

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY  
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES**

**April 18, 2005**

**MINUTES**

**Location:** First Floor Conference Room  
Civic Building, 200 Ross Street  
Pittsburgh, PA

**Members Present:** John Tague, Chairperson, Paul O'Hanlon, Co-chair, Ruth Walter Brenyo, Aurelia Carter, Liz Healey, Milton Henderson, Rich McGann, Penny Perlman

**Members Absent:** Linda Dickerson, Jeff Parker, Katherine D. Seelman

**Others Present:** Amy Anderson, Judy Barricella, Darlene Barton, Eugene Barton, Diane Beatty, Jennifer Behun, Don Clark, Joan Cleary, Joyce Conley, Tony Drane, Holy Dick, Carolyn DiVia, Chuck Keenan, Beatriz Kierzkowski, Peggy Lang, Jerry Laychak, Sue Loya, Paul Mellon, Richard Meritzer, Lisa Moses, David Rosenblatt, Donald Sand, Carolyn Vidt

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Tague at 1:08 PM.

**Approval of the agenda:**

Mr. Tague informed us that County Council Woman is here to speak on the Right to Know (Report Card) Legislation after the 911 TTY discussion.

**Introductions:**

All members and guests introduced themselves.

**Approval of February 2005 Minutes:**

Hearing no changes the Chair ruled that the minutes were approved as submitted.

**911 TTY:**

Lisa Moses introduced Diane Beatty and Donald Sand from County 911. They were here regarding a complaint made by Mr. McGann. He had called and was disconnected. A hearing person had to call to get a response. Mr. Sand said that this complaint was a result of operator error. The operator did not recognize the TTY tone. Mr. Sand has spoken to the employee who cut Mr. McGann off.

Ms. Beatty, the 911 Training Officer, explained that she had come from another 911 facility. She felt training was important and in her old position worked with a deaf task force. When she was transferred to her current position she continued to work with this task force. When the City system joined the County 911, she did not have a chance to train everyone. Members of this deaf task force call 911 as part of their training. Also the School For the Deaf sends a person every summer to work with the staff one on one. The next meeting of this task force will be at the Sush Center. They meet twice a year. They need to know where the problems are.

Mr. Tague asked if they send interpreters if they get a TTY call. Ms. Beatty answered the responding agency (Police, Fire EMS etc.) need to request an interpreter. Ms. Healy questioned why the County 911 operators had received training and the former City 911 operators had not. Mr. Sand explained that the former City 911 operators had not received this training. The City has had TTY training for years. Ms. Beatty added that the technology has changed. All the 911 employees have had training, but TTY calls are so infrequent the staff does not recognize them sometimes. Ms. Moses explained that the City currently gets interpreters from two providers, Center for Hearing and Deaf Services, Inc. and Golden Triangle Radio Information Center. Holly Dick countered that Golden Triangle Radio Information Center does not provide interpreters. Mr. Tague said that the City / County Task Force on Disabilities would check into this. Some of the members will come over to see the training. He thanked Mr. Sand and Ms. Beatty for coming.

**Right to Know (Report Card) Legislation:**

Mr. Tague introduced County Council Woman Joan Cleary. The Task Force has approved support of this legislation and would be sending a letter. Ms. Cleary then spoke on Council Bill # 1885, the Report Card legislation. She said she dealt with all aspects of this issue in this legislation. Most people agree with the concept, but it is the nitty gritty that is the issue. They will be taking public comment on Tuesday April 26, 2005, at the United Way Building. Ms. Healy asked if the committee has held a meeting on this legislation. Ms. Cleary said it has held one meeting. Don Clark, Deputy Director of the County Department of Human Services then explained the Department's position.

**911 TTY Rediscussed:**

At this point Mr. McGann arrived and informed the group there was once again a problem with the driver. Mr. Tague reviewed what had been said during the 911 TTY discussion. Mr. McGann told the Task Force that the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) does not follow the policies of 911 TTY. Ms. Healy pointed out that Ms. Beatty had developed a deaf taskforce for doing training. They meet twice a year. Mr. McGann responded Paul Mente knows about this group and when he had a problem with PEMA he contacted them. Ms. Barricella added that during the flood she received complaints regarding PEMA. She suggested we contact PEMA and ask about their procedures. When people were requested to call about filing claims, deaf people could not. Mr. Tague said he would contact PEMA.

**WPIC ISC Closure:**

Ms. Healy introduced Don Clark, Deputy Director of the Department of Human Services for Allegheny County, Sue Loya of WPIC – ISC, Tony Drane of Family Links Supports Coordination, Penny Lang of Staunton and Darlene Wisnicwiki of the Rankin Christian Center. She asked Mr. Clark to give a thumbnail sketch on what is going on. He said that they had contracted with four units to do case management. New rules came down that each agency must be conflict free (they could not provide any waiver services if they did referrals or monitored services). UPMC let go of their Case management services. Their 2000 clients had to be transferred to other units. The process began in March. During the past three months they sent letters to the clients and met with the staff. The four agencies are working together to transfer staff. They have held two provider fairs. Each client, or their family must chose a new provider by April 15<sup>th</sup>. 44% of the clients have made their choice. Philadelphia is going through the same process and only 34% of their clients have made a choice. They are working with very tight time frames.

