passed as a law by the Florida Legislature in 1991 to provide equipment for deaf and hard of hearing individuals with FTRI involvement. The current law does not include wireless accommodations. He spoke to the Public Service Commission (PSC) twice pushing for a wireless addition but was turned down by the PSC. He went again last summer to speak with them, and they said no again. They were presented with a 30-page proposal paper outlining wireless dissemination which also included over 25 states that provide wireless as an option. He was trying to figure out what was going on in Florida and continued to contact the PSC to check for the continued requests made by FTRI for funding. He announced they are slowly moving in the direction of receiving more funding. He asked for help from state organizations to write to the legislators and tell them about how they support the changing of the Telecommunications Access System Act to reflect updates in technology since its passing in 1991.

Presentation:

Anthony Verdeja, the executive director for the Family Center on Deafness, provided a presentation.

Glenna Ashton adjourned the meeting at 11:57 am.