Texas Governor’s Committee on People with Disabilities

**SUMMARY MINUTES**

January 27 -28, 2021

Zoom Videoconference Meeting / Meeting Materials Available at: <https://gov.texas.gov/organization/disabilities/committee-meetings>

**Call to Order/ Roll Call/ Introductions**

Vice Chair Dylan Rafaty motioned to convene the meeting to order. Chair Bangor verified quorum was present. Members approved the motion by roll call vote. The Committee meeting began at 1:08 p.m. Chair Bangor congratulated new member Kris Workman on his appointment, and welcomed Marsha Godeaux, exofficio representative for Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, replacing Norman Kieke who retired.

**Members Present**

Aaron Bangor, PhD; Kori Allen; Ellen Bauman; Evelyn Cano; Elyse Lieberman, PhD; Eric Lindsay; Richard Martinez; Joseph Muñiz; Kristie Orr; Dylan Rafaty; Emma Faye Rudkin; Kris Workman

**Exofficio Representatives Present**

Sandra Breitengross Bitter, Texas State Independent Living Council; Marsha Godeaux, Texas Dept. of Licensing and Regulation, Architectural Barrier Removal; Claudia Peden, Texas Workforce Commission; Justin Porter, PhD, Texas Education Agency; Robert Schuller, Dept. of Family and Protective Services; Dana Williamson, Health and Human Services Commission

**Invited Presenters**

Dennis Borel, Coalition of Texans with Disabilities; Bob Kafka, ADAPT of Texas; Dominick Robinson, Texas Education Agency; Beth Stalvey and Scott Daigle, Texas Council on Developmental Disabilities; Dr. Courtney Harvey, Health and Human Services Commission; Jonas Schwartz, Texas Workforce Commission

**Staff Present**

Ron Lucey, Randi Turner, Nancy Van Loan, Monica Villarreal, and Lindsey Zischkale

**Approval of October 22-23, 2020 Summary Minutes**

Dylan Rafaty motioned to approve the October minutes. Members approved the motion by roll call vote.

**Public Comment – Verbal and Written**

Alison said a 2019 modification to Texas Family Code Section 154.302 allows a disabled adult child to be paid child support through a special needs trust. The advantage of using a trust is that child support payments will not count as income to the disabled adult child, which preserves benefit eligibility for SSI, Medicaid, etc. If the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) does not assist in the collection and disbursement of child support, a non-custodial parent simply stops paying. An OAG opinion would clarify the policy.

Edwin, American Council of the Blind of Texas seeks consideration for visually impaired voters on new voting machines purchased by Harris County. Buttons activate voice capability when pressed instead of touching a screen. Are there plans to allow visually impaired Texans to vote by mail or by phone?

John, Advocates for Disability Access spoke about accommodation requests for captioning, particularly during legislative hearings. He seeks elimination of communication barriers through expansion of virtual capabilities to interact personally with legislators and governmental representatives.

Judy B wrote about her perception of treatment of people with cognitive, neurological disabilities through refusal of ADA required communication modifications to policies, behaviors, decisions, and training.

Melissa Georgeoff, NuMotion, a contracted provider of medically necessary complex rehabilitative technology, wrote about concern for Texas Medicaid beneficiaries during this public health emergency. Superior Health Plan notified NuMotion of a decision to terminate their service agreement the end of 2020. Unless Superior Health Plan reverses the decision, NuMotion will be forced to stop serving Medicaid beneficiaries and providing equipment, including many in rural areas across Texas.

Preston shared concerns about HHSC’s complaint reporting process. His son’s medication was stolen from the group home where he lives. HHSC’s Client Rights area received the inquiry but Preston never receive follow up. Instead, he was instructed to request a report from the provider or seek an open record through the Public Information Act.

**Guardianship Reform and Medical Decision Making (Crisis Standards of Care Workgroup)** – Belinda Carlton chairs the workgroup. Dennis Borel, Coalition of Texans with Disabilities and Bob Kafka, ADAPT of Texas, discussed the complexities of Guardianship and Supported Decision Making. Guardianship takes away a person’s civil rights. It different in each state. Texas was one of the first states to pass supported decision-making legislation. Legal aspects and emotional discussions are uncomfortable when considering rationing of health care, quality of life, or end of life. Opinions by medical professionals are lower for persons with disabilities. Texas’ Advanced Directives Act allows doctors to override your decisions. The term “crisis standards of care” refers to establishing criteria and guidelines. Discrimination or perceived quality of life should not be a factor; the medical community should make decisions purely on a clinical basis. Each hospital district’s medical ethics committees make their own decisions. Reasonable accommodations are important and reinforce ADA values. A statewide collaboration involving advocates and people with disabilities, older adults, healthcare, pro-life and faith communities has made progress. U.S. HHS Office of Civil Rights was included in the discussion. Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops contacted Governor Abbott. Texas does not have a statewide policy, but this topic falls within the purview of the Governor’s Office to direct legislative action. Mr. Borel and Mr. Kafka ask GCPD to support a “crisis standards of care” policy for Texas.

Members expressed the need to educate the medical and legal communities on person-centered life; perhaps the American Medical Association would provide continuing education. Texas Hospital Association or Texas Medical Association may be responsible for implementation or oversight or of a “crisis standards of care” policy. The following states have guidelines negotiated by a Disability Rights Texas’ agreement: Alabama, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Utah.

Motion by Aaron Bangor to adopt a single set of disability anti-discrimination standards of crisis care based on existing voluntary standards developed and identified by diverse stakeholders, and to direct staff to engage stakeholders within the Office of the Governor and the community to advance its goal for legislation, executive action or another method. Such standards should include education of all parties with responsibility for implementation. Members approved the motion with a roll call vote.

**Executive Director Report and Recommendations to 87th Texas Legislature** – Ron Lucey

The 2022-2023 Policy Recommendations report represents 18 months of hard work and aspirations of Texans with disabilities. The Office of the Governor transmitted the report to Texas legislators. When interacting with legislators, GCPD staff must remain neutral but may provide resources and expert testimony upon invitation. Members have no restrictions when expressing comments as a private citizen. Disability stakeholder groups may use the information from the report.

Mr. Lucey shared highlights of the first quarter of fiscal year 2021 (September-November, 2020):

* GCPD staff published the Support Service Provider/Co-Navigator report as an update to the 2017 report.
* Baylor University College of Arts and Sciences’ Journalism, Public Relations and New Media program agreed to host the 2021 Barbara Jordan Media Awards. This year’s event will be virtual. Members should encourage local media professionals to submit quality nominations.
* GovDelivery bulletins help meet the GCPD’s performance measures and statutory functions by providing technical assistance. Staff delivered 22 bulletins in a variety of topics to 11,770 subscribers.
* Exploration of a 5-year collaboration with Southwest ADA Center at ILRU on ADA implementation and supporting a live meeting or awards event.
* Future Accessibility and Disability Policy Webinars: Importance of Braille Literacy, How the ADA Applies to Historical Landmarks and Older Buildings, and Visitibility: Building Today’s Homes for Tomorrow. The GCPD’s Youtube channel archives webinars and training videos.

**TEA’s Digital Curriculum Advisory Committee (DCAC) Report and Survey of Local Education Agencies** - Dominick Robinson, Office of Special Populations and Monitoring, Department of Special Education Programs. TEA established the DCAC in 2019, comprised of 11 volunteers with backgrounds in special education, information accessibility, and assistive technology. The purpose of the report is to identify challenges in digital inclusion of curricula for students with disabilities and make recommendations to the State Board of Education (SBOE) to improve students’ learning outcomes. Questions from TEA’s K-12 Digital Inclusion Survey related to access to training and resources, and classroom accessibility. TEA distributed the survey to administrators, curriculum coordinators, general and special education teachers, support personnel and IT personnel. They received 912 responses. TEA conducted the survey during the COVID pandemic, so the majority of responses were from teachers about internet access. Summarized responses are below:

* Well over half of the respondents had a moderate to a great deal of understanding of digital accessibility.
* Training such as self-guided resources developed by Education Service Centers or local education agencies would move the respondent to a higher level of understanding.
* Over half of the respondents agreed that providing students with assistive technology and appropriate training would sufficiently address students’ digital inclusion and accessibility needs, which defines the importance of providing students, and their families, technology and training on how to use it properly.
* Only 56 respondents said they did not review videos for audio accessibility prior to showing them to a classroom of students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
* Over 90% of respondents provide resources such as large print or Braille for students who are blind or visually impaired.
* 93% of respondents provide resources or assistance to address the digital inclusion needs of special education students other than visually impaired or deaf and hard of hearing.
* 58% of respondents said training and acquisition of materials were the most mentioned barriers cited for unequal access.

