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

*Robin Garrison – Chair*

*Ricardo Ortega – Vice Chair*

**NEW MEXICO TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING – MINUTES**

Monday, July 17, 2023

3916 Juan Tabo NE, Albuquerque, NM, and Zoom Platform

**Members Present:** Robin Garrison (Disability Rights New Mexico/DRNM); Brian Schobel (Consumer of AT); TJ Chester (Independent Living Resource Center/ILRC); Andrea Sterling (Consumer of AT); Bill Newroe (Consumer of AT); Eric Gonzales (Commission for the Blind); Dennis Campos (Department of Workforce Solutions/DWS); Julie Bisbee (Guardian Consumer of AT) **Absent:** Pilar Murray (Family of Consumer of AT) excused; Valerie Griego (NM Division of Vocational Rehabilitation/NMDVR); Ricardo Ortega (Consumer of AT) excused.

**NMTAP Staff Present**: Tracy Agiovlasitis (NMTAP Program Manager); Lisa McNiven (Deputy Director of Governor’s Commission on Disability/GCD); Stan Ross (Director of Governor’s Commission on Disability/GCD); Julie LaJeunesse (NMTAP AT Specialist)

**NMTAP Partners Present:** Anthony Montoya and Jill Beets (Adelante Development Center/ADC);

**Guests:** none

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Robin G, Council Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:10 pm. Meeting protocol was at the top of the agenda for council review. It was established by roll call that a quorum was present. It was a hybrid meeting with council members on Zoom and in person. Some of the meeting guidelines were reviewed.

Robin G asked for approval of the agenda. Bill N moved to approve the agenda, Julie B seconded, and all council members approved by roll call vote.

Robin G asked for approval of the draft minutes from April 17, 2023. Andrea S moved to approve the minutes, Brian S seconded, and all council members approved by roll call vote.

**NMTAP PROGRAM UPDATE:**

Tracy A reported the State Fiscal Year 23 (FY23) report is being compiled with noted increased NMTAP services in all areas and on par to meet or surpass the Key Performance Measures that are tied to the program budget. Tracy A had a grant services review with federal staff last week, it was noted that comparing Federal Fiscal Year 21 (FFY21) to FFY22, there was a small increase in device loans during that period. They were pleased to see a 20% increase in Device Demonstrations, and a 29% increase in ReUse. Tracy A applauded Adelante’s Back In Use program for that increase.

Tracy A reminded everyone that Assistive Technology Conference (ATC23) is at the Berna Facio facility with Albuquerque Public Schools on September 11 and 12, 2023. NASW Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are approved, and the others were submitted waiting approval. Registration is open and all plans are going smoothly. It is “lunch on your own” and we will offer morning and afternoon snacks. Per council suggestion, we will look first at companies who employ persons with disabilities that also align with our fiscal agent for the event (Northeastern Regional Educational Cooperative). She asked all council members to please volunteer to introduce speakers and/or attend ATC23. They were asked to contact Tracy A with their availability.

NMTAP anticipates doing Hands On Workshops of Assistive Technology (HOW-ATs) in person going into this next year in all four corners of the state. Although hands on is preferred, if that is not possible, we will continue to do them virtually. Discussions for one in November in Las Vegas with the Satellite office at NEREC are in progress.

A few interesting events in May 2023 were provided by the staff. Julie L and Maurice A did a presentation to the Lovelace Hospital Therapy Inservice for twelve therapists that resulted in several device loans and some demonstrations. Jesse A did a training with devices demonstrated to the National Center for State Court’s Eighth Annual Conference of the Council of Language Access Coordinators in which 65 individuals attended. An example of problems can occur since cell phones are not permitted in court, but a hearing aid must be paired with a cell phone to function. DRNM has assisted in allowing a support person that helps an individual with cognitive processing issues to be in the courtroom as well. There are also hearing and vision tools that may need to be provided as accommodations. A general discussion noted that communication, vision, hearing, and web accessibility may be an issue as it relates to courts. NMTAP and collaborating agencies will continue to take all opportunities to educate public systems and individuals with disabilities regarding accessibility. All members are encouraged to act as liaison to any individual or group that can use and are open to presentations. New brochures are needed for NMTAP, and they will be provided to all council members when they are done.

