

Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay Board Meeting

Opening:

The quarterly meeting of the Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay was called to order at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, January 25, 2024, by Chair Al Sonnenstrahl, via Zoom video conferencing.

Present:

MDOD and TAM Staff:

David Bahar (Director), John Brennan, Donna Broadway-Callaman, Travis Dougherty, Kevin Steffy, Jane Hager, Brandie Callender

GABTR Board Members:

Al Sonnenstrahl (Chair), Darrin Smith (Vice Chair), Lori Berrong, Deirdre Cheek Lynch, Dave Drezner, Shannon Minnick, Michelle Morales, Ken Putkovich, Payal Sharmacharya, Alex Simmons

Interpreters:

Anne Leahy, Anna Rose, Chante Wilson

Captioner:

Natalie Ennis

Hamilton Staff:

Connor Fitzsimmons, Melissa McMahan, Marcus Smith, Lori Sporrer

Absent:

Steve Cooper, Glenn Lockhart

Approval of Agenda: Agenda for January 2024 GABTR meeting approved as distributed.

Approval of Minutes: Meeting minutes for GABTR meeting from October 25th 2024 approved as submitted.

Director's Report by David Bahar:

- Discussed staffing updates and the ongoing search for a financial administrator to replace Leslie.
- Updated the board on budget proceedings for FY 2025, including upcoming presentations in Annapolis.
- Announced upcoming office relocation plans for 2025.

Maryland Relay's Report by Travis Dougherty:

- Discussed the current financial status and projections for FY 2025, highlighting the expected reductions in relay spending while maintaining support for existing programs.
- Overview of recent developments and future plans for RCC and IP CTS integration.
- Elected as Chair of the National Association of State Relay Administrators, planning to influence future federal policies on relay services.

Maryland Accessibility Technology's Report by Kevin Steffy: (starts at minute 23)

- Applications and Equipment Distribution:
 - From October to December, MAT received 120 new applications and distributed a total of 292 pieces of equipment.
 - Compared to the previous quarter (July to September), a slight increase in applications was noted due to active summer season outreach.
- Fiscal Year Summary:
 - FY24 (July to December) showed significant activity with an expectation to match or double the equipment distribution numbers of FY23.
- Training Events:
 - Hosted a successful Talk, Text, and Train (TTT) event at the National Federation of the Blind with 45 attendees, 5 speakers, and training on various devices like Hable One, BlindShell 2, Pixel, Mini Vision 2, SmartVision 3, Memory Cell Phones, and the RealSAM Pocket.
 - Distributed training kits to trainers, containing the devices for hands-on experience in community interactions.
- MAT launched an online application system with a QR code for direct access at events, aimed at streamlining the process and reducing paperwork.
- Communication Facilitator Program Update:
 - Provided 121 episodes of service to various community members and 13 deafblind individuals in the state.
- In the process of acquiring a new Customer Relations Management system to enhance the program's administration, pending approval by the Attorney General and Department of Disabilities.

Outreach's Report by Donna Broadway:

- On track to reach all 24 counties with outreach efforts.
- In Washington County, library outreach includes four scheduled events with Hagerstown Library, one of the main libraries in the county.
- Attendance planned at the annual National Federation of the Blind conference rescheduled to February.
- Participation in B'More Healthy Expo and networking events including with Busboys and Poets.

- Awareness fairs at the Community College of Baltimore County and events with the Maryland Deaf Culture Digital Library.
- Outreach at senior centers and the MD-AER conference.
- Working closely with Yesheva Kelly and the team at MDOD to launch a new website, now under the Department of Commerce.
- Continued efforts in advertising, conducting webinars, sending out mailings, organizing virtual and hybrid events, and maintaining a presence at networking events and field visits.
- Conducted 56 events from October to January and secured numerous sponsorships and advertisements for various organizations and events.

GABTR Chairman's Report:

- Gave positive note about the progress with SCC - Senior Call Check

Public Input:

- No comments from public on live feed

Old Business:

- Bylaws: Still waiting for the go ahead from Attorney General

New Business:

- Discussions on potential updates to relay services and the integration of new technologies to enhance accessibility for Maryland residents.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:02 a.m. by Chair Al Sonnenstrahl.

Minutes submitted by:

Minutes Draft approved by: