

RICAT Minutes

Office of Rehabilitation Services

June 10, 2004

- Welcome: Meeting was called to order by Chair Waller at 2:45 p.m.
- Members present: Jill Waller, Blair Baldwin, Richard Gaffney, Kathy Samways, Bob Perrello, Emily Lennon, Pat Feeley, Ron Racine, John Benevides, Harry Dunbar, Brian Chace, Bill Robinson, Joe Murphy, Kerri Cicone, and Charlie Pollock.
- ATAP Partners: Lisa Labitt and Anne Mulready; and Regina Connor, Project Director.
- Acceptance of Minutes – 4/22/04: Richard G. made motion to accept minutes with Pat Feeley added to attendees at April meeting; seconded by Harry D. Motion was unanimously approved by Council members.
- Chairperson's Report: Last Friday Emily and Jill met with Anne Mulready and Liz Hubbard from RIDLC to discuss the Alternative Financing Program. Liz has put together a general overview for members to read, as well as a list of other programs around the country that have an AFP in place (attached). Liz will be attending the next meeting. Anne stated the information is based on what's in Title III of the AT Act. The question arose regarding whether federal money is available to help states establish an AFP. Each state designs their AFP to suit individuals in their state. States can create a low interest loan fund; a combination program; an interest buy down program; or a revolving loan fund where any money paid back used to fund new loans. Some operate more as a partnership with several organizations participating in the loan process. The state has to apply for the grant, but it needs to be run with consumer direction built in at all levels of programs. Several proposed changes to the AT Act were discussed during the teleconference call. AFP's will be a significant part of the reauthorization. Anne and Liz both feel if the State receives federal funding or not, it's a worthwhile program to have. Money can come from a number of different sources for a match. A lot of states partner with a financial institution because they don't have the expertise in credit determination. That is one of our goals for this year. There are a variety of different models that can be used based on length of payment period, interest rate, etc. which would need to be decided. The question was asked if there would need to be some type of an assessment before a loan is granted. Regina stated people have been meeting including to discuss the criteria for a loan program, including TechACCESS, MS Society, and ALS society. This is an option for anyone who wants to obtain a device regardless of medical insurance coverage. For many people on Medicare, vendors are only going to take cash and are not going to attempt to bill Medicare. The next funding cycle may begin in April 2005. This program needs to be designed with peoples' ideas and input. Charlie asked when this would be in place. Anne said possibly next year around the same time. Pat F. stated she was shocked at the administrative cost in some programs.
- Project Director's Report – Regina stated that prior to this meeting she had sat with Jill and Emily regarding the Reauthorization of the AT Act. The House has actually introduced HR4278 which was passed unanimously in subcommittee and has moved on the full committee. Substitute bill from original bill. It passed the House Committee on Education and Workforce by voice vote and was expected to be voted on this week, but with the passing of President Reagan there was no activity in Congress. It is expected to be put in suspension calendar where

it would pass with no amendments. On Senate side they haven't introduced anything. They have determined the language of what they intend to introduce. Bills are not the same in terms of some of the language. The emphasis in both bills is on direct service vs activities the projects have been engaging in over the past years which include training, outreach, etc. Direct services include equipment loan and reutilization programs, AFP, and equipment demonstration centers. House dividing funding where the project would elect to have a 60/40 split with 60% being utilized for state activity levels for AFP and Equipment Loan Program. Remaining funding would be used for other activities. Rep. Langevin is not a member of either sub or full committee but has had a lot of interaction with the committee. He was concerned with what they were proposing and recommended a second alternative which has flexibility with a 70/30 split. 70% being utilized for one of the 4 options, and the remaining 30% for the other activities. Senate bill doesn't divide funding in that manner. It is timely that RI is looking at how to develop an AFP. Regina stated the Congress absolutely wants the Council's advisement and input into program. It looks like reauthorization will happen. House and Senate both have language for sunset eliminated. They will then need to decide priorities. States will need to apply for grant for state funding for AT project and it is essential that there is consumer input. RI is in an excellent position because we do have an active advisory council. Regina will be looking to RICAT members as they think about future of project. She will share with people the House and Senate bills and final signed legislation when it happens. ATAP completed the Consumer Satisfaction Survey last year as well as reports provided by ATAP members. Regina stated she would like to have a meeting where ATAP partners do a presentation of what they do for project. This would give the new people on council an opportunity to ask questions. She wants to start process now even though legislation hasn't been passed. Anne asked if reauthorization happens what kinds of services that ATAP offers would be different. Regina stated the basic services will continue but we will be required to look into areas of direct service as well. Kathy asked if the public forums were finished, and if there is a way to use outcome of last year as well as ones coming from this years. Pat F asked if council members should be writing their representatives. Regina stated that our own representative was one of the people actively involved in development. (Langevin) Reed is actively involved in the Senate bill draft. She suggested that maybe contacting them thanking them for drafting legislation would be good. Regina will let Jill know when senate bill is introduced.

