

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES
NOVEMBER 20, 2006
MINUTES**

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

Members Present: Jeff Parker, Chairperson, Katherine D. Seelman, Co-chair, Aurelia Carter, Janet Evans, Liz Healey, Sarah Goldstein, Rich McGann, John Tague

Members Absent: Eugene Barton, Linda Dickerson, Milton Henderson, Paul O'Hanlon,

Others Present: Steve Chopek, Mary Figlar, Amanda Lapina, Lashanna Martin, Denise McArthur-Turner, Richard Meritzer, Charles Morrison, Elaine Plunket, David Rosenblatt, Allison Robinson PhD, Marion Treskey, Mary Esther Van Shura

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Parker at 1:05 PM.

Introductions:

Everyone introduced themselves.

Approval of the October 2006 Minutes:

Dr. Seelman moved TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES. Ms. Carter seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

Financial Report:

Mr. Parker passed out copies of the report. So far this year all our expenses have been for interpreters and our fiscal agent. Dr. Seelman brought up that the Task Force Budget was reduced during the fiscal crisis. The current budget leaves very little money for projects. She would like the Executive Committee to discuss this issue. Mr. Tague asked if there was any money for the video in this budget. Mr. Parker responded that there was not. The money for the video was money left over from previous budgets (\$7,000) and sales of the video (\$15,000). Dr. Seelman then went on to explain what the video was.

Parent Subcommittee Report Card Legislation:

Don Clark, Department of Human Service Deputy Director for the Office of Mental Retardation / Development Disabilities, reported that County Council approved the ordinance in April. They have been reviewing the ordinance and identifying what documentation is necessary and where it could be found. The home page lists all the providers. The next page has their names, addresses description and Web site. The following page has demographic information and hours of service. The final page will have financial information, personnel rosters, incident data and reports, and Department of Human Services monitoring activities. The State is providing information from the statewide reporting system.

Ms. Carter said she was pleased with the collaboration. Amanda Lapina has been very helpful. She also thanked Don Clark for his work. She said they did not have adequate information for placement. They met with representatives from three Department of Human Services Divisions and went through the Web page piece by piece. Mr. Clark opened the door to family members to participate. For those families without computers the department has assured the committee that this information could be accessed in other ways.

Mr. Tague said that is what he wanted to hear. He asked is the information throughout Allegheny County? Mr. Clark said they will try to get them and the school to understand and use the system. It will take a while to get people comfortable with it. Ms. Carter added that the state system can have some influence in how the system is set up. There are also concerns regarding voluntary information. Mr. Clark said he would meet with the state group to show them our system. We will evaluate what works and what doesn't work. We can not require optional information because of State contracts at this time, but we can encourage it.

Dr. Seelman asked, regarding evaluations, if there are going to be any focus groups. How do they plan to do evaluations? Mr. Clark responded they would put questionnaires or other feedback mechanisms on the Web page. They may also get a working group together. Dr. Seelman reminded him that this is an ongoing effort. If there is a provider that does not follow the code that provider will be listed on the Web. Mr. Clark replied "Can we do the same thing for those who don't get us information?" Penalties are a statewide issue. We must meet with the State to determine penalties. The County can only recommend to the state. Mr. Tague said he was looking for a grade on each organization. Mr. Clark said he was unable to have a time frame for evaluations which is legislation proof. Hopefully the Sate will do that.

Visitability:

Mr. Tague reported that two or three weeks ago the Governor signed the Visitability Law. Senators Ferlo and Rhodes introduced the legislation to enable municipalities to create a Visitability Tax deferment. The School Board may have one. With the County that would be a tax deferment of \$7,500. The County Council Committee approved and Council should pass it tomorrow.

Mr. Parker asked if the Task Force should be doing anything. Mr. Tague responded that the Marketing Committee has been appointed. They need to develop a marketing plan. Anyone can get the Tax Abatement. A board member of United Cerebral Palsy works for WIIC and talked to him about this. Mr. O'Hanlon reviewed the County ordinance and made some adjustments.

Mr. Parker pointed out that the disability community was represented in the process. Mr. Tague said he would help Mr. Meritzer locate Marketing Committee members who had changed their place of employment. Mary Esther Van Shura first thanked Mr. Meritzer for sending her a copy of the City Ordinance. The County Executive is very supportive of this legislation.

Kane Skilled Nursing Centers Report

Ms. Van Shura reported that the County Executive had convened a meeting to review the Action Plan. He wanted an Action Plan not a report. The changing demographic and changing needs lent itself to continuing care. They developed a continuum. In the Ross facility they are proposing 120 independent living units as well as a life center and a nursing home without walls. They have two providers in Allegheny County. They are also looking at personal care units – 60 at Ross and 30 at Glen Hazel. Assisted Living does not exist in Pennsylvania. Currently there is an attempt to get it through the State Legislature. Until then there is more of a focus on transitional services. In Glen Hazel there will be 14 independent living units. The Scott and McKeesport facilities will not be changed. The Action Plan is available on the Web site. There are 5 different sections to the Action Plan: (1) Expand the Continuum of care through right sizing and new services, (2) Ensure a stable operating budget, (3) Redesign operations to improve the consistency of quality of life, (4) Implement a marking initiative, and (5) retool and retrain the work force. There is a shortage of workers nationally. The County Executive has been very supportive of this plan.

