

RI Council on Assistive Technology
April 3, 2008: 2:30 – 4:00 pm
TechACCESS of RI, Suite I
110 Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick, RI

Minutes

Present: Jill Blaney, Gary Brandyberry, Denise Corson (ATEL), Carol Folan-Dusablon, Kathleen Fresher-Samways, Susan Gnirke, Kat Grygiel (Program Director), Judi Hammerlind-Carlson (TechACCESS), Margaret Hoye, Kaigongor Thomas Karweh, Teresa O'Brien, Jeanne Panarace, Allen Parent-Wetmore, Charlie Pollock (Chair), Lezlee Shaffer, Ying Sun, and Kim Wennermark

• **WELCOME:**

Meeting was called to order by Chair Pollock at 2:55 p.m.

• **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:**

Approval of Minutes for 2/21/08 - Motion made by Charles Pollock and seconded by Jill Waller. Motion unanimously passed.

• **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT:**

- Previous to this meeting, the Executive Committee discussed re-evaluating the role of RICAT. J. Waller explained how each of the committees currently works, and how they would like to re-evaluate and revise these roles. K. Grygiel discussed ATAP and RICAT, how they interacted, how changes have happened over the years, and how they need to change this relationship. They have set up an AD HOC Committee made of RICAT members, ATAP partners and Program Director (K. Grygiel). They will meet one hour prior to the next meeting in June to discuss the structure and what changes might be made. K. Grygiel asked for 2 or 3 volunteers. C. Dusablon, G. Brandyberry and S. Gnirke all volunteered. K. Samways asked if it would be possible for all to see the materials and give input. It was decided that materials will be sent out in 2 weeks in case new info is available. They will be looking at the structure of other AT programs around the country. Both Carol and Gary said they are so glad that this change is being done. J. Panarace stated she would be interested in having a dialogue with other states' advisory councils. K. Grygiel explained about the difference between the State Rehabilitation

Council (SRC), which is the advisory council to ORS/VR, and how they have strict requirements from the Rehabilitation Services Administration regarding their structure. Whereas, the AT act does not require that same type of structure. \$\$ involved in VR is massive. AT advisory council has more freedom as long as they have 51% consumer, representatives from certain boards, etc. People become invested and commit to council. As long as we have AT and ATAP program there will be a council. C. Dusablon commented that this is an opportunity to make a difference and to be a voice for a population that really needs it. Chair Pollock noted that to implement a single call number was his priority when he first came on council. K. Grygiel added that everyone has personal concerns that have an impact on their life; however, the council needs to support all Rhode Islanders. K. Grygiel stated that RICAT should advise ATAP, and also ATAP will be communicating what they need from the Council. Neither one can exist without the other. K. Grygiel asked if RICAT would like to have a meeting with or without partners to discuss changes. Members responded first meeting without ATAP partners.

- Chair Pollock showed an article from Providence Journal about how Social Security abuses money for disabled groups. J. Panarace added that the AARP also had article that said that some people had died before they received their funds.
- Chair Pollock also showed an ad from the Disability Law Center showing the election hotline. M. Hoyer commented that former RICAT member and President of RI National Federation of the Blind, Richard Gaffney, was on radio stating that a lot of people weren't using the machine, and they should use it because they were nervous they discontinued its use. Chair Pollock added that he tried it, but the machine wouldn't work and people didn't know how to use it. G. Brandyberry commented that they know there are still problems out there, and poll workers are not trained yet. However, prior to the November election, all poll workers will have to watch a video and learn how to use it. He added that transportation is another problem they are dealing with. C. Dusablon noted that the only people who know about problems with these machines are the clerk and moderators.
- Brain Injury Conference – Chair Pollock had been at the conference and wanted to show the packet received.

- **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- **Executive Committee:**

(See above)

- **Membership/Outreach**

J. Blaney had set up interviews for this past week. There is currently one vacancy; however, there is one person who hasn't attended the last several meetings. J. Blaney would like to send out a letter to release her thus making two vacancies. She has 2 applicants - one with mild CP and the other who has MS. J. Blaney will send out ballots to all members.

- **By-Laws:**

A hard copy of the revised by-laws was sent to everyone.

- **Alternative Finance:**

K. Grygiel gave an update on what has happened since the last meeting. S. Brunero (Acting ORS Administrator), K. Grygiel, L. Hubbard, L. Shaffer and J. Carlson sat in on a meeting at ORS with the Easter Seals staff who run the Massachusetts AFP. ORS will be asked for start-up funds. The next step is to have Easter Seals submit a report to ORS showing they are a sole source provider. There are still some questions regarding the exact terms of how they would run the program. T. Karweh commented he would like to become more involved, but is not sure what is happening with some matters. J. Panarace wondered if it would be helpful if people who have not been on RICAT for a long period of time to look at previous meeting minutes. K. Grygiel added that it has been a long time since the ATAP partners have presented what their primary services are to individuals with disabilities to RICAT members. K. Samways added it would be good if ATAP partners would do a presentation about basic services at the next meeting. Folks not having a lot of knowledge about AT would like to know more.