Survey data will reinforce report recommendations. DCAC will have an avenue for parents to provide recommendations. The focus is on service delivery. Report topics will include integration of Universal Design for learning principles; procurement of accessible information and communication technology, including supplemental or secondary resources; accessible Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematical (STEM) curriculum; educator preparation and training on accessibility; and student support and stakeholder engagement. One of the DCAC’s recommendations is to push educator training and preparation to LEAs and education service centers so they understand the methodologies. Next steps are to conduct a focus group with procurement and information technology specialists, then finalize the report and present the recommendations to SBOE by July 2021. GCPD members expressed disappointment that students were not included in the survey distribution and noted that challenges may differ from parents and teachers. Members prefer the report include formal documentation.

**Policy Development based on the Committee’s Issue Areas**

Staff will use Texas Legislature Online to track bills and prioritizing those that align with GCPD’s policy recommendations. The Senate and House of Representatives will announce assignments soon. March 12 is the deadline for legislators to file bills. Texas Council on Developmental Disabilities has a newsletter with an in depth “bill of the week”. Staff agreed to share a bi-weekly spreadsheet with members. Ms. Zischkale will send a Govdelivery describing the legislative process, and requesting an accommodation to participate in the process virtually.

Member Ideas for Exploration

During the 86th Session, the Governor’s Broadband Development Council (GBDC) was established and tasked to look at how broadband benefits the State of Texas in economic development, the delivery of educational opportunities in higher education and public education, state and local law enforcement, state emergency preparedness, and the delivery of health care services, including telemedicine and telehealth. Dr. Bangor asked staff for a future presentation on broadband development and deployment across rural areas in the state. The GBDC would benefit by understanding the need to have sufficient broadband to handle a video that supports sign language or enable telemedicine.

Eric Lindsay suggested two topics: access for veterans to long-term assisted care facilities, and influencing airlines to accommodate travelers with disabilities, in conjunction with Air Carrier Access Act. Mr. Martinez said the Office of State Federal Relations routinely hears from entities advocating on behalf of federal legislation. Members shared about the Open Doors or All Wheels Up organizations, and a webinar hosted by the US Access Board.

**Reports from Invited Exofficio Agency Representatives, includes follow up topics from previous meetings**

Texas State Independent Living Council (TxSILC)

Sandra Breitengross Bitter said the fifth Accessible Transportation Summit was a success with nearly 300 registrations. The Texas Council on Developmental Disabilities funded this 5-year project. The Accessible Transportation Advisory committee, consumer advocates, and members of the disability community finalized policy recommendations for the Texas Legislature and state agencies. Dr. Bangor will share the Transportation Works report with Council of State Governments and State Legislatures. SILC is working to determine if state-based paralysis resources are reaching the intended population by using virtual methods. Administration on Community Living is funding this independent living project.

Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)

Robert Schuller represents Adult Protective Services, Child Protective Services, and early intervention programs within the Department of Family and Protective Services umbrella. The agency’s report listed numerous published reports, the LAR for 2022-2023, and a list of scheduled meetings. CPS developmental disability program specialist is working with HHSC counterparts to develop a cross‑agency training on guardianship, including the roles that both agencies play. The CPS director of placement and several regional developmental disability specialists are creating new scenarios that add to the person‑centered training curriculum to address issues experienced by field personnel.

