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

*Brian Schobel – Chair*

*Karen Wiley – Vice Chair*

**NEW MEXICO TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING – MINUTES**

Monday, January 27, 2025

Zoom Platform

**Members Present:** [Zoom] Robin Garrison (Consumer of AT); Brian Schobel (Consumer of AT); Ricardo Ortega (Consumer of AT); Pilar Murray (Family of Consumer of AT); TJ Chester (Independent Living Resource Center/ILRC); Karen Wiley (Consumer of AT); Eric Gonzales (Commission for the Blind); Julie Bisbee (Guardian Consumer of AT) Bernadine Chavez (Disability Rights New Mexico/DRNM) **Absent:** Bill Newroe (Consumer of AT); Desiree Anaya – proxy for Valerie Griego (NM Division of Vocational Rehabilitation/NMDVR)

**NMTAP Staff Present**: [Zoom]: Tracy Agiovlasitis (NMTAP Program Manager); Lisa McNiven (Deputy Director of Governor’s Commission on Disability/GCD); Maurice Alvarez (NMTAP AT Specialist)

**NMTAP Partners Present:** [Zoom]: Anthony Montoya & Jill Beets (Adelante Development Center/ADC); Stephanie Dawson, FundAbility Manager, **Absent:** none

**Guests:** none

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Brian S, Council Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:06 pm. Meeting protocol was reviewed. It was established by roll call that a quorum was present. See attendance noted above.

Brian S asked for approval of the agenda. Robin G moved to approve the agenda, Pilar M seconded, and all council members in attendance approved by roll call.

Brian S asked for approval of the draft minutes from October 21, 2024. Eric B moved to approve the minutes, Ricardo O seconded, and all council members in attendance approved by roll call.

**NMTAP PROGRAM UPDATE:**

Tracy A noted that the NMDVR funds are now available and will progress as noted in the last meeting, and AT Evaluations (fee based) are available for NMDVR participants as well as co-participants with the 121 Vocational Rehabilitation programs in our state. The maximum number of official evaluations possible is up to six due to funding not being available until seven months in the contract year. NMTAP will provide trainings in the process for using the free and fee-based services to NMDVR. These will be held in Albuquerque, Roswell, and Las Cruces for staff statewide to attend and will include an AT training appropriate for employment or education. The purchasing of new AT equipment is underway with the $60,000 provided by GCD and the $200,000 from NMDVR which will help to replace outdated/broken equipment we have relied on for the last three to five years. We plan to get Mobile Device Management (MDM) to secure and track tablets. A contract position for an AT Assistant will be hired for assistance with this project. A Vamos Intern volunteer will enjoy on-the-job training once a week this Spring to assist with logging the outdated equipment. We provided document accessibility training for the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD), a new agency connection for NMTAP, on (1/16/25). A couple of upcoming trainings include Windows 11 built in accessibility (1/30/25) and specific speech generating devices at the NMTAP office (2/4/25). The current outreach of services was presented at the Disability Rights Awareness Day (DRAD) pre-legislative session along with other GCD programs and we will be present for the DRAD event at the Roundhouse on 2/13/25. Our partnership with the NM AgrAbility Project (NMAP) has been very active with the opening of the Farm and Ranch Museum’s NM AgrAbility exhibit and planning for the National AgrAbility Training Workshop to be held there in March 2025. It was announced at the opening that Julie LaJeunesse has accepted the position to be the Program Manager of NMAP at NM State University. This is exciting for the AgrAbility program in New Mexico and while NMTAP will greatly miss her, she will continue to work with us in the overall project.

Lisa M reported that funds for the NMDVR contract are now in NMTAP budget for state FY25, which started 7/1/24. She is working on the contract for the AT Assistant and the team is hoping to order current AT as quickly as possible. NMTAP created a Fact Sheet for GCD to submit to the Legislative Finance Committee with a budget request to include $50,000 for current AT in FY26. She noted that the full budget for NMTAP on record is $522,100 in AT Act funds and an additional $349,211 from NMDVR available. She appreciates the extra work on the NMTAP staff to utilize these funds in the next 5 months. She will look at Congressional funding options next. It was noted that an additional staff member is most needed and while that is difficult, she will look for opportunities.

**FINANCIAL LOAN (FundAbility NM) UPDATE:**

Stephanie D reported that they have not opened any new financial loans but have still been able to help consumers with AT needs. One example is an individual called to obtain a loan for a modified vehicle. With research and discussion, the consumer was pleased with the help and chose to opt for a wheelchair trailer rack instead of a new van with a lift. This was safe, more financially practical, and reasonable for getting the AT needed. A call for a computer was routed to DiverseIT as a better choice. Regarding the existing loans, three have been paid off and one was refinanced. She reviewed the report provided including information on outreach, increase in JP Morgan fund base, the expense report, and the status on existing loans. Stephanie will verify if a co-signer could be a family member not living in New Mexico if needed.

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

Anthony M reported donations and requests continue at a level pace, with an increase in wheelchairs. They are looking for funds to purchase wheelchairs due to the high request. He clarified that the three items provided in the category of environmental adaptations were for wheelchair ramps and one large one was installed by the volunteer NM Ramp program.

The council members and partners discussed adult changing tables for public places with an initiative to provide these more widely. Jill B added that with the success of their Destination Accessibility project they realized that there are barriers without these available to individuals with disabilities. ADC has joined a national advocacy group, Changing Spaces, with an NM Chapter. This group supports HB 40 open in the current legislative session, and it is on their website for review.

Jill B reported that DiverseIT have been giving out about 20 computers a month and their laptop waiting list (4 months) was cleared. There are a lot of Chromebooks available that were very popular during the pandemic, however the shelf life is only 5 years. NMTAP and DiverseIT created a plan to best utilize these by providing them to people on the waiting list, adjusting their 5-year limit to obtain another free computer to meet the expiration date of the Chromebook. The cost of technology to refurbish computers may go up with potential tariffs at the national level. A new DiverseIT Manager, David Perez-Lourido, will be starting on January 31, 2025, who is a Veteran and speaks Spanish.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

none

**COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS:**

Robin G stated that there have been many accessibility improvements to the state Capitol. If there are challenges anyone notices, please let her know. Remember to request accommodations through the website portal. She details some of the improvements and some of the challenges already noted for future work. There are 14 additional accessible parking spots marked off for the session on Don Gaspar.

Brian S noted the Disability Rights Awareness Day will be held at the Capitol on Thursday February 13, 2025, People with disabilities, families, and advocates are encouraged to attend. There was a discussion on Rail Runner accessibility and within the Santa Fe city limits. Robin will send information about possibilities to the council.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

**ADJOURN:**

The next NMTAP Advisory Council meeting will be on **April 28, 2025 from 1pm – 3pm** as a hybrid meeting via Zoom and possibly ADC conference room in Albuquerque. The meeting was adjourned at 2:22pm.

***Approved 4.28.25***