January 15, 2016

Dear Government Operations Committee Members.

As requested in the letter from the Senate Government Operation Committee dated May 5, 2015, The Vermont Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind Advisory Council was established. Attached please find a list of council members and their biographies that reflect their unique blend of experience and knowledge from both professional and community perspectives. The first organizational meeting of the newly formed Advisory Council was held in October of 2015. Our Council came to consensus on the above name and developed the following mission statement:

The mission of The Vermont Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf/Blind Advisory Council is to improve the lives of all Vermonters who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf/Blind by recommending policy that promotes diversity, equality, awareness and access.

The Advisory Council held two additional meetings in November 2015 and January 2016 and at the second meeting, four sub-committee work groups, were created to focus on specific age groups; birth to 3 years of age, school age (3 to 21 years of age), adults and seniors (65+). Each sub-committee completed a gap analysis of services provided or missing in order to identify strengths, challenges and opportunities for children, adults and seniors who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind. Each sub-committee identified gaps in the following areas:

1) Service coordination and delivery;
2) Professional capacity;
3) Data collection/collation/tracking; and
4) Accessibility that are in need of further discussion and examination in order to optimize outcomes.
5) The need for coordination of outreach, public education
6. Psychosocial and emotional support was also identified.

The gaps identified to date exist across the lifespan for individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf/Blind and are described in the executive summary below.

Birth to 3 years of age Sub-Committee:

Services for the **birth to 3-year** old population are coordinated by a number of agencies. The Vermont Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (VTEHDI) is a program housed within the Department of Health's Children with Special Health Needs. VTEHDI's federally mandated goal is to screen newborns, diagnose newborns with

hearing loss, and provide intervention services by 6 months of age. Nine East Network, through their Parent Infant Program (PIP), manages the intervention piece, of this mandate. PIP focuses on providing families with information and services to understand and support their child and their unique needs. Teachers of the deaf, audiologists, speech language pathologists, and/or other individuals that have specialized training provide PIP services as advisors/coaches to these parents. A **key issue** for this youngest age group is the lack of consistent, accurate, and unbiased information that is provided by advisors/coaches to families who have an infant or toddler with hearing loss. Given this concern of the sub-committee, it is recommended that there be additional time to discuss and examine the opportunities for improvement of services to families with birth to 3-year-old Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf/Blind newborns and infants.

School Age (3-21 years of age) Sub-Committee

The School Age sub-committee serves in the interest of approximately 650 Vermont children, **preschool age 3 to high school graduation and post-graduation**, who are identified as Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf/Blind (DHHDB), as well as their families. Out of these, roughly half of the students are eligible for special education. Thirty-four students have bilateral hearing loss at the moderate to profound levels. The **key issues** that affect this entire age group include:

1) The need for well-coordinated services that provide the requisite academic, emotional, social, linguistic, and cultural support to ensure these children develop into successful students and citizens;
2) The accessibility issues, including language, communication, equipment, for not only educational purposes but also for other activities of daily living (e.g., medical appointments, recreational, cultural and social opportunities);
3) Insufficient expertise/resources within the State that specialize in this population. In particular, the limited educational program and placement options available for Deaf and Deaf/Blind students are of concern to this subcommittee.

As such, the School Age sub-committee recommends the following:

1) A thorough review of the State's systems and capacity (including workforce assessment) to educate and support all DHHDB students in and of outside of the classroom appropriately in order to align our resources to the service needs.
2) A creation of a 'clearinghouse', wherein appropriate data is collected and collated, services are coordinated, outreach efforts are formulated and deployed/maintained, and training and credentialing are monitored.

Adult (21 – 65 years of age) Sub-Committee

The sub-committee found several areas of concern where there are significant gaps in services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind Vermont **adults**. The following **key issues** were identified by this sub-committee as needing improvement in the areas of support and/or access to services:

1. Mental health
2. Substance abuse counseling and treatment programs,
3. AA/alcohol screening services
4. Legal counseling
5. Deaf/Blind services around transportation and Support Service Providers (seeing guide)
6. Hearing aid funding and affordability
7. Appropriate communication and access to State agency programs such as Economic Services/Housing/food stamps/legal services/Children and Families services.

