



Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
1602 Rolling Hills Drive, Suite 203
Henrico, VA 23229-5012

Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
May 3, 2023

Members Present:

Roy Martin, IV, Chairperson
Carrie Humphrey, Vice Chairperson
Carl Cline, Jr.
Chris Gregory
Karen Engelhardt
Kristin Karmon
Traci Branch

Members Absent: (excused)

Susanne Wilbur
Tim Patterson

Staff Present:

Eric Raff, Director
Rhonda Jeter, Business Manager
Karen Brimm, Interpreter Services Manager
Felecia Smith, Virginia Relay Manager
Brittany Howard, Technology Assistance Program (TAP) Manager
Lynn Odom, Community Services Manager

Visitors:

Brendan Lynch, a potential board member attending to observe the meeting
Two DARS employees attending to hear the guest speaker from DPB

ASL Interpreters/CART Provider:

Lois Boyle, CART writer
Bernice McCormack, Interpreter
Elaine Hernandez, Interpreter

Networking – Coffee and Refreshments:

On Wednesday, May 3, 2023 at 9:30 a.m., the members of the Advisory Board of the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) convened in the conference room at the VDDHH Central Office, 1602 Rolling Hills Drive, Suite 203, Henrico, Virginia 23229-5012.

Call to Order:

At 10:00 a.m., Chairperson Roy Martin called the meeting to order. A quorum was present.

- A. Review of communication rules: raise your hand and wait to be recognized which will ensure a pause between conversations and help our CART provider and our interpreters. and allow a smooth transition of the communication.
- B. Introduction of Advisory Board members, VDDHH staff, and guests: Introductions were made for the board members and staff present.
- C. Review of Advisory Board membership roster: Chair requested that any changes to the roster be submitted to him for revision by the end of the meeting.
- D. Review of agenda: Agenda was review, no objections expressed
- E. Approval of the minutes: Minutes from February meeting reviewed. Minor corrections to draft minutes offered by Karen Engelhardt, corrections noted. Motion from Carl Cline to approve minutes as corrected, seconded by Karen Engelhardt. Motion carried.

Guest Speaker:

Wanda B. Council, Ed.S., Specialist for Sensory Disabilities, Department of Special Education & Student Services, VDOE

Ms. Council provided the following update regarding the legislation that passed in Virginia back in July of 2022 that pertains to language development for children for the deaf and hard of hearing between the ages of birth and five years of age. Initial implementation will take about three years. An advisory committee was formed as one of the requirements for of the bill, to be conducted July 1st 2022 through June 30th of 2023 called the Virginia Supplemental Early Language and Literacy Resources for Deaf and Hard of Hearing project (Virginia SELL-R DHH project). There are 16 members including DHH community members, parents of DHH children, professionals in DHH fields, state agency representatives, representing a variety of communication modalities and philosophies; the Department of Education (VDOE) is the lead agency (representative Wanda Council), followed by VDDHH (representative Eric Raff) and the Department for Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) through its Infant and Toddler Connection program (representative Terry Nelligan).

Activities of the committee will encompass requirements in that legislation that speak to language development for young children who are deaf and hard of hearing, and developing or identifying resources for parents of those children and for educators who work with those children. The committee has been reviewing language evaluation tools available; there are many different tools developed specifically for children who are deaf and hard of hearing focusing on their language needs, but some are normed and developed on children for hearing but can be used with children for deaf and hard of hearing. The committee will develop a list of recommended evaluation tools, and the agency leads will then make a final determination which tools and resources will be made available in Virginia for DHH professionals to use. Also, by August 1st of 2024 a report will be developed and posted on the Department of Education website that will have data reflecting language development of children who are deaf and hard of hearing compared with the language development of the same age group of students who are not deaf and hard of hearing, data analysis of information that has been reported through early intervention through school divisions for children who are in early childhood special education programs in terms of their language development. Similar reports will be made available by August 1st of each year going forward.