K. Wennermark questioned the choice of Massachusetts Easter Seals program to run the AFP. K. Grygiel responded that they have been running a program for the past several years where they provide funding for people who can't afford AT. She added in that they already have a relationship with the Sovereign Bank in Providence, RI. K. Grygiel noted that a major advantage we would get is that we would develop a contract with them to administer the

program, and they would get the financial overhead. That is where the seed money from ORS is coming in. K. Wennermark asked how the consumer will access Easter Seals. J. Carlson gave an example on how a person would apply - application is filled out, reviewed by Sovereign Bank, if good credit risk then the program buys down to get a lower interest rate. If not a good rating, it is reviewed again by a committee that takes more into consideration such as reasons why person was late to pay, etc. If they ok it, their decision overrides the bank decision, and they guarantee loan for bank. Easter Seals staff stated that 4.2% was their default rate. Consumers that developed program made sure to maintain complete privacy, complete consumer choice – just like everyone else asking for a loan. They would keep 2 pools of money – RI and MA. We would pay them an operating fee. Advisory Committee is 51% customers and this group only looks at applications that the bank feels it cannot sponsor without guarantee. MA has a huge budget whereas we will have only a tiny pool of money if we start. Easter Seals can guarantee some things we won't be able to. We will need to do smaller things. Money will be generated from revenue and paybacks of loans. K. Grygiel did add that we are jumping ahead of everything right now. There are still several items that need to be discussed and resolve before it can become a reality.

- **Legislative**

No report.

- **Communications**

Ying Sun stated that the RICAT insert was completed. If you have comments or changes, let him know. Everyone received a copy of it. Great job went out to Kathy, Ying and Jeanne. M. Hoyer added that RICAT should send ATAP brochures with RICAT inserts to the State Rehabilitation Council as well.

- **Partner Support**

Initial pilot visiting TechACCESS was done previously. They will revisit that.

- **Project Director's Report:**

K. Grygiel noted that she will attend the National Conference in Utah in May where revising the State Plan is one of the main topics. She

added that there are still bugs with the data collection system that the RSA created about 8 months ago. She also discussed a Peer Review System so that AT programs can look at other AT programs. K. Grygiel also commented that she had met with Betsy Dalton, of the Paul V. Sherlock Center at RIC to discuss how they could collaborate in the future. It was mentioned how at several high schools, AT for kids sits in closets not getting used once that student has graduated. CT has a web-based exchange program where if a school has an AT device that another school might need an exchange is done. Sherlock and the AT program might be able to collaborate on a similar model. J. Panarace added that the Governor's Commission on Disabilities (GCD) might have that same type of closet because there is a group that approves AT for state employees and once they leave or retire, the equipment is returned. K. Grygiel also added that she received a phone call from URI where they stated they have an exchange program between CCRI, URI and RIC.

- **Partner Reports**

TECHACESS: J. Carlson stated they had set the AT Conference date for 11/20/08 at the Crowne Plaza in Warwick. The man she had worked with for last the several years has taken a job at the Westin. She met with him over there to discuss relocating the conference there after he showed them wonderful accessibility features. If interested to participating on any of the conference committees, let Judi know. Dr. Sun's students are there each year with their projects. J. Carlson also noted they held an Open House for Occupation Therapists, and they had about 45 therapists that stopped in and were shown some new things. J. Waller asked how they get the news out regarding trainings. J. Carlson responded they are working with constantcontact.com and are seeing a significant difference between getting things out by email vs. by mail. They will hopefully cut down on costs, since they are currently paying less than \$300 a year because they are non profit.

ATEL: D. Corson commented on a new item that will have a major impact on a lot of people. The new Caption Phones are available in RI. The person reads what the other person is saying. There is a promotion running where the systems costs about \$100 but will then go back to about \$500. Hamilton Relay designed this where the person uses their regular computer, a telephone or even a mobile phone. A person can get captions anywhere they are. The font sizes are adjustable, etc. There is no charge to the consumer. It works in reverse as well. There is a special 800 number where the phone will ring. If the screen is not up, it will say number not available to caller.

It is more difficult incoming than for outgoing calls, however, it still works well.

OSCIL: L. Shaffer had to leave prior to partner reports, but did leave a report.

PARI: A. Parent-Wetmore had to leave prior to partner reports.

EBEC: L. Labbitt is at a conference in Boston.

Roundtable:

- J. Panarace noted that one item that came up during the Executive Committee Meeting was about the Open Meeting Law and how it does not allow for participation of members by phone. A person can call in and listen but cannot be counted as a part of the quorum. J. Panarace added she will check in to see about that. K. Grygiel added that an exception to that is if the person has a disability and has a waiver signed by a physician.
 - G. Brandyberry commented that time frames need to adhere to regarding meeting times. Meetings prior to Council meetings have been running over making RICAT meetings run later. Several people have set schedules. Partners have had to leave before getting to their reports. C. Dusablon commented that Chair Pollock will fix that. J. Panarace added that perhaps at the beginning of meetings, they can adjust the agenda if someone needs to give report.
 - K. Grygiel stated L. Shaffer had left some flyers from OSCIL which included one page about the AT program.
 - J. Panarace asked if either of the IL programs target veterans. K. Grygiel responded neither did. Adding that this is where when they look at next years' annual plan they can look into that more. K. Wennermark noted he is a citizen member not a member representing the VA.
- **Next Meeting Date:** June 12, 2008 at TechACCESS from 2:30 pm. – 4:00 p.m.
 - Motion made to adjourn by: C. Dusablon, seconded by J. Blaney. Meeting adjourned at 4:15 pm.
 - **Reminder:** contact Sharon (sharond@ors.ri.gov or 421-7005 ext. 318) if you will or will not attend.