The committee also identified a lack of education and training for both the public and private business sectors not only **for** but also about Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind individuals. Additionally, many young adults lack self-esteem and confidence and fall behind in their educational growth due to limited public school services as they become adults. Another challenge is the large contingency of refugees who have moved to Chittenden County and some whom are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf/Blind. This age group has the need for many wrap-around services that are not currently available.

The Adult sub-committee needs additional time devoted to examine the following areas for Vermont Adults who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind:

1. Census information.
2. Coordination of services
3. Professional capacity
4. Social and emotional gaps
5. Accessibility
6. Outreach to public and private sectors
7. Education and training for staff

Senior Citizen (>65 years of age) Sub-Committee

There is a very high incidence of hearing loss (33% to 50%) among Senior Citizens. We estimate that hearing loss affects between 34,000 and 52,000 Senior Vermonters. Hearing Loss is an invisible condition that nonetheless can have a profound adverse effect on health and quality of life. The following **key issues** were identified; Senior citizens are particularly at risk since confusion, depression and other conditions/symptoms associated with hearing loss can be mistakenly attributed to dementia. The cost of treatment (such as hearing aids and aural rehabilitation) is often

unaffordable for Senior Citizens because Medicare does not cover hearing aids nor do most other insurance plans in Vermont. It is crucial that Senior citizens in Vermont be able to access services and obtain treatment.

Summary:

The sub-committees are currently working on a table that provides examples of the impact on each age group and presents our findings on the themes and groups affected. An example of the table currently under development is attached.

As a result of the sub-committee's work on their respective age group's gap analysis, it was unanimous among all 4 sub-committees and the larger Advisory Council as a whole that the **recommendation be made for the establishment of an official legislative and governor appointed Council for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind to include current council members.**

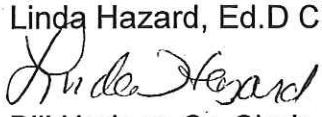
Additionally, the Council and sub-committees recommend the following goals be addressed:

1. Identify and implement quality improvement initiatives across all of the DHHDB age groups.
2. Bring policy recommendations to the attention of the Governor and Legislature.
3. Evaluate the need for a Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind Commission that has authority to make policy decisions. Currently 41 states in the U.S. have such Commissions.

We look forward to working collaboratively with the legislature and the Administration in order to improve services for children, adults and seniors who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind.

Sincerely,

Linda Hazard, Ed.D Chair



Bill Hudson Co-Chair

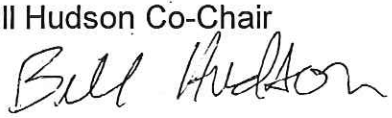


Table 1. Themes and how identified gaps impact each age group. (Example only)

Age Group	Coordination and Delivery of Services	Professional Capacity	Data Collection, Collation, Tracking	Accessibility (language, communication, equipment)	Outreach and Public Education	Psycho-social and Emotional support
Birth to 3 years	X	X	X	X	X	X
School Age	X	X	X	X	X	X
Adult	X	X	X	X	X	X
Seniors	X	X	X	X	X	X

The Vermont Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf/Blind Advisory Council

Member profiles listings

November 2015

Mission statement: "The mission of the Vermont Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Deaf/Blind advisory council is to improve the lives of all Vermonters who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind by recommending policy that promotes diversity, equality, awareness and access"

Monica Caserta Hutt: has worked in the field of human services for the last twenty-five years. As a graduate of the University of Vermont and a licensed secondary education teacher, she began her career as the Executive Director of the Sara Holbrook Center in Burlington's Old North End. She joined the Howard Center, a Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Designated Agency in 1992, working there for thirteen years, first in the children's division and then as the Director for Children and Family Services in the arm of the organization serving individuals with developmental disabilities. In 2005, Monica began her work with the State of Vermont and has held several positions in the Agency of Human Services, beginning in Field Services, moving to the Director of Operations for the Department for Children and Families and finally as the Director of Policy and Planning for the Agency. Monica is a 2008 graduate of the Snelling Center for Government Vermont Leadership Institute and a 2011 graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School, Executives in Local and State Government program. She is married to Kevin Hutt and they have three children, Nicolas, Malcolm and Luisa.

