

RI Council on Assistive Technology  
April 16, 2009 ~ 2:30 – 4:00 pm  
TechACCESS of RI, Suite I  
110 Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick, RI

Minutes

**Present:** Flo Adeni-Awosika, Kathleen Grygiel, Denise Corson, Carol Dusablon, Kathleen Fresher-Samways, Susan Gnrke, Liz Hubbard, James Litvack, Michael Matraccia, Mike Montanaro, Jeanne Panarace, Dan Pieroni, Colleen Polselli, Charles Pollock, Lezlee Shaffer, and Kim Wennermark

**Welcome:**

Meeting was called to order by Chair Pollock at 2:35 pm.

• **Acceptance of Minutes:**

Approval of Minutes for 2/19/09: Motion made by Sue Gnrke, seconded by Dan Pieroni. Motion unanimously passed.

**Chairpersons Report:** Chair Pollock discussed several articles from the Providence Journal. One regarding an issue discussed at the previous meeting about usage of handicapped placards, and that in Providence 6 people were fired for abuse of these placards. Another article was written by George Riley and helped veterans get access to organizations that could assist them. The third article was about drug subsidy being cut in RI where they want to cut 19,000 individuals with disabilities just to save \$855,000.

Sue Gnrke commented on the handicapped placard issue saying that Cranston Police are enforcing more as well.

Carol Dusablon added that she is going through a tough time getting a handicap placard for her relative that she is guardian to because of all of the publicized abuse.

Jeanne Panarace noted that previously they had replicas of parking tickets that people could stick on cars that were illegally parked in a handicap spot. It was added they no longer are available.

Sue also added that in the paper there was an article about Rep. Langevin got \$2.5 million dollars for respite care.

Mike Matraccia passed around an email stating how much money was brought into Providence Police by people parking illegally in handicapped spots. Fines for 2008 totaled \$25,745. Bad thing is it goes into General Funds and people feel it should go into a fund that deals with disability issues.

- **Program Director's Report:** Kat Grygiel stated that she had a few items to discuss:
  - a. ATEL funding has been reduced by \$15,000. She does not know what the funding level will be for next year, so they are looking into other revenue streams. There is a freeze on purchasing equipment for right now. Both Kat G. and Denise C. wanted to thank the RICAT members who wrote in letters supporting ATEL. Jeanne P. questioned if the state would allow a contract with projections in the dollar amounts. Denise C. added in that it was at a recent PUC (Public Utilities Commission) meeting that she found out that money she had assumed was being drawn from the surcharge on the phone bills for ATEL was actually going into the General Revenue Fund for the past 17 years and only \$40,000 was going into Newsline and \$10,000 was going to ATEL.
  - b. RSA – Rehabilitation Services Administration – the agency that oversees ORS - is receiving stimulus money. However, Kat G. has not heard if the AT program will be receiving any funding. If ATAP does receive funding, the Council will have to brainstorm with the partners. ORS is currently developing a plan for the stimulus money they will be receiving.
  - c. Revision of By-Laws – Kat G. suggested reconvening the By-Laws Committee to review suggested changes on May 7<sup>th</sup> at 2:30. That was not a good date for many, so an email will go out to committee members with suggested dates to choose from. Committee includes Liz Hubbard, Jeanne Panarace, Phyllis Lynch, and Carol Dusablon.
  - d. Membership Committee – Kat G. informed the Council that John Benevides had resigned due to time constraints and his new office location in Boston. Also noted was Jill Blaney's resignation and Charlie Pollock's term coming to an end.
  - e. Kat G. also noted that she had recently received a promotion at ORS to Deputy Administrator of Vocational Rehabilitation. ORS will be filling her position so there will be a new Program Director; however, she added she can't imagine not being involved in some way with ATAP/RICAT. She added that the State Rehabilitation

Council (SRC) played a large advocacy role in filling all the counselor positions at ORS.

- **Partner Reports**

ATEL: Chair Pollock asked how they were purchasing new equipment. Denise Corson responded that at this time, ATEL is in a good position as far as equipment goes. They were able to dispose of obsolete equipment, and have set up a new inventory system. At last ATEL meeting, they did suspend income criteria and have a steady flow of clients. Jeanne P. asked about the mobile Captel program and if they feel they will be moving toward area of cell phones. Denise C. responded they have been discussing it for the past couple of years and have been looking at Maine and California who already use this program. The main issue is that cell phone companies require contracts. Jitterbug phone does not require a contract, however, does not work with all hearing aids. Denise C. added they use Blackberry or Sidekick to communicate. James Litvack commented that he could not find a carrier that offered a pre-paid Blackberry or Sidekick device. Denise C. noted she has tried numerous times to contact various carriers, but never gets a response back from them. Jeanne P. added that a problem with pre-paid is that if you don't use within a few weeks, the company gives away your telephone number. Kim W. asked if they had tried to contact PUC instead of the carrier directly. Liz Hubbard noted that the I-phones come TTY-ready. People have to go buy the phone but don't need contract. Not sure if Apple might give ATEL a break. Not sure if they have a contact person to talk to. Liz H. said she would work with Denise C. on this project.

