

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

Thursday, November 2, 2023
8:00 a.m.

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>> GLENNA ASHTON: Good morning.

>> SEAN ISAAC: Good morning.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: It's 8:00 o'clock now, time to start the meeting. Good morning. I only see the interpreter and Gina. Okay. Full group! Okay. Okay. Welcome to FCCDHH meeting today, November 2.

We have a call to order. And I see that I'm here, Gina's here. Sean is here. Gabby is here. Cory is here.

>> [Open mic].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: I don't see any other council members here, so --

>> [Open mic]. There's two sausages, do you want to take one? If you want to take all of it, I don't care.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: We do not have a quorum for voting, but we can still go ahead with the meeting.

[Note from CART Captioner]: Please mute your microphones unless you are not speaking.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: I see we have a lot of visitors on Family Center on Deafness. Wow! We are so happy to see you here and we're happy for you to share with us about FCD, when it's your turn.

When you want to raise your hand or say something, other than council members, please raise your hand or click on the "raise hand" icon on Zoom and be recognized first.

We had a meeting last August 10, and Cory ran that meeting, because I was not able to be here.

Apparently the minutes were not written up, so from my understanding, it was a very short meeting.

Cory, do you have anything you want to say about that? Cory or Gabby? No. Who was there at the meeting? Cory or Sean, do you have anything to say about that meeting in August?

I don't remember if there was anything really significant from that meeting; it was a short meeting.

[Pause].

>> SEAN ISAAC: Hi, this is Sean. I don't have any additional updates other than the minutes from that particular meeting.

It lasted the full timeframe; we took some extended breaks. But it did last the full timeframe. And we were able to set up some discussion about this meeting.

Clearly this meeting has had some surprises, which we'll get into a little bit later, one being that the meeting is virtual. The other being that the previous liaison, Angie Green, is no longer the liaison and we have a new liaison who the Council was introduced to.

And so I don't want to take all of that out of order, but those were my biggest takeaways from the August meeting to today.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Thank you. I didn't realize they didn't have -- I didn't realize I didn't have my video on. Hello!

>> SEAN ISAAC: This is Sean. It's still a little early! [Chuckles].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: [Chuckles].

Okay. We have an agenda of DOH updates, committee updates, organization updates, then a break, and then we will have public comment. So anybody who is not on the Council can make comments about anything related to the Deaf community.

And then we have announcements, another break, and then the rest of the time will be FCD's show, I guess.

So we'll start with Sean, can you introduce Gabby? And Gabby can tell us about herself. And then go on with the DOH updates. So, go ahead.

I would like to see what Gabby looks like.

>> SEAN ISAAC: [Chuckles]. This is Sean. I am going to turn the introduction over to Anna Simmons, who is one of my leaders here at the Florida Department of Health, and she is also the supervisor of the liaison position.

So, Anna, take it away.

>> ANNA SIMMONS: Hi, good morning, thank you all for joining us this morning. It's a chilly morning here in North Florida, I don't know what it is everywhere else. We were low 40's, but it was nice not to be in a sweltering heat.

This morning, we are excited to announce that Gabby O'Sullivan has accepted the role and taken the position of the new Council liaison.

She came to us from helping in other healthcare industries, mostly with dental offices and things like that. She is a student. She is very excited about her new role.

And Gabby, I'll give you a minute if you want to introduce yourself or say anything else?

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Hi, this is Gabby. I'm super excited to learn more

about the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community. I feel like I've done a lot of research on my own, but I'm happy to be a part of a meeting so early on in my time here and I get to hear from the Council and really see how everything works.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Welcome, Gabby! We're happy to have you here. I'm curious, have you had any experience of any kind with Deaf and hard of hearing?

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: I have not. So I'm very excited to learn more about the community and how to support the citizens.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. I'm sure you're going to REALLY learn a lot today! Especially with the FCD presenting today. So you're really going to get it! [Chuckles]. I named people who are here on the Council but not who they represent, so let me review that quickly.

I'm Glenna Ashton, I represent the Florida Association of the Deaf.

Gina represents the Florida Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. Cory represents Vocational Rehabilitation Deaf and hard-of-hearing services.

Sean I guess is a liaison to DOH. And Gabby is our...

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: I don't know what we call her, an office person. And then Anna is the superior... the chief of health services.

>> ANNA SIMMONS: Yes, I'm in the role that Shay Chapman used to be in, if you guys remember Shay?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Yes.

>> ANNA SIMMONS: I'm that role.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Yes.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. So the DOH updates, please?

>> ANNA SIMMONS: Okay. So what I can share for our DOH update is I know that everyone is interested in the appointments to the Council.

So -- and vacancies and getting people appointed and filling those vacancies.

We work closely with our Office of Legislative Planning and we continue to raise this as something for attention.

And we work with them and share information. And recently we also just, probably within the last month, shared again, like, hey, we still have these vacancies.

So we're working with them to get the new appointments.

We don't have an update beyond that currently. But they are very aware that we need these appointments and that we do have these vacancies.

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Hi, this is Gabby. Another update we have regarding appointments. Dr. Karen Goldberg, the appointed council member for the Hearing Loss

Association has resigned her appointment.

She remains in support of the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community in Florida and is very honored for her time on the Council. She believes it's time for her to step away and give other members a time to serve.

So we thanked her for her service on the Council.

And then I think that's all we have regarding appointments. What do we have next...? Is travel procedures.

So obviously we didn't travel for this meeting, but for our upcoming meeting in February, we plan for it to be in Tallahassee. And we'll need a headcount on who plans to attend that meeting.

It will be held February 8-9 of next year.

Do we have a headcount of who plans to come so far?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: I always go every year, and visit the legislators. But this time, I don't know, because my husband has cancer can complications, so I've been busy taking care of him.

So I don't know if I can travel overnight. So I can't tell you until last minute whether I will be able to go or not.

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Okay.

[Pause].

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: And I believe also for that meeting we have members come early for session, legislative session. So the dates for legislative session, it begins January 9 and ends March 8, so that meeting will be in the middle of that as well.

What can we do to facilitate those members who are arriving early?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: I'm the one that usually takes care of everything. You will take care of adding a night at the hotel and I take care of the scheduling for visitors.

I always have gone every year. Sometimes Gina goes and sometimes Karen did go before.

But once in a while, Cindy goes. I don't know what it would look like with this next time in February, because our Council has been shrinking down with people, not showing up at meetings or resigning, and the biggest problem was not getting appointments approved by the Office. And that's been a big frustration.

So, it's kind of hard to predict what will happen in February.

That's another thing that I would like to bring up. I know that traditionally we've always had the meeting in February, but I think we need to alternate when they do -- when they have the official start in January, we should go in November, because that's when they have committee meetings and that's when we could have more influence on budgeting for the Council, more influence on whatever related fields that are coming up related to the Deaf and hard of hearing.

And then other years, when they start in March, go up in February.

By the time we go up in February, when they meet in January, it's too late for anything, so...

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Okay. I'll make a note of that.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: We may need to change that.

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Okay.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: And be aware of when the legislation starts and alternate. When they start early, we come early; we come in November. When they start later, we come in February.

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Okay. I'll make a note of that.

I guess we can move onto future meetings as well then.

We have February 8-9; May 9-10; and then August 8-9 for next year, which I think those all go along with the bylaws for the --

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Yes, it's four times a year; yeah.

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Mmm-hmm, right. Okay. And then I think I'll move onto the handbook now.

The handbook that was made for my position, liaison/staff person, I've read through that handbook and it's been very helpful.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: I was going to say, Angela and Sean really worked on that handbook, because before, we had people in positions for a long time and then they started changing over. So --

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: No, it's been very helpful --

[Talking over one another].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: I'm glad it's helped you, good.

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: I just wanted to say I'm thankful to Sean, the previous liaison, and Anna for the opportunity, and the Council for your understanding while I'm still learning this position.

So I appreciate the patience everyone has for me, while I continue to learn.

And then I think the last thing I really have anything to talk about is request for assistance.

I've reviewed voicemails that have been left, since the previous liaison has moved on, so I haven't been able to keep quite the same record that she was, because I have been playing catch-up at this time.

But most of the calls regarding the Council were needing assistance with hearing aids and other assistive technology, locating interpreters, or just calling with general questions about resources, including help with ADA laws on accessibility, IEP help, service dog -- or service animal help.

So, moving forward, I plan to keep a more detailed log, like the previous liaison did.

And I will say I was able to find all the resources I needed through our website, so that was very helpful, and allowed me to assist all of our callers.

And I believe that's all I have for the DOH update.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Thank you. Sean, do you have anything to add?

>> SEAN ISAAC: This is Sean. I'm sorry, my camera is just not working this morning,

so my apologies about that.

Yes, I do believe we have minutes from that meeting, as well as the adoption of the agenda. So those things still can be done.

And that's all I have.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Are you saying that you have the minutes from August 10?

>> SEAN ISAAC: Correct. Are those in the meeting packet, Gabby?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: I didn't see it.

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: This is Gabby. It was in a part of the DOH update; it was actually before this, so I apologize.

>> SEAN ISAAC: Oh, really?

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Let me see... what I can do is share -- maybe share my screen to do that part? Because we don't have it in the meeting packet.

[Pause].

>> SEAN ISAAC: We can send those out too, can't we? To the Council?

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Yeah, I'll go ahead and send that in the e-mail.

>> SEAN ISAAC: Okay. But, Glenna, I think we can move forward with the adoption of the agenda, right?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. It's not in the -- the meetings are not in the meeting packet.

>> SEAN ISAAC: This is Sean. That's correct. I think we accidentally averted those and we will send them out in a e-mail. But in the meantime, I think we can go ahead and adopt the agenda.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay.

[Pause].

>> SEAN ISAAC: This is Sean again. One other thing, some of you all who are familiar with this meeting will notice that the agenda is slightly altered.

We do have a speaker today and so we wanted to make sure that he had ample time to present to you all, which I'm excited about, and I think Glenna is excited about.

So the agenda has been slightly altered, but we still have most of the elements in there, okay? So I just wanted to make that note.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Thank you, thank you. Okay.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Committee -- are we finished with the DOH updates?

>> SEAN ISAAC: This is Sean. I think we are. What -- wait a minute.... Anna, did you have anything else? Or Gabby? I just want to make sure.

>> ANNA SIMMONS: This is Anna. I don't have anything additional.

>> SEAN ISAAC: Okay, perfect.

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: This is Gabby. I'm also done. I'm just sending those minutes out in an e-mail.

>> SEAN ISAAC: Okay. I think we are done for now. Thank you, Glenna.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Thank you to Gabby, Sean, and Anna. Thank you for the DOH update.

Now we have the committee updates. There's only three of us here... so...

>> SEAN ISAAC: This is Sean. Glenna? I want to mention it one more time, we still need to adopt the agenda. We skipped over that, I think.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Oh, okay. Well, we don't have the quorum to vote on it. Do the council members accept the agenda?

>> SEAN ISAAC: I guess that is true... so we can just move forward. Thank you.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Yeah... [chuckles]. All right. Committee updates. Gina?

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: Hi, this is Gina for the EMOT team. We don't have any updates; we did not have any action items to complete, so there are no updates at this time.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Thank you. Ad hoc, the bylaws. The bylaws that were sent in the packet is the wrong one. I was trying to find the right one last night and I couldn't find the right one. But that one was the wrong one; we made more changes since then, so I'll have to look and find the right one for Gabby to send out to the Council, just to read, no action.

But that's the wrong bylaws proposal. So we need to remove that

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Okay. This is Gabby, I'll go ahead and make a note that have as well.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Thank you. Budget? Cory, are you here, Cory? Budget?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Sean or Anna, can you speak about the budget at all? I know Cory meets with you anyway.

>> ANNA SIMMONS: I do not have any updates on the budget to share. Sean, did you have any updates?

>> SEAN ISAAC: This is Sean. I do. Let me pull it together and then share it a little bit later, if that's okay?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay, sure.

>> SEAN ISAAC: Okay.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Legislative, that's me. They will have a special session November 6-9 in -- there are a lot of hot topics they will be discussing, especially related to hurricanes and all of that, but they are attaching a lot of other things.

Another was HB-1, which is additional funding for students with, quote, unique abilities, to provide a way to meet their needs.

Apparently that's a new term to cover up people with disabilities; I don't know....

But that's for the Bright Futures scholarship, for the school vouchers. And they will give additional funding for a student with disabilities special needs, unique abilities, whatever you want to call them.

So that one I noticed.

I also have been talking to Cecil Bradley from FTRI because he has been working on to pass a bill to allow them to change from the old fashioned TTY. They will still keep some, but be able to provide cell phones instead.

And also have a fee from the cell phone.

And I believe he has a draft bill ready, but he cannot find a sponsor, you know, one senator and one representative; he can't find sponsors to do that.

So that's something we have to work on.

And I guess it's going to get delayed again, because the timeline for submitting bills is very soon, so....

And that's it.

The Web Committee is vacant, because the most tech person, Debbe, left/resigned.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. And then we have organizations updates. I'll start. I represent Florida Association of the Deaf and FAD just had their first in-person conference since COVID in St. Augustine.

And they were hoping that maybe 20-30 people showed up. 74 people showed up! They had a social Friday night. And then they had a meeting on campus of the School for the Deaf.

The officers were elected. Three people were the same, plus one new person. So it looks like FAD will continue building up and come back. So we have a good start with that.

Gina, did you go to that at all?

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: [Shakes head].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: No, okay. Did any of you from FCD, anybody from there go? Cory? Sally? No? Okay. And I guess it was probably mostly local people, we have a lot of people moving to St. Augustine.

Gina, do you have anything to report from FRID?

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: [On mute].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Is the president visiting?

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: [On mute].

I got it. Okay. There we go. This is Gina. There's not a lot that I found that I had requested information. I received from the web, what I did find, but there was a mention of a bikers' event but I could not find any information in terms of dates and things coming up.

The Election Committee meeting is coming up. And they had posted a really nice condolences for the Lewiston, Maine shooting and listed resources for, like, Victims First, which was very good, that you can get off of the website there.

