



## **DHHSC BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

### **Community Comments**

**August 16, 2014**

- I. Call to Order – JL
- II. Board Members Present: Amanda Sortwell, President (AS), Jonathan Silva, Vice-president (JS), Sue Stone, Secretary (SS), Chad Catron, treasurer (CC), Melissa Sortwell (MS), Jill Nolen (JN),  
Board Members Absent: Tess Contreras (TC), Brianna Berg (BB),  
DHHSC Staff Members Present: Michelle Bronson (MB), Executive Director, Jesse Lewis (JL) Development Director, Susan Coulter (SC), Educational Services Director, Kathy Yoshida, Director of Interpreting Services  
Visitors: 19 visitors signed in and the list is filed with the minutes  
Interpreters: Pam Warkentine, Nikki Wolfe
- III. Community Comments (3 minutes per visitor)
  - A. Jesse presented the results of the DHHSC elevation forms, 13 questions, encouraged people to fill these forms out, 60% deaf, 19% HH, 14% hearing, 3% DB, 4% late-deafened.  
94% + responses, 5% negative responses. Fresno area wants more information from Deaf professionals or Deaf students and baby signing classes. The Salinas area wants more services for seniors and families. Visalia wants more fun events, tutoring, more job opportunity, and workshops. People in the Merced area offered a lot of feedback: they want workshops, craft classes, CPR classes, and parenting skills workshops. The community likes the friendly staff, interpreter availability, ASL classes, workshops and events, computer access, DINGO, signing environment, videophones, access and advocacy.  
Ways to improve: faster response by staff, remodel the community center, more interpreters, more ads, increased awareness in hearing community about Deaf culture, fix AC in Visalia office, more social events, offer carpool, and caption the videos on the website. DSS requires this survey every year so please fill out forms every year even if you filled out one the previous year. Skippy had a question: how many people participated in the evaluation and when is the evaluation form given out? JL: total number about 120, and mostly from Merced. They are at the front desk and given to clients when they walk in. Beth Lipston wants to have only one staff person receive the evaluations. MB: can try, most likely person is Nat. Becky Sortwell: thinks that the importance of the form for our DSS funding should be added to the VLOG and perhaps a PDF form on the website that people can fill out and mail in. JL: but people are not looking at the VLOG, maybe can do through FaceBook. Kathy Yoshida: maybe put with DHHSC news. Alex Sanborn: why not designate one person across all offices. MB: maybe an AC person. Julie: I am an AC member and since AC members are not consistent I do not think it is a good idea.

Skippy: concerned about his right to privacy with the evaluation form. JL: forms only seen by one staff member so privacy is protected. Beth Lipston: Thinks it SHOULD be an AC member. Rosemary Diaz teaches at FSU and has noticed that the majority of grants require individuals who are receiving federal funds to hire an individual evaluator. Thinks responses are more honest if taken independent of the organization. Leanna: Why not Board and staff collaborate? David Glenn: also need to consider senior citizens.

B. Election of AC members. JL explained what the AC is and what the requirements are. We have 2 right now and need 2 more in the Fresno office. Beth Lipston and Alex Sanborn nominated themselves. Beth nominated Robin Kiefer. They all spoke briefly about why they wanted to be on the AC. Beth and Alex were voted in.

C. Comments from the community

1) Susan Turner from Merced is involved with the peer education program; wants a VLOG sent to the outlying areas on this topic and other workshops given. MB: working on this technology.

2) Becky Sortwell re AC please put the AC members contact information on Facebook and/or the website.

3) Martha McCollum feels very positive about DHHSC. Feels lucky to have such a great agency and services. Still very concerned about VRI. MB: if you are in the hospital and they advocate a VRI, DHHSC needs to hear about it right away to advocate for an actual interpreter.

4) RWD: suggestions for projects: nursing homes and deaf patients, perhaps to collaborate with FSU and their gerontology dept. MB: working on a grant for this issue.

5) Leanna Thompson: need a grant for access to mental health services. MB: this is always an issue.

6) Julie Glenn: re law enforcement, wants DHHSC to get involved with the various PD's, to facilitate communication when something happens and does not feel safe. MB can repeat that presentation.

7) Justin Gaines: would like to have a van set up for transportation for SSP's and DB members. MB the issue is liability; staff may not transport clients according to DSS. Becky Sortwell: maybe we can find a person outside of DHHSC. MB: yes, they would have to accept full liability.