Linda Hazard Ed.D CCC-A, Chair: Linda Hazard is the Program Director for the Vermont Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program at the Vermont Department of Health and is employed by the University of Vermont Medical Center. She has a Masters Degree in Audiology from Boston University and a doctorate in Leadership and Social Policy from the University of Vermont. Linda is currently the President of the Directors of Speech and Hearing Programs in State Health and Welfare Agencies (DSHPSHWA). Additionally she is the American Speech Language and Hearing Association (ASHA) State Advocate for Reimbursement (STAR) representative for Vermont. Linda's expertise includes building and leading collaborative teams and leading quality improvement initiatives for Vermont and nationally.

William Hudson, Vice-Chair: I was born with my severe hearing loss. Started off attending mainstream public schools, then my parents decided to let me try the Austine School for the Deaf which shaped me to who I am today and graduated with my high school diploma. In 1985 I was employed as the Coordinator of the Deaf Independence Program at the Vermont Center for Independent Living, overseeing a $100,000 grant program specializing in providing statewide independent living skills training for Deaf individuals. Currently I am employed with the State of Vermont Vocational Rehabilitation Services for over 26 years. Started out as a

Rehabilitation Counselor of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing to assist Vermonters to help prepare for and be successfully employed. In 2004 I was promoted to Senior Rehabilitation Counselor to do supervisory work in addition to my casework. This year, 2015 I was promoted to Coordinator of Deaf/Hard of Hearing Services, replacing my supervision work with outreach and education services among state agencies and businesses. Over the years I have served on many boards, advisory councils and committees related to the recognition and growth of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. For 22 years I have enjoyed teaching American Sign Language evening classes at the beginner's level with various locations such as the University of Vermont, Community College of Vermont and the Vermont Center Parent/Infant program. Earned my Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Johnson State College in 2001, and my Master of Arts degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Assumption College in 2004. Married to JoAnn, also an Austine School graduate and life is wonderful with our two grown children and 3 grandchildren and hopefully more on the way.

Susan Kimmerly, Ed.D., CCC-SP: Susan has lived and worked in Vermont for 35 years in the areas of speech, language, hearing and human services. As a certified speech-language pathologist, she continues to conduct evaluations for children in Vermont schools and consults with school districts on their service delivery of speech and language services. Susan worked for State government for 14 years, including as the State Consultant for Speech, Language and Hearing services with the Department of Education. In 2003, Susan founded and continues to direct the Nine East Network, which has hosted the Vermont Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program since 2014.

Elena Shapiro: Comes from a 3 generation Deaf family. Resides in Underhill, VT with three children in Elementary, Middle School and High School. Attended the Lexington School for the Deaf in New York City and then transferred to a mainstream school program until I graduated from High School. Attended the Rochester Institute of Technology and graduated with a B.S. of Science in Social Work and a Masters in Business Administration. I have worked in the Telecommunication field for 20 years and am currently the Director of Customer Service for Convo Communications. Served 9 years on the Board of Trustees for the Vermont Center for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing. Served as President of Vermont Association of the Deaf for 6 years and is currently the treasurer for the organization. I have worked closely with the Public Utilities Commission during my stint with Sprint Relay providing 711 in Vermont as well as on the board for the Vermont Equipment Distribution program under the PUC as well.