Ms. Humphrey asked: how families will be informed that resources are available? Through coordination and collaboration between agencies, mainly VDOE via local school divisions and special education programs and the Training & Technical Assistance Centers (TTAC), VDDHH community services, and DBHDS early intervention referrals, and through the professional networks of the SELL-R committee members. There is also a [VDOE webpage regarding the SELL-R Project](#).

Another piece of legislation, the Virginia Literacy Act that was passed last year, effective during the 2024/2025 school year. That legislation requires that all children with and without disabilities in the public schools are provided evidence-based and research-based instruction in the areas of reading, literacy, and language arts. There are some specific curriculum requirements that the reading specialists, general ed teachers, special ed teachers, teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, teachers of the blind and visually impaired working in the school divisions are going to have to be knowledgeable in that are being implemented. The focus right now during initial implementation is on kindergarten through third grade age group, but Ms. Council's understanding is it will be expanded to other grade levels. Some additional training efforts would be developed to support educators in complying with the curriculum requirements.

VDOE recently held a quarterly meeting of the regional coordinators of the Educational Interpreter grant which provides training and professional development for interpreters who are working in the school systems and who have not yet met the required qualification standards. It was a hybrid meeting with the onsite portion held in Virginia Beach at Corporate Landing Middle School, and the date was selected to coincide with that schools' Deaf community event which was held in the evening. There will be a teaching academy for general ed and special ed teachers as well as the I Am Determined Parent Summit held at James Madison University in June. The Virginia Deafblind Project will be hosting a transition retreat at the end of June. Also in June, TAC will be holding the annual ODUP conference.

Guest Speaker:

Tracey Yurechko, VCU, Partnership for People with Disabilities, Technical Assistance Center for Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Ms. Yurechko provided Board members with a list of summer camps, including: the Deafblind Project Retreat (mentors needed), Map Your Future (DARS at the WWRC) for students who have an open case with DARS, Cue Camp, among others. TAC's Opening Doors Unlocking Potential conference for educational professionals who work with DHH students will be mid-June.

In support of the Virginia Literacy Act that Ms. Council mentioned, TTAC is developing training resources for teachers who work with sensory disabilities, to include a variety of evidence-based tools that would be effective for literacy instruction in various language modalities.

A question/comment was made by Director Raff regarding a recent federal Supreme Court decision involving a Deaf student who did not receive adequate services under the IDEA, but who also wanted to sue under the ADA. The case garnered national attention and is an example of lack of provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Ms. Council agreed that is the responsibility of the schools to adhere to the law and follow through on their obligations to use training and education resources to ensure the provision of FAPE for all students with disabilities.

- **Recess**

Guest Speaker:

Ken McCabe, Department of Planning and Budget (DPB)

Mr. McCabe introduced himself, mentioning that he has worked at the DPB for more than 20 years, and assists other agencies in the Health and Human Resources (HHR) secretariat in addition to VDDHH. Mr. McCabe was asked to provide the Board and meeting attendees with an overview of the Virginia biennial budget process, and how that relates to VDDHH operations and programs. He offered the following information:

- A budget is the Commonwealth's spending plan, describing what moneys we plan to collect and how we plan to use them; Virginia has what's called an activity based budget.
- Virginia has a biennial budget, meaning each budget bill covers a two-year period (for example the budget passed in July 2022 covered FY23 and FY24); Virginia must maintain a balanced budget. Spending controls happen through appropriation, giving the government the authority to spend money.
- The budget is a piece of legislation passed by the General Assembly (GA); it is a powerful policy tool. The budget is one of the primary ways the GA and the Governor enact policy in the Commonwealth, including everything from establishing a new program, increasing rates for a current program, or just requiring an agency to give the GA more information through a study. An appropriations act overrides any other existing state law or regulation, but not the state constitution or federal law.
- A budget bill has four parts that each deal with: 1) operating budgets for state agencies, 2) capital like construction projects, road construction, buildings, etc., 3) miscellaneous transfers (movement of money for use across the state), and 4) giving the Governor a framework for managing the state outside of the budget (giving the Governor certain powers while the GA is not in session).
- The overall budget totals approximately \$160B, divided between the General Fund (\$58B, gathered through taxes) and Non-General Fund (\$102B, gathered by earmarking specific revenue for a specific purpose, e.g. gas tax to support transportation projects). Federal dollars, such as from or for grants, are also labeled as Non-General Funds. This includes Medicaid funding which constitutes a huge portion of the Non-General Fund. Medicaid is administered under the HHR Secretariat, so 85% of the Virginia Budget is handled through HHR.
- Strategies for spending money in the budget are developed through needs analyses and also determined through the Governor's and General Assembly member's priorities.
- Budget development typically starts in late summer every year (unless it is a Special Session of the GA)
- The steps for budget development are roughly as follows:
 - The Governor's office and DPB give guidance to state agencies regarding priorities, etc.
 - State agencies examine their needs and goals, and work with the HHR Secretary to narrow their list of budget items. The Secretary gathers plans from all the agencies, and meets with agency heads to continue trimming the plans
 - Plans are submitted to DPB for consideration: cost and impact analysis, explore alternatives, alignment with policy, alignment with the Governor's priorities
 - DPB meets with the Governor's Cabinet and policy office and briefs the Governor on how the plans can be realized given the resources available.
 - DPB develops a budget bill, the Governor develops a speech to accompany it, and it is submitted to the GA.

- The GA will hold public meetings (Mr. McCabe emphasized that these meetings are an opportunity for constituents and stakeholders to communicate their priorities to the GA).
- The bill is sent to the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Finance and Appropriation Committee for debate and consideration, and those committees work with DPB to craft a GA version of the bill (with edits, additions, changes) and they issue a Committee Report usually in February.
- The Committee Report is voted on by each chamber; they select conferees from each chamber to hammer out a final combined version of the bill to send to the Governor for consideration.
- The Governor can make his own suggestions, changes, deletions, additions, and after 30 days the GA will vote on that version of the bill, with the ability to separately veto or sever parts of the Governor's version.
- The Budget Bill is signed and then enacted.

The DPB, GA, Senate, and House websites all provide up to date information during the process.

Ms. Humphrey asked when Virginians can weigh in during the process; answer, they can attend public meetings, and can write letters to the Governor, DPB, and their legislators.

Mr. Cline asked, regarding Medicaid, whether the public is sufficiently aware of changes to Medicaid that are happening right now; Mr. McCabe noted that the "Medicaid unwinding," which assesses who is still eligible for Medicaid now that temporary rules due to COVID have been lifted, will not remove anyone who is eligible, and that federal guidelines are followed on how to make Medicaid participants aware of their status.

Ms. Karmon asked what happens if the budget isn't balanced, or a budget isn't passed; Mr. McCabe noted that a budget has always been passed historically, and if one was not then it would trigger a constitutional crisis. The 2001 budget did go un-amended because there was no agreement on amending, but it was simply left as is and was still valid.

Visitor/observer Joe White, DARS employee, asked what the pros and cons are for having a biennial versus annual budget; Mr. McCabe did not specify other than to say that having a biennial budget sometimes removes the pressure to 'get things done' in an off year, which could be either a con or a pro depending on the point of view.

Ms. Brimm asked whether the 'big budget' is passed in an even or odd year: answer, a budget passed in July of an even year accounts for the following odd and even fiscal years. Changes can also be made via a Caboose Bill, an add-on to the budget, for instance if a new program needs to be created after a budget is passed.

Mr. Raff asked about federal budget impacts to the state budget, as with the current stalled debt ceiling talks: Mr. McCabe said that yes, a freeze in federal funding would cause negative impacts to state programs that rely on federal funds.

Mr. McCabe noted that when asking for new programs, be sure to communicate effectively with decision makers by being clear about the reason for a budget request and provide adequate information on which they can base their decisions.