8) Beth Lipston: likes the older system for getting a hospital interpreter where we called on the way to the hospital instead of having to get there first and then wait. JS: VRI ongoing issues that we are dealing with, but no one shows up to the workshops. One purpose of the workshop is to obtain feedback to take to the hospital so we can make an impact. Will be another workshop next month-- please attend!! MB: hospital must initiate the request.

9) Skippy: I have been hearing that community member numbers are dwindling at all agencies. Social media might be a factor. Warrants further discussion.

10) Leanna Thompson: re interpreter issue, has met many deaf people on the bus and said they would like to go to school but do not because no interpreters. School only provides interpreters to the age of 22. MB: come see a client service specialist!!

IV. Approval of Agenda Items – approved by consent; added Change in frequency of Board meetings.

V. Approval of June Board Minutes – approved

VI. President's Report – AS: I posted a VLOG last month that I got a new job after graduating in May with my degree and moved to San Diego. I cannot continue as Board president here. It has been a great 2 years. I am not as impressed with the agency there compared to ours here.

VII. Vice-President's Report – JS: JS and SS have served on the board for 5 years. Most of our members are long-term. We are looking for that type of commitment. Vision is full

Board of D/HH. We are asking for new members. 5 vacancies after Amada steps down. Many positive changes over the years bought about by the staff and the Board working together.

- VIII. Secretary's Report – SS: no report
- IX. Treasurer's Report – CC  
July Financial Report distributed and reviewed. Copy is filed with the minutes.  
Rummage sale brought in \$419 in profits.
- X. Executive Director's Report – Michelle Bronson

### **Funding Updates:**

I am very pleased to share that we received funding in the amount of \$21,000 from Fansler Foundation! We would like to express appreciation to Fansler Foundation in supporting our efforts to support and strengthen families with D/HH children and youth by providing them with resources, intervention, advocacy, and communication training. This grant will fund family services for our Fresno, Visalia, and Merced offices. Services include our Fresno's parenting classes, ROCK program, YES! program, and general family services. What an exciting opportunity to expand our family services! Also, a big thank you to Susan for finding this grant and to Jesse for completing the grant. Great teamwork!

Combined Federal Campaign is now trying a new pilot program called C.A.R.E. in which federal employees across the nation can donate to any charity of their choice, regardless of state or location. Of course, DHHSC will participate because every dollar counts!

We are now interested in pursuing four grants; funding for literacy services through Ray Charles Foundation, Fresno Regional Foundation, and Harden Foundation, and Deaf Blind/Senior Citizens Coordinator services through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). This is an exciting but busy time for us because the CDBG is due on the 21<sup>st</sup>, which does not leave us with much time. Other grants are due next month and in near future.

### **Agency Updates:**

Through an anonymous donor, we received the Fairview curriculum, which we will utilize for our new literacy program. As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, Lisa Painter became our part-time Literacy Specialist and part-time CLSAT/ILS Instructor. She will provide literacy classes in the afternoon and DOR-related classes in the morning. DOR referrals have decreased and requests for literacy services have increased, thus we made the change in Lisa's position to best meet community's needs. Anyone is welcome to participate in the literacy program; services are provided for free. If you or someone you know would be interested in literacy services, please contact Lisa Painter. We will also have Lisa work with Shelley in serving ROCK families by having Lisa provide literacy services while Shelley provides ASL instruction, upon request.

### **Staffing Updates:**

As you may know, Everett Glenn has resigned and accepted a new position as Dorm Counselor at Riverside School for the Deaf. Congratulations, Everett! We are very happy for you and you will be greatly missed.

While we are sad to lose Everett, we are pleased to share that Taylor Galanti is our new Visalia Client Services Specialist. She will do five hours as BEST Facilitator and 20 hours as CSS. We are glad to glad to have her for more hours.

### **Staff Trainings:**

For our August SDD, we had our mandatory training on reporting child abuse from Fresno County Council on Child Abuse, and we were also thrilled to have Talila Lewis here to share about HEARD, a nonprofit organization she founded. She is also from Washington D.C., and because she was here in California for personal and professional reasons, we took the opportunity to invite her to present to our staff. HEARD stands for Helping Educate to Advance the Rights of the Deaf, and she focuses on ensuring that D/HH prison inmates receive full communication access to all legal and prison services. She is such an amazing person and HEARD is making strides in monitoring services that D/HH prison inmates receive; many fall through the cracks and are physically and sexually assaulted in prison without a way of reporting the incident. Many fear retaliation from the guards and other inmates, and HEARD staff work on providing means for them to make reports and to be able to communicate with their loved ones, especially with ongoing TTY and VP difficulties. Many prisons do not yet have videophones, and many struggle with having sufficient English skills to communicate on the TTY. What an honor to have Talila Lewis here!

