

RICAT Minutes

Office of Rehabilitation Services
40 Fountain Street ~ Providence, RI 02903
5th Floor Large Conference Room

September 23, 2004

- **Welcome:** Meeting was called to order by Chair Waller at 2:30 p.m.
- **Members present:** Jill Waller, John Benevides, Richard Gaffney, Ying Sun, Pat Feeley, Emily Lennon, Harry Dunbar, Ron Racine, Bill Robinson, and Flo Adeni-Awosika.
- **Members Absent with Reason:** Blair Baldwin, Brian Chace, Margaret Hoyer, Joe Murphy, Charlie Pollock.
- **ATAP Partners:** Lezlee Shaffer, Lisa Labitt. Regina Connor – Project Director.
- **Acceptance of Minutes – 8/12/04:** **John B. made motion to accept minutes, seconded by Richard G. Motion was unanimously approved by Council members.**
- **Chairperson's Report:** Ray Carroll, ORS Administrator, had given Chair Waller a copy of an email from the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA) regarding reauthorization of the AT act. The following was read to RICAT Members "Regarding the issue of the reauthorization of the Assistive Technology Act, we are pleased to report that Hill staff has confirmed that the House and Senate versions of the AT Act have been reconciled absent a Conference Committee and both bills, H.R. 4278 and S. 2595, are now identical, which of course, is necessary for the bill(s) to pass their respective Floors and then be sent on to the President for signature into law.

First and foremost, Hill staff have confirmed that the Tech Act projects will not be sunsetted. We are further advised that each State will receive an additional State minimum of \$410,000; the bill further requires that the focus of the legislation will be to provide device demonstration, equipment loan, device reutilization/recycling and financing systems such as low interest loans. There will also be a secondary focus on outreach, public awareness, training and technical assistance.

We are advised by Hill staff that the legislation will focus on students with disabilities and individuals with disabilities transitioning to community living. This focus aligns the AT Act with recent federal priorities, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and the Americans with Disabilities integration mandate in Olmstead.

Because there is no official announcement from the HELP Committee of what is actually in the AT reauthorization bill, in the interest of clarity, we must say that all information on substance of the reauthorization of the Tech Act is subject to an official announcement by the HELP Committee. Once that announcement has been made, we will provide an in-depth description of the AT Act based on Hill accounts."*

Regina stated that with the elimination of the sunset provision, the AT Act programs won't be subjected to wondering if their program will continue every year. Regina stated that one issue differing between the two bills was the amount of funding for programs; however, it appears that they have come to a compromise on it. The House had requested level funding, whereas the Senate was requesting a minimum of \$500,000 for each of the programs. They came to an agreement on \$410,000. For us we will benefit because it is more than we are receiving now. Basic services we provide will continue, but this will enable us to do additional things to help people with disabilities get the AT devices and services they need. Pat F. asked if this amount is per capita. Regina said there will probably be a formula used in determining amounts; however, we will be a minimum state receiving the \$410,000. Regina said this result is the testimony to the advocacy that has been done. We are fortunate to have congressmen who are so in tune with AT and are champions for us.

Jill had also stated that Regina had forwarded to her an email from Georgia Tech's Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access (CATEEA). They are recruiting people with disabilities to participate in a survey. If anyone is interested, it is on their website <http://www.workplacerc.org/R1/CAN.php>. The survey needs to be completed by September 30 and takes about 30 minutes to complete the 45 questions. This research project is funded by NIDRR.

- **Committee Reports**

- **Communications:** Ron R. stated that Joe Murphy is the new Chairperson of the Communications Committee, however, he was unable to attend today's meeting. Ron said there are a lot of new people on this committee, and all are bringing to the table new ideas. They have three things they would like to start with. 1) Speakers bureau – Kathy Samways said she would be willing to take the lead on this. They would like to update the “*ATAP TALKING POINTS FOR MEDIA*” that was used previously by members of ATAP when they did presentations. Harry D. stated he would also help. 2) The ATAP Consumer Brochure needs to be updated. The Committee wants some ideas on information that should be included and are looking at a tri-fold that can go into an envelope. 3) Website – Ron asked that everyone look at it and also look at the Discussion Board. People can browse it without registering, but to post you need to register. Pat said another option is Yahoo groups which is free right now. Ron said he had looked at that too, but there is also a lot of advertising with them as well.