Program Report: (see also Program Reports submitted to the Board)

Community Services – Lynn Odom, Manager

Ms. Odom reported regarding the **Deaf Mentor Program**: the coordinator position had been filled by Sharon Ellis Sandoval, but she has had to withdraw so we will be reposting that position soon. Currently there are 10 Deaf mentors who received the SKIHI training in February 2023 and are still intending to provide services. Those individuals were recently trained on paperwork processes, invoicing processes, and preliminary family placements. Their mentoring contracts are still being worked on my procurement, and Director Raff commented that those issues should soon be resolved so that hopefully services can begin soon. During the recent meeting, a logo created by one of the Deaf mentors was selected for use on future related promotional fliers, etc. Currently there are 38 families who will be receiving mentoring, with 18 of them in the NoVa area and none from the far southwest. Ms. Odom and the coordinator will try to manage the workload for each mentor given the geographic challenges. It appears that it will be likely that the list will be capped at 40 families at least temporarily until more mentors are identified, and additional families would be put on a waiting list. Prospective mentor resumes are being gathered and held until there are enough to warrant a round of interviews.

Ms. Karmon asked the age range of the children on the list now: answer, age 4mo to age 14yrs. The SKI-HI curriculum is designed for children birth to age 5yrs, but it was decided to flex the age limit for the pilot phase of the program up to age 8yrs since that is an acknowledged language acquisition time frame. Any child above age 8yrs will need to be put on a waiting list until the program is expanded. Ms. Branch expressed concern that the age limit be promoted clearly in order to reduce the frustration of families whose children are older than age 8yrs. Ms. Odom and Ms. Brimm emphasized that families can and should put themselves on the waiting list so that they can be contacted at the appropriate time, and that showing a need to expand the program via a waiting list may be helpful in getting approval for further funding for expansion. Ms. Engelhardt asked what the length of the program is: answer, the families express their desired frequency of sessions (weekly, monthly, etc.) and the SKI-HI curriculum is designed to be 2 years long, but families may participate longer depending on the needs of the child.

Regarding the **Support Service Provider (SSP) pilot project**, Ms. Odom stated that the coordinator position was recently posted and will be open until May 12. Recruiting for SSPs and for DeafBlind participants has also begun and some individuals have expressed interest. Recruiting has been done through Facebook, the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI, an in-kind grant partner) particularly at their recent DeafBlind Expo event and their case lists. Up to 15 DeafBlind participants can enroll in the first cohort. Up to 25 SSPs can be trained in the first cohort.

Ms. Humphrey (representing Reynolds Community College, an in-kind grant partner) mentioned that the planning group has been consulting with Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) and other subject matter experts regarding the curriculum development for the training, including the development of a written knowledge and ethics assessment that could be used in the future to develop a workforce credential for SSPs.

Regarding **Community Services Information and Referral (I&R)** activities for FY23 Q3, data shows 200 phone calls received through the central office phone line, and about 431 requests for information through regional and central office specialists. We hope to encourage our specialists to increase their outreach in the field so that more training and education can happen in the community.

