

RICAT Minutes
Office of Rehabilitation Services
40 Fountain Street - Providence, RI 02903
August 17, 2006
2:30 – 4:00 p.m.

Welcome

- Welcome: Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Panarace at 2:30 p.m.
- Members present: Richard Gafney, John Benevides, Margaret Hoye, Margaret Dunning, Kerri Cicione, Kim Wennermark, Emily Lennon, Joe Murphy, Ron Racine, Jill Waller, Bill Robinson, and Bob Perrello
- ATAP Partners: Lezlee Shaffer, Judi Carlson
- Guests: Doris Simas, Elisabeth Hubbard, Ray Carroll, Steve Brunero
- Acceptance of Minutes: Jill Waller moved to accept minutes of June 15, 2006, seconded by Richard Gaffney. Motion was unanimously approved.

Chairperson's Report: Chair Panarace sent a get-well card to Charlie Pollock. Chair Panarace then stated that some members had asked if RICAT would be planning to purchase a gift for Regina's retirement. Ray Carroll added that there would be a formal retirement event on September 14th at the Federal Reserve Restaurant. Chair Panarace asked for suggestions and added that she had wondered if Regina would use RIDE not that she has retired. Suggestions were given by several members from gift certificates to a nice engraved vase with flowers. Chair Panarace stated she will put out the money initially and she will poll everyone by email so that a decision can be made by the end of the month. Jill Waller commented she felt it should be something personal. Chair Panarace will look and run it by the executive committee before making a purchase of \$50. Another issue that has come up a couple of times has been a financial issue. She needs clarification of expenses related to serving on RICAT. Chair Panarace stated that the by-laws state that "RICAT members shall not receive a per diem but shall be reimbursed, upon submission of invoice, and completion of required documents for payment through the state agency, for their actual and necessary expenses incurred in carrying out their official duties". Chair Panarace commented that the Communication Committee members have been traveling to Kingstown and to Woonsocket and asked what the Agency policy is for advisory councils. Ray Carroll responded there were 5 councils like RICAT, and as a general rule they do not pay for mileage reimbursement for participating volunteers. There are other things ORS provides such as laptops, brochures, etc. If the Communication Committee needed a new piece of equipment that would be helpful for demonstration purposes, it would probably be paid for. Mr. Carroll also added that this council has done great work.

- Committee Reports:

- Communications: Joe Murphy again requested that people go to the beta website and give comments. Lezlee Shaffer had previously given some comments. Joe stated there are some revisions that need to be made, and once the revisions are done, they can upload it to the state website. The Council feels that one of the most important things is to have the partners' site come up. Joe added that then they need to look at brochures and fact sheets. Judi Carlson added that at a recent partners' meetings they looked at all the fact sheets, and each partner was assigned to research, validate information, and suggested changes. Joe also asked for any new vendors or new resources to be emailed to him as well. Joe also noted that they are trying to get better participation by people so they will be scheduling meetings in different areas. Ron added that with the current Communications Committee it was easier to meet at URI because it was closer to the members. Kerri had also mentioned to them that she would not mind hosting meetings, because by the time she gets out of school, the meeting is over. Chair Panarace also added the use of conference calls. John Benevides also suggested using web access.
- Executive Committee: Chair Panarace stated they had an electronic meeting where they discussed changing the bylaws to incorporate the new Partners Support Committee and also reducing membership. Both Emily L. and Jill B. reminded her they can't afford to lose anyone because of the requirements that they are mandated to have. She added that a couple of members held off until after the State Plan was submitted before they were going to submit their resignation. Chair Panarace also asked the members to look at the State Plan and Feasibility Study.
- Alternative Finance: John B. noted there is nothing new and exciting as they are awaiting the outcome of the feasibility study. After completion, they will mobilize a group of internal and external people to review based on the needs of Rhode Islanders. They should have an update by the next RICAT meeting. Chair Panarace stated Dianne had told her there would be 4 sub-groups.
- Legislative: Bob Perrello stated this committee hasn't had much to do until congress goes back into session. Chair Panarace stated six to eight people will also be on the legislative committee. Richard Gaffney commented that NFB has a piece of legislation - S1928, which is entitled the Free Newspapers for Blind and Other Persons with Disabilities Act. This would allow for the Library of Congress to pay for telephone lines that cover NFB's Newline. At this time, the organization has to get funding every year. Newline is free to anyone who is print handicapped. Richard also stated that the new voting machine was tested at a primary in East Providence where 3 members tried it and said it was very easy to use.
- Membership/Outreach: Jill stated that currently there is a full council; however, Ron has let them know that if another person is available he will step down due to his different responsibilities. He added that he would still be involved and come to the meetings when possible. Emily stated there are a couple of people they have to do outreach to and be proactive. Someone asked if there were any prospects. Jill stated she had contacted a former applicant, James Bowden, but he responded he can't do it right now but wanted them to keep him informed. Jill had sent out email

to everyone to see that they are actively on a committee. She added that coming up this fall, some members' terms will be ending and they will need to see if they still want to participate.

