

FSP FY2004 MCDHH

Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Annual Family Support Plan – FY 2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

II. OVERVIEW OF THE MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

A. Background

B. Definition of Family Support

C. Current Family Support Initiatives

1. Case Management and Social Services

2. Interpreter/CART Referral Services

3. Communications Access, Training, and Technology Services

4. Independent Living Programs

III. FAMILY EMPOWERMENT

A. MCDHH current initiatives to promote family input

1. Town Meetings

2. Annual Survey on Services to Families with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

3. www.state.ma.us/mcdhh: The Internet Portal of the Deaf Community

4. Advisory Councils

B. Providing a more family friendly atmosphere for input and influence

IV. FAMILY LEADERSHIP

A. MCDHH training program for family members

B. Giving families and individuals more opportunities to exercise their leadership skills

V. FAMILY RESOURCES AND FUNDING

A. Current resource allocation for family support

B. Providing flexible funding to families to customize their services

C. New initiatives for individualized service and support

VI. ACCESSING SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

- A. Educating families on how to access MCDHH services
- B. MCDHH services that promote access to information and referral
- C. New initiatives to increase access to services and referrals

VII. CULTURALLY COMPETENT OUTREACH AND SUPPORT

- A. How MCDHH provides culturally appropriate access and support to an ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse population
- B. New initiatives for providing outreach that respects cultural diversity of families and individuals

VIII. INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

- A. Current collaborative efforts with other EOHHS agencies
- B. Proposed new initiatives for interagency collaboration

IX. APPENDIX – MCDHH SURVEY ON SERVICES TO FAMILIES WITH DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN

TABLE OF EXHIBITS

EXHIBIT 1: INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAMS ASSISTING FAMILIES

EXHIBIT 2: FAMILY SUPPORT ACT INPUT

EXHIBIT 3: SUMMARY OF INTERAGENCY COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

As Required by Chapter 171 of the Acts of 2002, An Act Providing Support to Individuals with Disabilities and Their Families

I. INTRODUCTION

The Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (hereinafter “MCDHH” or “the Commission”) is pleased to submit the following report on its compliance with the Family Support Act (Chapter 171 of the Acts of 2002, An Act Providing Support to Individuals with Disabilities and Their Families). This report is being submitted to fulfill the requirements of the Act.

Through its 17-year history, the Commission has worked closely with families to meet the needs of deaf, late deafened, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing residents of the Commonwealth.

MCDHH currently has a number of initiatives underway for providing family support. These are detailed below. These initiatives involve working with other agencies, providing case management, training, and information. Much of the work of the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is community based;

therefore, the Commission also has a history of working with community groups, non-profits, and other agencies to support and empower families of the deaf community.

The Commission takes pride in its willingness to seek input from the public in a variety of forums, and for provided various forums and vehicles for families and the public to have input into the formulation of Commission policy.

This report discusses those efforts in greater detail.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

The Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has statutory responsibility in the Commonwealth for people of all ages who are deaf and hard of hearing. The Legislature established the Commission in 1986 (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 6 §191-197).

The objectives of the Commission are the following:

- To promulgate and coordinate public policy that affects the deaf community in Massachusetts
- To deliver technical assistance and resources to other state agencies to help them fulfill their missions to deaf and hard of hearing people
- To advocate on behalf of deaf and hard of hearing residents of the Commonwealth and their families
- To provide direct and special services to the deaf community as described below
- To provide public education on issues affecting the deaf community
- To ensure the accessibility and quality of existing services and recommend new services as needed

- To provide the Governor's office, through the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, with recommendations on how the Commonwealth can best serve the needs of deaf and hard of hearing residents and their families

The Commission carries out its responsibilities so that deaf and hard of hearing people have access to information, services, education, and opportunities which will be equal to those of people who hear, which will enable each deaf and hard of hearing person to live productively and independently, and which will enable him or her to assume full responsibilities as a citizen and resident of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

A. Background

The Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is a commission under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and serves as the principal agency representing the Commonwealth's 560,000 Deaf, late deafened, and hard of hearing people within state government.

The Commission is also the lead agency for the federal, cross-disability, cross-agency grant from the U.S. Department of Education through the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. This grant funds the Massachusetts Assistive Technology Partnership (MATP), to develop a coordinated, statewide system to enable access to assistive technology and assistive technology related services by people with disabilities in Massachusetts.

