

**Altoona Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting**

Held virtually Thursday, September 16, 2021 @ 10:30

See attached list for presenter and attendees.

Welcome and Introductions

Craig Schield, ADA Altoona BVRS opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

UPDATES BBVS Andy Wagner, ADA:

One BBVS employee was promoted to a specialist in Central Office, so this opens a position for an Orientation and Mobility Instructor in Altoona. In the meantime, BBVS is looking at contractors to continue servicing customers. If you know anyone interested, please contact our office to a schedule meeting.

October 15th is White Cane Day. Our office is in the process of coming up with an event for that day. We hope to go to the Farmers Market in downtown Altoona and set up an event.

UPDATES BVRS Craig Schield, ADA:

- We have several vacancies as follows: 2 BSRs, 1 ERC, several VRCs, and 1 VRS position(s). Central Office mentioned yesterday that HR is starting to work on the hiring process.
- We have returned to the office as of July 19th; however, the building is still not open to the public and we are considered in Phase I at this point.
- We can go into the community and meet with the consumer. We are not allowed to meet anyone in our building as of this date. We are hoping to be able to open to the public soon.
- We are approaching September 30th which is the end of fiscal year. We have a healthy budget, and still in need of spending. Hopefully, this carries over into next fiscal year, more information coming.
- The State Board meeting is today at this same time, it is a more high-level discussion that is held quarterly. If you would like to join the call ask Andy or I, and we can give you the information to join the call.
- The new term Pre-employment Transition Services is the same as the previous term PETS.
- This summer we tried to establish several community projects; but it seems they will not get off the ground until next summer; Fall projects are being started.

Jen Riggle: Will there be another meeting before the summer project for next year?

Craig Schield: Yes, but the staff person to ask is Melissa Martin our Transition Coordinator. I will be happy to share your question with her.

CAC Member Updates:

Jen Riggle introduces herself as she will be taking Charlie Lansberry's position as Skills Manager for the Western Region.

Renee Imgrund, Blair CareerLink, stated that their Agency is back in their office at the Altoona Public Library.

Dr. Marla Moon stated that as of July 1st she is no longer with Eye Associates, she joined the Heinmer Eye Group, her email address is drmooneyes82@gmail.com.

Craig Schield: Presentation How to communicate with People with Hearing Loss:

Communicating with People with Hearing Loss

Tips for Effective Face-to-Face Communication

Ask what the person with hearing loss needs

- Ask what you can do to help improve the communication process.
- Ask what he or she can hear and understand. Not everyone with a hearing aid or cochlear implant understand speech.
- Ask if an assistive listening device would be helpful
 - BVRS has a device where you type, and it is read live. Make sure if you have this equipment it is ready and operational.
- Many people use video relay. For example, I am signing, and interpreter is speaking to you.

Communicate clearly

- Speak clearly at a normal pace and avoid exaggerated lip movements or shouting.
- Introduce one idea or fact a time.
- Take turns speaking in a group situation. Raise your hand before talking. Only 30% of what you say is readable on the lips.
- Rephrase your message if the person does not understand you.

Use visuals

- Choose a well-lit and quiet environment with few sight and sound distractions.
- Make sure your face and mouth are clearly visible. Do not eat, smoke, chew gum or cover your mouth while speaking.
- Avoid standing in front of bright lights or windows.
- Get the person's attention first. Call him/her by name, tap his/her shoulder, flash the lights, wave your hand, or use other visual signals.
- Maintain eye contact. If you must turn away, wait until you reestablish eye contact before continuing the conversation.
- Use facial expressions and gestures to help clarify your message.
- Point to appropriate objects or use visual aids.

Tips for Effective Written Communication

Writing back and forth can be useful for conveying short, simple day-to-day information.

Before deciding to write back and forth

- Find out how well the person reads English.
- Find out if you are required to provide a reasonable accommodation.

Communicate clearly

- Let the person guide how much detail he/she needs or wants.
- Focus on the main point first; introduce one idea or fact at a time.
- Choose words often used by most people.
- Avoid long, complex sentences.
- Use simple illustrations and label them clearly.
- Use natural facial expressions and gestures.
- Consider typing on a laptop, tablet, or smartphone instead of writing on paper.
- Facial expressions are extremely important. It is also good to point sometimes and visual representations. Writing back and forth is also a good way to communicate.
- Not all deaf people are skilled with reading English it is a second or third language, you should ask if they prefer that method.
- Important to introduce one item at a time, then move on to next avoid using long complicated words or sentences.