Texas Education Agency (TEA)

Justin Porter, PhD, Director, Special Education Programs highlighted the Supplemental Special Education Services (SSES) program that directs $1,500 to parents for their K-12 students with multiple disabilities and receive special education services. The program targets students who have significant cognitive disabilities or complex needs including a DeafBlind primary designation, most severely effected by the pandemic and at-home learning. Supplemental services may be tutoring, additional occupational or speech language therapy, curriculum, computer hardware or software. Federal CARES Act funds will allow about 18,800 online accounts. TEA allocates about 70% of those funds to families designated as experiencing poverty or low income. Families complete an online application, and when qualifications are met, will be approved to register for their online account. An external vendor will process applications. Members asked for information about an appeal process.

The number of eligible Texas students with dyslexia services increased from 2015-2020 - about 225,000 now. One of the issues brought forth early on in the pandemic was difficulty in providing effective services for students with dyslexia in an online environment. TEA began a digital dyslexia intervention pilot originally with 300 students. The State Board of Education dyslexia handbook guides schools to aid in identification and determining service to students and delivery of curriculum. The multi‑sensory training approach is something that research has indicated to be very effective for students with dyslexia. Kids can overcome this disability once they learn coping skills and receive high quality curriculum. Teaching reading and addressing dyslexia is a science and has to be done in a specific way to get the intended result. Most of the materials are very hands on. Each lesson is scripted. Nothing like this dyslexia platform exists in the world. Under the authority of Governor Abbott’s emergency declaration, AmplioSpeech was selected through a competitive bid process to provide virtual speech therapy. To produce resources in Spanish, TEA contracted with Esperanza, a Texas‑based company out of the Rio Grande Valley.

Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)

Dana Williamson, Director, Medicaid and CHIP Services said HHSC’s response to the Covid pandemic was significant and allowed flexibilities using telehealth or telephonic solutions. Additional support became available for individuals using consumer directed services option. Covid vaccine distribution to Texans in the 1B category include individuals who have co-occurring medical conditions served by Medicaid. Residents of State Supported Living Centers (SSLC) were also a priority population. Monoclonal antibody treatment is available for SSLC residents who are Covid positive and deemed at high risk. Managed care organizations can work with Texas Department of Emergency Managment to receive personal protective equipment. Members asked about offering vaccines to students, under the age of 16. Ms. Williamson will consult Dr. Ryan Van Ramshorst, Chief Medical Officer, Medicaid and CHIP program, who participates on the vaccine allocation panel.

HHSC provides detailed reports to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) about network adequacy. The Medicaid/CHIP Quality and Efficiency Improvement Data report includes a rich set of data and quality improvement initiatives. HHSC requested an expedited extension application for the 1115 Waiver demonstration that supports STAR+ program in delivering managed care services. CMS extended the waiver through 2030. Money Follows the Person Demonstration (MFPD) funding provides opportunities for transitioning individuals into community settings. The Federal government extended MFPD waiver through the Consolidated Appropriations Act, rebalancing $450 million per fiscal year for states, of which Texas participates. The Promoting Independence report outlines initiatives funded by MFPD.

Follow up items: As the GCPD brought forth, HHSC will begin reporting publicly how agency complaints are addressed. The U.S. Department of Education indicated Texas was in violation of IDEA related to Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) funding. Members asked about a corrective action plan.

Texas Dept. of Licensing & Regulation, (TDLR) Architectural Barriers (AB)

Marsha Godeaux, Regulatory Program Management division, said TDLR successfully completed their Sunset Review. TDLR promoted Human Trafficking Month in January. AB program has 2,000 projects registered monthly; the new online system automatically sends reminders to owners. Because of Covid, inspections were slightly lower than last year. Members asked about performing building inspections yet keeping everyone safe during Covid. This quarter had 37 variance applications, half were postponements meaning they were not going to pursue waivers. Staff responded to 70-100 inquiries daily. Teaching engagements include outreach to Registered Accessibility Specialists about laws and rules. TDLR received three Transportation Network Companies inquiries; two were resolved.

