

# **RICAT Minutes**

**Office of Rehabilitation Services**  
**40 Fountain Street – Providence, RI 02903**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Floor Large Conference Room**

**August 12, 2004**

- Welcome: Meeting was called to order by Chair Waller at 2:35 p.m.
- Members present: Harry Dunbar, Margaret Hoye, Jill Waller, Emily Lennon, Charlie Pollock, Kathy Samways, Ying Sun, Joe Murphy, Ron Racine, Pam Corcoran (for Jeanne Panarace), John Benevides
- ATAP Partners: Lezlee Shaffer, Beverly Andrade-Johnson, Betsy Dalton, Judi Carlson, Lisa Labitt, Anne Mulready, and Elizabeth Hubbard.
- ATAP Partners Report - Regina thanked everyone for coming on such short notice to learn what ATAP partners' roles are. This was an orientation for new members and an update for council members.
  - TechACCESS of RI – Judi Carlson began the presentation by saying that TechACCESS is excited about being a part of ATAP. They are the statewide center for AT. Judi first asked everyone if they knew what the definition of AT was. She then passed around a few pieces of AT for members to get an idea. AT Devices and Services go together, and the definition is anything that helps a person with a disability function better. For people with vision impairments there is a wide range of objects. Judi brought a lighted magnifier to show the low end technology, as well as on the high end, a Packmate which is a standard typewriting keyboard with speech output. For people with hearing impairments Judi brought an amplifying device. Judi also brought a reacher, super scissors, built up cutlery, doorknob opener, etc. to show low-tech gadgets. A lot of people are coming to TechACCESS because of their kids. Judi showed how switches are used on toys. Items such as a mini-keyboard to help people use computers were also shown. Judi passed out a flow-chart showing what TechACCESS does including the Client Services, Schools Project, RI Dept of Health, and Central Information & Resource Center. Their primary goal is to get information out, as well as make referrals. Bev Andrade stated she gets about 300-350 calls a month. In response, she will either send them a catalog or invite them to a demonstration, refer to a vendor or service provider. TechACCESS also exhibits at certain conferences in the area, has a library, and has a website. Judi stated one of the big things is that a lot of people don't know what their rights are and don't know who to call. They refer a lot to the RIDLC if they think people have gone through process and they are still stuck. They also refer people to Lisa at EBEC. On Mondays they have demonstrations that are open to the public from 1:00 -3:00 pm. The ATAP grant subsidizes Member Hours so people can join and come use items in the center for a certain number of hours. They have a lot of people who

ordered equipment and they go in to learn how to use it prior to receiving it. They co-host an AT Conference with ATAP and other sponsors. This year's conference is being held on November 18<sup>th</sup> at the Crowne Plaza, Warwick, RI. Dr. Sun has been bringing his students each year to conduct a presentation. TechACCESS sends out a newsletter quarterly to about 3500 individuals. Several courses at the college level are taught about AT at TechACCESS. With regard to working on systems change, they are looking at funding issues and systems that need to be changed. TechACCESS has worked on the Department of Education school competencies in AT with Lisa; the AFP – Alternative Finance Program; and the Vision Commission with parents of children with visual impairments. They provide technical assistance and have written the AT goals in the state vision plan. Charlie stated he had gone to the public forum sponsored by the Governor's Commission on Disabilities and other agencies including ATAP at the Warwick Public Library last Wednesday. He found that there was no one phone number where people could call to get information, and asked if there is just one number. Margaret responded that the GCD and others were going to look into it, and stated a lot of things that people have questioned at previous forums have gotten results. Judi stated TechACCESS gets a lot of phone calls and refer them to whoever is appropriate. Lezlee added that OSCIL and PARI work with independent living issues, and they have information specialists there that can point people in the right direction. Margaret stated United Way used to put out a manual and now Travelers Aid does. Regina responded that service-providing agencies hear this complaint all the time, and it will be addressed. There are efforts on the state level to reinforce the concept of one stop shopping. She doesn't believe it will ever get to the point of only one place to get whatever is needed; however, people are trying to address this. Dept of Elderly Affairs had received funds to do a one stop for elders based on the same idea as the netWORKri concept.