But other than that, that is all that I have.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Thank you. I would like to recognize that Jenny Rojas representing the Department of Elder Affairs is here. And John Jackson from DCF, the Department of Children and Families, is here. So that means we have Jenny, John, Cory, Gina, and me; that's five of us out of seven. So that means we have a quorum, if they are actively online here.

Okay.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: So, Cory, John Jackson, or Jenny, do you have anything to report from your departments?

>> JENNY ROJAS: Good morning, this is Jenny Rojas with the Department of Elder Affairs. I hope everybody's doing good this morning.
I do not have any updates for you.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: John Jackson? Cory?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Probably trying to multitask, going from different meetings!

[Pause].

[Note from CART Captioner]: John's comments are in the Zoom chat.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: It's now 8:30 and we are not scheduled for a break until 9:45. So I'm thinking that...

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: If we can move one agenda item up earlier to discuss the announcements, which was scheduled for 10:30. Talk about the biennial report and plan for the 2025 report and plan for February 2024 meeting.

Every two years, we're required to write a report and send it to the Legislature, the Governor, and the Surgeon General.

Let's see... even years we work on the report and the odd year is when we send them. So the last report was 2023. The next report will be 2025. So that means in 2024, we have to start working on the report.

We do pretty much the same...

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: It's pretty much the same report.

What our report looks like, for those of you who can see it, we have sections on introductions and explaining about the Council.

And then we have -- we've added a new section this year, where we have statistics and also with pictures.

And we had -- in each report, sometimes we have a special session of whatever the hot issue is.

And then in 2023, we did it on OTC hearing aids, over-the-counter hearing aids. And the audiologist on our Council, she did that. And she explained about the law and the pros and cons.

And then we had pictures of different kinds of, I don't know, let me show it.

And then we had a section about older adults, because the biggest majority of people with hearing loss are the older adults.

And we have a lot of Deaf signers moving to Florida. LOTS!

And we always have a section on healthcare and a section on public safety and emergency.

And then we have a list of the members and their contact information.

And we do pretty much the same thing every year, because problems have persisted, and not a whole lot has changed. But we try to have a different topic that's hot at that time.

So, we don't really change it that much, because healthcare and public safety and emergency tends to be pretty much the same.

So what topics we would do for 2025, I don't know. I mean, we did a section on hurricanes before.

Cory! I see you! Hello!

Sean --

>> CORY PARKER: Sorry, this is Cory, did you want me to give a short report?

[Talking over one another].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Cory, maybe you can talk about the budget?

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Hi, this is Gabby. Gina has her hand raised, I think.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Oh, I'm sorry. I haven't seen the icon, I didn't see the icon.

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: It's okay to go ahead?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay, go ahead with the budget report, go ahead, yeah.

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: I just wanted to interject to make sure everyone was aware to -- when you asked the question. You met Shawn Norris, the president of FRID, they sent two board members to FAD for support and I was trying to get that in, but we kind of moved on. I want to make sure they did send two board members to FAD for their support.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Oh, okay, great! That's wonderful! And I apologize for not seeing that.

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: That's okay.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: I'll try to be better looking all over.

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Hi, this is Gabby again --

[Talking over one another].

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: -- I think you also have --

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Cory, do you want to talk about the budget report? What, who?

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: This is Gabby. John Jackson also commented in the chat. He said sorry I'm late, I just got a new computer this morning. No volume yet. And there's no DCF updates. That was in the Zoom chat.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Oh, okay. Thank you, John. Yes, Gabby, if you could watch the chat, that would be great!

And I know Cory is watching the StreamText. I would appreciate your help with that.

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Of course.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: I'll try to remember to look for that yellow hand-up thing. But I don't see -- I don't see the full screen, because not everybody -- not everybody fits on one screen. I have to click on to see the other people, so it makes it hard to see everybody. There's just so many people on here!

All right. Budget report. Have I caught up with anybody that wanted to say anything?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay.

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: This is Gabby. I think one thing we could do --

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Cory?

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: This is Gabby. If anyone wants to say anything about

Dr. Karen Goldberg, we can use this time to do that as well and her contribution to the Council?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Did she complete the entire official resignation process?

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: I believe she did, yes.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: And letter and notification to the Appointments Office and everything being approved?

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: I believe so, yes.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Well, I'm just checking, because there have been problems with the resignation process; that sometimes it didn't get recognized or something like that. Okay. Yes, Dr. Karen Goldberg, she was self-motivated to join the Council and she found the Council and joined -- sent in the application and she kept -- and I know she kept calling the Appointments Office, like, every two weeks, before they had changed the process.

And so she was the squeaky wheel and she got the appointment and joined. And at the same time, she got involved with HLAA at the same time she got involved with the Council.

And she was a member of HLAA, and then she moved up in the board position and then she moved up to president. And then she got really busy with her private practice and she has been involved in helping, during meetings, when we were working on something, she was very active in writing up things and writing up letters, writing up whatever we needed to have writing up.

And we had everything ready to show for screen sharing, so that was really appreciated.

And she's gone to the Capitol to legislative visits a few times. And that was good. She made good connections there.

And I will definitely miss her not being on the Council. But I know that... yeah, I really appreciate that.

Karen had a very active service on the Council.

>> CORY PARKER: This is Cory, yeah, this is good news, too.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Yes. Okay. Okay. We still need the budget report.

>> CORY PARKER: This is Cory.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Go ahead.

>> CORY PARKER: I can go ahead? Sure, thank you. Glenna, I need you to see what I'm saying, if you could? I haven't met with Sean for the budget report just yet. There was some informational pieces that we needed.

Traditionally, we tend to meet before this specific meeting in November, and unfortunately that did not happen.

I also got a text from Sean for my agency report as well, so would you mind if I can go ahead and give a brief report and then I can let Sean do the budget piece?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: That's fine. Go ahead.

>> CORY PARKER: Perfect. If you wouldn't mind, thank you. Again, my name is Cory, my last name is Parker. For those of you who don't know me, I represent the Department of Education/the Division of Vocational Rehab Services. It's nice to meet everybody. Gabby, I look forward to working with you in the future.

So, my voc rehab report really is focused specifically on just the transition. We've got our database migration system and we're transitioning to Aware and that Aware system within vocation rehab is a large focus for us right now.

With the Deaf and hard of hearing or the Deaf-related focus, with deafblind, we're focusing more on pre-ets, which is more of a pre-employment transition service, and that's for those in the age between 14-21.

So that pre-ets system focuses on a partnership with the National Center -- the National Association Center that we work on for exceptional children.

And we've got some specialists there who are responsible for working with the Deaf educational partnership that we're creating.

And we're also trying to create other partners. One of them is actually here today.

And we're really excited to focus on that transition and that partnership.

To try to develop opportunities for those Deaf and hard-of-hearing and deafblind children, really to take advantage of that pre-ets system that we have.

We will also be presenting at the Florida Educational for The Deaf and Hard-of-hearing conference. It's in another week or so. And we're really focusing on that as our current-day focus.

So that's my report for today.

And I'm really sorry, I wish that I could stay longer. But I'm going to go ahead and let Sean discuss our budget portion. Thank you.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Thank you.

>> SEAN ISAAC: And this is Sean. Can you hear me?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Sean?

>> SEAN ISAAC: This is Sean. Can you hear me?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Through the interpreter, yes [chuckles].

>> SEAN ISAAC: Hello, this is Sean. Can you hear me?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Yes, I can hear you.

>> SEAN ISAAC: Oh, okay, all right. So the budget includes budget for salaries, which we have plenty of budget there. As you will recall, we had a vacancy between the time that the previous liaison -- I guess between the time that the position went vacant and we were able to hire Gabby.

So there's plenty of budget there.

The expenses budget, there's plenty of budget there as well; currently we have \$31,304 in the expense budget.

And year-to-date, we've only spent \$2.

So there's plenty of budget there.

When it comes to the contracted services, the total budget is \$75,320 for our vendors. And we've spent a total of \$1,530 currently. So we have enough budget to get us through our year there as well.

That's currently where we're at.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Thank you. I know part of it was saved a lot because we've been doing Zoom meetings instead of in-person meetings, and that helps make a difference.

>> SEAN ISAAC: Mmm-hmm.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Are we all caught up on things on the agenda?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Sean, the minutes on August 10, I know you reported on, will we have formal written minutes done after?

>> SEAN ISAAC: This is Sean. I believe that Gabby sent those minutes out to the council members. Is that right, Gabby?

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Hi, this is Gabby. I did, I just e-mailed them.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Just now?

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: I e-mailed them at 8:24.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Oh, I see it now.

[Pause].

>> SEAN ISAAC: Gabby, this is Sean. Is it possible for you to share your screen and scroll through them briefly?

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Yes, I can do that.

>> SEAN ISAAC: Thank you.

[Pause].

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: This is Gabby. Can everybody see that?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Yes, I see it.

>> Yes.

[Pause].

>> SEAN ISAAC: So this is Sean. If you all will, I'll speak just a couple of things onto the record.

The members present were Cory, Karen Goldberg, Gina Halliburton, Cindy Simon, Jenny Rojas, and Shawn Norris as a visiting member.

And then the Department had myself and Angie Green.

The service providers including Janelle Barns, Natasha Moreno, Kelly Gavin; Lisa Johnston; Netza and Patrick from Vanguard.

The Council voted on the minutes from May. There were a couple corrections but they were voted and accepted.

And then Angie provided some updates from the Department. There were some organizational updates as well.

The committee provided some -- the committees from the Council provided a few updates. It looks like we reported on the budget at that time.

And then there were public comments available as well; one from our speaker today.

And then there were some comments from Shawn Norris, the president of FRID.

There were some comments from Cara Wilmot from the NTID Regional STEM Center and then we entered into discussion about new business at that time, and there are several items on new business, as you can see there.

[Pause].

>> SEAN ISAAC: Okay. And then we rolled into some additional comments from Amy Turner from the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing Center in Fort Myers. And there are some additional comments from council members as well.

And I'll give you all a chance to review those.

[Pause].

>> SEAN ISAAC: Okay, Glenna, back to you.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

I'm hoping we still have five council members still online, so that we can vote to adopt -- to accept the minutes as is or with any corrections.

Are there any corrections to the minutes from the council members?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: We do have five present: Myself, Cory, Gina, John, and Jenny.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: There are no comments? No corrections?

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: The only comment -- this is Gina from FRID -- with Shawn and I both listed as members, the bylaws only allow for one, so I don't know if that is going to be a challenge for the minutes or not.

But Sean Isaac did speak that he was visiting, but it's listed as a member.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Yes. Shawn should be listed as a visitor.

>> SEAN ISAAC: This is Sean Isaac. We can make that correction. Thank you.

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: Mmm-hmm.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. With that correction with Shawn listed as a visitor and not a council member -- yet -- do I have a motion to accept the minutes as corrected?

[Pause].

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: This is Gina. I motion to accept.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Do I have a second?

>> JENNY ROJAS: This is Jenny Rojas, I second.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Thank you. Now,...

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: All in favor, can you type in chat that you're in favor? Because I can't see everybody on here.

Gina, Jenny, Cory, and John, you need to type "aye" in the chat for the minutes.

We have John. We have Jenny. And we have Gina. I'm not sure if Cory is still here or not?

[Note from CART Captioner]: He is in StreamText chat.

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Cory responded in the StreamText "aye."

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Oh, great! Thank you. Okay. So it passed. Thank you very much! The minutes have been accepted and approved, with the corrections; the minutes for August 10 have been approved and are accepted.

Okay. We have finished that business.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Now, about the report. I talked quite a bit about the report. And I know council members -- if the council members have any ideas for the 2025 report? A new section or changes or anything?

[Pause].

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: Glenna, this is Gina.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay, Gina?

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: I just have a question. In the new '25 report, I'm praying that Anthony will have this information available when he does his presentation, but at the last meeting, he said they were sending out a survey to the accurate count of the Deaf and hard-of-hearing in Florida.

Will we be able to include that in the new -- okay, good. Thank you.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Yeah, that would be great if that survey is completed and we can include that information, that would be great!

Because that will be very good, because for the first time, we will have very specific statistics for Florida.

Yeah, we will look forward to having that information included in the report, for sure! Yes.

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: And Glenna, this is Gina again. And also, I thought about with FRID, they have interpreters all over the state. And it might be a really good thing to have in our biennial report how to locate those interpreters, how to, you know, contract with them.

Or even just who are the leaders, you know; Shawn and the vice president and the different districts. It's just a thought.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Thank you, Gina, for those ideas. And you talk about interpreters and one of the things that they get constant phone calls about is how to get an interpreter. So we should have a section on how to get an interpreter, what makes a qualified interpreter, and Deaf interpreters.

And then another section on how to pay for hearing aids, because that was another very common topic. So that would make it more specific related to what we get public comments about, how to get an interpreter and how to pay for hearing aids, and something about service animals specifically for the Deaf.

And make it clear that [chuckles] certain people could have those certain service animals, not somebody with a teacup dog in a store, no! [Chuckles]

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: And Glenna, this is Gina. It's also very important that Florida has more Certified Deaf Interpreters than any other state, and that should be in our report.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Yes, yes! I mentioned that, Deaf interpreters, yes.

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: All right.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Let me write that down.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: So the survey results that was an FCD project, right? And how to get an interpreter from FRID and help us with that. And how to pay for hearing aids, HLAA can help with that, and we have resources to get that information to put into the report. So that would be very good.

And I think we'll keep the healthcare section in and keep the public safety section. Older adults would be good to keep.

Well... that was -- we have... because we saved money on Zoom meetings, we probably could have a longer report and include more, unless the expenses are earmarked. I don't know....

Okay. So that's good. I appreciate that idea from Gina.

So that means we could use the time to get information from HLAA, FRID, FCD, and anybody else to gather that information.

Because the most important part is statistics.

Every time we go visit legislators, they always ask "How many?"

They actually want a breakdown by county.

And we briefly talked about the February meeting. And I don't know if I can go or not, but....

I don't see any changes to make for the February meeting; visit people on Wednesday and have the meeting start Thursday and Friday, and then maybe invite... invite somebody to do a presentation, maybe from a department or something.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay, you see that you have -- Gina, you say -- oh, Shawn, you said that you have three CDIs on the Board. That's great!