- By Laws:
 - Proposed Partner Support Committee – Chair Panarace read the proposed resolution which would be incorporated into Article 7, Section 2, Standing Committees. Standing Committees of RICAT are Membership Legislative, Communications and Partner Support. “IV. Partner Support - This committee has the responsibility to review work plans, reports and performance of ATAP partners and offer recommendations, technical assistance and resources to partners in achieving objectives.” Margaret Hoye questioned if RICAT abides by Robert’s Rules of Order. If so, before any vote can be taken, members need to receive a copy of changes 30 days in advance. John B. stated he was not sure if a hard copy had been sent. Margaret H. stated she did not get a copy. Chair Panarace stated she would have Dianne send a copy to all RICAT members. She also added that they have 3 volunteers for that committee - Margaret H., Ed Z. and Margaret D. Chair Panarace will postpone until next meeting.
- Program Director’s Report (Steve Brunero/Ray Carroll): Ray Carroll began by giving some informational updates from ORS. He stated that ORS is a State agency that is personal-centered and works in partnership with the community. ORS values the work and participation of RICAT. They have always endeavored to have as many AT users as possible. He commented that it was great to hear that membership is so good and extended their appreciation. Regina’s last day was July 28th, and Ray C. stated it was somewhat unexpected. She had been involved with the Tech Grant activities for last 5-6 years. Concurrent with her announcement, they had tried to have position back-filled after putting together a pretty persuasive justification. The State ‘07 budget was passed with the Governor having to cut 35 million dollars through savings via personnel leaving all personnel vacancies frozen. Ray C. added that DHS is working through a strategic process to address these issues. He is not sure when they will recruit for Regina’s position. Steve and he will transition. Regina and RICAT were also working on State Plan which was transmitted to our federal project officer, Jeremy Buzzell, at RSA on July 26. A couple of days ago Steve B. received an email from Jeremy Buzzell indicating that we hadn’t answered many of the requirements. They were surprised but then found out he did not review the update but instead had reviewed the basic plan. He advised that he would be reviewing the state plan and would get back if any clarification.

Ray C. also discussed ATAP’s budget stating that at one time this was a time-limited grant (discretionary grant) where they could have carryover money. Now it is a formula grant in the amount of \$312,777, and at the end of this FFY2006, Sept 30, 2006, there is no more carryover. ATAP is a partnership model which is subcontracted out. They are currently analyzing the budget to determine how best to allocate monies that come first to the state agency, adding that they will be having a meeting with the partners later this month to discuss how best to deal with the budget. Ray C. stated that he recently stopped by the RI Congressional delegation and met with all of the delegation not just the staff. Representative Jim Langevin and Senator Jack Reed have been wonderful supporters of this program. He then asked if anyone had any questions. Chair Panarace asked if there were any state funds. Ray C. responded there were not, and they were now working on the 2008 budget where they have to cut back \$36M. John B. thanked Ray for this update, and

added he felt someone on the Council should be involved in this as well so the Council would have more insight. This would not be for controlling the budget, but more for information so that when questions and discussions come up, they know why the resources are going where and for what. Ray C. responded that was a good suggestion and left it up to the Chair and Executive Committee to pick the person to participate. Chair Panarace asked about the carry-over money asking if it was there, why it wasn't spent it the past. John B. questioned if there are any contingencies if people can't be replaced. Ray responded that they will be able to put together in house resources to keep the ball rolling. Chair Panarace added that at the Department of Health Feds threatened to pull a program if the position wasn't filled, so she hopes for the best and that this is resolved quickly. Judi C. added that members (especially one attending ATAP partners meeting) should read the state work plan showing the contractors' responsibilities and the federal grant itself because this grant is tightly regulated. Ray C. commented that certain things are spelled out in the law. Once State Plan is formally approved everyone will get a copy. It is online at www.atap.ri.gov as well. Emily asked if the federal guidelines are online, but the response was they are not.

- ATAP Partners Report:

- PARI: N/A. Chair Panarace stated that James Litvack will be undergoing surgery for a cochlear implant on September 24 and will be spending several months in therapy after that.
- East Bay Educational Collaborative: N/A. Lisa Labitt is running a camp for disabled children for 3 weeks.
- OSCIL: Lezlee Shaffer stated that at previous meetings she had mentioned the state of OSCIL's equipment funds where they had an extensive waiting list for different pieces of AT. They have received some small grants totaling about \$25,000 including from Ocean State Charities, Christopher Reeve Foundation, Coastways Credit Union so they are addressing some of the waitlist. Some include vehicle modifications. OSCIL's I & R Specialist Susan Eleoff has been getting floods of calls regarding AT - repairs, vendors, and used equipment. PARI has been as well. Lezlee stated they have been getting repeat requests for equipment, but now because now because of their waiting list, they are limiting it to a one-time request only. They are continuing to have small vendor demonstrations at OSCIL (one with reps from East Side Kitchen and Bath Co.) Also the ATAP specialist is continuing to work with the nursing home transition people. One of the new things is the Disability Vote Coalition which is a grass roots effort that works with people with disabilities to get out and vote. The want to eliminate anxiety with regards to the new voting machines as well, so they are coordinating efforts to get one at the IL conference and possibly into the OSCIL office after. The Deaf service coordinator is involved in the panel discussion at the IL conference on new AT for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals. These devices include vibrating baby monitors, doorbell signalers, personal pagers, etc. and will be on display and available to use at the IL conference. Their shake-awake smoke detectors and hearing aid programs are still going on. Staff members are still doing equipment assessments for ORS. Chair Panarace noted that during the last legislative session there was passage for a higher level for hearing aids - \$700 per hearing aid every 3 years and children under 18 for up to \$1500 - which is

paid through insurance policy. She added that she went through a lengthy process to get reimbursed. Chair Panarace commented that she would like OSCIL and TechACCESS work with the Communications Committee on the ATAP brochure.