- Committee Reports

- Membership/Outreach – Jill stated she was happy we have a full council as of now. She wanted to let people know what the responsibilities for each committee are and handed out “job descriptions”. Emily said if anyone wants to join another committee, let them know. Emily also asked if a committee is having a meeting, let Jill or Emily know so they can get word out to council members. Pat F asked if executive members appoint committees. Jill stated each committee has a chair that keeps members posted on things. Regina stated Anne referred to the fact that Liz Hubbard has taken Roberta's place. Liz will be assigned to work with council as the staff liaison between ATAP and RICAT.

Committee Members include: Membership – Emily (Chair), Flo, Margaret, Jill, and Ed.
Legislative – Bob (Chair), Harry, Charles, Richard, Pat
Communications - Ron (Chair), Kerri, Ying, Joe, and Kerri.

Also, in December RICAT will need to vote for chair and vice chair. Let Emily know if you are interested.

- o Communications – Ron stated he has had difficulty communicating with Kerri Hicks. He will call her to see where she is. Once website is up and running, they will be able to look at other responsibilities. Anyone interested in joining this committee, please let him know. Pat asked if they have a speaker's bureau that might be something to use for community awareness. The Jaycees/Greater Providence Business Group/Lions etc. are always looking for someone to speak. Kathy stated that is happening in a parallel way through the Department of Health. She has recently talked to family practitioners and will be talking to Assisted Living Facilities. Kathy stated she would be able to do a presentation with a co-presenter who is a user of AT. Pat stated she just graduated from the NCCJ and they are under the radar. She also stated she is willing to call a reporter and send him to Ron. They also talked about seeing if they could go on Sunrise or talk to Bob Kerr with an individual user. Kathy said could she suggest that be part of a plan. At the next committee meeting they want to review website and encompass where they could do the most good. Pat asked if there is any marketing committee money. Charlie stated right now people know about RICAT just through word of mouth. He had never heard of RICAT before. Regina stated that is problematic for ATAP too, and they weren't sure if they would even be existing! If reauthorization happens, it will be permanent and we will be able to have a more organized effort. Pat stated they can't cut you off if more people are involved, and there are communications, press and local tv. Regina stated that is probably one of the reasons we have survived. It was the strong advocacy efforts to keep program going. Pat suggested we should have market communications plan with timelines, etc. and also a legislative plan.
- o Legislative – Bob stated he was not able to attend the last meeting. With regards to the bill to extend Newline for the Blind, he suggested if we can contact local reps it might help. Lisa said she thought it was the design of the bill that had a problem. It has been sent to corporations then it was sent to finance. Richard stated that the bill is not going to cost the state any money, and that it has passed Senate. Bill is funded through RI Relay for the Deaf with no additional state monies. If anyone writes, Richard said the biggest point that anyone can make is that it is cost neutral and there is no additional money needed. Bob stated the Legislature is getting towards the end of the session. Richard called House Finance Chairman Constantino and talked to Bob Cooper. Both House and Senate bills are held up in Committee (House #H8527 and Senate – #2687). Both bills are identical. If you send an email, be sure to put name, address and telephone number. Richard stated that Newline is also for other individuals who are print handicapped as a result of disability. Bill R. asked if those who are not computer literate could have a hard copy of the Bills, then they can also contact their Legislators. Kathy asked if would be possible for everyone to be a contact with 5 reps. Bill said it is also important to know the chairs and co chairs in both houses and asked if there is some way to compile a list. Liz would be able to work with it. Richard will send a copy of those bills to him. Bill stated that last weekend there was a speaker from PARI, Leo, and asked if we correspond with them. Regina stated that as an agency we work with PARI, but the council does not link at this time. Bill stated that July and August are out, but in conjunction with the RI Lung Association, they are always looking for people with different backgrounds as speakers. Regina stated that with a full council that we can do some of these things now. Bill discussed his mother-in-law who lives in North Providence senior center. She has problem with one leg and is entitled to transportation on senior vehicles; however, it is impossible for her to get onto the vehicle because they can't handle a wheelchair. Brian stated they are not required to carry a wheelchair on bus. They might be able to work on legislation requiring them. Brian stated that those vehicles are mainly used for transportation to doctors and senior meal sites. The big thing with that is people fall off

lifts. The last 7 years this has been beat down in Congress. Regina stated there is an advisory committee to RIPTA regarding accessible transportation. This type of problem might be an issue for that committee.

- ATAP Partners Report – None
- Roundtable
 - Information Technology subcommittee will meet on July 21st at the GCD office in Cranston. Regina chairs this committee. If there are no AT requests before committee, they do not meet.
 - It was asked if RICAT would like to meet again before the September 23rd meeting. It was determined they would and once Jill and Regina have a set date, members will be informed of that date.
 - Kathy asked if they could do a “Meet the RICAT Members” like at the AT conference. Jill said the original goal of that was to get applications from people attending the conference. It was suggested that RICAT members could help staff the booth this year at the AT Conference.
- Next Meeting Date: September 23, 2004 at the Office of Rehabilitation Services, 40 Fountain Street, 5th Floor Large Conference Room, Providence.
- Adjournment: Motion was made by John B., and seconded by Kathy S., that the meeting be adjourned. Motion was unanimously approved, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Handouts from Meeting:

RICAT Job Descriptions (attached to email)

Memo from Liz Hubbard, RIDLC, regarding Alternative Financing Program (attached to email)

AFP at a Glance (attached to email)