MCDHH
Massachusetts Commission
For The Deaf And Hard Of Hearing

Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Statewide Advisory Council
January 12, 2023

Updates from Dr. Opeoluwa Sotonwa

Commissioner at MCDHH

1. Update on EHS Interim Secretary, Mary Beckman
2. Division and Departmental Updates
   - DHILS
   - Substance Use Disorder & Recovery Services
   - HR Liaison
   - Social Services Department
   - Communication Access Services Division
   - Communication Access, Technology & Training Services

EHS: Interim Secretary Mary Beckman

"Beckman, a graduate of Yale Law School, has held a number of roles within the health care sector over her decades in the industry.

As chief of the Health Care and Fair Competition Bureau, she oversaw approximately 100 staff members in five divisions of the attorney general's office, including nonprofits and public charities, health care, Medicaid fraud, antitrust, and false claims.

Her work has included investigation and litigation related to the opioid crisis, the Affordable Care Act, health care organization and consolidation, price fixing among generic drug makers, and telecommunications consolidation."

Excerpt from The Boston Globe, January 4, 2023

Social Services Department: Update on DHILS

The Center for Living and Work (CLW)

- They are partnering with Our Deaf Survivor Center and the YMCA to provide the "Healthy Relationships" training again. One of the focuses is Teen Dating.
- They will be developing workshops on Healthcare Proxy and Funeral Planning.
- In February they'll work w/the Attorney General's office re: Energy Assistance

Deaf Inc

- As part of their Citizenship Project they are partnering with Gallaudet University to train staff on visual/gesture communication. Gallaudet will be using this training to gather information for their research
- They have a new Community Engagement Coordinator starting next week.

Viability

- Implementing DEI training for all staff starting this month.
- They have a MOU with Pathways to work collaboratively with another deaf agency.

Social Services Department: Update on Services

The regional Adult Case Managers and Children's Specialist are meeting regularly with their regional counterparts in the DCF Disability Services department. The goal of the meetings are collaboration and connecting regional DHH providers. So far they are going very well.

Peggy Lee and Karran Larson met with the SUD director at DCF to talk about collaborating. We don't have regional specialist like DCF does for SUD so Karran, Omar and one Deaf Recovery Coach who works with DCF families will join DCF's meeting and figure out next steps.

On November 18, 2022 Roberta Perry, former Children's Specialist and current DESE/MCDHH liaison, presented during the monthly DESE Special Education Leaders meeting on the Least Restrictive Environment for DHH students. There were 337 special education directors/personnel. This same presentation will be expanded and presented at the Federation for Children with Special Needs annual conference "Visions of a Community". The LRE guidance is now on the DESE and FCSN website.

Social Services Department: Update on Services

The Social Service Department is having an in-person meeting on January 27 to discuss/clarify our roles and to narrow down a list of potential new titles for the Adult Case Managers.

Last week, Peggy met with Liza Hirsch, Director of the Children's Justice Unit at the MA Attorney General's Office. Peggy & Liza are discussing a collaboration; Liza will join a department meeting in February to gather information from case managers about trending issues related to DHH children that are germaine to the AGO.

Updates from Substance Use Disorder & Recovery Services

Karran Larson
Coordinator of
Statewide SUD &
Recovery Services
And
Deaf Recovery Coach
Supervisor

1. BIPOC individuals and families struggling with Substance Use are under-served. We need to recruit and train more D/deaf and hard of hearing persons in recovery who may be interested in becoming Recovery Coaches.

2. Two part time SUD interpreters have been hired: Tracey Baptiste in Western MA and Desiree Weems in Eastern MA. Tracey and Desiree have helped to increase our capacity in serving individuals in need of SUD treatment and appointments. They also have been quite helpful interpreting for Karran Larson and Omar Olazabal, and Recovery Coach meetings.

3. Collaboration with DCF/SUD regional units through meetings with Director of DCF/SUD, Kimberly Shapiro, has been initiated.

4. A Parent Project collaborative with MOAR (MA Office of Addiction and Recovery and DFC, including a Deaf Recovery Coach, meet monthly to gather resources and to increase efforts to help families with Deaf members who struggle with SUD.

Division and Departmental Updates: Human Resources

Janay Mitchell
HR Liaison

Hiring Updates

Job Currently Posted
Referral Specialist

Re-posting (Not yet Posted)
Legal ASL Interpreters PT
Legal CDI Interpreters PT

Interviews in process
Executive Assistant to the Commissioner
Referral Services Supervisor

Job posting Closed & Scheduling Interview
Adult Case Manager

Positions Currently in Final Stage (Pre-Offer)
Business Office Coordinator
Vlog Project Coordinator
Social Media and Digital Content Specialist
Ft Staff CDI

REFERRAL

Cat Dvar
Director of CAS Division

SME/POC Update:

- Hayley Bernard, on a temporary basis, will be reassigned as our SME/POC on a full-time basis. Hayley will have this position from now until 4/30./23.
- Luke Baer will work full-time on Hayley's West "book" during this time period. On May 1st Hayley will return to her role as West Referral Specialist.

SME/POC Role and Duties:

- Hayley will support both the current referral staff in learning the new system and she will train any new referral staff who onboard over the next few months
  - Training on the new Referral System begins on January 17th
  - We will train 4 separate groups over a 2-week period so that each group is small; this will allow for maximum learning for our staff.
  - Hayley will attend all 4 training sessions to ensure transparent and complete communication is happening amongst the four groups.
  - All training sessions will be recorded.

Cat Dvar
Director of CAS Division

REFERRAL

User Acceptance Testing (UAT)

- UAT will begin January 24th which is when the first group will have completed their training.
- Folks who've completed training will begin testing while the second group goes through training
- All will rotate through UAT for several hours every day ending on March 31st

Our new Referral System will GO LIVE on March 31st

Trouble shooting will be conducted from April 1st to April 30th.

Cat Dvar
Director of CAS Division

Workforce Development
Subject Matter Expert Consulting Groups (SMEC's)

The ASL SMEC is up and running. They will be creating an action plan for MCDHH focusing on several areas, to include:

- Outreach/recruitment
- Training of Deaf Interpreters, ASL/spoken English Interpreters, Legal & Trilingual interpreters
- Mentorship
- Working Environment
- Document Analysis
  - RFRs/Recruitment Docs that go out
  - Job Recruitment Docs that go out
- Screening

Cat Dvar
Director of CAS Division

Workforce Development
Subject Matter Expert Consulting Groups (SMEC's)

The **CART SMEC RFR** is available and accompanying **VLOG** is available for viewing

Deadline for submissions is January 19th

A committee will be formed to review and select candidates to participate in this SMEC

Estimated start date is February 15th

Division and Departmental Updates: CATTS

Jon O'Dell
Assistive Technology Manager
& Training Specialist

1. Municipal Police Training Committee – multiple years of working together for all municipal police trainings in Massachusetts. We will be training at various academy locations during the next few months. We have also been invited to participate in the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Trade Show which will yield great opportunities for us.

2. Massachusetts State Police active duty and recruit trainings - we have been on their recruit training classes rotation for the last three years, going into our fourth - and are working to finalize the active trooper training as well, which we started work on last June.

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Assistive Technology Manager & Training Specialist

3. We are waiting for the Office of Emergency Management Services to publish their new ambulance/emergency response vehicle ride-along protocols handbook. This handbook should feature the emergency services card that we created at the request of OEMS and DFS. We've been regular presenters/exhibitors at DFS' annual convention for many years).

4. We recently scheduled trainings with the UMass Amherst Police Department and with a municipal department in Pittsfield; we'll provide a similar training in Ludlow.

5. Trainings for senior centers/council on aging in several different communities have been set up/are being set up, packets for self-exhibition have been sent for several others containing visor cards, Modern Guides, and Covid-19 tool.

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& Training Specialist

6. Daily requests from state agencies, private entities and D/hh individuals are being responded to.

7. VLOGS are regularly being created and posted.

8. 2 new positions are in process for VLOG production and social media specialist to unify the various functions of MCDHH. Hopefully this will make vlog production and posting completely internal to CATTS, working directly with Commissioner's office and SMT.

9. Committee memberships: State 911 Department and IT/AT workgroup now chaired by MOD

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Thank you!