

TRS Advisory Board Meeting Minutes 2.22.21

Meeting called to Order 10:00am

Attendees:

Michelle Vicino (Sprint/T-Mobile)

Clay Purvis (PSD- Vice Chair)

Andrew Brenneman (Sprint/T-Mobile)

Michael DeHart (PSD)

Erika Smith (Consolidated)

Rene Pellerin (Chair)

Kate Parrish (Filling Bill Hudson's vacancy; coordinator for Statewide Deaf and HoH services)

Peter Johnke (VCIL)

Jorika Stockwell (T-Mobile/Sprint outreach)

Interpreters:

Lianne Moccia

Virginia Clark

Jen Raney

Kelly Decker

Old Minutes

New Business:

a. RCC Funding Shortage

Purvis- Added RCC to the TRS contract a couple years ago w/ a \$20k annual cap to prevent overburdening Vermont Universal Service Fund (VUSF).

-Pandemic usage of RCC reached its limit just 7 months into the Fiscal Year

-Requested \$50k in Coronavirus Relief Funds to keep RCC funded through the 2021 calendar year

-Senate seemed supportive of the idea

Pellerin- Can you tell us more about that bill and how it's aligned in the budget?

Purvis- No bill # yet, but it's going to Senate Appropriations tomorrow. We presented it to Senate Finance who will submit it to Senate Approps. We will forward draft bill language when it becomes available.

Brenneman- Do we need to suspend the service until the funding is approved?

Purvis- Unfortunately, yes. I can't foresee a situation where this doesn't pass, but I want to make sure it's in a bill's language before we begin charging the CRF funds for the program. It's an important program that we want to keep available, but we may need to suspend it temporarily while we wait for approval. It's more a matter of *when*, not *if* at this point.

Pellerin- How are we going to notify RCC users of this suspension of service?

Brenneman- Michelle will work with RCC project managers and our vendor and we'll post a notification on the website. It will need to be highly visible and we'll make sure they know it's temporary. I'm concerned though- there are some people who may have booked service ahead in march.

Purvis- This is probably not the right forum for discussing the logistics of the suspension. We should honor all commitments we've made and provide a 2-week lead time ahead of the suspension date. We can figure out a way to deal with that 2-week period.

Vicino- Yes, we can discuss logistics offline. The website notification is a good idea. We'll also use social media. March meetings are a concern, so we'll still need to discuss that.

Purvis- We'll update the Advisory Council on the conclusion

Parrish - This is only for RCC, not for any other services- right?

Purvis- Yes, just RCC- everything else is available.

Parrish - So you know as a customer, it's a very necessary service that we make use of often.

Sprint/T-Mobile Report

Pellerin- Is it T-Mobile now?

Vicino- It's T-Mobile now. It says Sprint in the contract, but the merger is complete.

Brenneman- T-Mobile acquired Sprint in 2020, so Sprint is no longer an entity. We go by T-Mobile Accessible now. The contract commitment remains in place for access, but the company has changed.

Vicino- Report:

- no in-person outreach
- Searching for more digital outreach opportunities
- TRS & analog CapTel usage trends not growing. Users likely switching to (untracked) IP-based CapTel.
- Relay Conference Captioning usage has increased exponentially from Sep 2020 to Jan 2021
- Lots of outreach, remote work, social distancing, and colder weather led to a huge spike in RCC minutes.
- 66% of calls are TTY
- VT Relay website upgraded to WCAG 2.1 AA Standard for accessibility
- RCC hours were expanded 8am-8pm M-F, Saturday 8am-2pm

Pellerin- How has the pandemic affected relay? Any reflections?

Vicino- There was an impact on relay, yes. More calls were being made, people couldn't go to in-person events or jobs. Service levels were impacted (call agents missing shifts, quarantining).

Service levels went from [85% of calls answered in 10-sec or less (85/10)] to [(85/120)] thanks to FCC waiver. We haven't received any complaints during the pandemic, though.

Brenneman- We've had to close call centers, and we're down to one Communications Assistant at a time in facilities. We have to shut down quickly and sanitize before switching CA's. A call center in Austin also had to close due to the winter storm in Texas.

VT Equipment Distribution Program (VCIL Presentation)

Lavigne

-4 Applications Received, 6 individuals funded

1 voice amplifier

1 Desktop

2 iPads

1 iPad repair

1 personal assistance phone

-No requests over \$750, so no leverage funding was needed

-Currently have 1 amplified phone, 3 CapTels, and 1 Laptop in stock for loaning out

RISE Fund- funding for items/services related to COVID (telehealth conferencing)

Pellerin- Have you done any outreach through Frontporch Forum?

Lavigne- For EDP, I don't know. Our outreach person, Linda, has done some for VCIL broadly.

Johnke- I did a post in the past, but we don't use it regularly

Pellerin- There may be a lot of potential users on Frontporch Forum, so I suggest EDP and TRS both give it a try.

Stockwell- I only know how to post in my own area, but I'll look for a way to post more broadly

Purvis- The PSD has used it quite a bit during the pandemic to advertise our programs. I'm happy to have a conversation to get you set up.

Parrish- Is there a partnership between VCIL's EDP and the Vermont Assistive Technology Program?

Lavigne- I coordinate with Tracy at the AT tryout center to match users to equipment.

Parrish- Is it always a loan? Do they ever get to keep it?

Lavigne- It's a loan, but they only have to return it if they stop using it or move out of state. Users keep it as long as they need it. Funding opportunities are on a 4-year basis with the option to utilize funds to repair broken items.

Next Meeting:

Monday, June 7th at 10am