Mr. Tague pointed out that independent living units are independent housing. There is a desire to decertify nursing home beds and push for home based services. This is the beginning of the process and the Kanes must change. There needs to be an advisory committee which is in the report. Ms. Van Shura responded that the Federal Government has funded a proposal that includes Blue Roof. Good Shepard in Allentown is doing interesting things in this field. There have been some meetings with Blue Roof. They are looking into assistive technologies. The focus of the document is on community based care. Dr. Seelman pointed out that there is a good slide show on Food Shepard. This project is inspiring. Ms. Van Shura added that this program is the first of its type in the State.

Voting Accessibility:

Ms. Van Shura reported that of the 1314 polling locations in the County, 1307 are now accessible. They will continue to strive for 100% accessibility. When this program started 263 polling places were inaccessible. People from the Disability community now find it easier to vote. There are still problems for blind voters. The County did outreach to the blind, deaf and mentally challenged communities. They have both 16” and 18” mouse sticks for the new machines.

Mr. Parker added that he saw outreach going on. At one training it was demonstrated how to take the machine off the easel. But they could not do that at his polling place. Ms. Evans said they had training through CitiParks, but the trainer left half an hour early. The machines worked beautifully. Ms. Van Shura responded that she would check into that. The County will do more training in the spring.

Voter Registration at Human Service Agencies:

Mr. Parker reported that Rachael Freund had brought up this issue. Ms. Van Shura checked and there is not a requirement for Human Service agencies to do voter registration. Ms. Van Shura added that there is a requirement for agencies working with Aging populations to do voter registration. Mental Retardation agencies should also do this. Ms. Goldstein said they did a registration campaign at New Horizons. Dr. Seelman said we will get more information from Ms. Van Shura at the next meeting.

Voting Machine Training for Persons who are Deaf:

Mr. McGann reported that the deaf community needs more training. The Center for Hearing and Deaf Services has hired a new executive Director, Amy Hart. He asked her to set up a deaf advisory board. She will try to get to the meeting next month.

Mr. Parker asked if the training can be ongoing or is it only around elections. Ms. Van Shura said they can set up trainings between elections. There are issues with training for the blind and deaf communities. Dr. Seelman said we should have the new director come to a meeting. Ms. Goldstein thanked Ms. Van Shura for having this training before the Presidential Elections.

Vox Pop:

Mr. Meritzer read an email he had received from a Mr. Rose regarding harassment he had received from other tenants in his building. Charles Morrison, Director of the Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations responded that Pittsburgh has a Human Relations Ordinance which covers people who are being harassed. Mr. Tague sent him a copy of this email. They can either help people or refer them to get help. The Law requires that housing providers tell people how to relate to each other. He then gave his number: 412-255-2600. There is also a Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. The State has 180 day time limit, the City has a year.

Ms. Healey pointed out that in the past we have had people come to complain about access to doctors' offices. Mr. Morrison responded that they are covered by provision of services. The Commission takes a look at what can be done. It has a process for follow up. It can hold hearings and issue orders requiring corrective action. Some of the problems still exist but they are disguised. The Commission is a resource for the community.

Ms. Evans added she had a negative experience moving into her high-rise. The residents tried to keep her out. She became a leader in the community. She organized programs to get everyone involved. Mr. Rose has to be patient.

Mr. Morrison went on to say the violation must be in the City for the Commission to get involved, but they can refer anyone to another agency for assistance. The County does not have a Human Relations Commission. The budget for the Commission is less than 1% of the City budget. Someone from the audience asked if there is a complaint about housing, who should they go to first. Mr. Morrison responded they should go to the Fair Housing Partnership (FHP), an advocacy group for Greater Pittsburgh. They have one of the only fair housing testing groups. These are matched pairs covering all protected classes. If someone came to the Commission first but their complaint could be tested, they would go to the FHP. After testing the complaint, the FHP would go to the Commission. HUD contracts with the City and FHP to enforce fair housing laws. Racial patterns are still the same as they were in the 1950s. The case must be proven. He would be glad to provide training.

After discussion it was decided that the Task Force would cancel the December meeting.

Announcements:

Dr. Seelman thanked Lashanna Martin for all her work as the ADS Compliance Intern. She also announced that on February 15, 2007, the Thornburg Disability Law lecture will host Professor Bruce Coker.

Ms. Healey announced that the State Board of Education is drafting new regulations on special education. There will be a hearing in the Patent Office on December 11th. Only 70 people can observe and only 30 invited individuals may speak. There will be no hearing after the draft is completed.

Ms. Healy also announced the Peal Center is having a conference. They are seeking organizations to co-sponsor the event and / or have displays. They are planning to send out conference brochures in mid-December. Dr. Seelman **MOVED TO SUPPORT THE PEAL CENTER CONFERENCE**. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Evans moved that the meeting be adjourned. Ms. Carter seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:

DATE: January 22, 2007
TIME: 1:00 P.M.
LOCATION: Large Conference Room
200 Ross Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219