**Texas Governor’s Committee on People with Disabilities**

**SUMMARY MINUTES**

**July 29-30, 2021**

Meeting Materials are available at: <https://gov.texas.gov/organization/disabilities/committee-meetings>

**Call to Order**

Chair Aaron Bangor, PhD, verified quorum was present. Eric Lindsay motioned to convene the meeting; seconded by Dylan Rafaty. Members approved the motion by roll call vote. The meeting began at 1:05 p.m.

**Members Present**

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

**Exofficios Present**

Sandra Breitengross Bitter, Texas State Independent Living Council; Catherine Samuel, Department of Family and Protective Services; Clair Benitez, Health and Human Services Commission; Marsha Godeaux, Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation; Justin Porter, PhD, Texas Education Agency; and Claudia Peden, Texas Workforce Commission

**Staff Present**

Ron Lucey, Executive Director; Randi Turner; Nancy Van Loan; Monica Villarreal

**Visitors**

Edward O’Neill, PhD, Texas Education Agency; Mary Rochford, Texas Council on Developmental Disabilities; Susie Tiggs, EdS, Education Service Center Region 11; Steven Aleman, Disability Rights Texas; and Jenny Sellers, Special Olympics Texas

**Approval of April 7-8, 2021 Summary Minutes**

Kristie Orr identified edits within her member report. Dylan Rafaty motioned to approve the Summary Minutes as corrected, seconded by Ellen Bauman. Members approved the motion by roll call vote.

**Public Comment**

A.V. is self-employed, a senior citizen and customer of TWC Vocational Rehabilitation Services. She believes it is discriminatory to discontinue Unemployment Insurance from people with disabilities whom are self-employed.

C.M. started a business through TWC Vocational Rehabilitation as a job placement provider. TWC should streamline the lengthy, complicated process that hurts clients, providers and VR counselors. Clients do not communicate in English but are required to submit different forms or he does not get paid. It is becoming harder for deaf customers to get good customer service.

D.D. struggled with Texas vocational rehabilitation services for a year. He will be leaving Texas because he has not received the services he needs. VRS did not approve a recommended course of treatment and denied requests for specific medications. Neurologists on TWC’s approved list would not accept TWC’s rate scale for an assessment.

L.L., Executive Director of [Deaf Dreams](https://www.deafdreams.org/), spoke about ADA compliance in Texas and the lack of enforcement for violations. An entity faces no consequences for not providing requested accommodations without filing lawsuits that take time and financial resources. When L.L.’s daughter needed to take the SAT exam, she was told sign language interpreters would be the family’s responsibility. Another instance occurred when meeting with a new doctor who expected communication without interpreters.

N.A. serves on the board of a national organization but spoke in a personal capacity about appropriate education and the rights of deafblind children and their families. The National Deaf Center says unemployment for individuals who are deaf is 39% and for deafblind, 65%. Reading is a gateway skill that effects access, inclusion, quality of life, college readiness and future employment. She has experienced false mindsets of program administrators such as expectations of deaf students to read at no more than a third-grade level or not read fluently until middle school. N.A. requested resources on available transportation for deaf and deafblind Texans.

R.D.M. thanked GCPD staff and members for being accessible to her. She plans to continue advocacy work for persons with disabilities and seniors.

Jennifer Bacak, Texas Parent to Parent, discussed the state’s criteria for Amber Alert activation. There are gaps in safety procedures that protect children who have IQ scores above 70 but also have cognitive deficit or emotional challenges that prevent them from recognizing or assessing risk or unsafe environments. It endangers youth with physical disabilities such as blindness or quadriplegia or need continuous access to medication or dialysis. Texas Parent to Parent wishes to convene a stakeholder workgroup to ask to amend the code’s language.