The MCDHH is mandated to improve communication accessibility and quality of existing services, to deliver certain specialized services, to promote or deliver necessary new services, and to assist other state agencies in delivery of services to deaf, late deafened, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing people.

The Commission is mandated to increase public awareness, determine the extent and availability of services, determine the need for further services, and make recommendations to the Governor.

B. Definition of Family Support

MCDHH defines "family support" as those services offered by the Commission within its statutory mandate and subject to legislative appropriation that provide assistance, education, training, and planning to the families of deaf and hard of hearing residents of the Commonwealth, as the term "families" is defined in Chapter 171 of the Acts of 2002.

C. Current Family Support Initiatives

The Commission currently provides a number of family support services. These include, without limitation:

Cross coordination with other agencies of referrals for deaf and hard of hearing people

Counseling and information

Assistive technology devices and service

Caregiver Assistance

Current family support services are provided through the Commission's existing departments as described in the following sections.

1. Case Management and Social Services

The Department for Case Management and Social Services provides referral services;

cross-agency case coordination; technical assistance to state and community agencies around cases and in policy and procedures development; assistance to deaf, late deafened and hard of hearing individuals with complex life situations; and Chapter 688 Transitional Case Management services in special situations; bilingual (American Sign Language/English) case management services; and training to hard of hearing individuals regarding factors related to hearing loss.

MCDHH provides a range of family support services through its Case Management Department, including:

Personal counseling (bilingual staff)

Cross-agency case coordination

Development of resources and natural

Crisis intervention (including assistance support systems on the protection phase of abuse cases)

Outreach/case finding

Specialized information and referrals

Individual consumer education regarding communication access and

Certification services (re telephone services available to deaf, late-deafened discount, use of interpreters in tests, and hard of hearing people and families etc.)

Client needs assessment by specialized,

Case management for 'gap' populations, bilingual staff such as visually disabled deaf/hard of hearing

Client plan development (cross-agency) hearing persons, less-than-severely

Individual case work (intensive, mentally ill deaf/hard of hearing complex cases) persons, uneducated deaf/hard of hearing

Ch. 688 transitional case management hearing persons, or immigrants

The Commission has also taken the following family support steps.

Children's Specialists

The MCDHH Case Management Department has established three specialized regional positions in Boston, Plymouth and Springfield. These provide unique support services to families of deaf and hard of hearing children.

Children's specialists in these areas help families identify needs and assist them in working with other agencies for the betterment of their children. For example, our Children's Specialists connect families with early intervention and language acquisition resources once their children have been identified as deaf or hard of hearing through the Department of Public Health's Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Program. The MCD Children's Specialists also consult with, or provide training to, other agencies about the special needs of children who are deaf or have hearing loss.

Elder Care

The Commission is continuing its Deaf Eldercare Training program, run in conjunction with the Executive Officer of Elder Affairs. This unique, model program trains caregivers on how to work with deaf and hard of hearing elderly people. It also provides respite for families of deaf elders who can use the program to provide quality care for their loved ones. As the program continues to develop and more caregivers are trained, it will become easier for families to find quality care for their deaf elders in the Commonwealth.

2. Interpreter/CART Referral Services

The Commission also administers the Interpreter and CART (Communication Access Real Time)' Referral services. These services are vital to deaf and hard of hearing families because they provide communication access for deaf and hard of hearing children and adults in a variety of public settings.

3. Communications Access, Training, and Technology Services

The Department of Communication Access, Training and Technology Services provides public education on all issues related to hearing loss. It also provides free communication accessibility training and technical assistance to state agencies as well as public and private entities and organizations seeking to ensure compliance with the relevant provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

CART employs a technology similar to television closed captioning. This provides for a screen display of a stenographic transcription in virtual real time with a speaker's words.

The CATTs Department produces the Commission's informational materials, manages the agency's website and provides general information related to deaf, late deafened and hard of hearing people, their needs and services via telephone, TTY, e-mail and the Commission's Web site, [www. state .ma. us/mcdhh](http://www.state.ma.us/mcdhh). 2

To assist families in obtaining a thorough and efficient education for their deaf children, MCDHH has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Massachusetts Department of Education. This three-track agreement involves consumers and parents in planning three activities key to the education of deaf children:

An assessment of sign language proficiency by both public and private elementary and secondary school teachers

An assessment of the proficiency of interpreters in public and private elementary and secondary schools

An update of educational guidelines related to deaf and hard of hearing children, and training stakeholders in use of these guidelines

Activities such as these are critical to the families of deaf children. They provide families with the assurance that their deaf children will receive the constitutionally mandated education to which all children the Commonwealth are entitled.

