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, April 17, 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); Pilar Murray (Family of Consumer of AT); Eric Gonzales (Commission for the Blind); Dennis Campos (Department of Workforce Solutions/DWS) **Absent:** Valerie Griego (NM Division of Vocational Rehabilitation/NMDVR); Julie Bisbee (Guardian Consumer of AT)

**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); Maurice Alvarez (NMTAP AT Specialist)

**NMTAP Partners Present:** Anthony Montoya and Jill Beets (Adelante Development Center/ADC); Jason Quimby (Western New Mexico University/NMTAP Satellite Office)

**Guests:** Nat Dean, Kandace Montoya

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Robin G, Council Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:10 pm. Meeting protocol is at the top of the agenda so please review them. It was established by roll call that a quorum was present. It was a hybrid meeting with council members on Zoom and in person.

Robin G asked for approval of the agenda. It was noted that Stan R has a program update that he will share when he is able to join the meeting, so the agenda would adjust for that. Bill N moved to approve the agenda, Pilar T seconded, and all council members approved by roll call vote.

Robin G asked for approval of the draft minutes from January 23, 2023. 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 Berna Facio facility with Albuquerque Public Schools has been secured for the September 11 and 12, 2023 Assistive Technology Conference (ATC23). The call for papers is due on April 28, 2023. All members are encouraged to either submit for a session presentation or pass on to experts for submission. Meals or snacks were discussed as an option and council members suggested that catering be provided by companies who employ persons with disabilities. That decision will be made later. Jason Q from Western New Mexico University, NMTAP Satellite office, opened the opportunity to host ATC24 in Las Cruces.

The Digital Divide Coordinator position will be advertised as a contract position. Work will be done from July 2023 through June 2024. Members are encouraged to refer potential applicants. The general scope of work was briefly discussed. Notice of posting will be sent to all council members. Under the State Use Act, persons with disabilities will have the first option for such employment.

As an overview of services provided, Tracy A reviewed the ongoing collaborations with the University of New Mexico (UNM) Speech Language Pathology graduate students. We provide hands on training for Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices annually as part of the curriculum. We did our first training on AT for the UNM Occupational Therapy students, and that professor plans to also put training with us on the standard annual curriculum. We also provide training for the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation’s (DVR) Rehab Academy for new VR Counselors and Technicians. The NMTAP staff of three have been busy providing standard services statewide. Regarding device loans, we have provided 370 devices to 150 individuals with disabilities to try before they buy. 45 individuals with disabilities benefited from a device demonstration. We provided 15 training events, with half being in-person educational sessions. General outreach included 9 events where we had a table or provided an overview of our services and had 3000 engagements from our weekly 1-2 Facebook posts.

Stan R joined the meeting to share with the council that the Access Loan Financial Loan program is transferring from the San Juan Center for Independence (SJCI). This will be done through a Request for Proposals for a new community-based partner. SJCI requested to be released from the contract. This will take a few months for this transition to clear. There was discussion about audits; to have one as part of the contract transfer and to review the 4 annual audits provided by SJCI to those who requested at the last meeting. Stan R said the plan is to do an audit as part of the contract transfer. He will investigate options for a possible review/audit of the audits received from SJCI in February 2023. He will provide an update in print for the council members.

Tracy A completed the NMTAP report on services, noting that staff continue to provide technical assistance with the City of Santa Fe around accessibility. The City of Santa Fe is looking for an ADA Coordinator, ensuring accessibility is extremely challenging without a designated full-time coordinator. She added a note that the current AT purchased with the AgrAbility funds at the end of last year has renewed faith with the public that we have some updated AT to borrow. The Satellite office in Las Vegas was able to purchase some newer iPads and a few other items as well. Several council members applauded the staff for their good work, highlighting the AT Specialists and Coordinator’s efforts.

Lisa M, GCD Deputy Director, noted that the budget is limited and on track for the end of this fiscal year. She has continued to look for leveraged funding for AT through congressional initiatives. None are appropriate at the time. Brian S will send information about some Special Education federal funding for transition that may be an option. Lisa M also stated that the Brain Injury Advisory Council (BIAC) Coordinator position is open in the State Personnel Office. Please apply or refer an applicant to apply.

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

The Executive Committee has completed an improved reporting document for this council. Tracy A put information from SJCI reports into the Excel document and reviewed it with the council members. The committee did a great job at creating clear reporting for the investment accounts, bank accounts, and total funds available. It also includes more detail on the status of new loans, those paid off, and Certificates of Deposit (CDs) cashed out. General consumer stories regarding new loans for the last 2 quarters were also provided. Council Members noted this clarifies how money flows within the financial loan program and applauded the work of the committee. This will be used going forward for meetings.

The transfer of the financial loan program to another contract partner will require that Access Loan be on hold at this time. It was clarified that the 7 new loans in the first two quarters are an agreement between the consumer and bank. All the investment funds, CDs and bank accounts will remain intact and on hold under the agreements with SJCI until the contract transition.

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

Anthony M, Back in Use, reviewed the numbers provided to the council members in the paper report. He added that they get at least 20 requests weekly for devices. He shared a story of a retired Emergency Medical Technician on a helicopter which resulted in body injuries. As a former military serviceman, he is waiting for a wheelchair from the Veterans Affairs services. Due to that process taking so long, Back In Use was able to provide him with one so he could live independently again. This consumer was very grateful. Luckily, the program had several requests for Rifton standing frames and received donations around the same time. Donations are always a challenge and Adelante has submitted a small grant to purchase 10 wheelchairs, half standard, and half transport. They also hope to get a second Hub Scrub, a large sanitizing device. Robin G noted that DRNM has received complaints that some of the written documents in the DiverseIT training are in a cartoon format. A more appropriate format is desired. Anthony M will pass that information on to see if there can be different levels of training documents.

Prior to leaving the meeting, Jill B, DiverseIT, left a chat to thank NMTAP staff for partnering with DiverseIT on the computer distribution with NMDVR in March. DiverseIT gave the computers with basic instructions and Maurice Alvarez and Jesse Armijo showed them the built-in accessibility tools. They received good feedback. NMTAP also showed the recipients external AT tools that can attach to those computers.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Morgan Stanley was not present and will be invited in the future.

**COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS:**

Robin G noted that every three years, DRNM uses information obtained from the community and the data on individual cases they have taken to create a set of priorities that best meets the requirements of their grantors and the needs of New Mexicans. Every year they engage in community outreach to fine tune the existing priorities to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the community. A survey was distributed at the meeting and is available on the DRNM website. Council members are encouraged to submit information and forward to others appropriately. DRNM advocates for individuals with legal rights violations. There were discussions about how this relates to AT access. Contact DRNM at 505-256-3100 for further information.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

None.

**ADJOURN:**

The next NMTAP Advisory Council meeting will be on July 17, 2023, from 1pm – 3pm. It will be a hybrid (in-person and Zoom) meeting, location pending. Robin G thanked everyone, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:17 pm.

***Approved 7.17.23***