

RI Council on Assistive Technology  
February 21, 2008: 2:30 – 4:00 pm  
TechACCESS of RI, Suite I  
110 Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick, RI

Minutes

**Present:** Flo Adeni-Awosika, John Benevides (phone), Jill Blaney, Gary Brandyberry, Denise Corson (ATEL), Carol Folan-Dusablon, Kathleen Fresher-Samways, Susan Gnrke, Kat Grygiel (Program Director), Judi Hammerlind-Carlson (TechACCESS), Elisabeth Hubbard, Kaigongor Thomas Karweh, Lisa Labitt (EBEC), James Litvack, Joe Murphy, Teresa O'Brien, Jeanne Panarace, Allen Parent-Wetmore, Robert J. Perrello, Charlie Pollock (Chair), Ying Sun, Kim Wennermark (phone)

• **WELCOME:**

Meeting was called to order by Chair Pollock at 2:43 p.m.

• **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:**

Approval of Minutes for 10/18/2007 - Motion made by C. Pollock and seconded by C. Folan. Motion unanimously passed.

• **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT:**

Chair Pollock offered the following information:

- RI Disability Law Center moved to 275 Westminster St. Providence, RI. Their phone, fax, and emails are still the same.
- Brain Injury Association will hold its annual conference at Crowne Plaza in Warwick on March 28.
- A brochure entitled "The Place to Turn in Times of Need" giving names and numbers of places to go for assistance. K. Samways also mentioned there were 2 numbers out there being promoted as well as the number to call – The Point which comes out of DEA; and the 211 – which comes from the United Way. They agreed the trend is moving towards the one stop access. The question was asked if we have ever connected with them so that they know about us. J. Carlson commented that they brought staff over to TechACCESS for training. K. Grygiel will get in touch with The Point and 211 to confirm and will give a report at the next RICAT meeting.
- An article in Providence Journal discussed a poll which showed 1 in 5 individuals in RI are disabled. Chair Pollock stated that this community has great voting potential and the power to

make difference. He also discussed the race for President and that people with disabilities have the chance to make history with their vote for president.

- An article that had been in Providence Journal a while ago about what America does for the American people vs what other countries do.

- **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- **Executive Committee:**

J. Blaney passed around a list of the committees and asked that everyone sign which committees they are on and which ones they would like to be on. She also asked if that person is a Chair, that they write that as well.

- **Membership/Outreach**

J. Blaney noted that they have 2 members whose terms ended in December 2007 - FLo Adeni-Awosika and Jeanne Panarace. When asked if they were interested in another 3 year term, they both accepted. G. Brandyberry moved, J. Panarace seconded to extend their term limits. Motion was passed unanimously.

She continued by stating that they still have one spot available, which will have to be a consumer. She has 2 applications, and will be getting in touch with the Membership Committee to set up interviews.

- **By-Laws:**

J. Blaney stated that there was only one change suggested for the by-laws. On Page 4, Article V, Executive Committee, Section I - Membership – the words “Former Chair” is to be added to the Executive Committee to make transition easier when a new chair is elected. Motion made by J. Murphy, seconded by J. Benevides to make that change to the by-laws. Motion was unanimously passed.

- **Alternative Finance:**

K. Grygiel stated the Committee hasn't met in some time, but added that they do have new information. J. Carlson was asked at the AT Conference if we would like to meet with Easter Seals in MA to partner with RI ATAP. This is still in the talking stages, and

they have a meeting scheduled on March 10<sup>th</sup> from 10 am -12 noon at ORS. K. Grygiel asked if any of the Alternative Finance Committees would like to attend, and if so to please let Sharon (421-7005 x318) know in advance. This will be a very structured meeting explaining in a detailed way how their program operates. It was further discussed how they are trying to fund it using ORS Innovation & Expansion (I & E) funds and possibly some ATAP dollars to get the program off the ground. Easter Seals shared information with them that 80% of the loans given out are in relationship to terms of employment. J. Carlson added that the ATAP has always wanted an Alternative Finance Program developed that would provide low interest loans to purchase equipment. MA was one of the last states to get federal dollars and has their program up and running after going through all the legalities and paperwork. Case scenarios were passed out of people who have used this MA based Program. The ATAP partners would facilitate the application of loan; however, the program would be computerized and would filter through MA for processing. J. Carlson stated this program is perfect for filling the niche of people who might have money, work etc., but can't pay \$5000 or more up front for equipment. Easter Seals stated there is a small default rate, and that they do offer consumer counseling. K. Grygiel added that they definitely operate from a model that really is customer choice, where they don't second guess applicants' requests letting it be the consumers' decision of what they would purchase. They have been operating program for 5 years. It was added that the expertise they have accumulated over those years would take RI at least 3 years to gather. J. Blaney asked how similar this program was to that discussed from Colorado. K. Grygiel responded that Colorado didn't get involved with financial loans, but was more of a clearing house for information about funding source options. J. Panarace asked if they knew the ratio of self employment vs private company. K. Grygiel responded she would find out because she wasn't sure.