So we need to, Gabby, Sean, and I will have to work on ideas of who we can invite to present at the February meeting.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Gina? John Jackson? Jenny? Sean? Cory? Do you have anything else you would like to discuss?

We are moving pretty fast for this morning.

[Pause].

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: This is Gina. I don't have anything else to add.

>> SEAN ISAAC: This is Sean. I don't have anything else to add.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. I see a chat from Cara Wilmot. You mention Gwen Black who is a DHH/VI program specialist, bureau Of Exceptional Education and Student Services.

Are you suggesting her as a speaker?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Thank you for your suggestion. Gwen Black From the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing Educational Program for February as a suggestion. Okay.

I know that it's only 9:03. Council members, are you okay with moving up the schedule to take an earlier break? We've been going for an hour.

And then come back and go ahead with public comments earlier?

Which means that FCD could have more time for their presentation. You would need just 20 minutes to introduce everybody that's on here on Zoom! [Laughs].

Okay. Council members, is it okay we take an earlier break and come back at...

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Come back at 9:30?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Jenny says yes. What do the other council members say about taking a break and come back at 9:30?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Only one person has answered...

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: This is --

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay, Gina has suggested that FRID president, Shawn Norris, could also do a presentation.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: I have a cat meowing in the back! [Chuckles].
Well, I'm not hearing from any other council members about taking a break, so I guess we'll continue on

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: Oh, no, break, break, break, this is Gina.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: What? Yes, Gina?

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: I was trying to type and talk at the same time. A break is fine.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. But that's only two council out of five. I need to have at least four to respond.
John Jackson? Cory?

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: This is Gabby. John Jackson responded in the Zoom chat "sounds good."

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Jenny responded --

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Jenny and John Jackson both responded.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Oh, okay, I see it. I keep scrolling through the chat and I'm missing everybody.
Have I missed anybody on chat? Let me check to see if I've missed anything.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. It looks like I'm caught up.
Is it my understanding that we don't have -- I don't see her...

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Do we have someone doing regular CART captioning? Or are we only having it on -- captioning on Zoom? Which?

[Note from CART Captioner]: I am here captioning, Glenna.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Because I don't see CART on Zoom listening in. CART is here?

>> SEAN ISAAC: This is Sean. Lisa from CART is here.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. I don't see the screen for her.

Okay. All right. Oh, okay, I see her now. Okay. I see her. I need to get my eyes checked or something! I'm missing so much!

Okay. We will now -- well, it's 9:08, we will now take a break until 9:30, we'll come back at 9:30.

And I think at 9:30, we'll go ahead with the public comments. We have so many people here from FCD, I'm sure each one of you can make a comment during public comment. Okay?

And public comment is not related to FCD, okay? Personal, life experiences and so forth, and that kind of thing.

And then everything you want to say from FCD, because you probably will end up with extra time. Okay? All right. So I'll see you at 9:30.

[Break].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Hello! I'm back. Sorry, the cat was bothering me [chuckles]. Lisa! Hi!

Okay. As I said, we will go ahead and start with public comments earlier, and I understand Anthony, you have a meeting at 10:00 o'clock, so if you want to start with anything, public comments, not related to FCD, for yourself or whatever.

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Good morning. This is Anthony Verdeja. Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time, I don't have any additional public comments than what I plan on presenting in regards to Family Center on Deafness.

And just so you know, I was able to make some changes to my schedule so that I could have the flexibility of presenting whenever the Council was ready for me to do so.

So I will be able to stay on and not attend my 10:00 o'clock meeting. So thank you.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: You're scheduled for presentation at 11:15. You probably could easily start at 11:00 o'clock when you come back.

Okay. Thank you. Now I see lots of people here from FCD and I see a few people I do know, so hopefully you will have comments to share.

Go ahead.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Anybody? It's open to anybody to make -- it's open to anybody to make comments. Come on! Sally, Jackie, Betti Bonni. I know some of you!

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Public comments mean that anything -- yes, Cara?

>> CARA WILMOT: Hi, I'm Cara Wilmot with the NTID Regional STEM Center. We are now in Florida. I wanted to share, I'm going to put it in chat, the Cogswell-Macy Act is sponsored by our Florida Congressman John Rutherford and I think the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community should rally behind this.

This is an educational bill put forth, but is to improve Deaf education and visually impaired education initiatives for our students with sensory impairments nationwide.

So it would be great if we could get some support statewide, especially since we have support here at home from Congressman John Rutherford.

So if you guys want to read about it and share about it and help get the support to hopefully put this forward.

It's been put up two times before and not moved forward. But this is the third time, so maybe this is the time that it will really happen.

And it's also being sponsored by quite a few other groups, including the American Society for Deaf Children.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Thank you. Cara, what specifically does the Cogswell-Macy Act specifically cover? What does it say?

>> CARA WILMOT: They're looking at improving the assessment of students who are Deaf and hard of hearing, making sure they have proper accommodations and related services.

Sort of like actually giving them interpreters, not somebody's grandma who knows some sign language; that they have a certified interpreter, that we progress and monitor and make sure that they're actually making progress.

And quite a few other things, for the visually impaired, improving some of their supports with assistive technology. But one of the big things is measuring and making sure they're making progress and being provided those ASL accommodations when the families choose American Sign Language.

And that we are more strategic in placing them and not just placing them in the mainstream, making a more individualized decision in placing them in the most appropriate placement.

And increasing interpreter training programs. Quite a few things. It's a lot thrown into one bill!

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Thank you. How is that different than what's being done now?

>> CARA WILMOT: Right now, the push is for less restrictive, which is misinterpreted as mainstream. And, you know, saying that when you put them in the mainstream that, you know, anybody can just interpret is not always true, and that we are doing proper progress monitoring and measuring.

And the money is not being put forth. Of course, most school districts lose money when they provide appropriate services for students who are Deaf and hard of hearing and increasing that funding too.

Especially here in Florida, we use what's called a matrix. And, you know, many of our students who are Deaf and hard of hearing, when they're placed in the mainstream, they

only get a 252 or 253 and that doesn't come close to covering an interpreter, your itinerant teacher, the FM system.

The FM system alone can be very, very expensive.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Thank you for that information.

And you... okay. And then Cara said that she put in the information and the link to that Act in chat. So we appreciate you going to look at it and have that information. Thank you.

>> CARA WILMOT: Yep.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Gina?

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: Okay, yeah. I just wanted to ask Cara, does the bill that you are referencing, does it address how Florida does not require certification for interpreters? It does not?

>> CARA WILMOT: It does not. But luckily, I don't know if you guys are following the Perez case, I'm hoping that that will address something in Florida.

But also this is saying that it requires interpreting programs to prepare students for educational interpreting and moves them towards educational interpreting licensure, so I'm hoping that this bill, maybe that would push Florida.

I have not read the entire bill, I have just been looking at this, and for me, the fact that we have to have proper measurements, that's something that I've been fighting at the state level over and over again. You can't just use what you use for students with typical hearing, because those aren't always normed and valid for students with sensory impairments.

It's also pushing to not close down Schools for the Deaf because we need to have our continuum for service, you know. Every student is individualized and somehow our districts are forgetting that, which is very frustrating.

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: That's good. Thank you. Because I hope that does kind of back-door that issue, because FRID has tried several times to get licensure and to get certification requirements.

So I'm hoping that that will kind of push that forward. Thank you, Cara.

>> CARA WILMOT: Yeah, and I know Resource Materials and Technology Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, my previous employer but I still work very closely with them, have been pushing districts on how to advocate for that.

Even though it's not in law [chuckles] with that new Sturgis ruling, it is really supporting parents and advocates to not accept unlicensed interpreters.

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: That's great. Thank you, Cara.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Thank you, Cara.

I have a question. Cara, in the last meeting, you had talked about a summer program, Camp something for Deaf children, teenagers. Have you been in contact with Cory about that? Okay, good.

>> CARA WILMOT: Yes. And we're still working out negotiating with two different

agencies where we're going to host it. It will be in Northeast Florida, but it's open to any student in high school, 10th-12th grade and it's a college preparatory program, NTID started what's called a bridge program and it's based on what's done with students with typical hearing.

Students that go to bridge programs are more likely to stay in college and not drop out within their first two years. We know if they finish their first two years, they are more likely to finish a terminal degree.

And NTID, how populous this was, if they start this now, let's start back in high school to give them this bump. And that's what's started this.

They have been having this camp for three years in Alabama and it's been so popular and they have a very long wait list and they have decided to expand it into Florida in the southeast. They actually started a program in the northwest and in the northeast and they've started one in the southeast, so it's an innovative opportunity for students to stay in college and be successful and get those degrees.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: That's great! Because I thought Cory was talking about the VR one focused on pre, so we thought that was a good fit with those programs.

>> CARA WILMOT: Yeah, Pre-employment Transition Services is another committee I'm on. That's another day to talk about that!

So, that's a committee I'm on with the Florida Department of Education, Gwen Black, vocational rehab, Project 10 is a transgressionary project in the state of Florida and because I've worked with Florida so long, they've let me stay on the committee, even though I'm out of Alabama, but I'm focused on Florida.

So we are trying to figure out because Deaf and hard of hearing is one of the smallest populations to take advantage of vocational rehab and we don't know why. And Pre-employment Transition Services which is funded by WIOA funding at the national level, so VR has to spend most of their budget on these pre-employment transition services.

And they are students from 14-21 and there are five different services. And when students take advantage of these, it helps them to want to go to college, want to go into a career, stay with a career, try out different careers.

And our students who are Deaf and hard of hearing are not taking advantage of it. And there's multiple reasons why. Part of it is the way we offer our services in Florida, with it mostly being itinerant and this information isn't always trickling down to our itinerant teachers.

And we're trying to brainstorm to solve that.

I'm hoping when we come up with a more solid plan, I would love to present it to this group that we can get more on board with that.

The camp is great, but that's only three weeks, you know.

Teachers teaching, transitional is great, but, you know, you only have so much time to teach reading, transitional, all these things, so we have to come together as a community to offer all of these different opportunities.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Thank you. What is your position right now?

>> CARA WILMOT: I'm an academic and transition specialist for the NTID Regional STEM Center, so we cover 12 states in the southeast, and my area is Florida. And how can we transition and help students be college ready.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Oh, okay, thank you. I appreciate the work you're trying to accomplish here!

>> CARA WILMOT: Thank you.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Does anybody else have general public comments they would like to make?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Interpreters? Hearing aids? Service animals? Public awareness? Local Deaf organizations activity?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: All of these FCD people, are you all actually on or are you just -- your screen is there, but not you?

>> We're here.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Savannah? Carolyn? Katrina, do you have anything you would like to say?

>> KATRINA: No, but I would just like to add, as a member of Family Center on Deafness for a number of years and as an educational audiologist in the state of Florida for over 38 years, I am thrilled to be participating, even by Zoom, to this meeting, and getting to see faces and hear all that is going on in the community.

And I'm looking forward to FCD's involvement and support of the Council in the future.

So I appreciate the opportunity.

And I'm excited to hear what Anthony says! [Chuckles].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Now, the public comment is very important, because we keep track of all the public comments, we keep track of all the calls, the e-mails to Gabby to show the Government proof of the need of the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community, because that becomes part of the statistics that we have.

So we need the public comments. If nobody says anything, it makes it look like everything is fine! And we know it's not! [Chuckles].

So, it's really important to make public comment so we have that as part of the record and part of the statistics, so...

>> SUE: Okay. I can speak to that.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Sue?

>> SUE: I'm Sue Rosenbluth, I'm a retired teacher of the Deaf and hard of hearing and a speech pathologist for the Deaf and hard of hearing, I worked in Pinellas County Schools for 41 years and now I'm privileged to serve the founding member of the Board on the Family Center on Deafness in Pinellas County.

And I look forward to seeing what we can offer this organization. Because we have a lot of things that are really positive in our community, about services for the Deaf and hard

of hearing.

So I'm anxious also to see what Anthony is going to tell you all.

And I hope that we can be of benefit to this organization.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Thank you. I see Gina has her hand up?

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: Okay. Anthony may cover this during his presentation; however, I want to make sure that he mentioned last at the last meeting that they have outgrown their facility. And they were looking for a new place to move. So I hope he's going to say he's moving to Northeast Florida!

[Laughter].

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: No?! Oh, stop it, Katrina!

>> GLENNA ASHTON: South Florida! There's a lot of Deaf in South Florida!

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: He said he was going to be working with FRID and they're in Orlando. So, like, we can get closer to Jacksonville!

[Laughter].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: South Florida! [Laughs].

Okay. But that's an idea, to work on state funding and expand it to statewide programs.

Because the Council cannot provide direct services, we only do -- we are only an advisory, just to let them know what's going on. That's it. So....

Sheila? Stefan? Carolyn? Savannah? Elizabeth? Anybody would like -- I know you're on the FCD Board, either you have a life outside of FCD or a life before FCD.

What were some of the challenges that you saw? Like, for example, Katrina, you say you're an audiologist. And Sue, you say you're a former teacher, speech pathologist.

What were some of the frustrations, not related to FCD, but before life or current life, what were some of the frustrations you had working with the Deaf and hard-of-hearing people and Government?

I know! We need it on record!

>> Hi, this is Katrina. As an educational audiologist, I had the privilege and experience of working with parents from the time of initial diagnosis of their child's hearing abilities.

And to have resources that are available is so critical, because they are so raw in that moment and they're getting information, they're seeking, they want to know as much as they can, as they advocate for their child, but yet they are in a very emotional and hard place.

When you can provide resources, it gives parents tools to educate themselves and to be able to access, hopefully, people that also have gone through the same challenges or the same diagnosis.

When working with children, parents are looking for the best option, but yet at the same time, as an audiologist, I wanted them to know that there are options.

And that being part of the Deaf community, there are many Deaf role models. Even within Pinellas County, we have Deaf and hard-of-hearing teachers. We have Deaf and hard-of-hearing interpreters.

And to make that connection for them so that they could have that mentorship and support was critical.

But I also appreciate at the state level to be able to refer them to documentation that's collected as the survey that Anthony has been working on and those other resources.

Because as you know, everyone's different in how they process that information is different and they may all get to the same point, but in many different paths and timing and ways.