4. Independent Living Programs

Independent Living Programs and Services for Deaf and Severely Hard of Hearing People provide a broad range of services including skill training, self-advocacy training, peer mentoring, alternative support and recreational services, topical workshops for consumer education and advocacy. The following table depicts the reach of these programs.

Exhibit 1: Independent Living Programs Assisting Families

Community

Program

Hyannis

Cape Organization for the Rights of the Disabled

Worcester
Framingham
Center for Living and Working

Allston
Danvers
Middleboro
D.E.A.F. Inc.

2 It is also noted here that the Commission administers the Massachusetts Assistive Technology Program (MATP) described in greater depth above in Sec. II.A.

Community

Program

New Bedford

Lawrence

Northeast Independent Living Program

Springfield

Stavros Center for Independent Living

Deaf and hard of hearing people benefit from these programs and their ability to provide such activities as skills development, training and recreational activities. The availability of these programs and activities helps not only deaf people, but their families as well by providing valuable support services on a community level.

III. Family Empowerment

MCDHH employs a number of activities that provide an opportunity for families of deaf and hard of hearing people to have input into the Commission's policies and practices.

A. MCDHH current initiatives to promote family input

MCDHH currently has four initiatives that give families an opportunity to provide input into the Commission's decision-making process.

1. Town Meetings

First, the Commission hosts an annual Statewide Advisory Council Meeting and Town Hall meeting. This year's meeting was held in September in Worcester. The meeting is an opportunity for the general public to comment on the Commission's programs and to voice its opinion on how MCDHH can better serve the deaf community and their families.

The issues raised in the Town Meeting include:

The effectiveness of the Children's Specialist program

Budget and funding

The effectiveness of case management

Whether MCDHH is meeting the basic needs of deaf people and their families

How MCDHH can better meet the needs of its diverse constituency

The best ways to support families of the deaf community

2. Annual Survey on Services to Families with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

The second way that MCDHH reaches out to its families is through its annual Survey on Services to Families with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children. This survey asks respondents:

- How MCDHH can become more family friendly
- What new family supports should be developed by MCDHH
- Whether MCDHH should seek funds for more family support services
- Whether the Commission has provided training on how to quickly access its services
- Whether the Commission's services meet the family's ethnic, cultural and communications needs

- To suggest new approaches to accommodate diversity in the deaf community
- The best way to identify issues of importance to families in the deaf community
- Whether the Commission's performance is responsive to the needs of families

Respondents are also invited to provide any additional information or input on how the Commission can better support families.

A summary of this year's survey finds that respondents generally believe that the survey and the Town Meeting are adequate for providing a forum for family input into the Commission's work. Respondents, however, felt that the Commission could do a better job of helping them develop the necessary leadership skills within their families by providing more regional training and by involving the Children's Specialists more in training.

Respondents also felt that after-school or summer programs for children would benefit both deaf children and their families. Respondents also felt overwhelmingly that the Commission does a good job of meeting their individual ethnic, cultural or linguistic needs. Almost to a person they also believe that the Commission should obtain additional funding to provide more family services—from hiring more Children's Specialists to producing regular publications on deaf issues and the Commission's services.

A copy of this year's survey is appended to this report.

3. www.state.ma.us/mcdhh: The Internet Portal of the Deaf Community

Third, the Commission operates a Web site through the Commonwealth's Internet portal that is aimed at providing news and program information of interest to deaf and hard of hearing people and their families. The Web site, www.state.ma.us/mcdhh, is enormously popular within the deaf community because of the general lack of information elsewhere on deaf issues. This popularity is exemplified by the number of consumers and their families who use the site, which receives approximately 10,000 "hits" per month.

Through the MCDHH Web site, family members can:

- Receive a Guide for People Who Become Deaf or Hard of Hearing, one of the Commission's most requested publications
- Quickly download forms for requesting necessary services, thus reducing the time between request and fulfillment for information
- Receive training on communications access

- Get tips on how to select an American Sign Language (ASL) or signed English class
- Find information on assistive devices for the home
- Obtain a copy of the Commission's newsletter, which contains timely information on assistive technology, obtaining MCDHH services and legislation of interest to the deaf community

4. Advisory Councils

Finally, MCDHH is statutorily mandated to involve the community in its planning through its Statewide Advisory Council (SAC). The Council meets eight times each year and includes a broad cross-section of the community. This includes deaf, hard of hearing, and late deafened people.

