

Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Board

Commonwealth Keystone Building
400 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

September 9, 2022 Meeting Minutes Conducted via Teleconference

<p><u>Board Members Present</u> Kay Tyberg, Chair; President, HLAA-Blair County Chapter; member, National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Pennsylvania Society for the Advancement of Deaf (PSAD), and Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA). Public member.</p>	<p><u>Visitors/Guests:</u> Eric Jeschke, PUC (BTUS) Melissa Derr, PUC (BTUS) Laura Jarvie, PUC Office of Special Assistance Thomas Charles, PUC Office of Communication Denise McCracken, PUC Office of Communication Lori Shumberger, PUC Office of Communication Tiffany Tran, PUC Law Bureau</p>
<p>Amy Goldman, Secretary; President, US Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication. Public member.</p>	<p>Laura Grassia, Institute on Disabilities, Temple University, TDDP Manager</p>
<p>Sandi McNally, Assistant Director, TechOwl, Institute on Disabilities Temple University</p>	<p>Melissa Hawkins, Director, PA Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing</p>
<p>Christa Cervantes, Pennsylvania Account Manager, CapTel and TRS, Hamilton Relay</p>	<p>Amy Strawser, Outreach Coordinator, Hamilton Relay</p>
<p>Melissa Hawkins, Director, PA Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing</p>	<p>Joe Witmer, Office of Chairman Gladys Brown Dutrieuille</p>
<p><u>Board Members Not Present</u> Steve Samara, PA Telephone Association</p>	<p><u>Sign Language Interpreters:</u> Jessica Bentley-Sassaman Maria Melchiona (student)</p>
<p><u>Legal Advisor to the Board:</u> Alphonso Arnold, Jr., Public Utility Commission Office of Special Assistants, Staff Attorney and counsel to the TRS Advisory Board</p>	<p><u>CART/Real Time</u> Archive Reporting and Captioning</p>

Call to Order

Chair Kay Tyberg convened the meeting at approximately 9:35 AM.

Welcome/Introductions

Attendees and guests introduced themselves and were welcomed.

Chairperson's Report

Kay reviewed ground rules for the meeting and emphasized her priority to recruit new public members.

Secretary's Report/Approval of the Minutes

Minutes of the June 1, 2022 meeting were approved as corrected.

Old Business:

Changes by the PUC Order

Tiffany Tran from the PUC Law Bureau reminded attendees that the PUC has determined that no PUC employees will have voting privileges on the TRS Advisory Board, in order to maintain impartiality and prevent any appearance of Commission employees influencing the decisions of the Board. So currently, voting members are Kay, Melissa, Krista and Sandy. Lori Shumberger will be processing any invoices and providing administrative support.

Report of the Telecommunication Device Distribution Program (TDDP) including Wireless (WEI) by Laura Grassia

Laura distributed a detailed report and provided a summary of activity for the program year July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022. 91% of recipients of landline devices are 65 and older. A steady increase in number of applications for both the “traditional” and wireless programs was noted, with the number of applications for wireless exceeding those for landline devices. In addition to social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok) 98% of most outreach events are now in-person. Laura also provided information about telephone devices for laryngectomies available through TDDP.

Hamilton TRS Outreach Report by Amy Strawser

Amy provided data on outreach events, mentioning that like TDDP, these are now mostly in-person although virtual webinars are also available. The plan is to reach every region of PA. The awardee for the Hamilton college scholarship was announced; Hamilton is in process of selecting the volunteer awardee. Amy responded to questions about Speech-to-Speech Relay, which tends to be less understood or utilized.

Hamilton CTRS Report by Christa Cervantes

Hamilton Telephone Company d/b/a Hamilton Telecommunications is the contracted Captioned Telephone Relay Services (CTRS) provider throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. CTRS is similar to its counterpart traditional relay service with an added feature that allows consumers to receive captions on their phone as well as being able to hear what the caller is saying. The Condition of the CTRS was presented to the Board members with an opportunity for members to ask questions. Christa mentioned Hamilton hopes to be able to

announce the replacement for their CTRS Outreach Coordinator at the December TRS meeting. A general discussion regarding accessibility of podcasts and webinars ensued.

TRS Advisory Board Member Recruitment

Denise McCracken explained the TRS Board has been advised to make a recommendation to the Commissioners offices as to why they think there should be more members, the challenges of recruitment and what we are requesting from staff to achieve the goal. The TRS Board should consider how many members you think there should be. Amy Goldman and Kay addressed the issue of needing more person power and more importantly, more consumer representation from across the Commonwealth to increase the voice of Pennsylvanians with communication and other disabilities who can benefit from the program. Such a request could include suggestions to reach out to constituent relations personnel in state representatives' offices.

RTT Trial

Hamilton has determined it will not go forward with RTT phones. Fifty units were purchased through the TRS fund for the RTT trial in PA, and only a few pieces of equipment were used by trialists. Christa clarified the units can be used as a regular phone and people who have internet connections can use the RTT function if they choose to. A motion was made and seconded to recommend to the PUC the phones be transferred to TechOwl's reutilization program and made available to individuals who do not qualify for a phone through the TDDP. Due to time, there was no vote on the motion.

2022 Meeting Dates

Meetings will start at 9:30 AM if they are by videoconference and 10:00 AM if they are in person. The Advisory Board decided to continue with virtual meetings until there is official guidance regarding in-person meetings. The possibility of an interim meeting prior to the scheduled December 7 meeting was raised; discussion regarding having such a meeting will continue via email. The need to reserve the sign language interpreters and captioning for sufficient time to address the agenda was noted.

Meeting Adjourned

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy S. Goldman, Secretary