So, I always wanted to be able to, in that even raw moment, to be able to offer hope and support. And I think that's critical for anyone, but especially when you're trying to figure things out, sometimes the diagnosis of your child being Deaf and hard of hearing was a relief, because of some other things they were concerned about.

And sometimes it's in addition to other things.

But there is support. There are resources available. I am thankful to live in Pinellas County, because we do have a lot of resources and professionals and other -- and parent groups that are available.

And as Anthony will share, from those needs, programs are developed.

So, I am looking forward, as Sue mentioned, to support this organization, so that you have the data to help provide continued resources for our community. Thank you.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Thank you very much. Hi, Sally, I see you, Sally [chuckles]. Do you have anything to comment?

[Pause].

>> SALLY: Um...

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Jackie? Jackie?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Anybody else?

>> JACKIE: Really I'm just excited to learn more about the organizations here, I'm interested in seeing who we're working with and some of the key partnerships that we have. So I really appreciate being at this meeting.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Let me give you -- Anthony? Anthony?

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Good morning, Madam Chair, this is Anthony Verdeja again.

I didn't know if I was able to make a public comment just in regards to an observation that we're seeing in our local community?

But it's in regards to the fact that so many of the Deaf Service Centers that were around the state have closed. And unfortunately that's not just a recent thing, they have been closed for many years.

And we are noticing a much greater uptick of Deaf and hard-of-hearing adults without children who are coming into FCD looking for support and services.

And at this time, even though we have a lot of amazing things within the Pinellas County/Tampa Bay Area, we are still really lacking that amazing work that was accomplished by the Deaf Service Centers for so many years, and they really were able to

help with things as simple as reading mail.

And helping with bill paying and check balances.

And we, as an organization, do not have the staff nor the funding to allow us to take on that additional support of our community.

That doesn't mean we don't do it. Quite frankly, we don't turn anyone away. And we do everything in our power to get them connected.

And I'll touch a little bit later on this, but some of that is also getting more familiar with our community. And we have spent three years now learning more about social services outside of Deaf and hard-of-hearing services, so that we could start to build inroads with them, so that as a senior citizen comes to our door and she just needs help reading her mail or paying her bills, we can reach out to age-friendly Pinellas and work with them to provide her the in-depth services she's needing.

But I don't know if the Council has on its agenda or in its plans, as you're looking at strategic planning, for rediscussion of re-establishing Deaf Service Centers throughout the state that would allow for those services to be reimplemented and meet that greater need of the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community adults. Thank you.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Thank you. Yes, you're right, the DSC has been closing, mostly because of funding.

CIL is hoping to have Deaf and hard-of-hearing programs. Several of them around the state, but it depends on the person running the Deaf and hard-of-hearing program and how good their programming outreach is.

There is a few that's really good, and there's a few that's... hmm....

The Council is extremely -- is limited. We are only in a role of advising, we are not allowed to do direct service of any kind. And we're not allowed to -- we operate under the Sunshine Law, which limits us in communication a lot!

We can support bills, talk to legislators to support bills; we can provide information to other department agencies when they contact us, wanting to know how or where.

But to be actively out there doing daily activity, hands-on activity, we're not allowed to do that, because we're only advisory. That's it.

From the beginning, we wanted to be a Commission to do everything, like so many other states had, and the State has shown no interest in that.

So, it's sad to say we're kind of stuck. And the only thing we can do is advise, provide information.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: I wish we could be more than -- the Sunshine Law is really what limits us a lot. Without the Sunshine Law, we could do a lot more, but we are limited by the Sunshine Law.

All councils, all state councils, all state boards are all under Sunshine Law. And they're very strict about people who are actually representing the Government.

And so... I remember before, that DSC used to have a whole organization representing DSC, and actually we have a member seat for DSC. It was DSCA, the old DSCA, we have that organization position. And of course it's been vacant for a long time.

Anthony, you're welcome to apply for that position! [Laughs].

The Council is supposed to be 17 members. We've dropped down -- 17 members, and all 17 member positions are still there in the bylaws. We've dropped down to 12, we've dropped down to 9, and now we're down to 7.

A big part of that is that the Governor's Appointments Office have not done their job,

basically. They either ignore applications or delayed the applications or kept changing the application process. And the people who did apply to be on the Council lose their interest.

So it's the Government and the way they look at councils and boards. It has been a limited process.

The council members who are on the Council want to do a lot more and want to be able to provide more, but... the law doesn't allow us.

We need to find another way, if we can....

And also, the Council represents everybody; it's not just the signing Deaf. The signing Deaf, the late-deafened, the hard of hearing, deafblind, parents, interpreters, audiologists, hearing aid specialists, and several government departments and so forth.

And so it's an extremely broad range and it's kind of hard to really come together.

And I think maybe it's time for some kind of a new organization or some kind of new collaboration-type of thing between the existing many Deaf organizations we have, to find a different way to collaborate on their own, without the Sunshine Law, without the Government restrictions, you know.

You know, to have DSC, CIL, FAD, local Deaf clubs, what few there are, all these different kinds of groups that focus on -- there's the signing Deaf, to form some kind of collaboration group on a statewide thing.

And it would be easier to do it with Zoom now, we don't have to worry about traveling, and it's easier to do that with Zoom. So that would be nice to see that kind of action instead of people being in their own silo, so....

For example, here in South Florida, just in Palm Beach County and Broward, we have five local Deaf clubs or Deaf groups. And for the first time, this year, five presidents have joined together to plan a holiday luncheon together.

But still, just planning that one simple thing, they are still having problems collaborating with each other, because they're still thinking, my, my, my, my group.

And it's really hard to overcome that, to -- I mean, to break out of that silo thinking, you know, local thinking, trying to raise it up to a collaboration thing.

Maybe you could start with your region and you could keep expanding.

We need to find something that will make it work.

Sorry I'm getting on my soapbox, but that's what I try to encourage people to work together and....

Does anyone have any comments? Does anybody have any recent experiences? With communication access?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Cara?

>> CARA WILMOT: I'm in the world of education and so a lot of things I'm reading and following are education-related.

And they passed a new rule that we have to teach reading based upon the science of reading, which I'm all for, that Florida has taken that upon us.

However, no one was on the writing of this new legislation and took into account, again, our low incidence.

We keep writing these really wonderful education legislation, but we don't take into account our students with sensory impairment. They're not having anybody from DHH or sensory sitting on writing these rules and we in the Deaf community have to come back and fix it.

So it is mandated and everything is about verbal, phonics, phonemic awareness, and

that's wonderful if you can hear phonics and phonemic awareness to help that, but there's no caveat that says a Deaf child who has no residual hearing and can benefit from that, has no alternative.

And so then RNTC and your other state agencies are fighting to get teachers of the Deaf permission to use evidence-based alternatives like fingerspelling or reader reading which was resourced by the Federal Government by the Center on Deafness and using these alternatives and it's frustrating they're writing this legislation without taking into account our students who are Deaf and hard of hearing.

Recently they mandated that every district use a progress monitoring and they said they would even pay for it. A few years back, they bought I-ready and gave it to all of the districts for free.

And you read the fine print and you call the company and the company says oh, it's not accessible to students who are Deaf and hard of hearing and students who are visually impaired and we're going back to the district and saying why this isn't accessible and why this isn't anything else.

So it's repeating choosing these materials and educating our students without taking into account every student and understanding we're supposed to be providing individualized education when they have an IEP.

But then you're putting handcuffs on them when they say phonics and phonemic is the only way, when we know it's not. So....

Listening, if you have anybody that you know up top, these are some of the frustrations that we in the classroom are struggling with, so...

>> GLENNA ASHTON: It's nothing new that the Deaf and other disabilities are always an after-thought or not even on their radar. So....

Gwen Black, is she able to get involved in all of that?

>> CARA WILMOT: Gwen was hired... April or May of last year? That position was vacant for almost two years. So I'm trying to get her involved in as many committees as possible. That's why I think it would be great for you guys -- she could give you have the stats on the Deaf and hard of hearing in the state of Florida, she can pull that.

But she needs to hear from Florida Deaf Ed community. She's coming from California. And she needs to hear from our Floridians and understand our challenges and what we're facing.

And get involved in the Deaf community here in Florida. So I think it would be great for you guys to hear the stats of where we are educationally with Florida, but also to hear from people out in the field more, what's going on for real.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: She's from California? Oh, boy... that will be a big shock for her to see how different Florida is from California! Woo!

Anthony, you have a meeting that you have to leave and be back at 11:00 or what? What happened? Yes?

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Madam Chair, this is Anthony Verdeja. I was able to go ahead and make some changes to my schedule, so I can be here and present whenever the Council is ready. So I can be flexible for what you need. Thank you.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. Since we're not getting much with public comments, I

want to add a little bit myself.

As I mentioned before, that my husband is sick. We were on a road trip and we were in Nashville, Tennessee, and he ended up in the hospital there for six weeks.

That forced me to become more -- I have been having to talk with doctors and it's forced me to talk to doctors and it's frustrating because the hospital people were still wearing masks and I had to ask them to pull down your mask, pull down your mask so I can lipread. Most of the time I could lipread. Most of the times it worked but some refused.

My poor husband, he's hearing, he had to look at me and tried to repeat what they were saying. Ugh... it was not great.

I used VRI one time, when they finally understood how to use the VRI.

And all the nurse did was read the paper. She could have just given me the paper to read! I'm, like....

And then when he came home from the hospital, going to doctors' appointments, I had to make all of the doctors' appointments. Thank God for Sorenson!

My husband is a very quiet person. A very quiet person. So I'm the one who is asking all the questions. And doing the scheduling and everything.

And he was back in the hospital again. This time a different hospital, at home, and, again, mask, pull down, again....

So, it's, like I haven't stopped talking because I've had to deal so much with hospitals and doctors, I just went back to being more... and I wanted to [signing] [chuckles]....

So it's been harder for me, because having to deal with people more.

And luckily most of the times the people in the hospitals and the doctors were pretty good.

One interesting thing I did notice at the hospital, my husband was in three different hospitals, all three hospitals, they always have a sign outside the patient door, you know, like, a warning you have to put on PPE, you know, cover yourself up or warning, you have to wear a mask or warning, high risk of fall, and so forth.

They also had a sign saying if the patient was Deaf or hard of hearing. So I thought oh, well, that's good!

So I tried to ask, well, oh, I see you have a sign about if the patient is Deaf or hard of hearing. What's your training on how to deal with it? They wouldn't tell me. Oh, no! It's confidential. [Chuckles].

They maybe could, but all they know is, okay, the patient is Deaf or hard of hearing, but do they know how to deal with that patient? I kinda doubt it, from my experiences with them.

I was doing a lot of educating, educating, educating, educating, and so... I could see there's still room for improvement in the hospitals. But it's better than before, when they told me -- just ignored it. But at least they have a sign!

What more they have, I don't know.

But that's my public comment [laughs]!

Cecil! Hello, Cecil!

Do you have any information about the TASA bill? Did you find any sponsor? Go ahead.

>> CECIL BRADLEY: Good morning, everybody, on the Council. This is Cecil. Is there an interpreter voicing for me? Perfect, thank you. My name is Cecil Bradley, I'm the executive director of the FTRI, the Florida Telecommunications Relay, and I have been working in this position for about two years.

I previously worked with the State in voc rehab in the Deaf and hard-of-hearing position and now I'm working for FTRI.

And my goal here is, you know, why I'm back here is just to really push for better funding, as well as provide more wireless equipment for our community.

And I can give you a new update about that.

I was talking with you guys here, I think it was last spring? At the council, maybe it was last fall, I'm not sure which meeting. But I am excited to mention that there has been progress that's been made.

We're not there yet, but I will let you know that there is a law, it's the Telecommunication Access and Systems Act that was created in 1991. It's, as a result of the ADA Title IV that was passed in 1990 by Congress, that has passed down to the state of Florida in 1991, to establish a law that is to provide equipment, as well as FTRI involvement as well.

So, from that timeframe, truly the reality of the law is it's an antiquated law.

In reality, it just doesn't function well in today's new technology that we have available for us. It's got limited landlines, applications, for us that use our landline phones.

And that's what it's really geared towards.

So there are some acute -- equipment accommodations, if you want to consider Bluetooth and so forth.

But it still does not include wireless accommodations.

So, let's see if I can give you sort of a synopsis.

As of last year, last summer, it was 2022, as well as 2023, twice I spoke to the Public Service Commission in their public session. I think it was last July. I attended two different sessions, pushing for the wireless pilot.

Until the legislator went ahead for them to adjust that law.

But the PSC said no. And again last summer, to my surprise, they said no again.

And they asked me last year to develop a plan, some sort of proposed 30-page paper that we gave to them about what the need is for the wireless dissemination.

And everything was very detailed, that we had over 25 states providing wireless to their states.

And, really, that's just the number that I received, actually. I think there were 14 different programs, like FTRI across other states that provide wireless access.

So, in my report, interestingly, our neighboring state, Georgia, they also have wireless accommodations.

So, even though they still have their landline law, I was surprised that they had that accommodation.

They allowed the funding for the landline -- the funding for the landline did allow for wireless accommodations. It was in a limited capacity.

I was trying to figure out what's going on in Florida and try to do the same thing as in our neighboring state.

So one of my biggest arguments when I talk to the Public Commission, I said, you know, you really need to check your archived -- what do you call it? -- your archived web details. And there have been a variety of presentations that have been made about FTRI and the need for funding.

We say so every year of our need. And I'm happy to announce, as of today, we are moving, slowly but surely, we are moving in that direction.

Because last summer, during one of my chats with them, I was continuously emphasizing that with the Public Commission, you know, even though that you guys continue to say no to us in terms of a pilot, with that, the Commission still does recognize the need, that it's time for us to start offering that wireless accommodation.

So, they did ask the PSC staff to go ahead and draft some legislative language to propose to the State legislators to change the law.

All right. Now, again, that was last summer.

So, I did see in 2023 that there was a draft report that is going to go out in December, which means that the PSC meeting that we just had last October 25th, it was, what do you consider an internal meeting.

The Commission did agree to several recommendations. And I can go ahead and give you some pilot points.

But one is for funding, as well as wireless accommodations, that they weren't quite ready for the funding just yet, because they said there wasn't time for it.