It is important to note that the Commission is required by law to have at least one parent of a deaf child on the SAC to ensure that the families of deaf children are represented on this policy board.

In addition, there is a Regional Advisory Council (RAC) that meets in Springfield for the explicit purpose of making sure that MCDHH receives input from the deaf community and its families in the western part of the Commonwealth.

B. Providing a more family friendly atmosphere for input and influence

MCDHH has a long history, predating the Family Support Act, of working with families to make its services more relevant to the people it serves and its families. This input influences the Commission's work in a number of ways. It helps guide the Commission's policy and practices on an annual basis. It can influence how the Commission devotes its resources in a given year. And it can affect the budget that the Commission requests from the Legislature.

This year the Commission has solicited input on seven critical issues. These issues include:

- How the Commission can better empower families
- How the Commission can help families develop necessary leadership skills
- How the Commission can more effectively deliver its services
- New initiatives that the Commission can offer to better support families
- Ways that MCDHH can work to better meet the needs of the diverse population it serves

This effort produced a range of positive suggestions, which are summarized in the following table.

Exhibit 2: Family Support Act Input

1. Do you have comments on ways MCDHH could better empower families? Do you feel you have any input on the direction of agency policies, programs, or services? What steps would you like to see MCDHH take to enhance consumer input and make our services more family friendly?

The phone system is hard to navigate if you do not know where to direct your inquiry. The website can be a little tricky too. It can be hard to find information. Is there a way to add key words?

Contact the AMA about listing MCDHH as a resource for their members

MCDHH provide pamphlets to doctor offices for display in the lobby

Provide information to other organization newsletters

Email/electronic newsletter to families, including different events

2. Did you receive training or education from your children's specialist to help you become a more effective advocate? Do you have any additional ideas or recommendations to help MCDHH implement ways to improve their leadership skills within the family?

Exposure is the most important – getting the information

A program that families can go to help them understand their rights

Links to other advocacy groups, parents groups on the website

Advocate training: train parents, families, and children about their rights and how to advocate for themselves

Use MCDHH website as a resource to link to other parent groups

A volunteer group of people who work as advocates for families. This group can also do advocate training.

Advisory council members to meet with the families and/or caseworkers as a way of publicizing MCDHH services and providing – Involve people who can become advocates working with families.

Host events such the Walk for Deaf and Hard of Hearing for exposure in an environment that is "non-threatening" and social.

Language development should be supported, such as children with physical disabilities get wheelchairs.

Need for more information and advocacy toward legislators.

Work with TV shows such as "Chronicle" to produce a brief educational show about "A Day in the Life" of Deaf and Hard of Hearing people and their communication needs, equipment, etc. Dr. Tim Johnson could talk about hearing loss and how it affects you, issues, etc.

Send informational video tapes or reference papers and brochures to various newsletters and make them available for public viewing

3. Any suggestions regarding changes to:the way we provide services? How we fund those services?

More opportunities for more partnering with some of the other agencies to share'grants or share funding. Currently MCDHH has agreements; with the Department of Education and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

4. Have you received any training or support dealing with becoming more of an effective advocate? What services and resources do you think work well for helping families get information and referral? What new initiatives do you feel that MCDHH should do to support families? There could be more information available in local libraries, audiologist offices, primary care doctor offices, and hospitals.

Advertising on the MBTA

Evening community meetings with notices in the newspaper

Services provided in a timely manner

5. Your suggestions for the larger spring forum with other agencies

Regional meetings

Publicize-the meeting in advance using advocacy groups, advisory council, multi-cultural groups, etc.

6. How well does MCDHH work with people who come from different communities and cultures? Are we friendly and welcoming to multi cultural people? What new initiatives

or different approaches would you suggest MCDHH propose to meet the needs of ethnically or different groups?

Promotional tapes to run on the radios, family members may hear them

Billboards

Some ethnic groups do not seek services from MCDHH due to fear of discrimination. It would improve if MCDHH has a representative at the various ethnic and cultural events.