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)

Claudia Peden, Manager, VR Program and Support, said TWC’s Vocational Rehabilitation Division (VRD) continues to deliver services to new and existing customers via remote and in-person strategies. They are using a databased approach for increasing in-service staffing. TWC presented the Legislative Appropriation Request to the Governor’s Office and Legislative Budget Board. Exceptional items included capital budget authority to improve access to information and service delivery for individuals with disabilities, a VR system for replacing the current oversight and coaching system, redesign of the TWC website, and an enhanced customer communication effort for VR services and unemployment insurance benefits. VRD reviewed policies and procedures to allow electronic signatures and more remote delivery of services if there were not conflicts from other governing authorities. Last year, TWC initiated a vehicle modification project to evaluate and recommend improvements based on a customer’s need related to engaging and employment advancement. Revisions to these policies will move forward for commission action.

Ms. Peden spoke about new disability program initiatives. Embedded pre-employment transition services allow providers to work with students on high school campuses. TWC collaborates with school counselors, Texas Education Agency and education service centers. Staffing increased for the Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) Independent Living Services program to serve higher caseloads. A new phone helpline and email are available to address inquiries; a specialist was hired. For 2021, TWC will execute contracts with 28 local workforce development boards for Summer Earn and Learn. More than 2,500 participating students with disabilities are expected to gain work readiness training and paid work experience. TWC continues to enhance their website, including a new tab on the main webpage for programs and services for people with disabilities. The exofficio report includes disability program updates, budget, and performance measures for the first quarter. Services may have been delayed to customers due to Covid mitigation strategies, but applications for VR are beginning to pick up. Mr. Martinez would like to replicate VR trainings across the state.

**Texas Council on Developmental Disabilities’ Policy Priorities and Advisory Council on Postsecondary Education for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**

Public Policy Director Scott Daigle said the Council adopted, in October, the following priority areas for the 87th Legislative Session:

* Personal and Civil Rights - increase the protections of Texans with disabilities, eg: abuse neglect and exploitation, sexual assault, alternatives to guardianship, voting access, restraint and seclusion
* Accessibility - accessible parking, accessible transportation, home modifications, inclusive meetings, city planning and development
* Early Childhood and Inclusive Education - ECI Services, special education services, transition planning
* Employment – ensuring Texans with disabilities have access to competitive and integrated employment opportunities, eliminate subminimum wage, and day habilitation
* Health and Safety - ensuring Texans with disabilities have equal access to and are proactively included in using all community resources designed to maintain and improve individual and public health and safety, including during public emergencies, Medicaid, complex mental health needs, emergency preparedness and disaster relief, and communicating information in plain language for easy understanding
* Funding Vital Programs - ensuring the current funding levels for vital programs that support Texans with disabilities are maintained and increased, ie the state budget. Raise minimum requirement for rates and wages of community attendants in Texas.

TCDD Executive Director Beth Stalvey gave an update on Senate Bill 1017 (86R) about access to higher education for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The bill directed Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to review policies and practices that could increase access to higher education opportunities, distribute of educational outreach marketing materials, and establish an advisory council on postsecondary education for persons with IDD and autism. SB 1017 required a College Readiness and Success report to highlight data collection, recommendations, and college readiness and admission barriers. One recommendation was to replace the term “IDD” with “neurodevelopmental disorders” to clarify the population. Others included supporting college-prep programs, increasing training for faculty and administrators to best support students with IDD, increasing access to paid employment experiences and internships, and developing new programs in rural communities. Topics for a subsequent report included recruitment, scholarships for direct support professionals and attendants, ombudsman program within VRS, transportation support and training, dual credit/concurrent enrollment for students in special education that would raise grade point average and make them more competitive candidates for admission, relationship between post-secondary programs and employment supports in waiver programs. TCDD funded Project CASE at Texas Tech, Project HIRE conducted in Rio Grande Valley and Texas A&M’s PATH program.

**Mental Health Access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Texans**

Dr. Courtney Harvey represents HHSC’s IDD Behavioral Health Services, Office of Mental Health Coordination, and Statewide Behavioral Health Coordinating Council (SBHCC). In 2018, Texas Legislature tasked the Council to develop a coordinated and strategic approach to the delivery of behavioral health services. Dr. Harvey convened a group of individuals to discuss experiences of persons who are deaf or hard of hearing when accessing services provided by Local Mental Health Authorities. The goal was to ensure access to services by a skilled workforce. The group learned that effective communication is lacking and tends not to be delivered in a culturally competent or trauma-informed manner. Texas has very few mental health professionals and psychiatrists trained in sign language. There is a need for residential treatment. There is a need for the deaf or hard of hearing population to provide feedback or participate in agency’s committees or councils. SBHCC will coordinate with HHSC’s Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to ensure resources are available on mentalhealthtx.org. Survey questions would identify the number of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing when developing the next five-year iteration of Texas’ Statewide Behavioral Health Strategic Plan. Texas Association of the Deaf designated a representative to serve on SBHCC’s Behavioral Health Workforce subcommittee. The group continues to meet monthly; Emma Faye Rudkin will join the group to provide a personal perspective.