We do have money set aside, but go ahead and we're going to offer -- allow FTRI to offer that wireless accommodation, which is great news for us.

So some of the other important points are related to the TASA Committee, related to some funding that's going to be eliminated that we weren't going to necessarily go into detail about.

There really is some sensitive funding issues that we won't go into too much detail about.

But I am excited to note that it really sounded great for what they were discussing.

And what I'd like to do is I would like to talk to the staff at PSC a little bit more about how we can strategically plan some sort of revision of a report for the December report that's going to go to legislation.

In regards to, it's called relay service -- like a relay service program, it's called the Telecommunications Relay Service Programs, so the Legislature is going to get that in December.

And the staff is supposed to go and meet the legislators and offer those recommendations. I'm not quite sure how that's going to work. But I did ask, do you need our help? Is there anything we can do for you? But I haven't heard back.

We're almost there, we're close to that timeframe. But the PSC finally said they were going to go ahead and support us providing that wireless accommodation.

But when the legislators adjust that law, let me tell you, it's going to be the first time for us in so many years. 25 years of my being on the Board here and now being a director at FTRI, finally, just the language, I'm just hoping for the language to come out on the December 23rd report.

When it goes out, then we will be able to pursue and figure out our plan of action.

But as of right now, I'm asking you guys as the state organizations, please write your legislators and please tell them that you support the changing of the 427 .70128. I can give you more information if you need to but that law will help the wireless dissemination in the state.

Please reach out to your legislators. I ask you all, your individual groups, if you can, just reach out to them.

I know at FAD, Florida Association of the Deaf conference last week, I was there, I had a table and I had some presentations that I made, I had a paper I had written about a rough draft letter and how we were going to reach out to our legislators.

I have all of that and I would be happy to send it to you if you need some drafts or what you want to write or whatever the case may be.

It is some possibly good news for us in the coming years, so possibly next year. That's currently my public comment.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: [Signing no interpreting].

This is Glenna. I'm going to go ahead and let the interpreter speak for me, because my voice is no longer at its best.

But I am so happy to see that, Cecil, that we are slowly moving. Maybe slowly, but at least we're moving, and I'm really glad to see that, with Gabby and, you know, if she could

send that information out to the committee.

Sean, all of that information, if you could grab that for us? Especially me -- this is Glenna speaking -- the information for me.

I'm not necessarily too worried about the Council just yet, but I would love to have that put out to all of the organizations that we're working with.

Because I would definitely love to write a letter of support. So we just need to know those drafts and the names of our legislators and the law and so forth.

So if we could get that, that would be great. Thank you so much.

That's so exciting! We would love to just share that with everybody that we can. Thank you so much. Sean, Cecil. I'm so glad to see you here. At least we're moving!

>> CECIL BRADLEY: It does need to be revised, but right now the Legislature mentions TTYs and accommodations for the Deaf community. Like, who is using TTYs these days?

I want to mention the Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind communities, all of the people we partner with, so I do want to tweak that language and I would be happy to send that out to you.

I think it's here on my desk. And I'll send it to you. Who specifically should I send it to you? You, Glenna? Gabby?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Gabby is our new liaison. You can send it to Sean, Cecil. Go ahead and send it to Sean.

>> CECIL BRADLEY: I'm not sure -- oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, if you can give me a second, I want to make sure I do have Sean Isaac's information.

[Pause].

>> CECIL BRADLEY: Yes, I think I do have Sean's information somewhere within my FCCDHH paperwork.

Yep, I do have Sean Isaac's information, Glenna. And I also have Gabby's e-mail too. I'll go ahead and send it to Gabby and Sean and we'll make sure that you guys get that information; that's great.

The more people who write your legislators, the better.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: This is Glenna. So now it's 10:24. Do the interpreters need a break? Or do we feel ready to proceed with the agenda?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: All right. This is Glenna. And I would love to introduce Anthony, Anthony -- I'm trying to get the spelling correct -- this is Verdeja, the executive director of the Family Center on Deafness as our guest speaker.

If we could, you're in Pinellas, right, Anthony?

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: That's correct, yes.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: And I can see he has a fan club here.

[Laughter].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: So I'm assuming that everybody that's connected with Family Center on Deafness are people who either work with or who are on the Board. Welcome, Anthony! Thank you so much for being here today! We're so glad to have you on the agenda. And we really look forward to you and anybody else from Family Center on Deafness, just to hear about your role and your involvement in the state. So you have as much time as you want. You can go till 12:00 if you'd like.

[Laughter].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: The floor is yours.

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, council members, thank you as well, Isaac (sic) and Anna for allowing this opportunity for me to be here today.

I will start by just expressing first and foremost my humility and my gratitude.

I am so grateful that the FCD Board, staff, and Deaf and hard-of-hearing community of Pinellas County respected my knowledge and experience enough to allow me the opportunity to run, as the executive director, the Family Center on Deafness over these past three years.

And I would be remiss if I didn't begin my presentation today with, first and foremost, recognizing that FCD would not be where we are in 2023 if it were not for the amazing work, dedication, and commitment of the FCD staff and the FCD Board of Directors.

So, we're grateful to have this opportunity to come before the Florida Coordinating Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and we look forward to sharing with you a lot of the great successes that we have accomplished. And look forward at the end to talking about how we will be able to continue to move forward and hopefully collaborating with the Council and supporting all of these great initiatives at a statewide level.

So, thank you very much for this wonderful opportunity!

And please don't hesitate to ask questions or ask for clarity throughout the presentation.

I will go ahead and let you know that I am choosing to use spoken English at this time. We have an amazing competent working sign language interpreter team, so if that's okay with all of the attendees, I would go ahead and use my native language of spoken English at this time. If I could just get some agreement or head nods, that would be great.

[Pause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Beautiful! Thank you.

Madam Chair, the Family Center on Deafness has been in existence for 28 years. Family Center on Deafness began, and really, in 1995, with the discussion and recognition by administrators in the school district here, staff, and professionals, as well as community members in the recognition that at the time, the Deaf Service Centers were spread throughout the state of Florida providing amazing programs and services for Deaf and hard-of-hearing adults.

Unfortunately at that time, when we began to look at what was happening within our community, we realized that the future, meaning the youth who were Deaf and hard of hearing, were not being served to their full capacity.

It is at that point in which there was a decision made and a collaboration started to create a program focused on Deaf and hard-of-hearing youth within Pinellas County.

It started off first as a program referred to as Peach. It then became a program

referred to as Reach, and then in 2005, we were able to become a 501(c)(3) and became known as the Family Center on Deafness.

And it's hard to believe, but here we are, in 2023, still providing amazing programs, services, and support to families within Pinellas County, where one individual in the household is Deaf, hard of hearing, or has hearing loss.

And at least one individual in the household is 18 years or younger.

What's so amazing is that Family Center on Deafness is not only focused on the one individual who has the hearing loss, but we are focused on the family unit.

We are here to provide support and resources to all the members within that household. Which means everything from sign language classes, to one-on-one mentoring, to tutoring.

And I'm going to get to go through and brag about the wonderful programs and services that the FCD staff provide on a daily and weekly basis.

So, I'm going to show you our screen; I think Gabby and I are going to try to share a screen, is that correct, Gabby?

[Pause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Perfect.

[Pause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Gabby, if you can go into full presentation mode, that would be great. Beautiful.

[Pause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: It's just spinning....

Gabby, if you want to give me permission to share my screen, I can open it from my laptop; it might be easier. Thank you.

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: This is Gabby. I believe you may have -- do you see the share screen option on your computer or no?

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: It told me I was not permitted to share.

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Okay, okay.

[Pause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Are you all able to see that now?

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Yes. Thank you.

[Pause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: This is Anthony. What I will attempt to do, in an effort to be most accessible and Deaf friendly, when I do go to my next slide, I will pause for a moment to allow folks to read that information.

So please bear with us as we transition through this presentation.

[Pause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Family Center on Deafness is here really to empower and work with the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community of Pinellas County by providing them opportunities to enhance their communication, their education, and their independence.

And for any of us who have worked in the field of deafness for probably more than five years, we know that the deafness, the community of Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals has changed greatly, since when I came into the field in the 1980's.

Families who are identifying as Deaf, hard of hearing, and individuals with hearing loss now really encompass the greater gamut and here at Family Center on Deafness, we change our mindset and working with families who come to us for service.

Our goal here at Family Center on Deafness is not to be the one who makes decisions for or tells families how to approach and deal with their individuals in their family who are Deaf and/or hard of hearing, but to support them where and when we can, with whatever resources that we have to provide them.

And so for that, that means that every time we open a file to work with a family, we're looking for them to help us learn what they would like to do.

So on any given moment, on any given day, when you come into Family Center on Deafness, you are going to see almost every mode of communication happening within our four walls.

And quite frankly, even externally as we enter into the greater community.

What's amazing to see at FCD is that we have staff, board members that represent all of those aspects of communication as well.

We have staff and board who are Deaf generationally, born and raised in families who are Deaf. We have individuals who are born into households where the parents knew or had the ability to hear, but did not know sign language.

We have individuals who are deafblind or Deaf in limited vision. We have individuals who are late-deafened. We have individuals who grew up as non-signers.

So what's wonderful is we can then look at the families and we can work with them and meet them where they're at and try to open to them the opportunity that there is a lot out there that could be beneficial to them as a family, but also to the individuals in their homes who are looking to grow and expand their abilities to communicate.

Family Center on Deafness is the only organization of our kind currently in all of the Pinellas County area.

Now, if you look at this map --

>> [Open mic].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: -- at the very top, we have Tarpon Springs and we go down to South St. Pete.

>> [Open mic].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Those are the areas that we are covering and serving our community.

I would like to put it into some context, because it's important to recognize that only in this last year, due to the great amount of work and success that FCD has accomplished, that we were able to submit a request for an increase of staff and an increase of funding through the Juvenile Welfare Board, who is our primary funder.

And to our excitement and amazement, they approved that proposal.

So FCD stands 14 staff strong today

>> [Open mic].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: And we are serving at this moment 91 youth, 71 adults, and 66 households, within Pinellas County.

>> [Open mic].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Now we know there are a lot more out there. We know that unfortunately the surveys that we have been able to find -- and I do say thank you to Anna for sending us some of the surveys from the Department of Health -- however, the surveys that are out there are primarily focused on only adults.

So, our program focuses on households with children. And so that makes it really difficult for us, when it comes to requesting or submitting any sort of grant proposal, because we don't currently have any accurate numbers of Deaf and hard-of-hearing youth in Pinellas County.

So part of the survey that we'll touch on a little bit later is also in an effort to collect those numbers, to not only help the Family Center on Deafness, but to share with all of the other organizations in our communities.

And we actually, when we created the survey, intentionally broke it down per county, so that when it's collected and completed, any and all counties will be able to take that information for their particular communities.

Any questions so far?

And I can't see everyone, so I'm going to ask if Gabby can help if there are questions, please?

[Pause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Seeing none....

As I mentioned, we do have 14 staff now. Unfortunately, I realize my picture is a little outdated and we need to update this photo to incorporate all of our new staff.

And I talked about our Board as well.

Now, within our Family Center on Deafness programs and services, we are so fortunate that we can start working with a family at early detection, from birth, and we can work with that family who has a youth in that home up until that youth is 18.

So what's amazing is we get to see families grow and transition and learn and we get to support them through all kinds of life's journeys and experiences, in an effort to ensure that they feel supported and they realize that they're never alone.

One of our first programs that we can offer any family who comes in is from 0-5. And again, when we talk about offering these services, if, for example, the child is Deaf or hard of hearing who is in that age group of 0-5, we will serve the parents or guardians or anyone in the household.

Within our play group, which has been a very successful group, it's an opportunity for parents to come together and allow their kids to engage and play and they, at the same time, will have the opportunity to network and to learn from one another.

And to just talk.

If any of you are on this call and are parents like I am myself, sometimes you just need to know that you're not alone and not going crazy, quite frankly. And sometimes you need to know that yes, kids have temper tantrums and what do you do? What is your strategy?

Our play group is bringing parents together and share skills and resources and what languages are being used within that household and how to best move forward to ensuring they have the best support that they need.

Yes, go ahead. Glenna, I think you have a question?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: So family involvements, I'm finding --

>> INTERPRETER: Sorry, this is the interpreter speaking. The screen is very small; one moment while I adjust please.

>> INTERPRETER: I gotcha.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: This is Glenna. How do families find you?

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: That's a great question. Thank you, Glenna. One of the things we'll talk about a little bit later is all of the amazing networking and connection and community collaborations that we've been working on. That is one of our biggest ways.

We currently have an amazing contract agreement with the Pinellas County School Board that allows us to work closely with the school system. We get to go into the classrooms, we get to work with the teachers and the staff there, so they help with referrals.

We just this past meeting had -- I'm sorry, this past week had a meeting with All Children's Hospital in an effort to get into their early intervention program for them to start sharing resources.

And we have asked and presented to Anna and Sean -- I'm sorry, Anna and Sean about trying to also have our web page added to your resource list, through the Council, because right now we are not on the Council's website.

So a lot of it is word of mouth and collaboration, but we are still working to build and expand on all of those resources and lists. So great question.

[Echo].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Are there other questions?

[Pause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: All right. Thank you.

[Note from CART Captioner]: There is an open mic and an echo.

>> SUE: There is another question.

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: I'm sorry, go ahead.

>> SUE: It was just a comment. This is Sue Rosenbluth on the Board of FCD. We have connections through Child Find in Pinellas County, so the Child Find coordinators working through the hospital knows of us. Whether the hospitals know about us or not, but Child Find when the child is first diagnosed as Deaf or hard of hearing, they know about us. And again, that's word of mouth.

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Right. And this is Anthony. Yeah, thank you, yeah.

[Echo].

>> [Open mic].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: What is also exciting and is piece that we have here, since we have been in existence for 28 years now, we have noticed over the last two falls that we are getting more and more of this -- [echo].

[Note from CART Captioner]: There is an echo! Please mute your microphones if you are not speaking.

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: We are now serving the second generation of families in Pinellas County which is an exciting moment for us, because things have been going wonderfully and people really trust --

[Echo].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: -- to actually come back and get additional service.