Host a cultural event at MCDHH incorporating a tour of MCDHH.

MCDHH sponsor multicultural events by advertising in program book, etc.

7. The Commission is collaborating with a number of other agencies under EOHHS. From your experience and your perspective, what other agencies should MCDHH collaborate?

MRC in relation to follow up on job accommodations and ways in which employers can better understand the needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. Explain grievance procedures if not satisfied with services.

IV. Family Leadership

MCDHH provides multiple opportunities for its deaf community families to receive leadership training.

A. MCDHH training program for family members

A key area of training offered by MCDHH is children's services. Children's Specialists work with families of deaf children to train them in effectively helping manage their children's case. The outcome of this effort is that these families can assume a position of leadership and advocacy in such areas as education and assistive technology, providing their children the tools to help them succeed.

Another area of training offered by the Commission is its Deaf Elder Caregiver Training Center, a collaborative with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. This landmark effort provides training in the specialized area of providing for the needs of deaf elders.

In addition, the Commission's web portal is the most widely source of information for deaf community families in the Commonwealth (Please refer to Sec. III.A.3 above). It directs users to a variety of information on training programs of interest to families.

B. Giving families and individuals more opportunities to exercise their leadership skills

MCDHH frequently provides families with an opportunity to exercise leadership. Its town meetings, SAC, RAC and annual surveys provide opportunities for families to become involved in the policy of the Commission.

In addition, the Commission often turns to the community for guidance and assistance of issues facing deaf people. For example, MCDHH is currently involved in a collaborative effort with a dozen community groups to combat the rising tide of physical assault and sexual abuse against deaf children and teenagers. The management of the Collaborative includes a number of parents of deaf children. These family members have been instrumental in defining the mission of the Collaborative, its objectives and its activities.

Through the leadership of these families, the Collaborative, in a short time, has put together two public activities, bringing families together with educators, law enforcement officials and deaf children and teens in addressing the problem. The activities of the Collaborative are a mix of education, training, counseling and advocacy, all of which involve the leadership of the families involved.

V. Family Resources and Funding

A. Current resource allocation for family support

The Case Management and Social Services Department is the branch of MCDHH most closely responsible for providing family-support resources. In addition, operating on limited resources, the Commission has established three specialized regional positions—in Boston, Plymouth and Springfield—to provide unique support to families and their deaf and hard of hearing children.

These Children's Specialists are a valuable family resource for information on hearing loss and referrals to other agencies. The specialists also consult with other service providers, like the Department of Health, and educate them about the very special needs of children who are deaf or who have suffered a hearing loss.

B. Providing flexible funding to families to customize their services

Perhaps the greatest funding flexibility that MCDHH offers to families is the ability to offer its services free of charge. The Commission does provide direct funding in the case of its Assistive Technology Program; however, this program is aimed at elders who are hard of hearing.

To the extent that staff is available, families working with MCDHH do have the ability to customize their service program.

C. New initiatives for individualized service and support

MCDHH has a long history of broadening the scope of its mission by taking on new initiatives that are important to the deaf community. However, the Commission is in its third consecutive year of service cutbacks due to budgetary constraints. These constraints have had a materially adverse effect on the Commission's ability to take on new initiatives.

The Commission will pursue new initiatives in FY 2004 to the extent that it can establish partnerships to help offset the loss of 15 staff positions over the past three years.

These partnerships will include other agencies as explained in Section VIII below, as well as with non-profit organizations and educational institutions.

In addition, the Commission will continue its practice of seeking out grant opportunities to fund new initiatives. This is something it has done in the past with its Deaf Elder Caregiver Training Center, and is currently doing with its Abuse Prevention Hec.lth Collaborative for Deaf Children initiative.

VI. Accessing Services and Supports

A. Educating families on how to access MCDHH services

MCDHH uses a variety of methods to educate families on how to access its services. First, the MCDHH web portal, described above in Sec. III.A.3, is an information portal about the Commission and its services. Through this portal, families can receive information and link to other sources of information.

Second, the Commission produces an online informational newsletter that provides timely information on the Commission's services. (Formerly published in hard copy quarterly and mailed to readers, the newsletter is now published electronically twice a year as a result of cost saving mandates.)

Third, MCDHH hosts town meetings or forums around the state at which Commission staff meet families, providing information on services and discussing problems.