Amy Litzinger, Texas Parent to Parent, spoke about the potential loss of pay when a personal care attendant uses the Electronic Visit Verification accounting system. The EVV system rounds to the minute and the non-EVV systems located at the Financial Management Services Agencies round out to 15 minutes. This results in multiple times in one day that a provider could be losing 15 minutes of pay.

Linda Litzinger, Texas Parent to Parent, noticed an uptick where school districts insist that students who are age 18 be under guardianship for meetings and educational negotiations rather than allowing alternatives to guardianship. She thanked the GCPD for creating a guardianship task force.

Laura Marquez, PDN Children, spoke about the widespread lack of accessibility guidelines for social media. Vital information, such as daily COVID data, vaccines and resources, is not being communicated to people using screen readers. Responsibility falls to the due diligence of advocates. The Coalition for Accessibility Response and Emergency Services (CARES) remind El Paso city officials of their obligation to accessibility of website content. Members discussed creating a rubric for city entities and ADA Coordinators, communication departments and businesses.

C.N. spoke about driver license testing for individuals who use bi-optic devices. A low vision specialist may provide a certification for meeting the Texas requirements. Texas Medical Advisory Board could revoke a driver license based on outdated recommendation that Texas drivers should not be allowed to use a bi-optic when behind the wheel of a vehicle.

P.F. suggests making the registration for parking placards available online. Persons with disabilities and seniors need more affordable housing options.

S.A. spoke about retaliation for students with disabilities who don’t perform well taking the STARR test and are prevented from school activities. School administrators seek strong performance results.

Y.V. spoke about the low rate of pay for caregivers and continuity of their services so persons with disabilities can remain independent.

Anonymous wrote that people with mental health disabilities deserve rights, particularly in child custody situations. Advocates for education and job skills for persons with mental health disabilities.

**Reports from Invited Exofficio Agency Representatives**

**Texas State Independent Living Council** (SILC)

Sandra Breitengross Bitter said SILC’s board will meet virtually on August 11, including an open conversation with the public on priorities and advocacy issues of Texans with disabilities. The centers for independent living are working with consumers on COVID-19 relief and engaging FEMA to ensure availability of vaccines to people with disabilities. SILC submitted policy recommendations generated by the Accessible Transportation project to members of the Texas Legislature.

**Department of Family and Protective Services** (DFPS)

Catherine Samuel represented DFPS. Adult Protective Services recently published a Strategic Plan. Key personnel changes: Governor Abbott appointed Theresa Thomas as Director of the Office of Community-based Care Transition. Office of Consumer Relations will be renamed Internal Affairs and remain under Chief Accountability and Protection Office. Dinesh Tripathi is fulfilling the agency’s role as Accessibility Coordinator. Interagency initiatives: Child Protective Services’ developmental disabilities program specialists continue working with HHSC to develop training on guardianship. Regions 4 and 5 will host training sessions on the referral process for aging-out youth to assess for guardianship, reasons for denial, and responsibilities when HHSC becomes a guardian.

The CPS director of placement and several of the regional developmental disability specialists continue revising the person-centered training curriculum. CPS has assigned developmental disability specialists (DDS) within each region to serve as contacts for any referrals regarding children in foster care identified as deaf or hard-of-hearing to review cases and offer support. Members requested a list of CPS regional DDSs and asked if these specialists receive training or have expertise in working with kids who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**Health and Human Services Commission** (HHSC)

Clair Benitez replaces Dana Williamson as HHSC’s exofficio. The newly established Office of Disability Services Coordination (ODSC) falls under the Chief Program and Services Office. ODSC’s focus is long-term, systemic-wide aspects affecting the improvement of service delivery for persons with disabilities. They want to be a connector of expertise, research, resources and stakeholder engagement. ODSC’s Disabilities Services Action Plan includes information to improve service delivery for people with physical and intellectual and developmental disabilities. Affiliated with Rider 157 is ODSC’s Direct Service Workforce Task Force to improve the community attendant workforce. A public relations campaign promotes the benefit of direct care workforce.