Amy Williamson, M.A.: is a nationally certified (CI, CT) American Sign Language(ASL)/English interpreter with specialist certificates in legal (SC:L) and educational (Ed:K-12) settings. She works as the Instruction Coordinator for the Mid-American Regional Interpreter Education (MARIE) Center, a resource center on interpreting and interpreter education, and teaches and

trains interpreters throughout the country in a variety of specialized topics such as legal, medical, and educational settings. Amy is uniquely situated within the deaf community as she has deaf family members that include her parents, daughter, partner, and many extended family members. She holds a Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies with an emphasis in Pedagogy from Western Oregon University and is currently a PhD student in Interpreting with an emphasis in Research at Gallaudet University. Amy's research focus has been on educational approaches to training interpreters who are native bimodal-bilinguals in both ASL and English, heritage ASL users, language patterns and cognitive impacts found among deaf individuals who have delayed access to their first language (L1), and the (in)effectiveness of ASL/English interpreters in educational settings. Amy's interest in educational settings comes from being raised by teachers, working as an interpreter in the classroom, advocating for her daughter's appropriate educational placement, and coordinating with an extensive educational team to accommodate her son's educational needs that result from having cerebral palsy. Amy and her partner, Bill, live in Montpelier with Amy's two sons, Otis and Ben, and their Chesapeake Bay retriever, Polly.

Dr. Sharon Henry: is a Professor of Physical Therapy at UVM. She has been a physical therapist for 33 years and teaches in the entry-level Doctor of Physical Therapy program in courses where students learn about the physical therapy management of musculoskeletal dysfunction. Sharon is co-director of the Human Motion Laboratory and her primary research interests are motor control of human posture and movement, particularly as they relate to musculoskeletal impairments and injuries. She has mentored many undergraduate and graduate students and also works collaboratively with physical therapists in the community to create a provider-based network for carrying out her NIH funded clinical research trials. Over the last 10 years, Sharon has participated in the State Health Department's Hearing Advisory Council as a parent of a child with a bilateral sensorineural hearing loss who is now in 11th grade. Sharon also has a hearing loss, has siblings and nephews with hearing losses (ranging from moderate to profoundly deaf) and her father was deaf.

Cindy Moran: I currently serve as the Vermont State Director of Special Education. Prior to this role, I was employed at the Agency of Education as the Alternate Assessment Coordinator. Before coming to the AOE in 2002, I was a speech language pathologist, certified by the American Speech/Hearing Association. I graduated from UVM in 1983 with a Master's degree in Communication Science and Disorders. As part of my work in Vermont schools, I consulted with teachers and parents, administered speech and language assessments, wrote IEPs, and worked directly with students.

Mark Limoges: Deaf at 2 yrs old due to an illness. Admitted to the Austine School for the Deaf in 1963 and graduated in 1978. Received an Associates degree at Central Piedmont

Community College in Charlotte, NC in Auto Mechanics in 1980. Employed at General Motors & Dodge dealership for two years as transmission builder. Mark then attended and graduated from Gallaudet University in 1986 with his Bachelors in Science degree in Computer Science/Physics. Upon returning back to Vermont, Mark worked for a Computer Programming business before starting up his own contractor/painting business. Was then hired in 1990 by the Austine School as a part of the vocational training program. Mark continues to operate his business as a part time maintenance contractor to this day. Currently is treasurer for the Austine Alumni Association, Chair for the Save Austine Committee and member of the Vermont Advocacy Deaf Rights which focuses on preserving Deaf children's education awareness in Vermont. Also a member of the Vermont Association of the Deaf. Mark and his wife Jean reside in southern Vermont, their daughter is currently studying for her medical doctorate degree at the University of Vermont.

Sherry Sousa: My current professional role is Director of Instructional Support Services for Windsor Central Supervisory Union. I have worked within this district for the last 23 years as a special educator and building based administrator. Personally, I was raised in a home with a profoundly hard of hearing mother, and have raised a child who is also hard of hearing now attending Rochester Institute of Technology, National Technical Institute for the Deaf program. I have also written several books on Non Verbal Learning Disabilities, was a teacher in a residential treatment facility and educator for Landmark School both in the language based learning disability program and aboard the Watermark Program in north Europe and the Mediterranean Sea.