- **Lunch Recess**

Board member reports were offered during the Working Lunch

- **Carl Cline:** Was invited to consider becoming a board member for the Roanoke Valley Speech and Hearing Center, have not given an answer yet. Their recent open house event was cancelled and may be rescheduled for the fall.
- **Carrie Humphrey:** **1)** Reynolds Community College held the first ASL Game Night in February to promote social interaction with the signing community and provide language exposure for our students, with about 60 people attending. The recent Game Night in April brought in about 100 people, so it has been a very successful event so far. The next one will likely be the same weekend that the onsite SSP training will be happening so that those individuals from out of town may participate, and then another Game Night in the Fall. A flier will be created for each event with the dates and information. Reynolds will also soon have a graduation ceremony for the ASL&IE program students, separate from the wider whole college graduation ceremony. Reynolds is almost approved to be a CASLI testing site for interpreter certification, but still needs an already certified interpreter to beta test the site. The Dean of the School of Humanities, Dr. Bruce Sofinski, announced his retirement to begin summer of 2023. As an interpreter himself, Dr. Sofinski has been a great ally as an administrator and an advocate for the program. Interviews for his replacement have commenced. Ms. Humphrey is currently pursuing grant funding for future projects and program expansion and will be requesting letters of information from stakeholders to support requests for funding, particularly describing the challenges resulting from scarcity of qualified interpreting services. **2)** Regarding VRID Carrie is planning to go around the state to visit district representatives and stakeholders including interpreter training programs. VRID is looking at options for a new website host, possibly WIX because an RID chapter template already exists from another state which VRID may purchase from them so a site would not need to be built from scratch which would be very expensive. The plan is to add a community calendar to the new website to post events and training opportunities. **3)** Outside of VRID there has been a grassroots mentoring group growing which hopefully will eventually utilize the free Stepping Stones mentoring toolkit and curriculum developed under the federal grant work conducted by the CATIE Center in Minnesota. Ms. Humphrey hopes to collaborate with Ms. Council and Ms. Yrechko to make resources available to educational interpreters and recent ITP graduates.
- **Kristen Karmon:** Has been able to recently connect a Deaf child with other Deaf peer, which happened to take place at a library. She talked with a library administrator to set up an ASL story time with the volunteer services of an interpreter friend of hers.
- **Karen Engelhardt:** Nothing to report.
- **Chris Gregory:** With the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, is introducing himself to the Deaf and hard of hearing community in the far southwest of Virginia. Met with DHH specialist Deirdre Blankenship to network with her, and with the Roanoke Police Department (Chris has graduated from their basic and advanced citizen courses) and discussed improving interaction with the Deaf community. He has reached out to his audiologist and had planned to attend the aforementioned Roanoke Speech and Hearing Center event that was canceled. He met with an interpreter recently to work on some projects, and Mr. Gregory also completed his required conflict of interest training (comments were made regarding the ease/difficulty of completing the training and any possible accessibility issues.)

- **Traci Branch:** No questions/comments brought from the Deaf community. Regarding her work at DARS, Ms. Branch mentioned that the Map Your Future event that she is planning will be happening this summer for individuals age 14-22 who will be transitioning from school to employment. Self-advocacy skills (such as how to request an interpreter) etc., will be emphasized, as well as being an opportunity to meet older Deaf role models. Also, the Valley Area (Fishersville, Augusta, Staunton) RCD resigned so that position is currently vacant. The far southwest area RCD position is also still vacant.

Resumption of Program Reports: (see also Program Reports submitted to the Board)

Executive – Eric Raff, Director

Director Raff introduced prospective board member Brendan Lynch, of Henrico, who works for a local mental health agency and has been involved in the Deaf community since the '80's and interpreted for about 20 years.

Governor Youngkin, the First Lady of Virginia, various members of their staff, and Deputy Sec. Mills and staff, visited the VDDHH Richmond office in May, the first such visit by a Governor in the 50 year history of the department. They were provided with a brief tour of the office, and management staff were able to provide an overview of what we do at VDDHH.

Recently the Administrative Assistant position was filled by Kristin Obeck who will start on May 10th, 2023.

Previously mentioned potential office renovations have been put on hold while DARS reevaluates office space and explores options as the new lease period is due to begin in January 2025. This may necessitate moving to a new office, which will likely be within 5 miles of the current location and not Downtown Richmond since we wish to maintain free and plentiful parking for both DARS and VDDHH. If a move occurs, it will cause temporary disruption to services and programs in early 2025. Ms. Brimm noted that it would be desirable to find a location that is accessible to public transportation. Ms. Branch concurred.

The Statewide Interagency Team (SIT) has had a pause in its meeting schedule but is finalizing its Needs Assessment Report.

As reported previously, The VHEAP initiative regarding captioning access for institutes of higher education resulted in the release of an RFP, producing a list of vendors for onsite and remote live captioning services as well as postproduction captioning. These vendor contracts can be used by any Virginia state agency as well. Ms. Branch asked for a copy of the vendor list; one was provided to all Board members. Ms. Branch noted that accessibility (adequate captioning, website accessibility compliance) seems to be a problem across state government, so vendor availability may help improve that.