Ms. Benitez discussed the report’s executive summary. HHSC submitted a plan of intent to receive a 10% match for home and community-based services (HCBS) programs through the federal American Rescue Plan. Examples in HHSC’s Plan include time-limited reimbursement to strengthen and stabilize the HCBS workforce, potential paid time off or retention bonuses; supporting recipients with technology and individualized skills or socialization instead of a habilitation environment; developing infrastructure to support the operation of a pilot program that could be a future transition of waivers to managed care. HHSC submitted a proposal to CMS on June 29 to increase the state’s capacity to rebalance long-term services and supports funds. The 87th Texas Legislature maintained Early Childhood Intervention services. ECI is set to receive $19 million from the American Rescue Plan Act. Chair Bangor asked Ms. Benitez to confirm testimony heard about children not receiving ECI services and that providers are leaving the program because of inadequate funding or compensation rates.

**Texas Department of Licensing & Regulation** (TDLR)

Marsha Godeaux shared the Architectural Barriers program provided online training through the Building Professional Institute. Texas Accessibility Academy provided in-person and virtual training on the Texas Accessibility Standards for Registered Accessibility Specialists. The Architectural Barriers program continues to review construction projects, perform inspections and work with their enforcement division on complaints. The Hearing Instrument Fitters and Dispensers, and Speech Language Pathology and Audiology advisory boards are considering adoption of emergency rules to allow the continued use of providing services through telehealth.

**Texas Education Agency** (TEA)

Justin Porter, Ed.D., Director of Special Education, introduced Dr. Edward O’Neill who spoke about tragic events at a Fort Worth ISD campus involving restraint of a child. One student was pronounced dead after transport to hospital. The incident was referred to TEA’s internal investigative bodies, Complaints Management Unit, and Educator Investigations to determine potential educator misconduct. Dr. O’Neill could not speak to conclusions or outcomes. Simultaneous immobilization of all four extremities is prohibited under the law. When a student is restrained, TEA has a process and statutory requirements regarding local education agency’s notification to the family/parent/legal guardian around reporting and the use of restraint, and can make an internal referral.

Dr. Porter gave an update on legislative issues, from TEA’s perspective:

* SB 1716 funds $30 million for each biennium for Supplemental Special Education Services (SSES) and expands eligibility to students with an IEP in grades PreK-12. An online account allows families impacted by school closure access to the marketplace to purchase SSES goods and services.
* SB 89 requires ARD committees to note in a student’s IEP if services were missed or delayed due to COVID-19, ie: awarding compensatory services for at-home learning. Deadline for implementation is May, 2022.
* HB 4545 relates to all public school students who fail a state assessment then have a tutoring plan put in place to address the areas of deficiency.
* HB 1252 extends statute of limitations for requesting special education impartial due process hearing to two years for hearings requested on or after September 1, 2022.
* HB 785 relates to requirements around students’ plans for behavioral services when students are receiving special education for a disability related to behavior. TEA publishes Rulemaking for Public Comment.
* SB 776 requires the University Interscholastic League (UIL) to provide students with intellectual disabilities access to team sports.
* HB 159 mandates the State Board of Education to create a universal design training program for teachers to better address students’ needs.
* HB 2256 requires State Board of Educator Certification to provide a bilingual special education credential for teaching students of limited English proficiency with disabilities.
* HB 1525 creates a legislative commission to review special education funding and creates grant programs prioritizing enrollment of students with autism and dyslexia.
* Federal law’s maintenance of financial support (MFS) requirement says a state is not allowed to spend less money in one year than they did in a previous year on special education. TEA appropriated $44 million to support special education.
* American Rescue Plan of 2021 gave an additional $275 million funding to flow to local education agencies to encourage IDEA implementation and address issues that arose during COVID. TEA encouraged districts against funding permanent positions, rather to pay for technology purchases, compensatory contracted services, or extra duty pay.
* Rider 8 changes language to allow monies for adapting educational materials. Discussions have begun with school programs and curriculum side of TEA regarding implementation.