Fourth, the Commission's Communications Access, Training and Technology Services Department provides public education on all issues related to hearing loss. It also runs a public outreach program whereby it will provide free communications accessibility training. The CATTS Department is responsible for producing the Commission's informational materials, providing general information related to deaf and hard of hearing people, and managing the Commission's web site.

In addition, when resources and budget permit, the Commission will utilize advertising an outreach to the public. The advertising is aimed at creating awareness of the Commission's services and providing a way for the public to access that information—by phone, Internet or response card. (Note 4: In 2000 MCDHH conducted a public transportation advertising campaign, placing ads in MBTA trains. These ads described

the Commission and its services and featured a mail-in tear-off to request further information. This campaign resulted in tremendous demand for information on the Commission's services, and brought thousands of people into MCDHH's service community. Budgetary reductions forced an end to this public service campaign.)

Finally, the Commission works closely with its sister disabilities agencies on cross-referrals for families who receive support from one agency, but could use the services of the other.

B. MCDHH services that promote access to information and referral

MCDHH promotes access to information in a variety of ways. They include:

- Case Management. The Commission's case managers will make referrals for clients in need of certain services. Case managers will also help their clients find the information that will be of most help to them and their families.
- The Fund for the Purchase of Interpreter Services and the Fund for the Purchase of CART Services. These funds pay for the services of interpreters and CART providers to enable communications access for deaf, hard of hearing and late deafened people at many types of events in which other agencies are not legally responsible to pay.
- Independent Living Program and Services for Deaf and Severely Hard of Hearing People. MCDHH works closely with organizations such as those listed in Exhibit 1 of this report to promote access to information important to deaf people and their families.

C. New initiatives to increase access to services and referrals

MCDHH regularly conducts needs assessments, establishes work groups, promotes development of needed special services, and develops and pursues action plans that enhance already existing specialized services for deaf, late deafened and hard of hearing individuals.

VII. Culturally Competent Outreach and Support

MCDHH has several ways in which it meets the needs of its multi-culturally community and provides appropriate support.

A. How MCDHH provides culturally appropriate access and support to an ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse population

First, the Commission routinely hires translators of different spoken languages along with ASL interpreters. These multi-lingual translators are used when people who do not speak English seek case management services.

Second, MCDHH hosts the Multi-Cultural Workgroup, multicultural gathering for the purpose of increasing the Commission’s knowledge of diverse cultures, and to find out how it can better serve its constituents within those cultures. This Workgroup includes representatives of the following groups:

- Asian Deaf Association of New England
- Boston Black Deaf Advocates
- Boston Latino Deaf Association

New initiatives for providing outreach that respects cultural diversity of families and individuals

• In addition to the steps outlined above in Section VII. A, MCDHH has taken the following new initiatives in the area of cultural diversity:

- Provided MCDHH staff development training, led by a trainer from the Multicultural Workgroup, that focuses on recognizing and supporting diversity
- Nominated members of the Asian Deaf Association of New England, Boston Black Deaf Advocates, and the Boston Latino Deaf Association for seats on the Statewide Advisory Council (See Section III.A.4 above)

Our recently hired Director of Case Management and Social Services holds an MSW degree from Gallaudet University, which opens the door for potential collaboration as an internship/practicum site with the Gallaudet University Dept of Social Work.

The Commission welcomes diversity in its staff and strives to be proactive in promoting diversity in its hiring practices, as budgetary constraints allow for new staff.

VIII. Interagency Collaboration

The Commission has a history of working closely with a variety of Massachusetts agencies. The following table summarizes these collaborative efforts. While the projects cited are not meant to be an exhaustive listing, they do provide guidance on how MCDHH works with other agencies on behalf of families to support our mission to the deaf community. These projects are described in more depth following the table and elsewhere in this Report.

Exhibit 3: Summary of Interagency Collaborative Efforts

Collaborative Project

Description

Citation within this Report

EOHHS Collaborations

Cross referrals

MCDHH uses a system of cross referrals for cases that involve other agencies, such as its sister disabilities agencies.

VIII.A

MATP

MCDHH is the administrative agencies for the Massachusetts Assistive Technology Program, funded under a federal grant.

ii.a

Universal Newborn Hearing Screening

MCDHH Children's Specialists work with DPH in screening newborns for hearing loss. The Specialists also work with other agencies to address the special needs of children who are deaf or have hearing loss.