EBEC: N/A

OSCIL: Lezlee Shaffer distributed a summary of activities for March and April, and discussed a few of these activities. Shake-a-Wake smoke detector program is back up running again. Funding obtained through RI Rehabilitation Association, and also received RI Foundation Grant will be able to purchase more smoke detectors. Lezlee S. was involved in a couple of presentations – one at the Edward King House (senior housing) in Newport and the Mended Hearts Group (Providence chapter). Lezlee S. also discussed the Nursing Home Transition Program, where she gave a short case study to show how program works. Jeanne P., Carol D., and Chair Pollock both added comments about issues involved with nursing homes. Kathleen Samways commented that there is a website

(Dept. of Health) to find out about nursing home ratings.  
(<http://www.health.ri.gov/hsr/facilities/nursinghomes/survey.php>)

PARI: James Litvack gave a quick report which was prepared by Allan Parent-Wetmore who was unable to attend today's meeting. About 3 months ago, PARI had to seriously cut into their equipment program. They were still able to help 100 people purchase recycled devices, and six people utilized device exchange program. Provide equipment demonstration and information referral services to at least 50 people. In January they developed a partnership with 2 nursing homes making available electric hospital beds. PARI also acquired additional space in building for showroom of equipment. As of this week, they were able to restore Allen back to full-time status. If anyone is making a referral to PARI, have the person call ahead to make sure Allen is there and also that they have the equipment in stock. Carol D. asked if they had anything to assist person to get into bath tub. Liz H. responded that if a doctor writes a script for them, she should be able to get them. It was added that they also sell removable suction cup grab bars that are extremely strong. It was recommended she call PARI or OSCIL to have a mobility assessment done.

TECHACCESS: N/A

- **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- **Executive Committee:**  
N/A
- **Membership/Outreach**  
See Program Director's Report
- **By-Laws:**  
N/A
- **Alternative Finance:**  
N/A
- **Legislative**  
N/A
- **Communications**  
N/A

- **Partner Support**

N/A

**Roundtable:**

- Liz H. – Commission on Deaf & Hard of Hearing is having an expo on May 14<sup>th</sup> at the Dept of Administration bldg., and RIDLC will be bringing their AT funding guide, but also want to create a fact sheet on where to get funding for hearing aids. She questioned if any other agency will be attending. Denise C. will be there representing ATEL. Sue Gnrke commented that the CDHH took a big hit in funding. The availability of interpreters is down so that you have to wait at least three weeks to get one. Lezlee .S added that the amount of available interpreters is even lower because between 9-3 most are working in schools. Denise C. added that utilizing video relay for conferencing is in the works. James L. added that there is such a limited pool of interpreters available. Jeanne P. noted that there is such an expense to become an interpreter, and there is no program available at any local schools to provide certification. Mike Matraccia stated that the court systems use the video relay for conferencing as well. Much more cost effective as well as safe to not have to transport prisoners from jail to courthouse.
- Liz H. added that at one hospital she had to meet a client at provided video relay services. Denise C. will talk to Hamilton Relay to see what their outreach is to hospitals. Liz H. asked if she could find out what hospitals are using it. Flo A. stated that Roger Williams Hospital uses it.
- Kathleen Samways stated that the DD Network (which includes DD Council, Sherlock Center and RI Disability Law Center) partnered to hold an Asset Development Conference in June. Conference will include different aspects for keeping the money you have and also making money through entrepreneurship. She also handed out a copy of the 2009 – the Rhode Island Development Disabilities Council Summer Guide.
- James L. commented that a lot of people don't realize that interpreting is not just a matter of knowing sign language, but also confidentiality and ethics. First step to see if you want to become an interpreter would be to go to RI School for the Deaf. Closest schools are Northeastern in Boston. Flo A. will check too. Kathleen S. will check at URI to see if in the communicative disorders program includes ASL and see if there is any way to partner with other states.
- Dan P. – Dare to Dream Conference will be at URI on May 9<sup>th</sup> and he will be emceeing it.

- Susan G. noted that they had a discussion back in December regarding resources and central networking. Peer to Peer Support. Colleen P. responded that they subcontract it to RIPIN. Sue said that she talked to several people and that it has helped many people maneuver through the system. PAHI, Peer Assisted Health Initiative, helps physicians understand things regarding people with individuals.
- **Next Meeting Date:** Thursday, June 18, 2009
- Motion made to adjourn by Kim Wennermark, seconded by Susan Gnirke. Motion approved. Meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.
- **Reminder:** contact Sharon (sharond@ors.ri.gov or 421-7005 ext. 318) if you will or will not attend. Also – any question of where the meeting will be held or date, you can always check the website, [www.atap.ri.gov/ricat2.htm](http://www.atap.ri.gov/ricat2.htm).