Our staff continue to attend different trainings, including Diana attending a special screening on Human Trafficking at the end of July, and Kathy, Harvey, Kyra, and I attending our Sierra Partners HR workshop on Creative Communication Styles in mid-July, which was part of HR's monthly Leadership Academy. That workshop focused on how to communicate with staff, depending on their preferred communication style. For example, the Lion represents those who are assertive and prefer direct communication, and the Cat symbolizes those who are passive-aggressive. The Bulldog represents those who are stubborn and have a tendency of not listening to others' views, and the Groundhog is the passive type—disappearing into a hole to avoid conflicts. This training was very beneficial to me and the managers because we want to be effective in working with our staff while providing constructive feedback.

### **Events:**

Our 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Deaf Women's Conference, Visalia Town Hall meeting, and Merced Community Picnic were all successful. We had approximately 50 people in attendance at each event. Way to go, DHHSC Team! A big thank you to the staff and volunteers who hosted these events.

I would like to share that California Hands & Voices will be hosting a Mom's Night Inn on the weekend of Oct. 4-5<sup>th</sup>. We will have workshops and activities all day Saturday and Sunday morning, and all mothers of D/HH children are welcome to attend. There is a fee, but that includes meals, snacks, beauty sessions, a Zumba lesson, supplies, information packets, etc. It will be a fun weekend! If you are interested or would like to refer a mom, please see me. I would especially like to see signing deaf professionals attend.

### **Fundraisers:**

You can purchase a \$20 card for one year at certain restaurants and other facilities like Disneyland and Magic Mountain. \$12 goes to DHHSC. Another fundraiser is soliciting for funds for a variety of programs with thank you gifts. MB will be passing those out today.

- XI. Committee Reports –
  - a. Bylaws Committee – SS presented an amendment to the AC portion of the bylaws regarding even-year vacancies and elections. M/S/P

- b. Fundraising Committee – JN: At the end of Deaf Awareness Week is Soak me Pah from 8-12, then the picnic is from 11-3. A ticket to Blackbeard’s for \$9 supports DHHSC. JS: My friend who worked on our fundraiser “Wonders of the Animal Kingdom” passed away.
- c. Grant Monitoring Committee – JN no report
- XII. General Board Comments – JS
- XIII. Unfinished Business – none
- XIV. New Business –
  - A. Election of new Board members: Justin Gaines was voted into the Board and welcomed. Justin shared about himself briefly. We are happy to have the Deaf-blind community represented on the Board now.
  - B. Election of Board officers. AS resigned. Asked the board for nominations for President. CC nominated SS. SS declined. JS will serve as acting President for the time being.
  - C. November Board meeting moved to the following day (Wednesday) due to Veteran’s Day.
  - D. Grants JL: 1) Application to Fresno County for a Community Development Block Grant- This will be somewhere in the neighborhood of \$40,000 for a Deaf-Blind & Seniors Services Specialist. The specialist will focus on those two parts of the community, including scheduling the SSPs.  
2) Application to Fresno Regional Foundation for \$50,000 to fund a "Connector Grant" program that is currently called Linked Hands, which is to support both families with deaf children and the schools they attend, to be there to help them work together and develop a shared vision for the D/HH children. We would need to hire a full-time Specialist just for this program if we get this grant.  
3) Application to Harden- for the Salinas office only.  
4) Application to Ray Charles Foundation for a literacy program. This would be to support about 20 hours a week of literacy services in Fresno, provided by Lisa Painter.  
All 4 grants approved. M/S/P
  - E. MB requesting approval for a motorcycle run partnership with California Hands and Voices. M/S/P
  - F. Change in meeting frequency to every 2 months beginning January 2015. M/S/P
- XIV. Public Comments (specific to agenda – 3 minutes per visitor)
 

AS sees a lot of value in pursuing literacy grants. MB answered Leanna’s questions about the fundraising cards and the Blackbeard’s fundraiser. Julie Glenn had questions about the AC election and the change in the bylaws. JS explained it. Beth Lipston: are the current by-laws on the website? SS: Will be posted soon. Skippy: concerned about what happens if the Board shrinks to 4 when JS and SS term out in one year and will we have a quorum then? [Bylaws state that minimum number of members is 4].
- XV. Announcements – Deaf Awareness Week September 8-13 ending with Soak me Pah and the picnic.
- XVII. Adjournment – (JS) 12:07

**Date of Next Local Board Meeting: September 9, 6-7:30 @ DHHSC – Fresno**

Submitted by Sue Stone, DHHSC Secretary