Ms. Cano asked about TEA’s process to allow for homebound instruction. Dr. Porter explained there is a waiver process for a student who needs to participate in remote conferencing for more than 20 days.

Dylan Rafaty motioned to recess the meeting until the following day; Ellen Bauman seconded. Motion approved; meeting recessed at 5:00 p.m.

Evelyn Cano motioned to reconvene the meeting; Eric Lindsay seconded. Motion approved; meeting began at 8:34 a.m.

**Texas Workforce Commission** (TWC)

Claudia Peden discussed the report’s executive summary, legislative update, and agency initiatives. Vocational Rehabilitation Services staff and providers continue to serve customers remotely and in-person. TWC tracked 1,154 bills with 177 bills making it to the Governor’s desk for final action. All Exceptional Items requested by TWC are included in the General Appropriations Act as passed by the Texas Legislature. Ms. Peden highlighted the following legislation:

* Rider 48 requires TWC to conduct an inventory of all apprenticeship and internship opportunities for people with disabilities and will be made available to Rehabilitation Council of Texas by October, 2022. Ms. Peden will review the language of Rider 48 and periodically report back to GCPD.
* SB 50 directs Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to develop a process that conforms to the state’s Employment First policy and mentions TWC’s assistance in developing processes.
* SB 1917 requires HHSC, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, and other appropriate state agencies, to conduct public awareness and education campaigns designed to provide information relating to programs and resources available to aging adults who are blind or visually impaired.
* HB 4074 relates to collection and use of suicide data by the Behavioral Health Coordinating Council, including suicide prevention efforts.

TWC updated the VR Standards for Providers Manual on July 1, 2021 to remove some requirements put in place following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some services can now be provided remotely without an approved Contract Service Modification Request (VR3472) form, if agreed upon by the counselor, customer, and provider.

As of June, TWC has recognized five employers through the *We Hire Ability* recognition program. Nominations, including state agencies, may be submitted through September. On June 28, TWC debuted the online self-referral portal, *Start My VR,* for people with disabilities to sign up to receive VR services. TWC conducted a pilot to determine how many workers were needed for the Independent Living for Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) program. As of September 1, OIB will have a dedicated manager and is adding additional field worker positions. The OIB program served a record number of customers this year, partially due to a new OIB phone helpline.

Ms. Peden commented on testimony heard during the GCPD’s meeting regarding the significant decline in VR’s provider network. To lessen some barriers, TWC VRS initiated a comprehensive project gathering input about challenges. VRS is reviewing strategies such as reducing vendor requirements and forms; ensuring payment rates are competitive and equitable; strengthening recruiting efforts; and enhancing provider support and training. TWC reviewed requirements from the policy manuals and reduced 32 levels of approval. TWC annually reviews and posts to the Texas Register for public comment and the Commission adopts MAP fee schedules.

She responded to a previously asked question on competitive integrated employment. Typically, employers who receive federal funds to fill positions by individuals with disabilities have to hire 75% individuals with disabilities to maintain that funding. TWC reviews each customer’s situation on a case-by-case basis for vocational rehabilitation. TWC field staff meet with employers to learn about the work environment. The field staff have a checklist which first asks if the person is earning minimum wage.

**Executive Director Report and Staff Updates**

Ron Lucey listed accomplishments from the 3rd Quarter of Fiscal Year 2021:

* Interagency collaboration on Successful Communication Tips for Vaccinating People with Disabilities (flyer sent to pharmacies statewide)
* Presented at the annual Texas Parent 2 Parent conference
* Presented at Knowbility’s Access EDU conference
* Provided opening remarks at the National Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) conference
* Provided support during the 2021 Texas Society for Interpreters for the Deaf conference; assisted the Restructure Subcommittee re-writing the organization’s Bylaws and business processes (Randi Turner)
* Presented ADA training and Transitioning from High School to the Real World at the National ADA Conference (Randi Turner)
* Partnered with Texas Council on Developmental Disabilities to provide an update from 87th Legislative Session via a webinar (Monica Villarreal)
* Provided support for the Samuel Allen Law, Texas Drivers with Disabilities campaign, which allows voluntary disclosure of disability on a driver license and/or vehicle registration. Explored ways TAMU San Antonio might enhance the training component for law enforcement.
* Promoted Office of the Governor’s disability proclamations
* Finalizing the process to select an artist with a disability for the annual NDEAM poster competition
* Participated in interagency workgroups and subcommittees: HHSC Aging and Low Vision Task Force; HHSC Behavioral Health Services for the Deaf; two emergency preparedness groups; and invited to serve on a Rehabilitation Services Administration parent training group
* Conducted multiple webinars on disability and policy: Hosted eight webinars for TSID; partnered with TDHCA about the Rent Relief program; and a panel featuring artists with disabilities. Upcoming webinars include Accommodations and College; Dr. Ross Greene on his Proactive and Collaborative Solutions model; Tammy Goodwin, Disability Integration Specialist from FEMA, on emergency preparedness (Randi Turner)
* Performance measures; GCPD’s budget; one staff vacancy
* Continued growth of GovDelivery; up to more than 13,000 subscribers
* 87th Texas Legislature brief wrap up. Monica Villarreal spoke about selected legislation based on policy recommendations from the GCPD’s 2022 biannual report. A copy of this presentation is available upon request. As a private citizen, member Eric Lindsay supported SB 792 addressing required changes to accessible parking for Disabled Veterans, which becomes effective in January, 2022.

**Emergency Preparedness Interagency Task Force Updates**

Ellen Bauman, President of The Arc of DFW Area, leads an interagency task force focusing on back-up power solutions for power-dependent durable medical equipment (DME) such as ventilators, oxygen concentrators, and suction machines. Stephanie Duke, an attorney from Disability Rights Texas, leads a second group focusing on developing personal preparedness educational materials and hosting training events. Members discussed two policy recommendation proposals presented by the DME Task Force.

PUC-TDEM information exchange.

The interagency DME task force found many barriers, particularly the lack of using existing data. They explored using data from Medicaid managed care organizations and CHIP. They reviewed resources from other states. Texas’ Public Utility Commission (PUC) has a voluntary critical care registry, verified by a person’s doctor, who forwards information to local utility providers. Texas Division of Emergency Management offers STEAR. The [STEAR application](https://tdem.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/TDEM-21-Form.pdf) allows space to discuss personalized disability requirements. There are lack of data-use agreements between Offices of Local Emergency Management and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOADs) such as the American Red Cross or National Guard Units who might conduct well checks or provide water, etc. Electricity providers do not use data operationally to protect or restore power, partially because of privacy protections. Technology does not protect electricity circuits for customers’ homes. First priorities of a grid are hospitals and fire or police stations.

Dylan Rafaty motioned to adopt this recommendation. Ellen Bauman seconded. Motion was approved by roll call vote.

Utilizing Data from emPOWER’s Platform.

emPOWER is a national database that captures DME purchases of Medicare recipients. Counties may purchase data from emPOWER at a cost of $2,000 per request, especially useful during a disaster. The recommendation outlines potential solutions – data custodians; integrating Texas Medicaid and CHIP data into emPOWER’s database; working with DSHS, HHSC and TDEM to study the feasibility of integrating STEAR datasets and critical care registries from local power companies; and including scenarios during full-scale emergency exercises.

Dylan Rafaty motioned to approve this recommendation; Eric Lindsay seconded. Approved by roll call vote.

**Guardianship Subcommittee** **Update**

Ellen Bauman and Evelyn Cano lead a group of professionals discussing guardianship and alternatives to guardianship. Education is a critical component. The court system supports training. The subcommittee will develop policy recommendation proposals on who would benefit from receiving training and avenues for outreach.

