

# Maryland Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (MD EHDI) Advisory Council

Minutes April 18, 2019

## **Members Present**

Jennifer Reesman,  
Ph.D., Chair  
Judith Black  
Margaret Hargrove  
(Phone)  
Patty Muldowney  
Kelby Brick  
Jessica Thornton  
(Phone)  
Meagan Ackerman  
Robyn Miller, Au.D.

## **Members Absent**

Bridgetta Bourne-Firl  
Brian Reilly, M.D.  
Tina Backe  
Marny Helfrich

## **Maryland Department of Health (MDH)**

Tanya D. Green  
Jed Miller, M.D., M.P.H.  
Margaret Berman  
Jill Spector  
Katie Neral  
J. Bobbe Frasier

## **Guests**

Cheri Dowling  
Olga Polites  
Louise Colodzin  
Ben Dubin  
TraciAnn Hoglind  
Richard Jeffries, Ph.D.  
(Phone)  
Shee Newman

## **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson, Jennifer Reesman at 12:45 pm.

## **Welcome & Sharing of a Story**

Chairperson Reesman welcomed everyone and shared a letter she received from an adult who is hard of hearing and was identified at the age of three. The letter writer indicated that she is a college graduate and was often underestimated during childhood. She was expelled from nursery school and the fifth grade for not listening. She had no individualized education program or supports and failed music due to hearing status. Her purpose for writing was to show what has changed for people like her.

## **Approval of Previous Minutes**

The minutes from the January 17, 2019 meeting were voted on and approved with minor corrections.

## **Old Business**

### ***Parent Connections Update***

The council was reminded that the new coordinator of the *Parent Connections* program is Ashley Shindler of the Parents' Place of Maryland (PPMD). PPMD has formed a partnership with the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. which has expanded their outreach to Spanish-speaking families in Maryland who have children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Some recent outreach activities included:

February 26, 2019 – Presented at the Education and Advocacy Summit: Deaf Education at Gallaudet University

March 22, 2019 – Conducted an opening presentation on Cultural Competency at the Maryland State Steering Committee for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students Conference

April 6, 2019 - Presented at St. Camillus Catholic Church Day of Reflection to deaf and hard of hearing, bi-lingual Spanish families on the topic of self-care.

PPMD is broadening its scope of outreach to families of children who are deaf and hard of hearing in Prince George's County and Baltimore County. Current outreach activities are being conducted with Mary's Centers in Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

Kelby asked if PPMD has anyone on their staff who has expertise or background in American Sign Language (ASL). Currently PPMD does not employ anyone with expertise or background in ASL. Kelby suggested that any vacant PPMD positions be filled with deaf or hard of hearing staff and expressed that he would like to see PPMD receive help in this hiring effort.

Meagan Ackerman, new parent representative, asked how parents find out about the *Parent Connections* program. It was explained that families of babies who are identified as deaf or hard of hearing through MD EHDI receive a letter and information about *Parent Connections*, the Maryland School for the Deaf and local Infants and Toddlers Programs. Audiologists also recommend the *Parent Connections* program to families. It has been reported that most families indicate that they learned about the program from their audiologist or parent to parent referrals. Meagan suggested looking into ways to connect parents with other parents via phone or email instead of a paper hand out, and to consider if the initial Early Intervention (EI) interaction could provide opportunities for awareness. Chairperson Reesman reinforced the suggestion of connecting parents to parents and mentioned the Hands and Voices Guide by Your Side program.

Robyn Miller, Au.D., stated that in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), she uses the MD EHDI data system to locate and reach out to families and starts there. She stated that teachers of the deaf conduct home visits in which information about all services available in Maryland are shared with the family while letting the family know that they are there to provide support and help navigate the journey. Kelby reminded council members of the MSDE Technical Assistance Bulletin and asked Chairperson Reesman to re-send the bulletin to board members. MSDE provided the Technical Assistance Bulletin to all EI providers throughout the state and the bulleting states that a Maryland School for the Deaf representative should be invited to the first meeting. Chairperson Reesman stated that some families may end up with an EI coordinator who is unfamiliar with deafness and who may not try to match families with skilled EI coordinators. Jennifer suggests obtaining documentation of the number of times that MSD has been invited to IFSP meetings which could be helpful information to advocate for families. There was discussion around asking a representative from MSD and MSDE Part C to attend a future council meeting to present and discuss data from last year and this year around this issue. Patty Muldowney, MSD representative, stated she could provide information referrals and ages of the child that she has received. It was mentioned that each county may need to be reminded to invite MSD to the first meeting

and we should work toward determining the best approach to making this happen. Chairperson Reesman stated she would follow up with Marny Helfrich, MSDE representative, to receive her suggestions regarding this. Kelby stated that by June there should be enough data from MSD.

### ***Newborn Hearing Screening Protocols/Best Practices Update***

MDH is close to finalizing the edits to the document. Once MDH edits are complete, and the document is formatted with images added, it will be submitted to the Council for review. It is anticipated that the document will be presented to the Council prior to the next meeting in July. A two-week review turnaround will be requested of the Council.

### ***MD EHDI Brochure***

Volunteers were requested to work with Tanya on the MD EHDI brochure draft over the next 30 days. The new draft will then be presented to the council board members for their review and feedback. The volunteers are Kelby Brick, Margaret Hargrove, Judith Black, and Patty Muldowney. It was moved by Kelby and seconded by Patty that this process be accepted by the Council. The motion passed.