>> LISA (CART CAPTIONER): Excuse me, this is Lisa, the Captioner. We need all microphones muted, please; I'm getting feedback.

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: All right. We're going to move onto our elementary program --

>> LISA (CART CAPTIONER): Excuse me, Anthony. I need Sally to please mute your microphone. Thank you.

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Your microphone is on.

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: This is Gina. There is a lot of echo, it's hard to hear.

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: We're going to test it. Is that getting better? Perfect, thank you, guys. Thanks for letting me know, Lisa.
Are we good?

>> INTERPRETER: Betti, it looks like you need to mute, Betti Bonni, you need to mute yours.

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: All right. Thank you. Okay. So the next program we have is our elementary program, which is really focused on our youth who are in elementary programs. So kindergarten, all the way up through working into transitioning to middle school. So fifth grade.

Now, as you can see, what we're doing here with all of those students every afternoon Monday through Thursday is they're coming in from school, because I mentioned we have a great relationship with Pinellas County schools, we are working with students on their homework, we are talking to the teachers, figuring out where their strengths and weaknesses are, and where we can best support the teacher in educating the child.

Sometimes it's linguistic training, sometimes vocabulary, sometimes reading, writing, it just depends on the individual student and the need that they have for us to meet.

We will do, along with that, life skills. As we know, the majority of children who are Deaf or hard of hearing and have hearing loss where the parents are not learning sign language to communicate with them, so we're also, while we're also trying to support the educational aspect of the child's learning, we're putting in life skills, coping skills.

How to learn turn-taking, how do we play with one another? What does all of that look like?

All of this is happening in our programs and services in the afternoon.

What's really amazing about FCD and we will talk about this a little bit later too with some of the older students, is that we are able to incorporate learning in a more casual environment, meaning it's not always as structured as a classroom curriculum might be, but everything that we're doing, from playing card games, to playing on the playground is an opportunity for the staff to work with the youth and teach them vocabulary, teach them essential pieces of colors, numbers, turn taking, manners, everything we can think of to make sure our students are getting the most rounded experience throughout our programs.

One of the most exciting things that I have to share with you guys today is in this past year, FCD staff have worked incredibly hard! And we are now a licensed child care center in Pinellas County. Woo! Which is so exciting!

[Applause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Pinellas County licensing board is actually more strict in its regulations than the state licensing board!

And so over this past year, year and a half, the staff have taken 40 hours of additional training, taken and passed seven exams, and then just this week, the woman who runs this program, Liz, actually completed and passed her director licenseship!

So she is now a fully child care license holder for the Pinellas County licensing board!

[Applause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: So we are thrilled with that!

And what that does is afford us a child care center and the clout and it's not just about a drop-off center for daycare.

We are really working to build and educate the children, as we go back to our mission, to enhance all of their communication, their education, and their independence.

So, big, big kudos to the FCD staff for putting in all of those additional hours and taking on all of that DCF training. So, again, I can't say enough about what the staff has accomplished!

We then go into our middle school program. Here again, we are providing some great opportunities. Now as you read through our list -- let me give you a second to do that; I'm sorry.

[Pause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: You can see exactly what it is that we are doing with these kids everyday; tutoring, robotics, a life program which I'll touch on a little bit, field trips.

We're talking about learning how to play sports and improve our math skills. Talking about Deaf and hard-of-hearing culture. Talking about the opportunity to do travel, arts,

discovery, and our summer camps.

So, again, this is an opportunity where we're not just talking to the kids, we're not just presenting information. This is a hands-on experience as well, where the kids are in the weeds. They're planning their trips.

Last year, the travel club, the kids had to pick where they wanted to go, figure out how they were going to get there, call the hotel, make reservations, schedule tours.

They had to build on the communication skills to enhance all of those things. Once they did all that, we then were able to find the funds to send them.

They chose St. Augustine, they went to the School for The Deafblind, they did tours and figured out how long it would take to drive, how many miles, how much the gas would cost. Those are life skills they will never forget.

That's one example of the amazing things happening in our program.

We also have a collaboration and a project with NTID, RIT for their robotics program. So right now, we have a middle school and a high school robotics team. And we have the ability to introduce robotics into our elementary program through NTID.

What's been amazing is our teams last year went, we had two separate teams for middle school that went, and our boys' team last year, they took third place in the nation, which was amazing!

They missed internationals by one point, which was a bummer! It was an amazing opportunity for these kids. What they have to do is they get all the parts, they have to build the robots, they have to build the fields, they have to program and code everything, and then they have to compete in the competition.

And the competition expectations change every year.

So we are so fortunate and proud to have a robotics program for both our middle school as well as our high school.

As we move on into our high school program. A lot of the same types of things are happening, except for, now with kids who are older.

What's exciting here is we are able to offer things like driver's ed. and this is where our collaboration starts to shine, working with self-reliance based out of Tampa, we were able to have Mike come over and teach driver's ed. to the youth.

And then they could have a Deaf instructor teach them driver's lessons and go with them to sit with their exams.

Some of our parents weren't as thrilled about it as we were! But it was exciting to see the kids get excited about having the opportunity to take and soon to be driving.

So in this next couple of months, we will be having several of our students with driver's licenses, which is good and bad! [Laughs].

Another huge collaboration that we have is we're part of the Academic Bowl Team through Gallaudet University. Now, last year, our students were able to go to nationals at Gallaudet, we were one of 16 teams selected.

This past week, we just took our screening and we are now passed up into the regionals again this year. What that means is these students are competing at a national level with other schools and programs in another country.

I'm going to brag a little bit more, it wouldn't happen without the great support of the Pinellas County school teachers and coaches we have here through our staff.

What's amazing is we have our teams come to us for two days a week in the afternoon. Actually I think Academic Bowl Team comes one day a week with us and the kids practice and practice and practice.

Most of the other teams that we're competing against from around the nation are part of the Schools for the Deaf where they're actually teaching and training for the full year all the time during the week and throughout the whole school year.

So what's amazing is that even though we don't get to work with the kids everyday and that we don't focus strictly on Academic Bowl, our team was able to make it nationals last year and already made it to regionals this year.

So we are incredibly thrilled and proud of all of the great work they're doing.

And, again, these are skillsets and knowledge bases that they will never, ever forget, which is, again, going back to our mission, thinking about that: Education, independence, and communication.

These are all things that are going to make them more successful as they become adults.

Two and a half years ago, we were fortunate enough to win a grant for three years through the Hollace Foundation through Stetson University and that had us set up a mentorship program for students who work with FCD. We didn't want to set up another boys and girls club with experience.

What part of the grant was focused on was looking at a child when they come in and figuring out if they're someone who is Deaf or hard of hearing, have a hearing loss, are they sign language users? Are they spoken English users? Are they spoken Spanish users?

Who are they? Where are they? And how do we then find a Deaf or hard of hearing or an individual who is an adult with hearing loss who has a like background?

And what we did was paired them up. And in that pairing up, we then allowed them to work for the past 2½, almost 3 years now where they would come together once a month and we would have a specific topic.

As you can see in the pictures, we have a cooking class taking place up top. And then on the bottom, we had a French-trained chef who came in and talked about etiquette and formal dining and showed them how to set tables and plates and things.

And after that, we took them out to a five-star restaurant for a seated dinner.

Some of these kids wouldn't have this opportunity anywhere else and here they had this experience. And, again, learn a new skillset that could only help them be a well-rounded individual.

Another opportunity we did is that we were able to take the students over to Universal Studios. They were granted a card which had \$60 on it, like a cash card, and throughout the day they had to use math, to look at how much they were spending and how much was remaining and what they could afford for lunch and what they could afford for dinner.

They had to map out the whole entire experience. They had to map out their day. They had to map out what they were doing when and where and how they were going to get there.

After they did that, then they were also going to be kind of challenged for the first time, many of them, to do things on their own that day.

Parents were not with us. And only the Deaf or hard of hearing or individual with hearing loss mentor was with the students.

We had one young lady who was 14-years-old, she's Deaf, her family all have the ability to hear and use very little to no sign language in the home.

It was time for lunch. And she looked at her mentor and said all right, you order. And the mentor said hmm... no, you order.

And the young lady said I have never ordered my own food. I have never picked my own lunch. I have never done any of these things on my own. My mom always does it for me. I don't know what to do.

And so our mentor said okay, let me show you what I do. As a Deaf adult, here is how I go and order from a restaurant.

And our adult pulled out her phone and typed in her order and showed it to the cashier. The cashier then went ahead, of course, and began to ring up the order. And the staff paid for it.

Then she looked, the mentor looked to the young lady and said it's your turn. She looked like a deer in the headlights. What?! What do I have to do? I have to order my own food?!

You can do it, just try. So the young lady typed in her own order and showed the cashier.

When she was done placing her order and paying, the mentor said well, how do you know when your food is ready? How do you know when it's your turn to pick up your tray?

I have no idea! The young lady said. I don't know what I'm supposed to do.

Ah... the Deaf mentor typed in her phone, when it's my turn, please wave my receipt because I'm Deaf and I can't hear you call my name. I'm going to stand back there.

When the young lady typed, she began to type the message and showed the register (sic), the two ladies stepped back and waited for their tickets to be waved.

Eventually the mentor's ticket was waved and she came up and grabbed her food and came back. A few minutes later, our young lady, her ticket was waved and she walked to the counter.

The thing that is so amazing is that, and we have a video of it, I didn't include it in the PowerPoint today, but we have a video of it, that one of our other mentors took, the minute this young lady put her hands on the tray to pick up the food that she had ordered for the very first time, to pick up the food that she chose for herself for the very first time, she had a visible change on her face. She turned around with that tray in her hand, the biggest smile on her face!

And she got so proud and walked so happily back and sat down and was thrilled that she, for the first time, had shown independence in her ability to order her own food!

From the rest of that trip, throughout the rest of that day, and even now, a year and a half later here at FCD, this young lady has now become one of our leaders.

She is someone who has now become a cheerleader for attempting to try new things. A cheerleader for encouraging her colleagues to get out of their own comfort zone. To not sit back and wait for everybody else to do something for them but to try on their own.

And for me, that is what this is all about, right? This is why FCD exists. FCD is here to help provide those opportunities so that every child, every adult has an opportunity to enhance their communication, their education, and their independence.

We thought we would throw in a quick short testimonial that I have. One, the first one you're going to watch is of two parents whose son are in this life program. And then the third one is one of our Deaf mentors who helps with the program.

So if you bear with me, I'm going to attempt to pull this up. And I hope it works! Because I had it up earlier.

It is captioned, just so you know.

[Pause].

[No audio].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Okay. I'm being told some people are not able to see. Are you guys able to see the screen? No? All right. Let me see if I can... it says I'm sharing, so let me see here...

[Pause].

>> Anthony, Jackie is saying you can click for a new share and that might fix it.

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: I apologize, folks.

>> ELIZABETH: This is Jackie. When you're sharing, you have to stop sharing and then click a new share on the correct...

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Thank you.

>> It's a new share.

[Pause].

[Video played with captions].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: So this is Anthony. So those are just two testimonials that we have from parents and one of the folks that's been involved with our Deaf mentorship program.

We have seen great strides of success, really, in each and every one of their lives, and it's just so exciting to see.

Now, that three-year grant will expire at the end of June. But I believe we already have potential funding in place to allow it to continue forward. So we're very excited about that.

I have a few more slides to go through, but I wanted to just stop real quick and see if any of you might have questions so far or anything that I can address before we move into our funding and partnerships?

[Pause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Okay, Glenna is going to hold off for questions until a little bit later. That's fine. Gina, did you have some?

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: Yes, I do. I am praying for you guys to expand!

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: [Laughs].

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: I need you in Michigan! I need you in Florida! You almost drove me to tears thinking about a little boy I used to interpret for, that told me he was going to be -- he was almost ten, he told me he was going to be a heart surgeon and he said but, you know, it will be hard because I'm Deaf and people think Deaf can't do it. One year later they closed the school and it broke my heart.

Because I'm saying... you know,... oh, gosh! So, when I see your presentation, I hear what you guys are doing, I'm telling you, you're moving me to tears! You have got to expand!

You're on my prayer list officially!

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: This is Anthony. Thank you so much, Gina!

Yeah, and, you know, the challenge for us, quite frankly, is that we have families that are coming from Tampa and up north and we have families coming from Sarasota and coming up to us asking us if we can help provide programs and services.

But unfortunately, our funds have to stay within Pinellas County at this time. But that's

where our relationship and connection with the Council and with the other organizations associated can help us.

Because if we could replicate the success that we're having at FCD in other parts of the state and/or country, that would be amazing!

But our current bucket of funding is really what limits us to just the Pinellas County area. And I'll touch on that in just a minute.

But thank you! We can always use any sort of prayers and thoughts!

Our staff, I'm sure, would love it if we weren't working quite as many hours everyday. But it does, again, it's a testament to their commitment to serving the community and that's why we're all here.

So if no other questions right now, I'm going to go back and share my last few slides and then we can go ahead and open it up for more conversations. So thank you, guys, so much for staying with us.

We also offer at this point free sign language classes. And we offer those not only to the families that we have currently working with us, that we serve, but we also offer them to other programs and organizations around our community.

Our efforts are really to educate the greater community as well about how to work with and support families who are Deaf and hard of hearing within their organizations.

When I show you the list of collaborations and networking that we have, you'll see places like Great Exploration Children's Museum. Well, that's a children's museum based here in St. Pete that actually has won quite a few national awards.

And what they are really focused on is making sure that they are providing play groups and access to their programs. So they like for us to have their play groups there, so that then families can see this is something they want to support.

And we're actually going to be going in and training their staff starting in January, about how to work with and support Deaf and Hard of Hearing families as they come on-site.

Another example is Glazer Children Museum in Tampa and they wanted to make sure -- they opened a dinosaur exhibit in the fall and they wanted it Deaf friendly and be there as Deaf kids and play with all of the different things and see the skeletons and really talk about resources that they could set up that were in ASL, so that -- and captioned so that everyone who is Deaf or hard of hearing who comes into that exhibit can experience it to its full potential.

So those are some of the great things we're able to accomplish through some of these other services we're providing, like our sign language program.