- TechACCESS: Judi C. stated there are 3 or 4 objectives they are working on including the Demonstration Center and the Membership Center. They received a little carryover money last year and they were able to purchase demonstration devices and develop relationships with vendors who would give them equipment on a long term loan. They are concentrating on childhood technologies; computer access; Learning and Cognitive Technologies; and Deaf/Hard of Hearing/Blind/Visually Impaired technologies. They have received most of the equipment and have reorganized; and they are receiving more drop-in traffic as well. Judi commented on the statistics the ATAP Partners need to keep and how challenging they are to keep. TechACCESS' membership hours are full, and they will need to offer a double session. They do public demonstrations on Monday which are free to public. These include blind technologies one week, low vision, computer access and Deaf and Hard of Hearing other weeks. Some are taking it out of the office to Senior Centers and Assisted Living Centers as well. The second big thing is the Annual AT Conference. Judi added she hopes all can come. Brochures will be going out next week, and noted if you don't one, you are not on mailing list and need to let them know. They already have 18 vendors signed on, and Judi believes it is a strong program, specifically on education, vocational, and some adult services. Judi also spoke of one of the benefits of working with partners, and that is that the State agency can't solicit funds, however the partners can. TechACCESS just received funding for Cybervision Saturday, where they will be able to get children who have visual impairments or who are blind to get into a social group that they normally wouldn't have the opportunity to do and explore technology. They are collaborating with Insight and received money from the Citizens Foundation. Another item Judi mentioned was the Instructional Materials Accessibility Act which states that students who are Blind or Visually Impaired must receive educational materials at the same time as their sighted peers. All school systems must have a plan in place by the end of December. The last thing Judi discussed was the Tech Act federal grant which has just developed a partnership with the Alliance for Tech Access (ATA) – a very powerful lobbying group- which is calling vendors to task. All states are supposed to have demonstration centers. The date of the AT Conference is November 16th at the Crowne Plaza in Warwick. Chair Panarace added that she has noticed that there is more for- profit corporations starting to recognize universal design, and hopefully there will be more that recognize the need for either Assistive Technology or modifications to equipment to accommodate people with disabilities.
- Sherlock Center: N/A
- Roundtable:
 - Jill B. raised the question regarding the date of the next meeting. On the agenda is was listed as September 21, yet she thought it was going to be October 19th. October 19th is the correct date and the meeting will be held at TechACCESS. Lezlee had stated that OSCIL's conference room will not accommodate this large of a group.

- Margaret Hoye – Brought up that with all the hurricanes and terrorism, they have all kinds of alerts for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing but nothing for the blind or visually impaired. Richard G. stated he has an alarm that comes in to him from the weather service. He added that the National Federation of the Blind is trying to get some type of emergency information spoken, but FCC hasn't done much about it. Margaret H. stated she called the stations to say there is nothing to help her. Judi added that the Emergency Management Committee is addressing that exact issue, and Paul Choquette from DHS is on the committee. They are doing automatic 911 information if a person is speech impaired; talking about ways to notify people with at-risk children who can't be off oxygen; and possible a reverse 911 calling system. Lezlee added that Paul C. is going to be on a panel at the IL conference, and his aspect is emergency housing. Ray C. added that the CSAVR, the national organization Council of State Administrators in Vocational Rehabilitation, is working with the Department of Homeland Defense to assure that they were considering the needs of individuals with disabilities. Chair Panarace said the bottom line is you need to think ahead and you can't rely on the system, but instead need to build relationship with friends and neighbors.
 - Jill B. questioned if anyone attended any of the Forums. Lezlee responded they hosted the Warwick site, and it was very well attended. There was a nice cross section of individuals with disabilities.
 - Elisabeth Hubbard stated that because RI Disability Law Center is federally funded, they have to reprioritize. She handed out surveys and asked that everyone fill it out and send it back to RIDLC.
 - Bill R. commented that he has been out of touch and asked if it would be appropriate to ask anyone for their recommendation on which of these questionnaires would be of the most impact of the committee. Jill responded he should do all. Liz added they are trying to get a sense of what people are most worried about right now and what area they feel is not getting the attention it should.
- **Next Meeting Date: October 19th from 2:30 – 4:00 p.m. at TechACCESS, 110 Jefferson Boulevard, Suite I, Warwick.**
 - **Adjournment:** Motion was made by John B. and seconded by Richard G. that the meeting be adjourned. Motion was unanimously approved, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:59 p.m.