**Implementation of** [**Senate Bill 776**](https://capitol.texas.gov/Search/DocViewer.aspx?ID=87RSB007765B&QueryText=%22SB+776%22&DocType=B) **(87R) related to Adaptive Sports**

Jenny Sellers, Special Olympics Texas (SOTX), spoke about “Revolution Inclusion,” a term used to promote Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools and Sports. SOTX augments, improves, and grows school inclusion programs. Unified Champion Sports helps TEA with provision of special needs sports programming in schools with backing from UIL. SB 776 requires UIL to establish rules to provide for UIL-sanctioned unified sports. SOTX is required to provide data. There is a significant reduction in bullying at a Unified Champion School. Peer to peer networks aid the success rate through team building. Students from the general education population are more likely to encourage, incorporate, and hire folks with different abilities after a positive experience. This is an opportunity to promote meaningful social inclusion. [University of Massachusetts](https://www.umb.edu/csde/research/playing_field) is studying the benefits of Unified Sports.

**“Texans with Disabilities Share COVID Stories”** [**Report**](https://tcdd.texas.gov/resources/covid-19-information/texas-covid-stories/1-year-after/)

Mary Rochford, Texas Council on Developmental Disabilities (TCDD), said the agency conducted three surveys during the pandemic to see how COVID was affecting Texans with disabilities and family members in the categories of health care, employment, special education, and isolation. In the spring of 2020, participants were asked if COVID-19 had disrupted access to their services, if they had been able to stay safe during the pandemic, and whom they contacted if they needed help. In summer, participants were asked about access to therapies and health care, and their level of concern around virtual learning and safety in the workplace. The third survey centered on access to resources, and asked if people had received a COVID vaccine. Participants submitted open-ended comments saying they could access doctors via telehealth, but there were many insurance issues. Texans told stories of being laid off or were afraid of returning to their jobs for lack of safety precautions. There were concerns that virtual learning did not provide methods to meet a child’s IEP or felt teachers were not able to fully help special education students. Parents and schools were nervous about sending kids back to school or allowing in-home services because they were afraid of contracting the virus. Opportunities for socialization were disrupted or worsened feelings of isolation. TCDD gathered stories through a large social media initiative to share with state leaders. A better lesson learned would be to be proactive in preparing for emergencies not reactive with services.

**ASL Interpreter Pay and Recruitment for Deaf Students, K-12, in Texas Educational Settings**

Susie Tiggs, Education Service Center Region 11, described proposed policy recommendations she submitted for member consideration. There has been a dire shortage of certified interpreters in Texas’ educational system since the mid 1990s primarily due to the low pay scale and recruitment barriers. In 1998, GCPD issued a press release to call attention to this imbalance and gathered input during a public forum. Some recommendations are still appropriate today. Interpreters in educational settings are paid less than interpreters in the community. School districts report to Texas Association of School Boards that interpreters may be paid between $10-$36 per hour. Most districts classify interpreters as paraprofessionals. While some school districts hire Communication Facilitators and pay a provider up to $350,000, many only pay $50,000 for interpreters. Primary competitors would be video relay services, private agencies, or universities. To be certified, educational interpreters are required to have at least 60 college hours or an Associate’s Degree. Interpreters must pass a certification test that averages a 35% passing rate and then obtain continuation education every five years. The Regional Day School Programs for the Deaf (RDSPD) allocation of $33 million has been the same since 1995. Funding is based on the amount of services the students receive. Services from the 53 RDSPDs are vital to support students in small and rural settings. There are 13 interpreter training programs across the state, some programs graduating more students than others. Tarrant County generally graduates 27-30 per year.