- **Legislative**

B. Perrello started his report by stating that a lot of people are coming back from Iraq and are not having their needs met. Chair Pollack added that that is why people need to get out and vote. G. Brandyberry brought up the RI Disability Vote program. S. Gnirke added that with everything happening on the local level, they are cutting the weakest links. The finance budget is going after the elderly, kids, and the disabled. K. Grygiel stated she believes that part of the role of the advisory board involves

advocating for those affected; and added that it is very hard for those that work for the state to criticize the boss. However, she feels that advisory boards such as the Governor's Advisory Board, State Rehabilitation Council, and RICAT, if they collaborated, could speak on behalf of people with disabilities and the consequence of cutting services. Voter registration is one way to start. S. Gnirke noted that she had been involved with the Vision program when they were trying to cut that program. Legislature actually listened with Representative Eileen Naughton assisting and the program was not cut. J. Panarace cautioned everyone that the situation took 25 years to develop and that it has come to a head because of many legislative abuses. K. Grygiel stated that there is a place in advocacy that RICAT as a group has not participated in recently. She will talk further with the members of the Executive Committee. J. Panarace noted she feels we would be wasting our efforts to send anything negative to the Governor, but instead should send information and facts to the legislature. C. Folan stated it doesn't have to be negative, but should show what is in the best interest of the disabled person. G. Brandyberry added that this body should be putting forth something to make things happen, such as the legislation passed so that the hearing impaired can hear all those commercials of candidates and what they have to say. K. Grygiel stated they won't solve this problem today, but the seed is planted. K. Samways added that the primary is coming up and also that the DD Council is very interested in cross disability alliances. The consensus was that a lot of groups would be strengthened by more voices. S. Gnirke commented that this election has brought out more people across the board during this primary.

- **Communications**

Y. Sun noted that the main project the Communication Committee was working on was a 3-fold flyer that J. Panarace and K. Samways had started a template for. Brochure was something like the one ATAP is using now that shows various categories of AT devices. He then questioned the Council as to whether or not there was a need to do another one or if additional information could go in that one. J. Panarace responded that she still thinks it would be a good idea to have a separate one when they are trying to recruit. K. Grygiel noted that RICAT was the Advisory Council to ATAP and the identities of the two are somewhat interdependent. J. Murphy made the suggestion that RICAT could do an insert like the GETATStuff insert. K. Samways added it could include the committees of RICAT, the members, etc. K. Grygiel stated they

are running out of the ATAP brochures and will be getting more printed soon. She asked if they could pull together an interim draft for an insert in about 3 weeks. It was noted that the draft would be emailed to the Executive Committee and Program Director for approval instead of waiting until next meeting.

K. Samways also stated that she participated in provider education at Brown, and Y. Sun did the same at URI.

- **Partner Support**

K. Grygiel stated this committee had done a pilot meeting with TechACCESS. Handed out a summary of findings, and added that they need to connect as a group and figure out the next step.

- **Project Director's Report:**

K. Grygiel acknowledged TechACCESS for again pulling together the AT Conference, adding that there were 41 exhibitors and 291 attendees. She also said "Mark Your Calendar" for November 20, 2008. K. Grygiel then shared statistics compiled from all partners from the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of this fiscal year which included 56 short-term loans; Training – 307 on AT; 330 devices that were either exchanged, recycled or provided on long term. This was again for the period of October 1, 2007 – December 31, 2007. ATAP has also been very busy with marketing materials – a new table top display was set out for people to see, as well as the newly developed brochures, sticky pads and a calendar bookmark. K. Grygiel also stated they are going to be critically looking at old brochures that ATAP had done way back including the Hearing Aid brochure. She added that the Executive Committee will be meeting and figuring out how ATAP and RICAT can work together.

- **Partner Reports**

East Bay Educational Collaborative (EBEC): L. Labitt stated that education is usually the sunshine spot because kids are entitled to services and devices. However, the climate in RI is very challenging for school districts as well. All 36 school districts are having trouble. EBEC's demonstration/resource center has been busy providing demonstrations on the devices and resources available. L. Labitt has been to only about 8-9 school committee meetings, and she could not even get in the door to 4 of them. Parents of students with disabilities are now going to meetings. People are now participating. A flyer was handed out for the "Is College in Your Future? the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual

College Planning Forum” - a forum for students transitioning to college. Her success story: A student she worked with at East Greenwich High School had worked with a Transition Counselor while the student was in between high school and a vocational program. The student needed more technology support while transitioning from the academic to the vocational portion of the program. She worked with the family, and the student was able to transition into vocation program using different software, laptop, etc.

TECHACCESS: J. Carlson handed out a summary of the AT conference. She also discussed trainings she was involved with – modules for colleges that were tweaked towards different levels of interest. NEIT participated with their Certified Occupational Therapy program. She speaks to groups through the Physicians for Human Rights Group. Southern NE Rehab Conference??? Presentations were also made at CCRI and another RI college on augmentative communication. She participated in the training of about 250 professionals about technology for individuals with disabilities. She also stated that the theme of the AT Conference “Improving Life Daily” is what ATAP is all about - changing the life of someone with a disability.

ATEL: D. Corson commented on the nice visit she had with a referral from ORS. ATEL had purchased a new voice dialer for one person with a disability (polio) who had no movement of their arms. This wasn't a good fit for that person. However, through an ORS/SBVI referral, a client who had moderate hearing loss, macular degeneration, was in a wheelchair, and lived by herself was able to use this piece of equipment. D. Corson helped her and voice trained about 20 people into the phone for her. Within 15 minutes the client was able to voice dial and no longer has to guess which numbers she is pressing. Another device would have helped with answering but not with calling out.

PARI: A. Parent-Wetmore stated they had quite a few pieces of equipment that is vital to people. This last quarter they had a 24-year-old gentleman who had a TBI and needed a wheelchair but was having problems with insurance. They were able to get one through Zambarano Hospital.

**Roundtable:** None

- **Next Meeting Date:** April 3 @ 2:30 @ TechACCESS.  
**Reminder:** contact Sharon (sharond@ors.ri.gov or 421-7005 ext. 318) if you can not attend.