



**Virginia Supplemental Early Language and Literacy Resources
for Deafness/Hard of Hearing (VA SELLR-DHH) Project
Advisory Committee Meeting**

March 10, 2023

Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association Conference Center
Washington/Jefferson Rooms, 4200 Innslake Drive,
Glen Allen, Virginia 23060

Minutes of Meeting

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Emilie Mulholland, Advisory Committee Chairperson, at 10:08 a.m.

Roll Call of Members: The roll call of members was conducted, and the advisory committee members and guests introduced themselves.

Members Present: Valerie Abbott, Briana Bates, Robin Bliven, Dr. Lori Bobsin, Michele Bronnenberg, Wanda Council, Ashley M. Esteva, Janet Knust, Carrie Martin, Emilie Mulholland, Terri Nelligan, Eric Raff, Dr. Irene Schmalz, Jessica Sheffield, Hunta Williams, and Laura Yellin

Members Absent: None

Guests in Attendance: Dr. Zenia Burnett and Sarah Peters, Virginia Department of Education; Hilary Hodes, Virginia Project for Children and Young Adults with Deaf-Blindness; and Dr. Brenda Seal, Educational Consultant

Communication access services were provided by American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters: Elizabeth Leitch and Katherine Malady, Cued Language Transliterators: Maureen Bellamy and Carolyn Livingston, Certified Deaf Interpreters: Raylene Lotz and Randee Pascall-Speights, and Communication Access Realtime Translation Captioner: Juan Ortega.

Continuing Business

Review and Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes: Ms. Mulholland requested the advisory committee members to review the meeting minutes from all previous meetings, held on December 1, 2022; December 13, 2022; and February 3, 2023. The committee members were provided the opportunity to make comments and to suggest corrections prior to the voting members' final acceptance of the meeting minutes.

Mz. Esteva proceeded with a motion to accept the December 1, 2022, meeting minutes. Ms. Knust seconded the motion, and the meeting minutes were accepted, unanimously.

Mz. Esteva proceeded with a motion to accept the December 13, 2013, meeting minutes. Ms. Bronnenberg seconded the motion, and the meeting minutes were accepted, unanimously.

Mz. Esteva specified a change to her name in the February 3, 2023, meeting minutes, and proceeded with a motion to accept the minutes with the revision. Ms. Sheffield seconded the motion.

Mr. Williams inquired about his previous comments regarding one of the existing parent resource guides (*Virginia's Parent Resource Guide for Families of Children with Hearing Loss*). He referenced his previous suggestion for including a consultant in the review of the document in consideration of its continued use as a guide for parents. Ms. Nelligan inquired about the previous inclusion of Deaf consultants in the development of the current parent resource guides. Dr. Schmalz confirmed that approximately five Deaf adults had previously contributed to the development of the current resources, and she welcomed an increased level of diversity to be represented in future versions.

Ms. Bates inquired about the response to her previous comments pertaining to her concerns about the current parent resource guides. Ms. Council acknowledged that her comments were noted and summarized in the February 3, 2023, meeting minutes. Ms. Nelligan encouraged Ms. Bates to consider sharing photographs of diverse families and professionals with the committee members for the possible inclusion in future Virginia resources.

Mz. Esteva and Ms. Sheffield repeated the motion for acceptance of the February 3, 2023, meeting minutes, and the meeting minutes were accepted, unanimously.

Communication Etiquette Reminders: Mr. Raff provided recommendations for utilizing the communication access services appropriately throughout the meeting.

Review of Agenda: Ms. Council reviewed the agenda items and provided an overview of the lunchtime discussion topic. She confirmed that the final advisory committee meeting will be held on May 4, 2023. A planning work session will also be held on April 12, 2023, to allow Ms. Council, Ms. Nelligan, Ms. Mulholland, and Dr. Seal to plan and prepare for the May 4, 2023, meeting. Information will be posted publicly about the meeting; however, the advisory committee members are not required to attend. Ms. Council will provide additional information via email prior to the meeting.

Travel and Logistics: Ms. Peters provided an overview of the process for submitting the required travel-related reimbursement forms and information.

Review of Census Data (birth–three): Ms. Nelligan reported the following Part C Child Count data, which reflects the number of children (ages birth–three) who were deaf or hard of hearing in Virginia with active Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) who received early intervention services and had not transitioned to receive any Part B services: in 2020, there were 269 children; in 2021, there were 270 children; and in 2022, there were 245 children. Ms. Bliven further clarified that Part C under the

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) pertains to early intervention services and Part B pertains to school-age services which includes two-year-olds in Virginia. The services between Part C and Part B do not overlap. Ms. Abbott inquired about the percentage of children being served under Part B versus Part C. Ms. Council offered to possibly provide that information at a later date. Ms. Nelligan commented that some families decline the services offered through an IFSP; therefore, the total number does not reflect the number of children who were born with a hearing loss.

Early Language Milestones Considerations: Ms. Council reviewed information pertaining to the list of the 13 language developmental milestones resources that was reviewed at the February 3, 2023, meeting, in consideration of the combined top three choices that were selected by the committee members at the last meeting. The *IDEAL American Sign Language and English Developmental Milestones* and the *New Jersey Parent Resource Guide for Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing* were among the top choices for consideration. Additional recommendations received from committee members for several resources will be reviewed for further consideration. Ms. Bronnenberg and Ms. Bates each provided clarification regarding their selections for specific resources. Ms. Council will send the updated list of resources for the committee members to review prior to the May 4, 2023, meeting.