- East Bay Educational Collaborative – Lisa Labitt stated that as of today there are about 25-30 people attending their science materials resource center. She has been able to talk to vendors there and said that it would be good if all their books were available in alternate format. Lisa brought with her an article about a girl who won a national competition in Braille. She spoke to people at Delta and Foss about how students need a variety of formats whether it be on Braille, CD or diskette, and shared with them some of the new information regarding federal accessibility requirements. EBEC also sends out a newsletter. Lisa stated that each of the collaboratives are structured differently. A lot of their programs are statewide. The newest program they have is the Transition Academy at Salve Regina University. Students between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one who are ORS eligible, and who have not yet completed their academic requirements as stated in their IEP's or other transition requirements in their IEP's may do so in a more age appropriate environment. Other collaboratives' infrastructure is the same as theirs, run by a board of directors, and work with their technology coordinators, special education directors, superintendents, and classroom teachers. At the collaborative they have done over 46,000 sessions of professional development (PD) last year. Lisa showed a copy of the PD menu showing her course. "Special Services - Assistive Technology Training". A lot of networking goes on. She presented some pictures of a student in a classroom and some of his writing. She worked with his IEP team and then she showed a 3 page story he did after working with assistive technology. She had loaned him from the Lending

Library a piece of equipment to help him. She gives the teacher questionnaires and support. Subsequent training time is also provided. Lisa also discussed some of the training she has done with RI Parent Information Network (RIPIN). She had also done some middle school training for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. A lot of 13 year old boys and girls have issues with being different, and Lisa it is an important time to teach kids on an individualized basis. Parent support is key and helps determine the success rate. They have a few publications that were done previously – the AT brochure and Parent Guide. Lisa showed an assistive technology wheel for consideration which she uses with teacher/students/parents. Basically at the collaborative she does a lot of individual assessments of students and works with conference committees. Collaborative is unique because of the ability to network and link with the other programs. Now with “No Child Left Behind” she has been part of the agenda and inclusion on the minds of people in education that they need to be thinking of alternate formats – AT, universal design. Emily asked if a teacher has to refer students. Lisa stated it is usually through the IEP process, but families also call. She will invite them to the resource center, and then she usually makes a call back to the special education director.

- Sherlock Center – Betsy Dalton stated she has been part of the AT movement in Rhode Island since the 1980’s. She talked about her role changing and evolving over the years that the grant has been in existence. For the first 5-6 years she worked more on direct training and resource development, and helped write the first parent guide. In the middle of the ten years, a good evaluation was necessary and Sherlock Center moved into the area of program evaluations. Their role changed significantly to evaluation. They are now in phase III. Her most recent Research Brief that will come out this fall entitled “Accessing AT: Is RI Responsive?” This Consumer Satisfaction Survey was funded by ATAP. The Sherlock Center Research Brief is published about 3-4 times a year. Betsy read the conclusions of the major findings of the study. Essentially the study found that there was progress over the years, but there are a lot of areas that still need work. The survey has 3 large appendices that have all the data. Now she is working on AT competencies. She just completed a survey that will be shared with the inclusion classroom next week. They will see where educators feel their knowledge of AT lies, and document to gather feedback to see where teachers feel their skills lie in relation to AT competencies. They are probably about a year away from implementing changes. This is just one of the many different things she does in her work at the Sherlock Center. She sees the partners as overlapping areas working together. Kathy asked if this survey is only for teachers who will be attending the institute. Betsy stated she will also be gathering information at the conference. She worked with research director to develop an instrument for studying competencies and allow them to transfer them over to a document where they can see where they are at. They haven’t decided what the process will be. They will contact people who are involved with inclusion, a broad spectrum of educators. The question of what “Inclusion” was arose. Betsy explained it is the participation of students with disabilities in regular classroom activities with various supports. It is the recent extension of mainstreaming and bears a relationship to “No Child Left Behind”. Emily asked about the Satisfaction Survey and the issues are still how to fund it, get the assessment, evaluation; and asked what ATAP will be doing about these continuing issues. Regina stated that this is something that after 10 years of existence, we are now at a transition point

looking at the future and what will it hold for the projects. Regina stated it looks like the law will be reauthorized and some of the issues that have been pointed out will be a basis for what we do for the future. We are addressing those issues on a regular basis. They will be looking at issues, which is one of the reasons she wanted to share survey results with the council. Progress has been made, but gaps still exist. Betsy stated there is an executive summary of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey that she put together, and she can be sure they will get a copy. It is also on the ATAP website. Betsy stated it's a process that will never be completely done; and the Federal Government is realizing these projects need to be continued because of that. .