Of course we also have a ton of resources and we would love to share them. We actually still have an old fashioned lending library which I'm holding onto because I'm old school and I know that sometimes as a busy parent, having the ability to flip through a book or throw in a DVD and watch it with your kid is still a reasonable way for you to learn language and to build that connection.

We try to have minimally four family events a year. We often supersede that in working in collaboration with other organizations, as well as doing specialized topics.

The picture on the left was actually Jennifer, who is a Deaf marine biologist would works down at Loggerhead Marina and we took the dev mentorship program down there in the summer and we saw sea turtles lay eggs in the middle of the night with all of the kids and parents and have her talk to us about what was happening.

It was amazing!

And she came up with the families who couldn't attend and talk about sea life and how to focus on conservation and make sure that we were saving our planet.

The picture on the right was one of our recent events where we work with the Deaf Literacy Center to host a Halloween event and what that does is we open it up for families

to play games and do trick-or-treating and we did that in collaboration with a local farm that opened up here in Pinellas Park.

So the three of us worked together to ensure our Deaf community could come out, have fun, and actually have an accessible experience to celebrate the holidays.

And we do that typically with a Signing Santa, we do that with Halloween and in the spring, and we do it at least three or four times a year, which is amazing. So we're grateful for those relationships.

My button is going a little slow...

[Pause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: There we go.

So, funding. We need funding [laughs]! We are incredibly active. We are doing a lot of amazing things. And while in the past three years, we've been able to grow our funding, we are in a better place than we have been for a long time.

However, as you can see, with all the programs and services that we're providing, we need more help.

We are, as I mentioned, and Gina brought it up again, we are currently at two locations. We're at our main office location, which is in a warehouse district, and then we have a small portable location on one of the elementary school properties.

And again we're grateful for the relationship we have with the school that allows us to have our portable there.

However, with our new licensing for our child care center, our main office cannot be granted approval because we do not have a green space or a playground for the kids to play on.

And we only have an alleyway.

So really, we are in need of a facility. We would love to move all of our programming and services under one roof.

I always, when people ask me, what would be the place you need, I say you know, ideally, if we could find that small 200-member Lutheran church that has a fellowship hall, a sanctuary, Sunday school classrooms, and a playground, that's all I'm asking!

If any of you know anyone out there who would like to donate such a property, please don't hesitate to call.

Or if you have resources, we would like to stay in the Pinellas Park, Clearwater area, we would like to serve this county, we don't want to go too far south because that will impact the families come to us for services.

We are doing more fundraising events, Give Tuesday is coming to Florida soon, it's the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, and we have our Give Tuesday button up.

And we are working on grants and we have a grant supporting us right now as well as board members helping us go out and asking for money to continue to support this great program.

But we know we can't do it alone. And that's where working again in collaboration with the Council and other organizations around the state. We can make sure that people are aware that we're here and that their services can be provided, especially within the Pinellas County area.

[Pause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: I about fell over when I saw this list, and I'm going to be very clear, it's not exhaustive, we could only fit so many names on this slide, and these are

just a few, I mentioned already, Great Ex and the Glazer Museum, we have a relationship with the School Board and the City of Pinellas Park have allowed us to use their facilities for some bigger events.

A lot of other places you see here are organizations who work with the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community, not the same work we do, but back to I believe Glenna's comment about building a collaboration and wanting to build up that network.

So we as Family Center on Deafness are really working to reach across to these other organizations and work together with them.

We all know, unfortunately, that historically the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community doesn't always easily come together for collaboration, but we are not going to give up. We continue to work with other organizations in an effort to say we're here to serve the community, first and foremost.

This is not about us. And it's not about me, definitely. But what it is about is ensuring that every Deaf and hard-of-hearing individual who is in Pinellas County never feels that they are alone, never feels that they can't accomplish or achieve anything.

But that we are there to provide them the support and encouragement that they need to continue to grow and to better themselves.

I think this is really cool! I wanted to take a moment to celebrate again how much that the staff and the Board have helped us accomplish over the last couple years.

We have been not only recognized at our local level, but at the national level. The National Diversity Council actually recognized FCD and the work that we're doing here as an inclusive environment. That we are striving to ensure that everyone feels welcome here, no matter what mode of communication you choose to use.

And to me, that was a huge honor!

I was able to fly up to Atlanta, where they had an awards ceremony and we were presented our award, which was very humbling.

The City of Pinellas Park, the chamber there, they actually granted us the inaugural award for Exceptional Service Provider, so that was also an exciting thing that just happened this last year.

We also were selected to be the featured presentation at the Council For Exceptional Children's international conference in Kentucky last year and we presented at the state conference a couple weeks ago here in Florida.

And we've been spotlighted as The Pinellas Community Foundation, these are some accolades we have gotten and we haven't talked about the award that Liz just got and there is others coming down the pike because of the work the staff is accomplishing.

Whew! That was a lot!

We are doing amazing things! We really could utilize the help, the support, the encouragement from the Florida Coordinating Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Having -- knowing that you are there and encouraging people to also reach out to us, that we are here to support you is, I think, what's going to help us get to that next level.

I think it was Cecil who mentioned that needing help with writing letters to be sent to our representatives, I know that there are limitations as to what the Council can do or endorse.

But FCD wants to figure out how we can help connect our families -- or the families and youth that we serve and provide programs to, to be there, to help with the letter writing, to help with the calls, to help us, as a whole, get what we know we need.

We need certified interpreters working in schools, correct? We need more access services and programs provided around the state for adults and for youth and for families.

We can help spread the word through those pieces.

So, as was mentioned earlier, one of the ways we thought to help do this was to work with Chris Littlewood, Betti Bonni, and Jabil, and two years ago, we created a survey.

And the survey, with all intentions, was created, a tool to be used and shared by all counties around the state of Florida.

And anyone who wanted to utilize it.

And what we did is we wrote it in a way that would allow it to be accessible through sign language, through spoken English, through captioning, and would break it down to the levels of the county so that the counties could actually benefit from it.

We had a big launch, but to be honest, it really did not go anywhere, because we didn't have the support we needed from places like the Council, FRID, FAD.

And so it is now here. We are now here at this moment with all of you listening!

And we're so excited that we have this opportunity to share.

And I thought I would just pull it up, just so you can see it. Gabby will send out that e-mail, she has the link and everything to share with you.

But I wanted to just show you quickly what it looks like so you get a sense of how it was structured.

[Pause].

[Video played]:

>> Hello, I'm Chris Littlewood, and I'm a self-advocate for people who are Deaf and hard-of-hearing. This is Betti Bonni, who is a Deaf Certified Interpreter. We are trying to get in the state of Florida who are Deaf and hard of hearing and who may need resources for effective communication.

Responses to this survey is completely voluntary. Although counts will be shared, your information is completely confidential and will not be reported to any agency.

[End of video].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: So as you go through, I believe it's 28 questions, and all that information is being collected through Jabil. FCD is not collecting that information. And point of clarification, we are also not making any money on this project. This is not a way for us to collect e-mails or anything to that effect.

But what we wanted to do is get the numbers of Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, adults and youth, to be able to incorporate into grant writing and, quite frankly, to be able to start to share this information with our representatives.

Because as we know, the information is not really out there at this time.

So, that is one thing that we could really use your help with, if we can get this information shared and disseminated, that would be wonderful.

I think at this time I would like to just stop and open it up for any questions or comments about what we've shared and go from there.

Glenna?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Yes, this is Glenna. One way that we could all help would be to apply to be on this Council. That makes our Council more strong. It gets attention, maybe.

And I'll give you an example. Parent of -- this is a position on our council -- parent of a child with hearing loss is vacant, if any of your people can apply, you can encourage them. Maybe somebody from Hands & Voices.

Deaf Service Center agency, many have closed down, like we've discussed. That might apply to you.

Yeah, I think those are the two vacancies. So maybe you could recommend, you know, someone who sells hearing aids, we've got a position [chuckles], you know, someone who is Deaf friendly you might encourage someone in the community.

So those are three positions that you might have a network to fill.

Our website does have -- it has our report. I think you have to go on the website, it's on the left-side column and go under reports.

And then in that section, it will have the application. You know, there was a time where you could do an online, but now you have to actually print it and then it has to be notarized, so that does require it to be printed and sent on manually, and I'm not sure if maybe that's not why we don't receive enough applications. I don't know.

That is one way you can help our Commission -- or Council, rather.

And then you asked a question about how many people there are? How many responses have you received to your survey?

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: This is Anthony. So far, I think we're at about 400. Which we know in our state is not nearly accurate.

And so what we're really hoping is that if we can get the school systems, if we can get the independent living centers, if we can get other Deaf and hard-of-hearing organizations, VR, the Council, to help us spread the word about the survey, then that would allow us to hopefully get more accurately counts, that might help us to be able to better extrapolate numbers.

I mean, we know there are hundreds of thousands of people within the state of Florida who have various levels of hearing loss. And we intentionally wrote the survey to not be exclusionary of any type of hearing loss.

I believe we, if you go on later and read through some of the questions, we ask about Deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, hearing loss, in an effort to make sure that we were not talking about just individuals who are Deaf and hard of hearing and who use sign language.

We really wanted to make it as broad as possible.

Because at FCD, as I'm sure in many other organizations, those who are coming into the doors are individuals with the various levels of hearing loss.

And so we wanted to count anyone who identified as someone with a hearing loss.

So that would include senior citizens, but that would include also potentially someone who uses a hearing aid for slight or mild loss. So we were hoping to get the most accurate numbers as we could.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: This is Glenna. So that survey, is it shareable, meaning if you were to send me that link, I could share it with others and encourage them, you know, people in local organizations to me in South Florida or, perhaps I could send it out to other organizations so they could share it to their networks and maybe encourage people to click the link?

So it's a shareable, anybody can respond? Anybody could share it out? Great. So could you share that link with us? Because -- or maybe give it to Gabby so that Gabby can share it out to us; that's the correct way.

And that way all of the organizations represented here, VR, education, you know, various organizations.

Oh, we've got a person who is the Department of Elder Affairs, she could probably share it to her folks.

We do have a variety of people on this Council. And if you can send the link to Gabby, she can share it out to all the organizations represented here. Great!

Do you have a goal for when you finish this survey, when you close the window? Or will it be open indefinitely?

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: This is Anthony. We were hoping to be able to close it last fall, but obviously there were so few responses, that we've just kept it open indefinitely at this point.

I think what we will probably need to do is do another launch of the survey and establish a new cutoff date so it's not just hanging out there forever.

But in our internal discussions, we thought it would be better to leave it out there in hopes that more people would start utilizing it and collecting more information than making it close too early.

So right now, we don't have a timeframe of closure.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Yeah, I see. I think it would be worth it to try again, distribute it again. I have seen many organizations that are becoming more and more active now that COVID is a little bit further behind us.

It was a slow-going time for a while there. But I'm seeing more and more events, community gatherings, so maybe now is the time to send it out.

Things got really quiet during COVID in many of our organizations, but I think now people are getting outside.

And that actually, events might be a good time to spread the survey. So I think it's timely.

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Thank you.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Great. And then I also wanted to say -- maybe I missed it somehow -- how many families and Deaf children and how many people, I suppose, have you -- are you serving?

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: So the exciting thing that we can share is that right now, we have 91 youth that we're serving, we have 71 adults, for a total of 66 households.

Now, that's not how many we've served over the last 28 years; that's just how many are currently actively being served through our programs and services.

So it's a lot. And of course we want to provide more and more. So we're working very hard to get the word out, that we are here.

One of the bigger events that we started hosting two years ago is that we work with the Pinellas County and we have established what is called Deaf Day with Pinellas and what we do is we bring together social service agencies from the county and they set up and then we bring in the Deaf and hard-of-hearing organizations from Tampa Bay and then they set up.

And our goal is to educate not only the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community about what services are available to them, but we're also educating the services about how to work with the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

So, for example, Text-to-911 is now available in Pinellas County. So at that event, the 911 operators can work with the Deaf community to set their phones up for 911 emergencies.

And then the Deaf individuals could explain to the 911 workers how to engage with the Deaf community and talk about use of language and what that might look like.

So, we got a lot of excitement. This was our second year and we had a great turnout!

And now they're looking at how to expand that program next year, to incorporate more than the 17 agencies from the county that were there this year.

So, it's taking time, but we're definitely growing and expanding and getting the word out to the greater community.

And so through those educations, through presentations, I'm going to the Florida Girl Scouts next week and giving a presentation about what we do. We've presented to PARC, which is an adult services program for individuals who are development delayed.

We are spending time, like I said, I've presented to the Council For Exceptional Children conference. We've presented to the cities of Pinellas Park, we've presented to the city of Largo, Florida.

So we're actively trying to get out and do more presentations and education to the community as a whole.

So thank you.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: This is Glenna. And, Anthony, you were talking about receiving funding and so forth from the partners that you're working with.

The question I have for you now, I guess, I'm not sure about this year specifically, but who are your total funders you're working with right now? How much money are you receiving?

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: So we actually have -- a majority of our funding is coming from the Juvenile Welfare Board. We then have several grants that we're receiving every year annually. And then donations.

So I'm excited to announce that as of this moment, FCD has surpassed the \$1 million budget for fiscal '24.

So we have worked very hard to get to that point! And we hope to continue to continue to grow.

Unfortunately, as I'm sure most of you on this call know, Florida, the state of Florida has absolutely no fiscal support for any Deaf and hard-of-hearing organizations, that I'm aware of.

So that would be one thing that would be amazing, is if we could work collaboratively, with the help of the Council, to figure out how to find state funding.

Because like the Florida Association of the Blind, they're getting a big chunk of money every year to provide services throughout the state. The blind community has done a fabulous job of networking for 75 years and getting people to give them money.

We, at FCD and other Deaf and hard-of-hearing organizations have not done a good job with that. So we do need that collaborative approach because, quite frankly, I should not have to rely on private donations or grants to be able to serve the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community in Florida.

I should be able to have some sort of support and funding from the state.

So I would love -- that would be a great project that I would love to figure out how we move forward on in the future. Thank you.

Gina, I see you have your hand up.

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: Anthony, when you send Gabby that information that Glenna asks for, could you include where a person would send donations to? You know, give me some exact language for non-profits or for-profit organizations so I can know how to tell them where to send it.