**Occupational Skills Training for Individuals with IDD Report**

Jonas Schwartz, Targeted Populations, TWC Vocational Rehabilitation division gave an overview of Senate Bill 2038 (86R). The Occupational Skills Training (OST) for Individuals with IDD report identifies 20 potential funding sources for postsecondary certification, occupational licensing and other credential programs. It identifies 192 top occupations in high-demand industries for which some type of workforce credential is required. TWC receives funding from multiple federal agencies for the development and implementation of training and certification programs and distributes most of the funding to 28 local workforce boards. TWC-VRD provides financial and vocational counseling support and guidance to Texans with disabilities to participate in the programs. In Fiscal Year 2019, over 52,000 individuals received training through a variety of TWC administered OST and other programs. VRD supported 7,500 people including 2,286 diagnosed with IDD. The IDD label describes over 800 distinct conditions with range and severity so vast that making specific recommendations for the IDD population would be impractical. The report provides suggestions for expanding existing programs for people with disabilities in community college systems.

Examples of a high demand occupation that require high school graduation or equivalent is home health aide or personal care aide. Texas offers certification in these industries to people with IDD through TAMU’s PATHS and UT’s E4Texas programs. In 2019, 438 VR customers received training to become a personal attendant. El Paso Community College’s Project HIGHER offers a level-one certificate to prepare people with IDD for certification testing in automotive technology, industrial tech welding, heating ventilation and A/C residential. Average wage for home health/nursing aide is $9.60 per hour typically without benefits, versus $22.60 for an HVAC technician. Anyone may apply to attend a current OST or other training program regardless of disability. Individualized educational supports such as adjusted eligibility criteria, personal assistants or attendants or note takers could make this OST more accessible for people with IDD. TWC VRD will continue to provide support to individuals wishing to attend OST or other training programs with the goal of obtaining competitive integrated employment.

**Policy Development based on the Committee’s Issue Areas**

Adult Protective Services Complaint Follow-Up with a Legally Authorized Representative, originally received from a constituent that identifies a lack of transparency. A third party should be involved in closing out the complaint. GCPD staff has not fully reviewed the proposed recommendation nor sought input or data from DFPS.

Motion by Ellen Bauman to allow the appropriate state agency an opportunity to address the concerns. Motion approved by roll call vote.

Certified Sign Language Interpreters for HHSC/Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Interagency Contracts. Ms. Rudkin introduced the proposal, noting the deaf community prefers in-person, onsite interpreters. Stakeholders report many complaints of unqualified, non-certified interpreters. An interpreter should be responsible to say they are not qualified for certain assignments. Oftentimes issues involve complex healthcare and quality of life discussion. Without proficient interpretation, miscommunication occurs or information may be left out such as behavioral issues or medical history. During Covid, certified Video Remote Interpreters assisted. Board for Evaluation of Interpreters maintains a registry of interpreters for the deaf. There are valid tests available to measure skill. The proposal suggests HHSC ODHHS only work with certified interpreters.

Motion from Dylan Rafaty to approve the proposal. Motion approved by roll call vote.

State Board of Educator Certification Rule on K-12 Certified Sign Language Interpreters. Ms. Rudkin introduced the proposal to reinforce a State Education Code requirement that interpreters hold certification, if the certification exists in the mode of communication needs by the student. It involves knowing how to interact with a deaf child to explain the context of material in their language. GCPD staff met with State Board of Education Certification regarding credentialing. SBEC suggested adding a school personnel’s passing status to SBEC or TEA’s website.

Motion by Elyse Lieberman to adopt the proposal. Motion approved by roll call vote.