Ms. Perlman asked what happens to families that did not make a choice. Mr. Clark responded that there is an auto-selection process. They will be assigned to one of the three units. 1300 did not choose. In placing these clients they will take into account geographic issues and funding streams. They will start with the process used in Philadelphia. Ms. Carter said there was not enough time to make the choice. The letter did not give enough information. She asked if the time frame could be extended. Mr. Clark responded there were tough issues to work through. They have a touchstone meeting every Thursday with the agencies. They will discuss this at their next meeting. The issue on extending the time limit may open it up to people who have already made a choice. Ms. Carter said she hopes they would consider an extension. She was also concerned about the case load. It is already high. Carolyn Vidt expressed her concern about the short notice as well. Consumers without families do not get the guidance they need. This is the equivalent of 24 hour notice to consumers with families. They don't know or understand their choices. Case loads are extremely high and now they will be higher. New regulations will require how they will operate. Case load maximums will be changed. Ms. Healy added everyone agrees that the time line should be extended. What steps should be taken in addition to the time frame to help people make a choice? Both information fairs were in Monroeville. Some clients and families do not have transportation. We must give people the opportunity for more information. Case workers should have face to face contact. One plan was to move case workers to a new agency with all of their cases.

Ms. Loya spoke on the outreach effort. They attempted to contact each consumer to ask if they need assistance in making a choice. Those who lived alone were visited. All returned envelopes and incorrectly filled out forms were given to staff for a home visit. Choice forms will continue to come in. Many clients want to follow their support coordinator, but they could not always be assured of that. We are now getting back to these clients with that information.

Ms. Healy asked once a family makes a choice that they want to stay with the support coordinator, will it be honored? Ms. Lang said they will work to honor those requests. The money will follow the clients so case loads will not go up. Ms. Wisnicwiki related that she has been getting calls from families requesting the current ISE. The client information they get includes the current ISE. Mr. Drane added that the caseloads are always too high. They are going to make sure that former UPMC staff gets former UPMC clients. They are working cooperatively through the transition. Mr. McGann asked if OVR has anything to do with MH/MR. Mr. Clark said OVR does the same work in the short term what we do in the long term.

Beatriz Kierzkowski said her son was leaving Sunrise School. Family Links is well suited to their needs. Who takes care of the clients need until the transition? Ms. Perlman responded until the confirmation WPIC will continue to serve the clients. Ms. Kierzkowski added over Easter weekend they got a call saying her son needed psychological testing. The next week they got a call saying this was not going to happen. Ms. Healy asked if the eligibility of clients will change. Will clients fall out of the system? Are there redeterminations? Could you lose any services? Mr. Clark said no, the transition will not change anyone's status or lose any money. Some people get into the system that were ineligible. Ms. Barricella added that there is still a disconnect that people can choose. She supports an extension of time. She received a call regarding her son from someone she never heard of and when she returned the call no one knew who the caller was or what they had wanted. She also received a call that her son was no longer eligible because they lost the paperwork.

Ms. Healy volunteered to let the members know about the extension. Families need more support in making a choice. Caseloads should not go up. Someone from the audience asked if all the units will get more staff so all the caseloads will stay about the same. Mr. Clark answered yes; money and staff support will follow the clients. The agencies will grow very fast. This is going to be a challenge to the administrations.

### **Disability Connections:**

Ms. Barricella reported there was a meeting tomorrow for the Aging and Disability Resource Center grant 12:30 p.m. in the Heinz Room at the United Way. Ms. Healy asked who will go there any why. What resources will be available? Ms. Barricella responded that it would be a physical place the location of which would be a collaborative decision, for anyone who needs long term care services. Anyone can come. The center will have forms for all providers. It will have information on programs such as nursing homes and food stamps. County Assistance will either be at the Center or in communication with the Center. Consumers will only need to make one phone call. They will have working groups on intake and information and referrals. The Center will have agreements with agencies. The State is setting up two virtual centers next year.

Ms. Carter informed Ms. Barricella she did not get in invitation. Ms. Barricella said this is an ongoing process. It will include all services. They sent out 30 letters inviting people. If someone can't come but wants to be on the working group, let her know. Ms. Vidt asked about advocacy. Ms. Barricella said the Information and Referral work group will consolidate resources. They will be able to refer people to advocacy groups. Ms. Vidt asked if there will be another meeting. Ms. Healy asked if the information could be sent out in Email. Ms. Barricella said not everyone has mail. People can contact her through the Web site.

Mr. Laychak asked who will handle Information and Referral. Ms. Barricella responded that staff in the Aging and Rehabilitation Resource Center. Mr. Tague pointed out that the Center is still in the design phase. After the initial meeting there will be working group meetings and follow up meeting.