Members commented that it is a benefit to students to have consistent interpreter assignments. It may be helpful to cluster students that use the same mode of communication. Interpreters may experience “burn out” or carpal tunnel syndrome. Members asked staff to identify and analyze data on salaries from other industries. Dr. Porter shared that TEA’s state coordinator of deaf education, Emily Robinson, would be a good source.

**Unmet Needs for Dyslexia Services**

Steven Aleman, Disability Rights Texas, spoke about developments affecting the state’s policy for students with Dyslexia. TEA requires districts to report the number of students with all disabilities. School districts reported 241,197 students with Dyslexia. House Bill 3880 (87R) did not pass, but was a comprehensive revamping of the state public school policy around screening, identification, and provision of services to students with Dyslexia. In June, 2021, TEA proposed an amendment to [special education rule](https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/laws-and-rules/texas-administrative-code/19-tac-chapter-89) clarifying that Dyslexia is a condition eligible for students qualifying for special education services under the Specific Learning Disability category. On June 25, 2021, State Board of Education authorized a preliminary revised version of the Dyslexia Handbook; public comment ends August 27, 2021. Rulemaking may result in further revisions, based on feedback from the public. The general theme is public schools should consider students with Dyslexia for special education services and not limit them to eligibility of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

There is a requirement for parents or guardians to be involved in the development of a student’s IEP. Parents have more rights and choice in Child Find than Section 504. Section 504 provides accommodations and protections. TEA was given authority to collect data during the 85th Session, but at that time, no money was tied to it. In Section 504 there are reevaluations every four years. United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, has authority over Section 504.

**Individual Member Reports on Disability Issues**

Emma Faye Rudkin’s nonprofit, Aid the Silent, sponsored two camps for deaf students in middle and high school. Aid the Silent won some grants this summer and is planning for their 4th Annual Gala. Justin Osmond, who is an advocate for people with hearing loss, will serve as an amazing keynote. She is working with foster kids who are deaf and met with CASA in San Antonio. A project with PBS television and teaching ASL signs (15 videos) continues.

Dylan Rafaty shared that the North Texas Disability Chamber is developing a mentoring coalition, “Connect, Focus, and Grow” to help youth transition into the workforce. HEB is opening three new stores in Collin County and promoting disability inclusion. Dylan was accepted into the Leadership Plano program. He serves on Plano’s Building Standards Commission focusing on city codes. He is working with professional sports teams to establish a foundation on employment of people with disabilities. He is spearheading a disability track for an international film festival in Dallas.

Kristie Orr is supporting a new local disability coalition to serve citizens with disabilities. They have applied to become a nonprofit. A student government association on TAMU campus voted to name July, “Disability Pride Month.” TAMU offers an accessibility series on a variety of disability topics. Kristie is part of Texas Faith and Disability Network providing accessibility resources.

Joseph Muñiz attended National Association of Governors Committee’s virtual event on artificial intelligence (AI) and the impact it may have on the disability population in the area of employment. During the interview process, organizations may use AI to record and screen applicants. Algorithms used by programmers create a score based on criteria for an ideal candidate. (Chair Bangor added there could be some systematic bias issues that those algorithms do not account for that would put somebody with a disability at a significant disadvantage - probably not directly related to whether or not a person can perform the essential job functions.)

Richard Martinez is speaking with new dialysis patients about working and leading a rich life. He sometimes helps folks in casework. He works in supplier diversity, so he helps organizations figure out the contracting process. Mr. Martinez may participate with VIA’s Navistar pilot program for persons who are blind or visually impaired navigate public transit.

Eric Lindsay competed in the paralympic trials and qualified to go to Dubai as part of the World Para-Archery championship. He completed the process to have his service dog, Norman, function as a team. He was asked to participate in a study on neurogenic bladders. He plans to increase awareness among the veteran community about STEAR and emPOWER emergency registries.

Elyse Lieberman is partnering with TWC and Golden Crescent Region in Victoria to coordinate a workability, parent and student fair hosted by the Education Service Center for disability employment awareness month. She is getting a group together to approach the mayor to form a committee representing people with disabilities. She is working to expand secondary student transition for students under Special Education and Section 504.