RICAT website - <http://www.atap.ri.gov/ricat.htm>

Discussion board - <http://p068.ezboard.com/bricatdiscussionforum>

- **Legislative:** Richard stated that the Newsline bill has finally passed. SBVI will have administrative responsibility for the service and should be ready to assume their role by November 1st. In the meantime, if you know of anyone interested in Newsline refer them to National Federation of the Blind of RI at 401-433-2606. Richard stated that different consumer groups and agencies came together and worked to get the Bill passed. Lezlee reported that the legislation that Lorna Ricci, Executive Director – OSCIL, drafted with regard to nursing home transitioning has also passed. OSCIL is in the process of putting together a brochure giving information about transitioning home from a nursing home. They are getting a lot of referrals as a result of the passage of this law. Pat F. asked if this is Medicaid funded. Lezlee responded that some funds are from DHS.

- **Membership/Outreach:** Emily stated there are 3 members whose terms are about to expire - Flo Adeni-Awosika., Jeanne Panarace, and Ed Zuromski. All three had previously said they would like to continue being council members. The other item to be discussed is the need to vote for Chair and Vice Chair. Emily asked if anyone was interested in running. There were no responses. Jill asked Regina that since Jeanne P. retired from Department of Health (DOH) was there any problem reappointing her. Regina asked if there was actually a Council vacancy, since Jeanne was representing DOH. Richard asked if there was a requirement that there be a representative from DOH. Jill reviewed the By- Laws. Emily read that DOH as an organization is represented not an individual and Regina stated they had a standing representation. Regina stated that may change when the law is reauthorized based on the description in one of the bills which is more detailed in terms of who should be represented on the Council. Emily stated the Council still needs to vote on re-appointing Flo and Ed. **Emily moved to recommend they continue for another term. Richard seconded. Motion was unanimously passed.**
- **Project Director's Report:** Regina reminded council members that the Annual AT Conference is coming up November 18th at the Crowne Plaza from 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- **Roundtable**
 - Richard G. stated that at the Warwick Mall on Sunday, September 25th from 10 a.m. - 7:00 pm the NFB of RI will hold a bake and craft sale. They will be located on either side of JC Penney. They will also be honoring Regina at the NFB State Convention for her work on Newslines on Saturday, October 23rd at the Radisson Airport Hotel.
 - Pat F. stated she had an onslaught of VA cousins for Waterfire and wanted to let everyone know there is an accessible boat for people with disabilities that leaves from the Brawford Street Bridge. She stated it is a great way to experience Waterfire. Regina said that information about the boat rides could be found on the Waterfire website.
 - Bill R. – Gave his sincere apologies for being late but he was stuck in traffic on the highway. A member in a group he belongs to had discussed with its director a problem that has arisen. This woman loves to go to Warwick Mall to shop at JC Penney, yet she needs to use a walker which has a basket to carry her oxygen tank. JC Penney has nothing like that to assist people. Grocery stores have carts. The thought was presented to him how does one go about approaching a company to advocate for adaptive equipment. Bill stated he would be willing to head up a committee to help. Pat suggested writing a letter to the corporate headquarters or manager. Harry said when he spoke to Bill previously and had heard about this situation, he called JC Penney and has told that they no longer had the scooter equipment. John asked if the mall itself might have something. Providence Place Mall and Emerald Square Mall both have scooters available. Bliss Properties is the property owners of Warwick Mall. (Mr. Garabedian), and they have an office in the mall. Richard stated it is best if the consumer try to talk to the building manager before contacting a political representative. Congress should be the last approach. Regina stated the mall is a place of public accommodation and they do need to follow the laws under ADA. Bill also stated he was at the Big E on Senior Day/RI day and he was amazed at the amount of people that were there with motorized wheelchairs.

- Charlie was unable to attend today's meeting because he recently broke his hip. Jill circulated a card to be signed by everyone.
- Emily asked if anyone attended the AFP meeting at TechACCESS. Regina stated she did, but there is nothing new and different to discuss. She will get minutes from Liz Hubbard and next AFP meeting date for council members.
- Pat asked how a person gets an item on the agenda. She wanted to discuss Traumatic Brain Injuries and software programs to aid in functioning. Lisa stated she has a hospital background. There is AT for rehab, but TBI patients were focused on ADL's. They have never been software or rehab focused, but more memory focused. Lisa said she would be interested in doing some research for Pat. Pat stated from a consumer point of view, it is difficult to get a job. Activities of daily living have been covered, but cognitive issues haven't. For example, Pat had developed a marketing plan for RICAT which took 12 hours vs 2 hours it would normally have taken her prior to injury. She also reminded people that head injuries occur every 35 seconds. Emily also answered Pat's first question and stated that all someone needs to do is let either the Chair or Regina know what they want on the agenda two weeks prior to the meeting.
- **Next Meeting Date: December 2, 2004.** Jill will bring in list of suggested dates for next year's meeting to December meeting.
- **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 3:45 p.m.

*FOOTNOTE: The information provided by the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA) read into the Minutes has subsequently been retracted by that organization.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon DiPinto

Sharon DiPinto