**MassMATCH Advisory Council Meeting**

**Wednesday, December 18, 2013**

**Minutes**

Members in Attendance: Owen Doonan, Randi Sargent, Lisa Chiango (by phone), Les Cory, Tory Dixon, Susan Hargrave, Kevin Hatch, Susan LaSante, Tom Mercier, Lee Nettles, Alexander Pooler, Linda Sakin,

Guest Names: Nick Whitaker, Chad Shrum

Program Staff in Attendance: Kobena Bonney, Ann Shor, Karen Langley, Kim Shaw

Representatives from Provider Agencies: Cindy Aiken, Leo Tonevski, Cathy Bly

Introduction and Communication Protocol: Les Cory was chair for today’s meeting. He began by requesting that when speaking that the microphone is used and also to be sure to start by stating your name. Everyone then introduced themselves via microphone.

Discussion and Approval of Minutes: Minutes were approved without discussion.

Program Updates: Kobena Bonney

Kobena announced that we did get an rsvp from almost everyone for this meeting which is certainly worth mention.

Regarding the Abilities Expo- it was very well attended with a lot to see and learn about assistive technology. This was actually the most well-attended of all shows this year which shows that folks in this area are interested. If you missed it, Kobena strongly suggests that you try to make it to the next one which will be Sept 5-7, 2014 so mark your calendars. For those who were able to make it-Thank you! A special thanks to Karen Langley and Ann Shor for making all of this happen.

Karen Langley agreed that it was very good turnout. She did state that an area of improvement would be a broader range of assistive technology to cover more disability needs.

Lee Nettles said that the exhibits were great but interpreter access could’ve been better. Because there didn’t seem to be enough interpreters he was unable to have one accompany him throughout. As he needed assistance, he had to keep returning to the booth (which was out of the way) to try to get an interpreter which did become a barrier to fluid communication. When he was able to get an interpreter, the information was helpful and exhibitors were very good. Suggestion for next event would be more interpreters and better access to them.

Lisa Chiango agreed with Lee and she added that there were accessibility difficulties. Because it was very long walk to the Exhibit and the walk included having to pass through another exhibit, she said that Guides would be a good idea for future events

Alexander Pooler agreed that due to the layout, accessibility of certain booths was difficult. His booth in particular was in an isolated section so accessibility was an issue and maneuverability was also difficult.

There was also mention that there was not enough handicap parking.

Kobena thanked everyone for the feedback. He said these are all very helpful suggestions. Kobena said that before the event, he had to assist the event holders to make the website more accessible, as it was not compatible with JAWS. Their responsiveness was impressive.

Kobena moved on to report that the annual federal reporting s for Massmatch are currently being finalized so there should be specifics available for the next meeting in March.

Technical Assistance Update Kobena Bonney

Kobena discussed the state’s progress in making technical assistance more accessible. The Mass Dept. Revenue has implemented the Mass Tax II program and improvements and changes are ongoing. A group called Access Advisory Committee has been established for planning purposes and to be sure that issues of accessibility are being met. The RMV has also set up such a committee and Kobena is a member of this group.

Kobena is working with UMass, Medicaid and MRC to ensure that forms and websites for Money Follows the Person are accessible.

Kobena is seeking feedback for AT School Share because it is still a work in progress. We have a long list of enhancements but would like more input .You are all encouraged to join our working group to identify features to add for next phase. Let Kobena know if you are interested and he promises only 1 or 2 meetings will be necessary.

DMERe-use Program Update-Randi Sargent

The program’s “soft” launch was December 20, 2013 and a formal launch will be in January. Basically this is a Re-Use program, grant funded by Shapiro Foundation, MRC and Spaulding Rehabilitation. The program involved refurbishment, donation and delivery is available (for small fee).

The web address is [www.dmerequipment.org](http://www.dmerequipment.org) and a link is available through the Massmatch website. Equipment consists of mainly wheelchairs(manual and power), lifts, ramps, chairs, and special seating, shower adapted equipment and adapted strollers.

This is currently a pilot program but our goal is to expand statewide after June 14, 2014. There is an ongoing need for donations.

A question was posed: “What is the difference between this Reuse Program and GetAtStuff Program?”