The last program note was that the NMTAP role in the AgrAbility project is to do four trainings of agricultural AT and offer information or suggestion of potential AT to food growers when asked. The Farm and Ranch Museum in Las Cruces is interested in having a temporary exhibit of the NM AgrAbility Project and discussions have begun for that initiative.

Lisa M, GCD Deputy Director, noted that fiscal year has started with about a half million dollars in the budget which the bulk of it is for personnel. The struggle is for new AT to provide services and she has submitted a request for additional funding through Representative Heinrich for congressional funds. Information of any success will not be until December at the earliest. The Digital Divide Coordinator contract position was posted on June 23, 2023, and will close on July 23, 2023. Everyone is encouraged to contact us about this position required by the federal funding NMTAP has received. There have been no inquiries to date. Dennis C did forward the position to his Workforce Connection’s entire Southwest area of managers and consultants.

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

Anthony M, Back in Use, reviewed that the numbers continue to be lower than expected due to a reduction in inventory. They recently provided a wheelchair seat to a young bodybuilder so he could travel to a competition in Dallas which allowed him to sit up and win the competition. There was a discussion about current sourcing equipment which includes a wide variety of advertising for donations, and a partnership with Presbyterian, news stories, and personal contacts. Challenges include that the drop off is on the busy street of the Give ABQ location and large donations may exceed the space available. Suggestions from council members were offered that may or may not be feasible. As soon as donations arrive, they are usually immediately given to consumers. It was noted that motorized wheelchairs require proof of disability and authorization to use one. This practice is to prevent the use of motorized wheelchairs against advice of their medical doctor and so they cannot be obtained to simply be sold online.

Jill B, DiverseIT, noted that they gave out fifty-one computers this quarter. One consumer that received a computer with the basic training provided requested further training. After DiverseIT provided some in Microsoft Office he was inspired to get a job in information technology and plans to return to a Central New Mexico bootcamp to get ready for that. They only have seven people on the waiting list for laptops, which was reduced from a large corporate donation because of a social media request. She thanked NMTAP for tagging their Facebook page when requesting equipment. Please note that Adelante is doing a project with AT&T for 150 laptops to be given only to persons under age 17 as a back-to-school initiative, despite their request to include individuals with disabilities in that project.

**FINANCIAL LOANS (Access Loan) UPDATE:**

Stan R reported that the two loans at SJCI were combined as a first step with a plan to move on from SJCI. Adelante gave a terrific proposal and the complicated process to transfer the financial loan program is progressing. He is looking forward to not just maintaining but increasing the program. Stan R also gave an update on the staff added to GCD for their programs, including the Residential Accessible Modification Program that will be active again. Discussion regarding the SJCI audits from the last five years reviewed noted that the audits were done by an outside auditor approved by the state indicating poor bookkeeping practices. Stan R feels confident in the new contract with Adelante. There will be a continued assessment of the finances with the transition. Jill B then shared that Adelante is excited to increase awareness throughout the state and expand loans beyond vehicle modifications. They will create a new website and materials in cooperation with NMTAP. They have hired Stephanie Dawson to run the financial loan program who has experience with disabilities and finances. Jill B assured there will be meticulous bookkeeping with clear detailed reports provided to NMTAP.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

None.

**COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS:**

Robin G noted that DRNM is holding several public forums to share their programs and hear concerns from the Farmington, Las Cruces, and Silver City communities. There is also a Willing to Work project developed to gather support for raising the income limit to qualify for Medicaid health insurance under the Working Disabled Insurance program available to individuals with disabilities. TJ Chester suggested that it is best for individuals to activate the Ticket to Work under Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and then apply for Medicaid categories 74 or 43. If an individual does not receive SSDI they are required to be processed through the Incapacitated Review Unit with the state.

Bill N is interested in the possibility of communication devices and artificial intelligence being helpful for seniors with dementia. There is not much or any research regarding this being done. Julie B, a Speech Language Pathologist, noted that a challenge would be that these devices do require insurance funding and that dementia is a loss of skills that may not allow the use of AT.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

None.

**ADJOURN:**

The next NMTAP Advisory Council meeting will be on October 16, 2023, from 1pm – 3pm. It will be a hybrid (in-person and zoom) meeting, location pending at the NMTAP office. Robin G thanked everyone, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:05 pm.

***Approved 10.16.23***