**Employment:**

Mr. Tague informed the Task Force that the first meeting of the committee will be April 21<sup>st</sup> at 9:00 a.m. at UPC. He has identified a number of people to serve. He will be attending the Working Women With Disabilities event. Enable America would be holding a Town Hall meeting on 24<sup>th</sup>. County Executive Onorato will kick it off. It will be at the IBEW Hall in the Southside. They want to hear about issues around employment.

Mr. Meritzer informed the Task Force that he would be having an intern to help them with their committee activities. Ms. Healy pointed out that the Employment Committee meeting was this Thursday morning. Names were sent to Mr. Tague from the Strategic Planning process of people interest in employment issues. They should be contacted. Part of the Strategic Planning process was to broaden the base of the Task Force. Mr. McGann said that the Deaf community should be involved. Many of the deaf community miss meetings because of work. OVR provides job services for the deaf but does not have deaf services. Mr. Tague said he would try to have meetings at times when the deaf are not working.

**Housing / Design:**

Ms. Brenyo was back after have pneumonia twice. Mr. Tague pointed out the Mr. Keenan was here. Mr. Henderson reported that he had talked with Ms. Brenyo last week. Mr. Keenan came out to the center with plans for a facility at the old Eat and Park site on Penn Avenue. The plans were accessible and appropriate. Mr. Henderson added he was also on the SILK Housing Committee. HUD is having a conference at the end of the month on accessibility and design. He is trying to go to that conference. He is also working with government officials. He is further looking at the Strategic Plan and how SILK can help.

Mr. Tague asked if the Task Force should send him to the meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Henderson said there were two meetings, one on the 28<sup>th</sup> and one on the 29<sup>th</sup> and they were both the same. Mr. Tague pointed out that the first meeting deals with local issues. Mr. Henderson added that Mr. Tague chairs the SILK and Mr. Henderson chairs the Housing Committee. He asked if the Task Force help fund the conference. Mr. Tague pointed out that this meeting benefits local activity. Mr. Henderson said that \$300 would cover hotel, attendance and food. Ms. Healy said the SILK will cover transportation and hotel. She moved THE TASK FORCE PAY FOR MR. HENDERSON TO ATTEND THE MEETING ON THE 28<sup>TH</sup> AND MEALS FOR THAT DAY. Seconded by Ms. Carter. The motion was passed unanimously. Mr. Henderson said he would bring back a report.

Ms. Carter asked if the committee will be involved in the plans for the new building on Penn. Will the visually impaired be able to use it? Mr. Keenan responded that he is working with Three Rivers Center for Independent Living. Mr. Tague agreed that we need to look at sensory issues. Mr. Henderson pointed out that 7% of the units were for the visually and auditorily impaired.

**Forensic Service:**

Ms. Perlman informed the members that she did a presentation on Advanced Directive in Washington Pennsylvania to about 150 people. She went on to say that 15 years ago people who went into state hospitals would stay there for many years. Today Mayview only has 400 patients and their stays are limited to two years or to keep them out of jail. She went on to outline Forensic support services and Mental Health Court.

**Voting Update:**

Mr. Tague said he had spoken to Shawn Fox. Mr. Fox was not sure when the Election Board would next meet. He also expressed that he was not sure there was any problem with voting accessibility. Chief Executive Dan Onorato never put a committee together to look at this. Ms. Healy added the policy requires people with disabilities to come Downtown to vote. The Primary is a month away. We should meet with them immediately. People with disabilities should be able to vote at the closest assessable polling place by provisional ballot. They need to come up with a better accommodation. This is the second meeting Shawn Fox did not attend. She suggested that everyone walk over from this meeting to the Chief Executive's office and demand a meeting.

Mr. O'Hanlon informed everyone that a woman in Knoxville broke her hip trying to vote at an inaccessible polling place. The time is now. This is not just the Election Department Director's problem, the County needs to deal with this. Ms. Barton said the County should be able to reassign voters. Mr. O'Hanlon responded that last year the state put out a policy prohibiting reassignment of voters or the use of provisional ballots for Curbside voting. The focus is on accessible polling places. Mr. Tague said last election they received complaints all day. No one utilized the Downtown process. Ms. Healy suggested we set up a meeting and invite Mr. Kukovich from the Governor's office. Mr. O'Hanlon said we should focus on the County. The state is a different issue. He wants to meet with the Election Board, but he does not know when they meet.

**County Comprehensive Plan:**

Mr. Tague said someone would be coming to the next meeting. Mr. O'Hanlon reported that the Consolidated Plan was need to spend HUD money. There would be a hearing Thursday at 1:00 p.m. at the Regional Enterprise Center. The HUD funds have been raided by government. Only 15% still goes to housing. Mr. Tague said he thought we had input into the consolidated plan. Mr. O'Hanlon responded that there was a housing forum in November. A hearing is required, but nobody ever knows about it. 150 people show up at the Housing forum in November. The County submitted a plan to HUD that was rejected. They are resubmitting the plan. In August they had an application process but it did not include advocacy. Ms. Healy said she would send an Email to Mr. Meritzer for him to send out.