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Sure, thank you.

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: Well, do it -- Glenna, I'm not going to do it as a council member. I saw your face!

I'm not going to do it as a council member, this is personal, okay?

[Laughter].

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: All right. Thank you.

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Right. And this is Anthony. And, yeah, just to make sure that we're kosher across the board, definitely, we, on our website, we actually have a donation page, a button that people can go to. The survey is also on our web page, but Gabby has that as well.

But that's kind of how we typically will collect and support donations, through our website, personal checks, or whatever people can send us directly as well.

But, yeah, thank you guys so much.

Other comments or questions that anyone might have?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: This is Glenna. And Anthony, I do have one more question. But you're absolutely right, in terms of the blind community, they have a really strong ability to be able to receive tons of funding.

In regards to, I think it's DAPD, they focus on -- they have limited -- for people who are cognitively limited, so there's a category there that that helps them in terms of the blind group.

So I know for sure the politics are strong when it comes to those two groups.

So the blind community definitely has a support mechanism behind them and the Deaf community does not.

So we just really kind of help each other.

Trying to get that word out is really -- it's very helpful.

The National Association of the Deaf is very good, but not our local state organizations.

So, yeah, you're right, the politics are strong; if we could voice our opinions and get the word out.

I know specifically for this Council, a couple of departments have started to reach out to others for people on the councils, for, I think it's DEF, Department of Educational Families, VR, Elder Affairs, Florida Association of the Deaf, you mean, we all have to know someone that could help us find some money for you.

And there's got to be something within each one of those departments. So hopefully we can start researching that and find some ways to make those connections for you.

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Thank you, Glenna. I agree, I think it would be great to continue to build on developing those relationships.

I will let you know that in an effort to do that locally, we did reach out to Lighthouse for the Blind and the executive director there and I wrote a grant together in an effort to get \$250,000, I believe it was, for the rehab of a facility, so that we could move into their building and have a joint facility.

And unfortunately, we were not selected for that grant.

But we are working locally to try to build some of those relationships. Because if we can kind of create a one-stop shop, especially for the community, you know, the Deaf and Blind community, the idea on Family Center on Deafness and the blind community would be perfect, then everyone would get served, but unfortunately it didn't work out.

But the conversations are being had down here, because we do see that as maybe one of our stronger ways with moving forward with finding funding. Thank you.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: For sure. This is Glenna. Yes, I agree. I think one last

question I have for you is... um... who's here? I'm looking specifically... I lost the interpreter! Where is the interpreter! Oh, no! I can't see the interpreter! Oh, there they are [laughs]. I see you now.

I thought -- was there an audio interpreter? Was there someone doing spoken English for us too?

>> INTERPRETER: [Signing, no interpreting].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: It looks like I'm losing some of the interpreters. It's okay. Who is interpreting right now?

We've got two interpreters working. Fabulous. Okay, great.

Okay. So, the one last question I do have for you, Anthony, is I know there are a lot of people that are here on our Zoom that work at FCD or FAD (sic).

What are your roles at your center? At FCD, can you tell me who is who and who does what?

>> Hi there, Glenna, my name is Stefan and I am an employee of FCD. It's been about two years now and I work with the middle school students.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Thank you, Stefan. Yeah, anybody else?

>> Hi, Sheila. Yes, my name is Sheila, I work with the high school students.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Anyone else? This is Glenna. Anybody else? Elizabeth?

>> Hi, my name is Elizabeth and I'm the child care director and I work with the elementary program.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Thank you, Elizabeth. Who else can I point out? Jasmine?

>> Yeah, hi, my name is Jasmine and I work with the elementary program, I'm an assistant with Elizabeth.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Anybody else I can call out? Jackie, how about you?

>> Hi, my name is Jackie and I'm an FCD employee, I also work with the 0-5 age group.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: This is Glenna. Who else? Sally? Sally, are you still with us? Do you want to introduce yourself?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Savannah, how about you?

>> I am Savannah Adams, I am the middle school and high school assistant for Stefan and Sheila.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: That's great! Who else can I --

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Sally needs to turn her camera on.

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Do I see Carolyn? Oh, Carolyn, you stepped away. Okay. Tracy?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Maybe not Tracy. Sally, are you available for us? Hi, why don't you tell us what you do there at FCD.

>> What do I do? Oh, this is Sally. What do I do at FCD? Absolutely. Oh, my screen is frozen. Rats! Can you say it again for me, Glenna? This is Sally. You asked me what?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Tracy, how about you? You go ahead, Tracy. Do you want to introduce yourself?

>> Sure, my name is Tracy, my last name is Kasch, and I've been working at FCD quite a bit. I'm super excited now, I manage the website, I do a lot of the media, the social media, some marketing, as well as the fact I deal with the robotics team. So working with the robotics team is fun.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: This is Glenna. Sally, are you ready for us? What do you do there at FCD?

>> Hi there, yeah, my name is Sally, I'm the program support specialist; I write down data of our customers, any sort of input when it comes to the numbers of the students that we have. I also deal with funding. And I deal with all the details with our Juvenile Welfare Board connection. Thank you.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: This is Glenna. Betti?

>> Hi, hi, my name is Betti and I'm on the FCD Board and I work with this fabulous group of people supporting the FCD, the staff, the managers and so forth. But I am also the financial director on the Board.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Is it Caitlyn, did you want to introduce yourself?

>> Hello, my name is Caitlyn Dollar, I am the program director at FCD, I have been here about six years now, really anything program related, I have the blessing to work with. So that's all the programs that we run from age zero all the way up to high school.

And then also our community outreaching and community service projects and our collaborations. So anything related with the programs, I'm involved with.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: This is Glenna. Is it Noelle? Noelle I thought I saw earlier. Who else we could have introduce themselves from FCD today?

It's okay. I don't see Noelle, her camera is not on.

Carolyn? Would you like to introduce yourself? Carolyn, your mic is on mute.

>> [On mute].

>> INTERPRETER: It's still on mute.

>> Sorry about that. Hi, my name is Carolyn Brewster, I'm the financial consultant, and I've been here since June 1st, and I love working here very much!

[Applause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: That's great! This is Glenna. I don't want to overlook anybody. There is Noelle, I think maybe Noelle disappeared. We have David.

>> Hi, my name is David, my last name is Maruca, and I have been here a few months now here at FCD, I work in the front office, I'm the office manager, I work with the clients that walk in, any of the students.

I just kind of manage the office and take care keeping ourselves organized, also entering some things into the database and our filing system.

So hi, it's nice to meet you!

>> GLENNA ASHTON: David, I have a question for you. David? Are you -- David? Hi.

[Pause].

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: He has two screens, so he's looking.

>> DAVID: [Signing, no interpreting].

Yes, this is David, I have two screens and there's one with the camera and one over at the left. When I look at the camera, I'm not actually looking at myself. Sorry, I have one eye on myself and one eye on the other.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: This is Glenna. David, are you still working as a DI?

>> DAVID: Yes, I'm working all over Florida, I'm still working as a CDI, I passed my test and I'm not just a DI. So yes, I'm a certified Deaf Interpreter, yes, thank you.

[Applause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: This is Glenna. I'm still looking for Noelle. Does Noelle want to turn on your camera and say hi to us? Anyone? Katrina, did you want to say hi?

>> Well, since everyone -- I kind of talked before. I just wanted to say that Noelle is probably listening. She is a teacher of the Deaf in the Pinellas County School System and has served as president of the board on Family Center on Deafness, and as with Sue and myself, Noelle is one of the founding members of the Board.

So she's probably tuned in listening, but she is also actively multitasking network right now.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Oh, wow, thank you for clarifying. Okay, got it.

All right, great, great, great, yeah, thank you, we'll leave her alone then.

So this is Glenna again. I'm curious about your program. It seems like you're really great with the elementary, middle, and high school. So you mentioned that that's in the afternoon, Anthony? You don't do anything on the weekends or anything during the day, correct? So it's 0-5, what's their timeframe? How do they participate?

What do you do in the 9:00 to 5:00 hours?

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Yeah, this is Anthony. Thank you so much, Glenna, that's a great question.

So we actually serve, our programs run late afternoon. Our programs run throughout the day sometimes at various times, sometimes it's out in the office, sometimes it's out in the community, whatever works best for the families throughout the day.

Now, what happens during the rest of the time is our staff are working very hard doing one-on-one work with families and individuals, sometimes in homes, sometimes in the actual school classrooms, or sometimes here in the office preparing for the afternoon programs.

So we start having youth arrive around 1:30, Monday through Thursday, and then we finish our program, I believe our last program ends at 6:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

So our families and staff are really engaged throughout the day with sometimes it's doing documentation and paperwork, sometimes it's doing tutoring, sometimes we're assisting the teachers in the classrooms, sometimes we're meeting with parents outside for one-on-one discussions about services and programs.

And then that's also -- the morning's also when we do a lot of tours. So for new families that are interested in joining FCD and allowing us to serve them, we will have them come in, we will show them our space so they can get comfortable and get a better sense of what it is we do and how we support them.

So thank you.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: That's great. So all of your staff is full-time then?

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Well, I am thrilled that with our new increase of positions and our increase of funding this past spring, we now have eleven full-time employees! We have two part-time employees, who are drivers who help us with our transportation for youth to and from school.

Now, just to give you an idea, is every week we do about 26 runs, meaning 26 pickups or dropoffs every week for the families that we serve. Which is a lot! [Chuckles].

And we do that with the two staff part-time and the majority of the staff on this call will also help with transportation when needed.

We've all been trained, we've all been approved to do those services.

So, we can always use more staff. We can always use more funding and more hours. But we're doing an awful lot with just the few people we have here.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: This is Glenna. Yes, I'm sure that the transportation makes such a big difference. I'm sure that it's been tough for some families to bring their children, you know, between work and maybe not having a vehicle. I believe the transportation is such a valuable asset, right?

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Yeah, yeah. When -- this is Anthony -- when we started providing transportation, again this past summer, we saw very quickly a huge increase, not

only in folks participating, but in the request for transportation.

So, you know, another one of our asks that we put out there is we need another van and we need someone else to fund another driver position.

So those are other services and programs that if we had the additional staff and vehicle, we could do even more than what we're doing right now.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Sure, yeah.

Okay. It's fabulous! It's really just all great news! It's a great presentation! I am so happy to have met with all of you, all of the FCD staff, some of you that I have known for a little while. It's just really great to be a part of this. And you guys are absolutely right, we need to have FCD all over the state. That's right!

So thank you! Again, many, many thanks for your great representation. Thank you for the staff who stayed here and stuck with us!

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: This is Gina. Anthony? I'm going to give you a carrot, you want a school and you want a playground, you want classrooms. I have access to all of that when you move up here to Northeast Florida, okay?

[Laughter].

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: Katrina, you watch! Open up a suboffice, okay? All right. Bye! Thank you!

Great presentation, Anthony!

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Thank you.

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: It was nice meeting all you guys too!

>> ANTHONY VERDEJA: Thank you, Gina. This is Anthony.

One thing I would like to just put out there, and I put this out to Anna and Sean as well, but I would love it, as the Council is looking to start back in-person, the next time you guys find yourselves down here in the Tampa Bay Area, I would love to offer -- and it actually could happen any time -- but I would love to offer a tour of Family Center on Deafness.

I would love for you to come and see us in action. I think it would really be beneficial for everyone, from Sean and Anna, down to, you know, Gabby now as well, and all the council members, to really just see how much amazing work the staff are doing on a daily basis.

And how much of a great impact is happening for the families that we serve.

I just -- it's hard to put it into words or put it on a PowerPoint until you see it in action.

And it just... it does the soul good.

So thank you for this opportunity! Thank you for your patience and kindness to allowing us to present!

We look forward to being able to work collaboratively with the Council moving forward.

And please reach out, if there's stuff that we can share with our families, that we will definitely share information that you need or support that you guys need in any of the campaigns that we're trying to help ensure move forward. So thank you again!

[Applause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Again, wonderful! Thank you. Wonderful things. Great

presentation!

And I hope that some of you have been considering applying for the Council! Please join us!

Okay. So thank you. And if there are any final comments or questions? If anybody would like to close us out with some final comments?

[Pause].

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Gina?

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: Yeah, Glenna, don't we have -- this is Gina -- don't we have a position open for the FAD representative? Don't we have that open still from when Donna retired? So we could have a Deaf person apply, right?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Yes.

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: Yes. Jackie?! And who else do I see? Who else?! I saw a bunch of them on there! Sheila! All of you all, apply!

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Yeah, we're supposed to have two representatives, but now we're currently in search of a HLAA representative, so...

>> GINA HALLIBURTON: Okay.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Okay. So, once again, thank you very much to all of you for joining. We've gotten lots of great information from FCD. Thank you for bringing yourselves as well!

And I look forward to more partnerships with all of you. And with other organizations as well.

Gabby, do you have any final comments to wrap us up? Or if you wanted to mention the February meeting?

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: This is Gabby. I don't think we have anything else today.

And the only thing we would need for the February meeting is maybe a headcount of council members who think they may be able to come so we can look into hotels and meeting spaces and reservations for those.

>> CORY PARKER: [Signing, no interpreting].

[Talking over one another].

>> CORY PARKER: This is Cory. Is it still in Tallahassee?

>> GLENNA ASHTON: I'll have to let you know if I can go. I'm not sure.

>> GABRIELLE O'SULLIVAN: Yeah, the February meeting is still in Tallahassee, that's the plan for now.

>> CORY PARKER: Oh, so it is still in Tallahassee. Okay.

>> GLENNA ASHTON: Yeah, I think the Tallahassee locals will go, maybe the Jacksonville folks, Cory, I know you would be able to go.

We'll have to try and make sure that Cindy and Chris can come as well.

We might -- it might be lucky if we get a couple new appointments before then. Fingers crossed on that one!

Okay. I think -- let's see... it's 11:56 now and we are scheduled to stop by noon.

So once again, I wanted to thank all of you who joined us today. And I'm sure, maybe I'll see you in February or perhaps some other event in your local areas.

Again, big thanks to you all.

And I would say the meeting is adjourned now. Thank you! Thank you all!

[Concludes at 11:57 a.m.]

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