### ***Membership Update***

All Council board member positions are filled. A welcome is extended to MSDE representative, Marny Helfrich and parent representative, Meagan Ackerman. Marny is completing a term that began July 1, 2016 and ends June 30, 2019. MDH has indicated that Marny will not need to reapply for her first full term which will begin July 1, 2019 and remain in effect until June 30, 2022. Meagan Ackerman is completing the remainder of a term that began July 1, 2018. This term will remain in effect through June 30, 2021. Meagan received partial funding through the MD EHDI Program's HRSA grant to attend the recent National EHDI Meeting. Meagan, whose husband is a CODA (child of a deaf adult), has three young sons, one who is hard of hearing, one who is hearing and one who is deaf.

Judith Black's final term as the local education agency educator representative ends June 30, 2019. MDH representative, Tina Backe's term will be renewed on July 1, 2019. Bridgetta Bourne-Firl's term as the Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD) representative will end on June 30, 2019. The status of the MDAD position beyond June 30th is pending recommendation from MDAD.

### ***MD EHDI Program Update***

Program statistics were provided. Kelby asked about the low number of babies who have been identified as deaf or hard of hearing for calendar year 2019. Tanya stated that the MD EHDI Program is monitoring this data.

### ***MD EHDI HRSA Grant Update***

The HRSA grant is currently in year 3 of 3. The current focus is on learning communities. Pediatricians and their staff from two practices are participating in the learning community which allows physicians and their staff to gain knowledge about the EHDI process. The practices have offices in Baltimore County, Allegany and Cecil

Counties (Perryville, Essex and Rising Sun). The next educational webinar for learning community participants will be held on April 25<sup>th</sup>. The topic will be communication opportunities, technology and amplification. A pediatric practice in Baltimore City was initially included but encountered challenges with administrative approvals for data collection. This practice anticipates being able to participate in the second cohort of the learning community project which will occur during year 3.

### ***National EHDl Meeting Update***

The 18<sup>th</sup> National EHDl Meeting was held in Chicago, IL on March 3 – 5, 2019. Tanya, Bridgetta and Meagan Ackerman attended the meeting. Attendees from each state are given a designated time and meeting space to connect in what has been named the “state stakeholders meeting”. The Maryland stakeholders meeting was well-attended and engaging and provided an opportunity for stakeholders to learn about the EHDl system in Maryland and to meet and network with one another.

### ***Follow up from previous meeting – Medicaid amplification reimbursement discussion***

MDH Medicaid staff Jill Spector (Director, Medical Benefits Management), Katie Neral (Deputy Director), J. Bobbe Frasier (Division Chief) and Margaret Berman (Chief, Division of Children’s Services) attended today’s meeting to discuss questions raised at the January Council meeting about processes and criteria for obtaining hearing aids. Jill Spector thanked the council for bringing this concern to the attention of MDH Medicaid. Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) now provide audiology services to enrollees who previously received services through the Maryland Medical Assistance fee-for-service program (FFS). There are nine MCOs and they all have different structures. Currently only two MCOs require pre-authorization.

MCOs were surveyed to determine the causes for the concerns being seen. Because surveys have just been received by MDH Medicaid, the results are not yet ready to share. Additionally, a letter packet has been developed by MDH Medicaid which will be sent to audiology providers informing them of the expansion of Medicaid audiology, hearing aid, cochlear implant, and auditory osseointegrated device services which took effect on July 1, 2018. The letter detailed the changes that MDH made in the past few months to assist providers with reducing barriers in the FFS system. The packet includes a list of barriers and the associated solution, an educational flyer for Medicaid participants/parents on how to obtain help for their child’s audiology services (available in English and Spanish, and there is an ASL version in the works), and an MCO audiology contact list which indicates the credentialing contact, claims contact and prior authorization contact for each MCO. The letter includes MDH Medicaid contact information for reporting delays and issues. Hardcopies of these documents were shared.

A mother from Prince George’s County shared that she has been waiting since December to get her son’s earmolds from Children’s National Medical Center. MDH offered to help her find resolution directly and shared contact information. An educational audiologist from Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) reported that

with close monitoring and collaborative advocacy, MCPS is now seeing about a one-month turnaround time, compared to a six-month turnaround time earlier this school year.

Gratitude was expressed to the MDH team for working collaboratively with MCPS and the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing on behalf of the pediatrics population across the state of Maryland.

## **New Business**

### ***Council Member Attendance***

Attendance for each meeting is recorded. A member who does not attend at least 50% of council meetings within any consecutive 12-month period is considered to be resigned.

## **Announcements**

### **Legislative Updates**

Kelby Brick provided legislative updates. Several bills passed and are now waiting for a signature or veto from the Governor. One bill of interest is SB 677 (3rd) - Deaf or Hard of Hearing Individuals - Support for Parents.

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?pid=billpage&stab=01&id=sb0677&tab=subject3&ys=2019RS>

This bill would require the Maryland Hearing Aid Loan Bank to distribute videos to the parents that provide information about language and communication. The Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is working to obtain clarification of the types of videos that are being proposed. The bill would also exempt parents of a deaf or hard of hearing individual from paying tuition at a public institution of higher education for a one-time participation in a course that teaches a language or communication mode. The bill would require each hospital to provide a list of resources to parents before the discharge of the newborn. Margaret Hargrove stated that she was involved with drafting this bill.

### **Annual MD EHDI Stakeholders Conference**

Registration is open for the annual MD EHDI Stakeholders Conference which will be held on Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup> at the Hearing and Speech Agency.

**Next MD EHDI Advisory Council meeting** – Thursday, July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019, 12:30 PM – 2:30 PM, Hearing and Speech Agency; park in the rear lot.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:33 PM.