Stuart Soboleski: Resides in South Albany, Vermont. As a Deaf person who grew up in a Deaf family, he has been educated and employed in both schools for the Deaf and in mainstreamed settings in public schools. He holds a Bachelor's degree in special education from the University of Connecticut. Stuart works as a farmer because he has a strong interest in social and ecological justice. He believes that agriculture can be a great equalizer because it brings people's feet back to the ground. He wants to make life easier and more equal for everybody, while developing a better understanding of Vermont's current and future path in recognizing intersectionality.

Deb Charlea Baker, M.S.: Deb has experienced varying levels of hearing loss since early childhood. She wears hearing aids and uses assistive listening devices as needed. Mainstreamed throughout her early education, she learned Sign Language in college and trained as an Interpreter at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. She worked as a Nationally Certified Interpreter for 15 years. She then worked at Vocational Rehabilitation as a Counselor for Deaf and Hard of Hearing for over twenty years and served on many boards and advisory councils such as the Deaf Task Force, Mental Health Alliance for Deaf and Hard of

Hearing People and Hearing Aid Task Force. She continues to serve on the Board of Disability Rights Vermont, and as an advisor for the Office of Professional Regulations for Hearing Aid Dispensers and Audiologists. She has been a member of the Hearing Loss Association of America (formerly known as SHHH) since 1988 and for six years served on the National Board of Trustees in Washington, D.C. Four of those years she served as an Executive Officer (Secretary and Vice President). Currently she serves on the HLAA Vermont Chapter as Chair of the Steering Committee. Besides having experience with her own hearing loss, her son (now an adult) experienced sudden unilateral deafness as a small child. Her partner who has a strong family history of progressive hearing loss/late deafness, is now losing his hearing. She has also has a grandson who has mild hearing loss

Ralph Gallo: Born profoundly Deaf, I attended the Austine School for the Deaf in Brattleboro from which I graduated in 1971. Attended the Rochester Institute of Technology for two years. After having several work experiences, I was employed with the Vermont Agency of Transportation for 10 years in heavy equipment and truck operation, along with supervising several crews to properly maintain the roads, guardrails, and culvert replacements. Added to this each winter was snow removal and sanding of I-89. I then dedicated my professional career to the Unites States Postal Service. My job consisted of Distributor Clerk duties, along with being a Job Instructor. As Instructor, I was responsible for training employees in mail distribution. After 28 years of employment for the USPS, I retired in 2013. For roughly the past 15 years I have also served on various boards and advisory groups. My service has included being a Board Member for 2 years for TTY Relay, board member of the Social Rehabilitation Advisory and the Vocational Rehabilitation Council prior to 2002. From 2003 to the end of my term in 2012, I served on the Board of Trustees for the Vermont Center for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing in Brattleboro. Currently I serve on several groups; as Auditor for the Austine School Alumni, focusing my energy as an active member for SAC (Save Austine Committee), the Vermont Advocacy for Deaf Rights (VADR), the Vermont Association of the Deaf (VTAD), which focused on the bill S.66 in 2015 and as a current member of the Vermont Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf/Blind Advisory Council.

Keri Darling: Keri Darling is currently the director/trainer for Deaf Vermonters Advocacy Services (DVAS), in the beautiful green mountains of Vermont. Keri has been deaf since age 2 ½ years old, growing up in rural Vermont with a hearing loss. Attended RIT (Rochester Institute of Technology) where she found the different kinds of accessibility options that are available to hard of hearing or late deafened or deaf people. It was there at RIT, Keri learned about Deaf culture and sign language. Upon graduation, Keri was hired as the Manager of the Deaf Independence Program under the Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL). In this capacity, she oversaw deaf staff, and clients who needed Independent Living Skills development and accessibility awareness for deaf and hard of hearing on systems level. Developed a