Re-Use is federal and refurbishment is part of the program. Assistance is given to make the connection between consumer and equipment and delivery is an option. GetATStuff is a list of items for sale and free, set up similar to craigslist in which people can list items to sell or give away and/or use the list as a resource for items they may need to buy or obtain for free. Another difference between the 2 is that the items obtained through the Re-Use Program are functional. With GetATStuff, there is no guarantee that the item will be in working order. These 2 programs do work together. Randi is currently the customer support team for DME and if there are requests that cannot be filled through DME she often refers people to or searches for them on GetATStuff.

Karen Langley said that a major goal of the program is to get funding on an ongoing basis. A small advisory committee has been started and is working on:

1. 1-Page fact sheet about the program
2. Collecting and write-up of Success Stories
3. Gathering funding support from outside organizations
4. Gathering input/feedback for 2 documents: the Amendment to Budget and Enactment piece in legislation

Next Steps Following Visit by Marty Mittnacht- Ann Shor

It was good that she came to hear our suggestions to help improve DESE practices around assistive technology.

We have set-up a draft input to DESE which involves:

1. Advisory Document
2. IEP format needs revisions; input is needed to revise and incorporate AT
3. Input is needed to publicize materials; need help getting the word out.

One idea is to focus more on local schools, since they do their own purchasing at specific times of the year, targeting them at the right time of year is key.

A DESE Advisory group has been started to work on these items. Volunteers for the group so far are: Alexander Pooler, Owen Doonan, Karen Janowski, Jeannette Beale, Susan Hargrave and Tory Dixon(maybe).

MCB-Alexander Pooler

In order to try to better educate on AT equipment, MCB recently had an event in which AT vendors came together to explain their devices and answer any question about what they do. This was very helpful to MCB staff. It is a free event and a great opportunity for all: Vendors can promote their products while giving the staff and consumers/families the knowledge they need to make informed decisions. We are looking to do this again next fall so if there is anything in particular that you would like to see at this event, please contact Alexander.

Cindy Aiken expressed interest in hosting an event in Worcester. She said they are often contacted by vendors but because they don’t have the needed staff to host such an event they haven’t done this before but to do it in collaboration with another agency would be great.

Owen discussed the benefits of getting AT products on video to capture exactly what they look like and what they do. Ann suggested putting such videos on Massmatch Youtube channel.

SKYPE for future meetings Alexander Pooler

In order to be more inclusive to members of the Advisory Committee we are looking into Skype as an avenue to explore for future meetings. This may bring in greater participation for members and consumers.

As it stands it appears that a premium subscription to Skype is needed, which would allow up to 10 others to chime in at same time. Compared to other options such as Google Hang-out, Skype is best because of the customer support.

The one issue or snag with this plan is the conflict with the state agency rules around Skype use.

Karen Langley has an upcoming meeting with the 3 Commissioners at 600 Washington Street and she will bring this matter up in hopes that they may be able to work on this issue collectively.

Update-Dept Developmental Services Tom Mercier

Tom introduces his 2 newest designers: Nick Whitaker and Chad Shrum. Welcome!

MassMatch Website Update Review/Update Discussion Ann Shor

In a recap of last meeting, the website was set-up 6 yrs ago and has great features. That said, changes are necessary.

For this reason, he group took some time to review the website.

* Randi proposed technology available that reads the screen when prompted.
* Karen Langley mentioned the consideration of mobile device view. She also suggested that too many layers can be more difficult so it is a fine delicate balance of too much up front vs. too little.
* Alexander suggested that the use of light blue in the drop down menu near top is not good for low vision- more contrast should be considered and search by options.
* Leo T. suggested that Long Term Loan Program should be put on the main page.
* Kobena agreed and also mentioned that the placement on the brochure would a be changed and clarified.
* Karen L. suggested that “success stories” and pictures would be nice.
* Alexander volunteered to update Massmatch’s Facebook page.
* Find us on Facebook and Find us on Youtube links suggested

We are also changing the way we are sending out alerts. In the main page of the alerts are links and a short summary blurb; then from the link more details and complete articles/stories are available. Automatic archiving of newsletters and alerts is also being worked on.

A Massmatch website working group has been started. Currently volunteers for this project are: Alexander Pooler; Randi Sargent, Owen Doonan, Cindy Aiken, Susan Hargrave. If anyone else would like to join, please let us know.

Other: Ann Shor

The State Plan for AT ends on 9/30/14 so at the next meeting we will be looking for input for next year.

AT Tip of the Week

Cindy Aiken suggests tapping more into resources of the CAP program. There are some nice videos and good VR related AT information.