II.A.1

Other Non-EOHHS Agencies

Deaf Elder Caregiver Training Center

MCDHH has partnered with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs to launch a first-in-the-nation center to train caregivers in the specialized work of providing care to deaf elders.

II.A.1

Education of Deaf Children

MCDHH has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Education to improve the quality of education for deaf children in Massachusetts schools

II.A.3

New Collaborative Initiatives

Abuse Prevention Health Collaborative for Deaf Teenagers

MCDHH, in collaboration with a dozen other groups, including schools, parents, justice agencies and non-profits, has launched a program to educate, counsel, and assist deaf children and teenagers with the problems of physical assault and sexual abuse.

IV.B

A. Current collaborative efforts with other EOHHS agencies

MCDHH is engaged in a number of collaborative efforts with other agencies within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. These efforts include cross-referrals with its sister disabilities agencies in the Office, such as the Commission for the Blind and the Rehabilitation Commission. This type of effective case management provides effective cross-agency case coordination assists families by reducing the time spent seeking services.

MCDHH is the administering agency for the Massachusetts Assistive Technology Partnership (MATP). This is a cross-disability federal grant that under the Commission's management helps ensure cross-disability assistance to clients by making all types of disability-related technology available.

In addition, MCDHH case managers work closely with the Department of Public Health on a case-by-case basis. Case managers will refer families of newborns to DPH for the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Program, and DPH will refer parents to MCDHH and its Children's Specialists.

B. Proposed new initiatives for interagency collaboration

MCDHH recently launched the Abuse Prevention Health Collaborative for Deaf Teenagers in conjunction with several other agencies, schools and non-profit, community-based organizations. Efforts such as these allow the Commission to further its mission to advocate on behalf of the deaf community by combining resources with other groups.

IX. Appendix—MCDHH Survey on Services to Families with Deaf or Hard of Hearing Children

MCDHH Survey on Services to Families -with Deaf or Hard of Hearing Children

Please take a few minutes to let us know how we could better serve you and your family.

Question 1: What would you like to see MCDHH do to increase family input and make services more family-friendly?

I think MCDHH Services are family – friendly as is

Annual surveys to collect family input

Town Hall meetings to collect family input

Question 2: Did you receive training from your Children’s Specialist to help you to become a stronger advocate and achieve the results you want?

Yes No

a) What new supports would you like to see MCDHH provide to help you develop or practice leadership skills?

I think MCDHH services are already geared toward helping family members develop their advocacy and leadership skills

Regional, recurrent advocacy/leadership group training sessions

More focus on advocacy/leadership training by MCDHH’s Children’s Specialists

Question 3: Should MCDHH seek funds for more/new family support services?

No, I think there is enough support now.

Yes, find funding for more Children’s Specialist positions

Yes, find funding to provide more intensive training to the Children’s Specialists on urgent issues so they can become better advocacy and trainers Yes, find funding for a regular flyer or publication to increase awareness of issues about families with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, and about MCDHH services.

Have you received services from MCDHH’s Assistive Technology program?

Yes No

b) What new activities would help families improve children’s’ individualized services and supports?

None, services and supports already in place.

MCDHH should encourage after-school programs for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

MCDHH should encourage summer programs for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Question 4: Did you receive education on how to access services quickly and effective manner from your MCDHH Case Manager?

Yes No

a) What services best help you get the information you need?

Direct telephone and e-mail access to my MCDHH Children's Specialist

Special page on MCDHH website with information and updates about concerns of families with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

MCDHH Case Management arranging meetings between schools and families

Question 5: Do you think MCDHH services are provided to you in a manner that meets your ethnical, cultural and communication needs?

Yes No

a) What new approaches would you suggest MCDHH use to meet the needs of ethnically, culturally or linguistically diverse families?

Information and educational materials printed in different languages

Town Meetings with foreign language interpreters to gather input from culturally and ethnically diverse families

Cultural sensitivity training for MCDHH Children's Specialists

Question 6: Which would be most helpful to you and your family?

Interagency, regional Town Hall meetings to identify "common issues" for families and to increase problem-solving through agencies working together "Team Advocacy" approach with different agency representatives working with families and schools so

that everyone is "on the same page " a) Which of the following best describes your experience with MCDHH?

A. My family's needs were addressed in a more timely manner

There was less paperwork and fewer phone calls to deal with

All caseworkers involved with my child knew what the others were doing