Evelyn Cano is president and co-founder of the Disability Chamber of Commerce of Rio Grande Valley. DCCRGV’s webinar series has been successful and there are plans for a conference in October. DCCRGV is partnering with Texas Deaf Chamber to co-host roundtables on employment issues and unemployment benefits for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. She was appointed to serve on Disability Rights of Texas’ board. She serves as an independent consultant for a large public charter school forming a special education advisory committee. She is speaking with city leaders about forming an inclusion diversity committee for people with disabilities.

Ellen Bauman shared The Arc of DFW Area meets quarterly, virtually. She joined Cook Children’s Joint Commission in delivering kits for 3,000 school kids. Her efforts with the emergency management and guardianship workgroups are satisfying. She plans to work towards retention and better pay for personal care attendants, including encouraging LIDDAs to attend more training to learn what is available for the people they serve.

Kori Allen shared that Coppell is starting some accessible workout classes at the recreation center, aquatic and non-aquatic. They have held trainings for city employees on emergency management, new developments for parks and recreation, and website accessibility. Little People of America is gathering a list of physician or specialists who are familiar with dwarfism. Ms. Allen will be spreading awareness for Dwarfism Awareness Month through fun facts, support and encouragement to families. A couple of in-person social events are planned.

Aaron Bangor shared that AT&T’s employee resource group conducted events for Global Accessibility Awareness Day. Their chief diversity officer spoke on disability diversity, and a panel discussed what people in different roles across the company can do. They held informal lunches, called DINE – ie: **d**iscover differences, **i**nclude one another, discover **n**ew perspectives, understand different lived **e**xperiences. AT&T rolled out 9-8-8 abbreviated dialing code that directs calls to the National Suicide Prevention lifeline. Dr. Bangor spoke via a virtual summer camp for students with disabilities at UNT’s College of Engineering about the importance of STEM fields, technologies, and how to navigate the workplace. He was interviewed along with David Ondich for local KOOP radio station about what the ADA means, what the GCPD does, and how GCPD supports agencies. Disability:IN Central Texas held an online webinar on opportunities and risks in the digital space for organizations seeking to improve disability inclusion. Speakers were Becky Kekula, Disability Equality Index Director, National Center on Disability and Journalism, and Jack McElhaney from MicroAssist.

**Future Meeting: October, 2021**

Staff are targeting October for the next meeting to occur in conjunction with the Annual Lex Frieden Employment Awards. Partners for the event include ILRU/Southwest ADA Center, Houston Mayor’s Committee for People with Disabilities, Disability:IN Greater Houston chapter, TWC, and Workforce Solutions Centers.

Chair Bangor will propose a draft policy recommendation on the State as a Model Employer, and noted progress cannot be tracked without data. TWC’s Civil Rights Division publishes a report on the hiring of protected classes. Could Ms. Peden brainstorm with TWC and GCPD staff about measuring the employment of people with disabilities in state government? Voluntary data tracking will show a trend of employment outcomes over time. ODEP has published an Inclusive Recovery Resources Report.

**Adjournment** – Upon completion of all items on the agenda, Chair Aaron Bangor asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion by Eric Lindsay; seconded by Ellen Bauman. Meeting adjourned at 4:43 p.m.

Submitted by Nancy Van Loan, Recorder

**FOLLOW UP ITEMS:**

DFPS: List of CPS regional developmental disability specialists. Do DDS specialists receive training or have expertise in working with kids who are deaf or hard of hearing?

HHSC: How is the agency addressing ECI provider funding and compensation rates that will allow children to receive needed services?

TWC: review language of Rider 48 and provide periodic follow up.

TWC: How many BET food service locations were closed during COVID?

TWC: brainstorm with TWC and GCPD staff about measuring the employment of people with disabilities in state government