Director Raff has been facilitating an informal group of SMEs who have been discussing credentialing for interpreters who work in legal settings; the Specialist Certificate in Legal interpreting (SCL) credential has not been available for some time due to retirement of the test material. Bob Lichtenberg (court interpreting coordinator in Washington State) the CEO of RID Star Grieser (of Virginia), Howard Rosenblum of NAD, and several other experts who were involved with RID's recent report on the topic have been meeting to discuss options and explore ideas for funding streams to support the development of a new SC:L test/process. Various organizations, such as the national organization for court administrators, might be approached to help support the efforts. Those discussions are ongoing.

Technology Assistance Program - Brittany Howard, Manager

VDDHH recently hired for the Region 5 D/HH Specialist position which is an update to the previously submitted TAP quarterly report. Karen Rhoads started in that position on February 10, 2023 and has been a positive addition to our staff as a wage employee. Unfortunately, the D/HH Regional Specialist from Region 6 (Charlottesville) has resigned during the third quarter so that position is temporarily vacant, and the contract holder is filling in until the position is filled. Also, the specialist for Region 7 (Richmond) resigned recently as well, so that wage position will be advertised soon, and Ms. Howard will cover that region until the position is filled.

Four-year renewal notices were recently sent out to TAP consumers to remind them that they are eligible to update their equipment. The TAP program is exploring options for adding tablets to their equipment list and have at least one promising program called Empower 360 that provides free internet service and affordable hardware. Power BI, a Microsoft reporting tool, has been launched for TAP which has improved reporting capabilities, and will help to make contacting consumers easier when the analog-to-digital transition begins. An online TAP application is being developed so that consumers can complete the application process more quickly. TAP developed a list of available smartphone apps that is almost ready for release. Regarding statewide events, TAP staff attended an early hearing detection and intervention conference and had a vendor table, allowing them to contact local hospitals and various other professionals that didn't know about VDDHH resources before; they already had resources for use during hospital stays, but had not considered what the consumers would need when they are discharged to go home. TAP has also continued to support ISP by providing some personal amplification devices for loan to various local court systems.

- Public Comment Period at 2pm as scheduled; no comments entered.

Virginia Relay – Felecia Smith, Manager

Ms. Smith provided an update on the Virginia Relay Advisory Council (VRAC); despite recruitment efforts the vacant council positions have remained vacant for an extended period. As a result, it has been decided that the advisory council will be disbanded. VDDHH recognizes that gathering stakeholder feedback and informing users about industry and technology changes remains important to the success of VA Relay, so it is likely that we will hold future webinars or meetings, probably via Zoom, in order to reach the public.

Ms. Smith noted that program outreach remained active in the past quarter. Virginia Relay representative were able to attend three events: a presentation to a class of 9-1-1 dispatcher trainees in Salem, Virginia; a Virginia Telehealth network meeting in Virginia Beach as a result of Ms. Smith joining as a member of the group; a conference of social workers which will likely result in an increase in referrals to TAP.

Hamilton Relay continues to perform adequately. Relay traffic consists predominantly of traditional TTY calls, and the performance remains satisfactory there. The RCC program continues to see an overall decline in usage since the end of the COVID period but has seen a recent bump in numbers perhaps owing to the success of advertising efforts that were launched through Facebook and email blasts.

VDDHH/VA Relay is working with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) regarding the Digital Equity Act. Transitions from analog to digital will impact users, and it will be important to alert those traditional relay users prior to service changeover to prevent service disruption. DHCD is unable to share personally identifiable information with VDDHH and vice versa. Ms. Smith

will be drafting grant proposals to win money that has been allocated for support of transition efforts. TAP has also been sending out postcard notifications to TTY consumers to contact them directly about how the transition will impact them and is exploring options for TTY alternatives that are compatible for digital service.

Ads for TAP and Relay have been launched in the publications, Senior Guides in Southwest and Northern Virginia. Also, regarding outreach, a new Hamilton Outreach Coordinator has been hired and will start on or after May 15th. Her name is Melanee Rodriguez, and she is from Chesterfield, is an experienced outreach provider and is bilingual in English and Spanish. Her introduction and photo will be included in the next edition of the Commonwealth Caller.