telecommunications distribution program in Vermont for low income Vermonters who have hearing loss, who needed telephone equipment but couldn't afford it. Was instrumental in setting up TTY payphones in all Rest areas in the state of Vermont. During this time Keri began to notice abuse happening in the Deaf community, and after completing a national training in 1999, Keri started DVAS in 2000. In the past 15 years, Keri has received numerous local and national awards for her work in creating awareness about accessibility for Deaf and hard of hearing victims/survivors. Keri has developed numerous training tools for law enforcement, hospitals and EMT's when encountering Deaf people. In the past she has served on several advisory and board of directors both on state and national level. Currently, she is serving on the Advisory Council for the JDVNC (Justice for Deaf Victims National Coalition).

Annette "Missy" Boothroyd: I was born Deaf due to an illness. Attended the Special Education Public school system until I transferred to New York State School for the Deaf and graduated in 1977. Received an Associate degree in Business Management at National Institute Technical of the Deaf in 1981. I worked at University of Massachusetts as a Librarian for 17 years and taught at Holyoke Community College as an ASL Instructor for several years. I used to work for the Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation (currently Disability Development Service) for 5 years, and with the Massachusetts State Association of the Deaf in Western Massachusetts for 3 years as an Advocate. Currently I am the Deaf Independence Program Coordinator at the Vermont Center for Independent Living since 2005. I have participated in many advisory committees in both Massachusetts and Vermont. Taught sign language classes to the family members of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in Massachusetts for few years. Currently a member of Brattleboro Area Lions Club as a secretary. My husband, Peter and I live in Amherst, Massachusetts. We have two grown children and 3 grand dogs and 1 grand cat.

Danielle Howes: is the Part C Program Administrator for the Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division, Children's Integrated Services Unit. Under the Individuals with Disability Education Act, Part C provides regulations and federal grant funds to support services for infants and toddlers (birth to age 3) who have a development delay or condition that could lead to a developmental delay.

AJ Van Tassel: AJ has experienced some level of hearing loss from a young age. He is a bilateral hearing aid user and uses other assistive listening devices and coping techniques as needed. After serving in the U.S. Navy, AJ has spent more than 25 years in the legal industry, working in both the private and public sectors. He is currently an Investigator with the Public Protection Division of the Vermont Attorney General's Office. AJ served for several years on the Vermont Hearing Aid Task Force and the Vermont Hearing Advisory Council.

Spenser Weppler: Spenser is a Senior Program Analyst at OneCare Vermont in Colchester VT, one of Vermont's Statewide Accountable Care Organizations. Before that he was a Healthcare

Reform Specialist for the Green Mountain Care Board, a position he held since the GMCB was formed in 2011, with a focus on the areas implementing healthcare system delivery, and payment reform. Prior to working for the Board, Mr. Weppler was a Healthcare Administrator for the Healthcare Administration in what was formally the Department of Banking Insurance Securities and Healthcare Administration (BISHCA) now the Department of Financial Regulation (DFR). He held this position since 2005 when he had moved back to his native Vermont from Boston. In Boston he worked as a Research Associate for the Boston University School of Public. Spenser was born in Morrisville VT at Copley Hospital and was a student of the Morristown School District, and graduated from Peoples Academy in 1997. He received a BA from Bowdoin College in 2001 and a Masters of Public Health (MPH) in Health Care Administration from the Boston University School of Public Health in 2005. Spenser was born binaural severe to profound sensorineural hearing loss and wears two hearing aids. He currently lives in South Burlington with his wife, and his two daughters ages 3 and 1.

Judy Vreeland: Judy has worked with Deaf children and adults as an educator, mental health therapist, and program administrator. She holds degrees in Education of Deaf Children, and Mental Health Counseling with Deaf Persons. In addition, she completed the Family Therapy Program of the Family Institute of Cambridge, and Leadership for Change, an advanced program of the Carroll School of Management at Boston College. Judy has been with The Learning Center since 1980 and became the President and Executive Director in 2010.