NMTAP logo, state with Zia symbol with four stick figures with disabilities

*Robin Garrison – Chair*

*Ricardo Ortega – Vice Chair*

**NEW MEXICO TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING – MINUTES**

Monday, January 23, 2023

Zoom Platform

**Members Present:** Robin Garrison (Disability Rights New Mexico/DRNM); Ricardo Ortega (Consumer of AT); Brian Schobel (Consumer of AT); TJ Chester (Independent Living Resource Center/ILRC); Andrea Sterling (Consumer of AT); Bill Newroe (Consumer of AT); Julie Bisbee (Guardian Consumer of AT); Valerie Griego (NM Division of Vocational Rehabilitation/NMDVR); Pilar Murray (Family of Consumer of AT); Eric Gonzales (Commission for the Blind) **Absent:** Dennis Campos (Department of Workforce Solutions/DWS)

**NMTAP Staff Present**: Tracy Agiovlasitis (NMTAP Program Manager); Lisa McNiven (Deputy Director of Governor’s Commission on Disability/GCD); Stan Ross (Director of Governor’s Commission on Disability/GCD); Jesse Armijo (NMTAP AT Coordinator)

**NMTAP Partners Present:** Anthony Montoya and Jill Beets (Adelante Development Center/ADC); Leslie Wright, Damon Wright, and Charlie Phelps (San Juan Center for Independence), Jason Quimby (Western New Mexico University/NMTAP Satellite Office)

**Guests:** Nat Dean

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Robin G, Council Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:08 pm. It was established by roll call that a quorum was present. Two new members, Pilar M and Eric G, were present and every member introduced themselves.

Robin G asked for approval of the agenda. Ricardo O moved to approve the agenda, Pilar M seconded, and all council members approved by roll call vote.

Robin G asked for approval of the draft minutes from November 7, 2022. Bill N moved to approve the minutes, Andrea S seconded, and all council members approved by roll call vote.

**NMTAP PROGRAM UPDATE:**

Tracy A reported that the reauthorization of the Assistive Technology Act is called the 21st Century AT Act. It was signed into law and will initiate in June 2023. There is an increased focus on collaboration and transparency. One change noted is in the council makeup, such as a required representative from the protection and advocacy state entity. Fortunately, Robin G, from DRNM, fills that chair. The council will be kept abreast as these changes unfold.

To allow for the time needed for upcoming reports and actions, Tracy A mentioned a few other program activities. The Assistive Technology Public Health (ATPH) project is progressing. A scope of work has been created and approved by the federal Administration on Community Living (ACL). There is also development on a budget and the recruiting of a contractor to be the Digital Divide Coordinator. After many discussions with the Developmental Disabilities Services Division regarding supporting their service participants better with AT, we are now involved in their pilot project to change the culture in using AT. We have presented our services to both 9 service providers and 10 vendors in the project, as well as also taking the comprehensive training modules along with the providers. NMTAP did increase their AT loan library stock with about ¾ of what is needed. This included lots of visually impaired communication devices, which are in high demand right now. We also got several gaming items and AgrAbility items. The need to add current AT to the device loan library is continuous. NMTAP and GCD met with SJCI last week to work on cleaner financial reporting. It was a cooperative meeting and Leslie W will address the confusion on the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY22) report and also review this quarterly report. For the new members, Tracy A reviewed the basic outline of the Financial Loan Program: investment accounts are to maintain or increase funds, financial loans are guaranteed with Certificates of Deposits (CDs), and CDs are cashed out with interest when loans are paid off. This method is to keep funds available in the program for new loans for individuals with disabilities to get needed AT.

Lisa M, GCD Deputy Director, noted that there are no changes in the finances of the overall NMTAP program, but did note that the Christopher Reeve’s Grant submitted for new AT was not accepted.

An update on the GCD Residential Accessibility Modification Program (RAMP) was requested. Stan R stated that it is slowly coming out of hibernation with anticipation for rebooting this Spring. There has been no staff in the program for quite some time and GCD expects to hire new staff soon. To prepare for this, attention to requested projects includes assisting applicants to get all the necessary documents in, which is the longest part of any project. Emergency projects will be done first. It was discussed that two Independent Living (IL) centers, ILRC and SJCI, have an ongoing connection to the GCD RAMP, with funds they have available for accessible projects throughout the state. This may be a referral to GCD for a job that the IL is not able to do or working together on a joint project (ex: one does the bathroom modification, and the other does a ramp into the residence). The ILRC is out of that funding and will not have any until July 2023. Leslie W noted that SJCI does currently still have funds. It was noted that home accessibility projects can also be requested through an individual’s Medicaid Managed Care Organization, but DRNM often gets complaints that they are not done well. The Veteran’s Administration and a few other groups are also resources. Stan R noted that there are networking meetings between many of these groups and will continue to collaborate.

**FINANCIAL LOANS (Access Loan - SJCI) UPDATE:**

Leslie W reviewed the financial overview sheet for October 2021 to September 2022, noting that the total funds are incorrect, and she will give the updated total. Starting with the Morgan Stanley investment fund #4426, reduced from $182,771.58 to $34,905.47 due to an error by Morgan Stanley taking SJCI Public Private Partnership (PPP) funds and putting them into this investment account, as discussed in December 2021. Unfortunately, this was not noticed for several months, and it was removed in December 2021. The #5834 and #8797 investment accounts gained a small amount, but the #8796 dropped about $100,000 to add loans to the program. This drop would be reflected in the months that those loans occurred and are not on this annual report that the Council members reviewed. There are currently two money market checking accounts. These accounts (#4264 and #8567) are stagnant due to withdrawals as noted in monthly reports. Regarding the total funds available for loans, this includes what is in the checking accounts as well as all the investment funds. Investment funds can be cashed out within 24 hours when there are not enough funds in the checking accounts. The checking accounts are kept fluid with loans that are paid off, so this rarely happens. Leslie W noted that the interest on the CDs held to guarantee the loans, is recognized as accrued in the annual audit and when it is cashed out. There is also interest accrued in the money market checking accounts acknowledged in the annual audit. To correct the miscalculation in the total funds in the Access Loan program Leslie noted that as of October 2021, the total funds were actually $2,499,458.19 and not $3,287,130.77. Also, the total funds as of September 2022 are actually $2,277,486.62 and not $3,287,130.77. The supporting documents were verbally reviewed. Most loans and the corresponding CDs are for 5 years. In some cases, the loan will be for 7 years and the CD will roll into another 5 year term, then cashed out when the loan is paid off with the current interest. Occasionally, if it’s a few months until the CD is mature the second time, they may wait until it matures to cash it out. In response to Council member questions, Leslie W stated that she does internal audits, but there is also an external audit annually for SJCI, which include the Access Loan financials. The annual reports are available to anyone by request and are also on the SJCI website.

Leslie W reviewed the quarterly report, in which Morgan Stanley investment accounts #4426 and $5834 gained little money. The #8796 account dropped about $90,000 due to a withdrawal of $100,000. That $100, 000 was deposited into the money market account #8567 in November 2022 to provide new loans. SJCI gets loan requests continually. A couple was denied due to poor credit and three new loans are in various stages of finalization.

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

Anthony M, Back in Use, noted they get many requests daily and are fulfilled as soon as any items are donated. This quarter, they provided 441 devices to 335 individuals in need. Their goal is to provide about 150 devices a month and they want to serve beyond Bernalillo, Sandoval, and Valencia. Adelante and NMTAP continue to discuss how to expand on a regular basis to further areas when funding is available. The rural areas of the state are challenging, and efforts are clearly being made to make services available.

Jill B, DiverseIT, noted that they gave 91 computers through the NMTAP funding, although they gave a total of 159 computers to persons with disabilities. With the success of providing computers through the NMDVR in Santa Fe, they are partnering with NMTAP staff to do a similar delivery day in the Los Lunas area to reach farther south from the metro area. DiverseIT will give the computers away, provide a how to use the computer training and then NMTAP will provide accessibility tools and options for AT to those consumers scheduled. A Presbyterian case manager sent a thank you stating that the computer DiverseIT provided allowed for access to telehealth appointments and improved that client’s life. They provided laptops this last year, with about $1000 a month expense to repair them, and now only have desktops available. A discussion about outreach opportunities for both donations and provision of equipment through both DiverseIT and Back In Use occurred. Also, some of the other resources in the rural areas was reviewed including St. Vincent’s Hospital and Coming Home Connections in Santa Fe, and possibly Presbyterian Hospital or Northern New Mexico College in Espanola.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Andrea S, member of the Bylaws review committee, reported the updates including those that have been provided to the committee since the last NMTAP meeting. The committee met a second time to address the issue with a quorum and to further clarify a proxy for a member. The details were reviewed and there was a discussion regarding designating a proxy. The proxy is registered to only vote according to what the member has asked that proxy to vote and not their personal position. Wording regarding proxies was changed by council members for clarification. TJ Chester moved to adopt the Bylaws with the amendments, Julie B seconded, and Bylaws approved by majority of the quorum (six council members voted yes and one, Ricardo O, voted no).

TJ Chester, moved to approve the Open Meetings Act (OMA) Resolution as it was updated at the last meeting, Julie B seconded, and it was approved unanimously by council members.

Andrea S nominated herself to be the Executive Councilor, third member of the Executive Committee. Bill N seconded that nomination. Robin G asked for any more nominations and there were none. Andrea S was approved to be the new member, unanimously by roll call vote.

**COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS:**

Robin G noted this will be tabled due to the meeting already an hour longer than intended and all members agreed. Several council members continue to feel confused and overwhelmed in understanding the financial loan reports. Robin G requested that the Executive Committee discuss how to improve reporting and simplify the information. Tracy A will arrange for a discussion.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

With the extended meeting, Nat D agreed to contact Tracy A with her comments and concerns directly rather than speak at this time.

**ADJOURN:**

The next NMTAP Advisory Council meeting will be on April 17, 2023, from 1pm – 3pm. It is pending as a hybrid (in-person and zoom) meeting in Albuquerque. Robin G thanked everyone for their patience and fortitude for those who were able to stay an extra hour to complete the business with the quorum that remained. The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 pm.

***Approved 4.17.23***