- OSCIL – Lezlee Shaffer stated OSCIL has been in existence for 16 years now. The other independent living center is PARI. Some services OSCIL provides as an agency are: I & R where they receive several hundred calls a month from people who don't have any idea where to go; do advocacy either on an individual basis or system advocacy (work at state house). They have a nursing home transition program which enables them to work with younger people who are in a nursing home because there wasn't any other option for them at that time. Housing is one of the key things they are working on – finding accessible affordable housing; setting up support services; as part of their housing efforts they are also working with the Home Choice – providing opportunities for people with disabilities to own their own home. They have a benefits specialist program (SSI or SSDI) for people who are thinking about returning to work. There is a staff person who does drivers education training and who provides training for the deaf community in how to use TTY and new technology. They do Peer Support. A majority of staff members have disabilities so they can talk about that. The Board of Directors is also comprised of at least 51% of individuals with disabilities. They are getting lots of referrals from students who are just graduating from school or college, and they are trying to assist them getting housing and basic independent living skills. The purpose of their program is not to do ongoing case management. They set specific goals on what they are going to be working on. OSCIL also conducts Disability Awareness Training where they are providing education to businesses on disability awareness issues. ATAP equipment program is where people have an opportunity to work with people who need to get some pieces of AT but can't financially. If they meet certain income guidelines, they can purchase items and show them how to use them. They do an IL assessment when they first go into a persons' home. AT is a huge piece of what they are doing and it dovetails with other programs. They also have a small grant to provide hearing aids for individuals on an income basis. In terms of some of their recent activities, they are on the IL Conference planning committee which is coming up on September 10<sup>th</sup>. One segment is going to be on AT specifically with the hard of hearing and deaf community. Steve Florio from the Commission on Deaf & Hard of Hearing will be doing a presentation. Lezlee does presentations at senior centers, senior fairs, etc., where she brings low tech devices. Seniors seem to relate to these items because a lot of them don't even want to know about such things as computers. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the Consumer Education Series where they address the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing community. This years program is focusing on health. They are very active with the Governor's Commission on Disabilities Forums. The senior community provided input.

- RI Disability Law Center - Elizabeth Hubbard stated RIDLC helps the ATAP project as the Policy Analyst. She recently went to the national AT conference with Regina and gave an update on the status of AT programs. One program other states had was cooperative purchasing arrangements. A number of school districts were involved and they bargained with dealers to get better prices for school districts. Shorter terms were negotiated so they could renegotiate after 6 months if additional equipment were needed. There was a session on State Medicaid; a presentation on NEAT (Connecticut) – a program that began as a recycling program. Instead of running as a traditional non-profit, they purchased a building for \$1 from the state and developed it from there. They are setting up a satellite demonstration center in MA, and they are looking for other states to be in partnership with them. The AFP program was discussed. It is a program that will allow people to get non-traditional loans for AT. A lot of sessions showed how to develop these loan projects, and have community-based organizations administer them. A lot of states have been doing this for a number of years, and we can look at them. A lot of states have partnered with banking institutions that deal with non-profit organizations. The bank processes all the information. If bank gets a client that wouldn't normally get a loan, they refer them to the AFP. If that person was someone they could help out, they try to help out. They might cut down on monthly payments, but the main thing is they guarantee the loan. This leads to the next choice of whether you use a revolving loan program which seems to run out of money quickly. Elizabeth said she talked to people in other states, and they use a system that leverages money; the default rate is reviewed for these kinds of loans which are usually low and then decide on a number slightly above. That is the percentage of money that they have in loans that they keep. This way, if someone defaults then they have that money saved. Other issues that came up were repossessing. For a state to qualify for AFP they have to have matching funds and have to describe efforts on what they have done to look for grants. The administrative costs would total about \$100,000 for personnel, advertising, and supplies, whereas the bank shares some of the costs. There will be a meeting on Friday, August 20<sup>th</sup> at TechACCESS about the AFP program.
- Kathy Samways did a PowerPoint presentation on “AT for Health”. Anne stated that with the right outcome data, this could be brought to Blue Cross. Margaret stated she is glad that they are working with physicians. Kathy stated they had a lot of questions from physicians. The PowerPoint presentation they did at the physicians' conference will be available on the Health Department's website.

- Next Meeting Date: September 23, 2004.

- Adjournment: Motion was made by Ron R., and seconded by Joe M., that the meeting be adjourned. Motion was unanimously approved, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.