

 *Keith Maes*

*Chairperson*

 **NEW MEXICO TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

 **ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING – MINUTES**

Monday, June 22, 2020

Zoom Platform

**Members Present:** Bill Newroe (Consumer of AT); German Benitez (New Mexico Commission for Blind/CFB); Robin Garrison (Disability Rights New Mexico/DRNM); Ricardo Ortega (Consumer of AT); Chris Zafra (Workforce Solutions); Albert Deimer (Independent Living Resource Center/ILRC); Keith Maes (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation/DVR - Chair); Nat Dean (Consumer of AT) **Absent:**

**NMTAP Staff**: Tracy Agiovlasitis (NMTAP Program Manager); Jesse Armijo (AT Coordinator); Maurice Alvarez (AT Specialist)

**NMTAP Partners present:** Larry McCabe (San Juan Center for Independence/SJCI); Anthony Montoya (Adelante Development Center/ADC)

**Guests:** Eli Fresquez (Children, Youth and Families Department/CYFD)

**CALL TO ORDER:**

NMTAP Council Chair, Keith M, called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm. By roll call of those present it was established that a quorum was present.

Keith M asked for approval of the agenda. Bill N moved to approve, Robin G seconded, and all council members approved the agenda unanimously.

The minutes from the last meeting were reviewed. Bill N moved to approve the minutes as presented, German B seconded and all council members approved the minutes from March 9, 2020 unanimously.

**NMTAP PROGRAM UPDATE:**

Tracy A reviewed Device Loans, Device Demonstrations, Training, Information and Assistance calls, Public Awareness events and Technical Assistance data for this year as compared to last year. Overall, there is a decrease due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. She described how the program is providing limited services, including mailing out device loans every Thursday and demonstrations/trainings through a video platform. The Assistive Technology Conference 20 (ATC20) has been cancelled and (ATC21) is anticipated to be held in May 2021. She noted that during the teleworking and stay-at-home public health orders, the NMTAP staff have worked on creating more robust Policies and Procedures including sanitizing devices and rules for returning to the office when that is allowed. Protective and sanitizing supplies have been difficult to obtain, but some are on order in preparation for that time. They have kept in touch with nationwide AT Program practices and have benefited from good federal guidance during this time. While AgrAbility is not under the purview of this council, Tracy A shared that it has been changed to utilize Occupational Therapists for farm/ranch assessment since that will be more feasible and effective. She noted they are aware that challenges for individuals with disabilities have increased with the pandemic situation and encourages that anyone dealing with these contact NMTAP or DRNM for assistance in getting their needs met.

There was no administrative staff to provide a full financial report, but Tracy A noted that all of the one-time appropriation that GCD/NMTAP received to provide home modifications and to purchase new AT has been completely spent. AT equipment included items that have been requested and are newer in the world of AT. Also, some budget cuts are anticipated to some degree from the legislative response to the pandemic.

**FINANCIAL LOANS (NM SEED Loans, Access Loan NM & Community Fund) UPDATE:**

Larry M noted that Access Loan NM currently has $219,234.64 in open loans at this time, with a total of $172,602.73 loans that were paid off within this federal fiscal year. Two loans defaulted this year. One loan for $38,061.58 defaulted in March when the borrower passed away. This loan was for a vehicle with a wheelchair lift and SJCI will post it for sale. Another defaulted in November for $30,758.36 when the borrower was 90 days behind in payment, the maximum time the lending partner allows before cashing the CD that secures the loan. SJCI renegotiated with the borrower directly. The vehicle for sale will be posted at United Access and it was suggested posting it on Facebook as well. Between the investment accounts, the CDs being held against current loans, and the checking account, Access Loan NM has a total $1,832,871.62.

The SEED Loan program defaulted on two loans for a total of $14,665.10 during this fiscal year. One was due to a Chapter 13 bankruptcy and so this may or may not be included in the reorganization in court later this year. Between the investments and the checking account SEED Loan has a total of $588,911.42.

Neither loan program has had any new loans provided during this last quarter. There have been no changes in the AT Community Fund at SJCI.

**REUSE (Back In Use and DiverseIT - Adelante) UPDATE:**

Anthony M reported that in this last quarter, 208 refurbished items were given to 109 individuals with disabilities at a value of $32,297. The consumer satisfaction rate continues to be primarily highly satisfied and he attested to the service his team provides. During the stay-at-home order there are now 144 individuals on the waiting list and they hope to begin a soft opening soon, providing some durable medical equipment curbside. They have kept in touch with clients during this time as well. It was noted that the voice message published for Back In Use does not designate it is the correct number for Back In Use services and some people may not leave a message for that service due to confusion. Those calls are in the process of being forwarded and so the current number 505-445-5332 is correct for durable medical equipment at Back in Use. They are still not collecting donations into Back In Use at this time.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

It was noted that it is challenging to reach some consumers without any connectivity, especially in the rural parts of the state. When employees of any agency are returning calls using their personal phone, often they block their number for privacy, but this is sometimes not accepted by consumers. Keith M said that he has had success with Google Voice. With this app on his phone he has had good communication with his consumers, maintaining his privacy. There is no consistent way of reaching service providers teleworking and using their personal phones to conduct business.

There was discussion about video conferencing accessibility and NMTAP considered training on this if needed. It was suggested to provide a “tip sheet” and include it on the website. DRNM has several tip sheets regarding Special Education that are helpful during the stay-at-home that may continue, at least in part, into the next school year. Maurice A noted that with our Policies and Procedures update, “How To” guides are created for AT devices and apps for consumers and that a list of the apps for iOS and Androids is posted on our website. NMTAP is also using the Trello platform that has been helpful in teleworking as a team and can be used as a daily task list as well for individuals with disabilities.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Eli F noted that there approximately 400 members involved in an Access and Functional Needs working group that are sharing information and creating helpful information related to COVID-19 issues for individuals with disabilities. A disability access COVID guide with disability links has been created by this group, working closely with the Department of Health. This collaborative team is meeting weekly and can be a great resource. Tracy A thanked her two staff members for attending and contributing helpful information in discussions. All council members agreed.

**ADJOURN:**

The next NMTAP Advisory Council meeting was scheduled tentatively for September 14, 2020 via Zoom again. The final date will be confirmed early in September. Keith M adjourned the meeting at 3:42 pm.

***Approved at September 14, 2020 meeting.***