Ms. Council encouraged additional discussion and feedback regarding the types of information and resources that would be most beneficial to assist the committee members with making their final recommendations. Dr. Bobsin commented that the University of Virginia does not promote specific resources from the cochlear implant manufactures; however, the Integrated Scales of Development (Cochlear Americas) provides a well-organized language developmental milestones tool that can be translated into multiple languages.

Ms. Nelligan and Ms. Council emphasized the importance to consider all the communication modalities and languages for families to have available for their children. They also reminded the committee members that their final recommendations will not require the mandated use of a single language, communication modality, or tool but will allow the families and the IFSP/Individualized Education Program Teams to utilize the information and recommended resources when determining what is appropriate for each child.

Mr. Williams commented on the importance of considering the different language learning needs of children who are deaf and hard of hearing, including the unique communication needs for children who are deaf-blind, or deaf with low vision, who may benefit from using pro-tactile interpreting.

Ms. Council discussed the rubric for reviewing the list of language developmental milestones resources. The rubric was previously created by Dr. Seal and was edited to include specification of the languages and modes of communication used, and for ease of use by parents. Ms. Council added that the rubric could be further modified to include additional information regarding children who are deaf and hard of hearing and have other disabilities.

Mr. Williams commented about the review of the language assessment tools for professionals and his concerns regarding the validity of the ASL assessments utilized with children who are deaf and hard of

hearing and deaf-blind. Ms. Council clarified that a separate rubric was developed for use when reviewing the language assessment tools utilized by professionals and that Ms. Bliven would review it during her presentation. Further review of the language assessment tools would also occur at the May 4, 2023, meeting.

Mr. Williams suggested consideration for further discussion via email among the committee members beyond the advisory committee meetings. Ms. Abbott commented, and Ms. Council confirmed, that such conversations or discussions among multiple committee members via email would be considered as conducting public meetings, which under Virginia law would require compliance with specific regulations. Ms. Council recommended that the committee members continue to share information and ask questions during the scheduled advisory committee meetings.

Overview of Language Development Terminology: Dr. Seal presented an in-depth overview of research on how specific terminology, such as language delay, developmental language disorders, dual language learners, bimodal-bilingual language acquisition, language deprivation, and language developmental milestones, is generally utilized. Dr. Seal further discussed the significance of considering the cultural and socio-economic factors impacting children who are deaf and hard of hearing that may also affect the research and development of language assessment tools when standardization and norms are applied.

Dr. Seal responded to Mr. Williams's request for clarification regarding the source of some of the data referenced during her presentation as being national data that was reported from Gallaudet University.

Dr. Schmalz commented that, with consideration of factors such as poverty and other accompanying disabilities, the advisory committee must continue to move forward with its efforts to establish a baseline and identifying an instrument to support the language and communication development for children who are deaf and hard of hearing. Although a single tool would not work for every child, identifying an instrument that is easy to use instead of a standardized test could assist with establishing a baseline for teachers to know where to start.

Shared Language Experiences: Mr. Raff introduced a lunchtime discussion to the advisory committee to share language learning experiences about children and families who received services through early intervention, early childhood/preschool programs, and related services.

Overview of Standardized Norms: Dr. Seal presented data and research on utilizing standardized assessment tools and norms under the requirements of the IDEA for assessment and evaluation of students with disabilities, which included a review of several tools and resources that were under consideration by the advisory committee.

Overview of Recommended Language Assessment Tools: Ms. Bliven presented an overview of the following tools that are commonly utilized by professionals to evaluate and assess the language and auditory skills development of children who are deaf and hard of hearing: Cottage Acquisition Scales for Listening, Language and Speech (CASLLS); Visual Communication and Sign Language Checklist (VCSL);

Auditory Learning Guide (ALG); and American Sign Language Communicative Development Inventory (ASL-CDI 2.0). Ms. Bliven provided copies of a rubric that can also be completed online to assist the committee members with reviewing language assessment tools that are utilized by professionals. The committee members engaged in discussion regarding the tools. Ms. Council added there will be further discussion about language evaluation and assessment tools at the May 4, 2023, meeting.

Public Comment: Members of the public did not attend. Public and/or written comment were not received during this advisory committee meeting.

Next Steps: Ms. Council reiterated the final advisory committee meeting would be held on May 4, 2023, at the current meeting location. The committee members were encouraged to provide feedback and ask questions prior to the final meeting, if needed. Ms. Council clarified that Mr. Raff, Ms. Nelligan, Ms. Mulholland, and Ms. Council were planning hold a work session on April 12, 2023, from 1-4 p.m., to further prepare for the May 4, 2023, advisory committee meeting. Ms. Council noted the work session location has not been confirmed and will be a public meeting; however, the advisory committee members are not required to attend.

Ms. Council stated that several of the documents included in today's meeting materials will also be sent via email. She reminded committee members that, during the May 4, 2023, meeting, the advisory committee will have a final discussion about the language developmental milestone resources, the language assessment and evaluation tools for educators/professionals, and the resources for parents. Ms. Council noted the voting members will participate in making the final recommendations. She also mentioned that committee members may find it helpful to bring their notes and materials from the previous meetings to reference during the next discussion.

Ms. Abbott shared that in 2022 the Virginia General Assembly passed a resolution designating May 4-10 each year as Late Onset Hearing Loss Awareness Week. She encouraged the committee members to share information about the fact that hearing loss can occur at any stage and at any age.

Ms. Mulholland asked the committee members if there were other comments or questions, and none were received. She thanked the committee members and the communication access services providers for their attendance and participation in the meeting.

Ms. Yellin proceeded with a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Bronnenberg seconded the motion, and the committee members unanimously voted to adjourn. Ms. Mulholland adjourned the meeting at 2:58 p.m.