Ms. Brimm mentioned to Ms. Smith that the Virginia Telehealth network meetings would be an appropriate venue for her to share the DOJ's most recent 'Dear Colleague' letter which was regarding access to effective communication in healthcare settings. Ms. Smith concurred and mentioned that information about a telehealth resource clearinghouse developed in North Carolina, shared by Director Raff, would also be a good item to share with that group.

Interpreter Services Programs - Karen Brimm, Manager

Ms. Brimm noted that we continue to participate in the PEHI grant project, the five-year grant project with Idaho State University. We do have a cohort of Virginia participants who are completing the online training right now, and several interpreters have been identified. Virginia will not likely have a cohort during the next grant year but then we would have another cohort start the following cohort year in order to give other states the opportunity to have candidates participating. Altogether the program has about 15 candidates in various states at any one time. It also gives us a chance to make sure that we've done our wrap-up activities with the existing cohort like providing feedback etc. and to perhaps do other project activities like gathering video recorded stories about healthcare experiences from Deaf community members that could be used by the program to create training materials.

Ms. Brimm continues to serve as the agency liaison to the Department of Emergency Management. She was recently asked to serve on the newly established Emergency Management Equity Working Group by virtue of her work as AFNO during the COVID-19 response. The Group met for the first time and is drafting and approving a charter, and there will be quarterly meetings held at various locations across the Commonwealth.

Ms. Brimm recently presented for the Department of Justice as part of a panel of speakers on the topic of how systems change can enhance ADA compliance, for example how accessibility was addressed during the COVID response. The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities also participated as well as representatives from several other agencies.

During the Spring 2023 Session of the General Assembly, §§ 8.01-384.1 and 19.2-164.1 of the Code of Virginia were amended and reenacted. The new bill language says that local courts could identify interpreters on their own if VDDHH is unable to identify an available and qualified interpreter for a particular hearing. Prior code stipulated that only VDDHH would identify a particular qualified interpreter for a given request, and VDDHH stood firm that the amended bill should preserve VDDHH's ability to vet and approve interpreters found by the court so as to minimize the risk of harm to the community.

Regarding interpreter coordination, we are maintaining a stable 92% request satisfaction rate thanks to the freelance interpreters on our Service Agreement and who accept work under our court system MOU, but the scarcity of available and qualified interpreters continues to be a growing issue

especially for legal interpreting. The court system independently decided to fund several interpreter and CART positions, and we contributed to those job descriptions and will be included in the interview and selection phase, although no candidates have been brought to our attention thus far. ISP would coordinate their active interpreting time.

Regarding assessment, VQAS and EIPA slots are consistently filled. Development of the new VQAS performance materials continues with the launch of a new version of the test slated for some time during 2023. The VDOE grant application period has begun and we will be drafting that paperwork in order to meet the deadline. We do not know at this time whether there will a funding increase or whether we will keep the current level of funding.

- Recess

New Business:

Director Raff shared some photos taken during the Governor's visit. Each manager presented regarding their programs, with Ms. Smith receiving the lion's share of questions because she was the first to brief.

Election of new Chair and Vice Chair:

- Ms. Engelhardt nominated herself for Chair; Mr. made a motion to approve Ms. Engelhardt as Chair, Ms. Humphrey seconded the motion; no Nay votes recorded; motion carried.
- Ms. Branch nominated Mr. Cline as Vice Chair; Ms. Engelhardt seconded; no Nay votes recorded; motion carried.

Ms. Jeter requested that those with travel forms go ahead and sign and submit those with supporting documentation; review of mileage policy; reminded Board members to complete their mandatory Conflict of Interest training; reminded Board members that the loop system in the conference room is available if needed.

Regarding the agenda for the next meeting: Mr. Raff suggested inviting a speaker for the EHDI program to brief the Board; Ms. Brimm asked for clarification on the time for the next meeting so that interpreters and CART will be booked for the appropriate time slot; Ms. Engelhardt suggested a briefing on the status of 9-1-1 and first responder related community education available, and Mr. Raff suggested that perhaps Paul Stuessy from community services could give an overview of the training he provides to the State Police Academy classes.

Meeting Adjournment:

Being that there was no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.