Critical Public Health Information available via American Sign Language. A respected ASL interpreter championed this proposal because individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing were failing to receive important information during the pandemic. ODHHS created a few informational videos on Covid, now added to DSHS and GCPD webpages. Travis County Services for the Deaf released a video on their Facebook page. This recommendation would be helpful to local and state-level emergency planners.

Motion by Dylan Rafaty to adopt the proposal, as amended, to identify persistent public health information be communicated in the native language of Texans who are deaf or hard of hearing. Motion approved by roll call vote.

Guardianship Reform. Ms. Bauman said families need information on all available options – guardianship, supported decision-making, and person-centered planning. Judges from rural counties need accurate information. Members of the courts, investigators and attorneys need training. Courts must educate potential guardians about the individual’s rights. Sometimes, courts strip people of their rights prior to a supportive decision-making document is in place. Tarrant County Probate Court provides a good model. Guardianship requires an attorney’s representation, which is expensive to families. GCPD staff prefer to work with state agencies without involving legislation, and should review all existing resources. GCPD may host a training webinar or may create brochures or a series of videos targeting parents and transition-age students or legal representation. Disability Rights Texas was working with school districts to provide information to parents about guardianship. Ms. Cano, Ms. Bauman, and Mr. Rafaty would like to explore the issue further.

Motion by Ellen Bauman to create a subcommittee on guardianship, person-centered planning, and supported decision-making with the goal of identifying and supplementing existing resources, and identifying effective means of communicating with key stakeholders including families, judges and their staff. Motion approved by roll call vote.

Unemployment Insurance Claimants with disabilities. Mr. Lucey asked if TWC would consider allowing an alternative qualifier to the usual requirement of applying for three jobs per week? Working with VR could demonstrate someone’s active search for employment. Can commissioners by rule or administrative action amend the requirements? Ms. Peden agreed to take the request to executive management for further discussion.

Dr. Lieberman discussed a book, “The Explosive Child: A New Approach for Understanding and Parenting Easily Frustrated, Chronically Inflexible Children” written by author Ross W. Greene, PhD, and his program that focuses on shifting focus away from reacting to behavior and being proactive and collaborative with students in resolving issues that cause behavior. She requested Dr. Greene present to the Committee at a future meeting.

**Member Reports on Community Outreach**

Committee members shared accomplishments in the disability arena of work in local communities or representing the GCPD.

Kori Allen: City of Coppell created ADA liaisons from each city department when interacting with citizens. The city’s library will conduct a “meet your neighbor” virtual series and this week’s the topic is living with disabilities. Little People of America has conducted events virtually during the pandemic.

Ellen Bauman: The Arc of DFW Area has new board members; they are reaching out to additional counties. The annual Look Ahead conference will feature Ginger Mayeux presenting on the 87th Legislature, Rachel Neeley from HHSC on consumer direction, and Donna Green from ADRC of North Texas about local resources. In partnership with Cooke Children’s Oral Health Coalition 15,000 kits were distributed to elementary school-age kids.

Evelyn Cano: Has transitioned her volunteer work to Disability Chamber of Commerce RGV, founded in 2019. Primary focus is educating local employers on making a more inclusive workforce by providing etiquette and sensitivity training. Ms. Cano cherishes the ongoing collaborative efforts in her community. She serves on Texas Workforce Solutions’ transition coalition. Ms. Cano is a board member for Disability Rights Texas.

Elyse Lieberman: Spoke about her work over special education transition for Education Service Center #3 serving 39 school districts in the Victoria area. She is the primary contact for challenging behavior concerns in the school districts. Her expertise lies in emotional wellness. She is part of the Mental Health Wellness Support network for school districts, and the statewide multi-tiered support system. Dr. Lieberman is developing partnerships with TWC and school districts.

Eric Lindsay: has been working for Paralyzed Veterans of America to mobilize support and provide testimony to Legislature on accessible parking and Disabled Veterans license plate reform.