Rephrase when needed

Craig demonstrated situations where time is limited, or other barriers are present might call for a more direct approach. In these cases, eliminate unnecessary words for efficiency.

- “Eat – when”? for “when did you last eat?”
- “Work here – how long?” for “How long have you worked here?”
- “You sick” for “Are you feeling ill this morning?”
- “Car color?” for “What color was the car?”
- Remember, the goal is to communicate!
- For example: you want to ask when they want to eat
- In English, when did you last eat?
- In Sign language, eat when
- Simpler the phrase the better
- Have you worked before?
- Worked before
- How have you been feeling this a.m.
- Sick, sick recently. Bring down to a lower reading level.

Video Interpreting

Visual communication is valued by many people who rely on sign language to communicate. Video interpreting uses video technology and broadband internet access for communication in sign language. Two types of video interpreting services are available: video relay service and video remote interpreting.

Video Relay Service (VRS)

VRS is used for telephone calls between someone who uses a videophone and someone who uses a voice telephone.

- VRS is free for all callers, services are paid by FCC.
- Only use to call someone in a different location
 - Parties cannot be in the same room
 - For parties in the same room, use Video remote interpreting.
- Interpreter is in a separate location than the other parties.
- The VRS interpreter only see the person using ASL.

How it works

1. The caller dials the number directly. A person who is not using a videophone is automatically connected through an interpreter.
2. The sign language user signs to the interpreter, who interprets for the non-signer.
3. The non-signer speaks, and the interpreter interprets.
4. The communication uses natural conversation.
 - a. Due to the interpreting process there will be slight delays in conversation.
 - b. Don't be concerned if there are moments of silence during a call.

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)

Video remote interpreting, or VRI, use video technology to provide an interpreter to parties meeting face-to-face or through video conference. The interpreter is not physically present but can see and hear the parties through the web camera and microphone. VRI may be useful for situations requiring an interpreter but an interpreter is not able to be on site.

- There is a fee for service, much like a freelance interpreter or agency.

Assistive Technology for Employers

The ADA and other laws require businesses and nonprofit organizations to provide access to employees who are Deaf, Deafblind or hard of hearing. Assistive technology is one tool to help improve communication and productivity in the workplace.

If you need an assistive device, contact me and I will see how we can obtain the device.

Examples of Assistive Technology

UbiDuo

If you have been writing back and forth to communicate, you might appreciate the UbiDuo. It is a stand-alone device that allows two individuals to type a conversation. It is faster than texting or instant messaging because the text is visible to both parties as each character is typed. The UbiDuo can be a great tool for shorter or more informal conversations.

Amplified telephones

Amplified telephones have adjustable volume control to make the phone conversation louder and clearer. This can help your employee understand telephone conversations more easily.

Captioned telephones

Captioned telephones work through relay services. A communication assistant (CA) sends captions of what is said to a telephone with a caption display. Captioned telephones also have adjustable volume control.

Assistive listening devices (ALD)

Assistive listening devices are portable devices that transmit sounds via a microphone and transmitter to headphones, an earphone, or a neck loop. ALD can help your employee participate in meetings and one-on-one conversations.

Craig demonstrated some basic sign language skills that are helpful to know. If hearing aids cannot be afforded by the customer, inform BVRS so services can be provided.

Next meeting December 16th at 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

John will be presenting and giving a demonstration on some technology that could fit into your workplace.

Meeting ended at 11:30

Attendance Roster

Presenter: Craig Schield, ADA, BVRS

Attendees:

BBVS:

Anne Stollo
Andrew Wagner
Amanda Turner
Jacki Thornton
Lyn Freida
Josie Dively
Jeanne Danison
Cindy Ruddeck
Lori Mutchler
Kiley Foley
Lindsey Palumbo
Amy Somers
Luis Fontanez
Martha Futhey
Grace Fontanez
Sarah Krug
Shelley Haupt
Sherri Hack
Steve Kechisen
Lori Mulchler
Nicole Lodge

BVRS:

Craig Schield
Alex, Craig's Interpreter (330-704-8490)
Colleen Woodring
Melissa Kinser
Beth Wineland

CAC Attendees:

Dick Jeffrey
Jen Riggle and Charles Lansberry – Skills
Sherry Gearhart - Skills
Janie Mercaldo – PA CL of Sunbury/Bloomsburg
Dr. Marla Moon
Renee Imgrund – Blair CareerLink