Richard Martinez: Through his outreach as a small business advocate with VIA Metropolitan Transit, five excellent webinars and town halls focused on disability issues. One had 1,800 participants! He helped GCPD staff with a webinar for people with disabilities owning businesses or hiring persons with disabilities. VIA held three training classes with Alamo Workforce Solutions. He assists organizations seeking grant opportunities. VIA provided eyeglasses to San Antonio citizens, in partnership with University of Incarnate Word. He is offering advice to a charter school that is committed to having 20% of students with special needs. Mr. Martinez spoke with representatives from American Association for the Blind regarding employment training opportunities.

Joseph Muñiz: Texas School for the Blind board has met through the Zoom platform during the pandemic. It has been a learning experience in delivering intensive services to students with visual impairments. And particularly challenging for deafblind students who require tactile communications. Mr. Muñiz continues to work with school boards. Collaboration is richer when communication is face to face.

Dylan Rafaty: Renaming his nonprofit, the North Texas Disability Chamber to focus on community education. Working on Master’s program with SMU, studying conflict management and dispute resolution. Advocating for clear masks to businesses, organizations, police and fire departments in DFW area. Serving as a commissioner with Plano’s Building Standards Commission that focuses on accessibility and universal design for both residential and commercial facilities. Working with city council to help establish a Disability Access Advisory Board. Selected for Board of Directors for the United States International Council on Disabilities, a disability rights organization based in Virginia, and representing Texas. Dallas Business Journal recognized Mr. Rafaty for Inaugural Leaders in Diversity Award as a champion for people with disabilities.

Emma Faye Rudkin: During Covid, Ms. Rudkin and her organization, Aid the Silent, continues to work with students, teachers and parents regarding communication. They sold clear facemasks and raised awareness about personal protective equipment and safety. She arranged a hearing aid fitting for a person in their own backyard. Successful pop-up clinics in San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley provided access to hearing loss care and assistance with hearing aids that removes critical healthcare barriers of families. In school settings, she teaches anti-bullying and explains disability. Ms. Rudkin is writing a children’s book about having a service dog and having hearing loss. A television segment, “Hank and Emma Faye,” was featured on PBS <https://www.klrn.org/hankemmafaye/>. Sign language is taught and befriending someone with a disability.

Kristie Orr: approached by a Texas A&M University graduate and his mother about having an advisory board in Bryan-College Station community. Dr. Orr is exploring who will lead the group, with her support.

Kris Workman: Has a few leads to explore in his community.

Aaron Bangor: participated with national partners working with state and local government on disability inclusion and accessibility issues. Addressed the Western Governors’ Association about universal design, technology and disability policy during a webinar. He moderated a panel on the inclusive telework environment for the Council of State Government’s virtual conference. AT&T’s social media team interviewed Dr. Bangor on “enlightened artificial intelligence” and ensuring technology is accessible. Datasets systematically exclude people with disabilities so it’s important to think about disability; are we educating students in such a way that makes it likely they enter into fields like data science/STEM-type fields to include disability representation. Disability-IN Central Texas promotes inclusion in businesses and organizations and held virtual events to keep membership engaged during Covid. Jose Velasco from SAP and Rachel Cyrus from Dell presented on autism hiring programs. An upcoming event will be “Deafblind: Demystifying and Recruiting People with Disabilities” in March. Other Texas Disability-IN affiliates are located in Greater Houston and DFW metroplex.

**Future Meeting**

The Committee will meet virtually for the next meeting. Motion by Richard Martinez as tentative guidance to staff to plan the next meeting for April 7 and 8, 2021, pending any unforeseen circumstances. Members approved the motion by roll call vote.

**Adjournment**

Motion by Dylan Rafaty to adjourn the meeting. Chair Aaron Bangor ended the meeting at 4:15 p.m.

Submitted by Nancy Van Loan, Recorder

EXOFFICIO FOLLOW UP ITEMS

* TEA: additional information about an appeal process for SSES
* HHSC: confirmation about funding for a recommendation as an LAR exceptional item for Support Service Provider/Co-Navigator initiative
* HHSC: LAR funding for the ECI program. Is there a corrective action plan for DOE’s violation of Texas’ ECI?
* TWC: Can Unemployment Insurance claimants with disabilities report a lesser number of job searches per week when actively participating in vocational rehabilitation?