



STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

August 17, 2012

Community Leaders,

Several of you have expressed concern with recent changes at CDHI, so I wanted to take this opportunity to share with you my intentions in making the changes. These are all things that I talked about at the Town Hall meeting, but there still seems to be some confusion, so I wanted to start with an email explaining the changes.

As you know, Public Act 11-44 folded CDHI into the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services, now renamed the Department of Rehabilitation Service (DORS). With that consolidation, the Executive Director position and the Executive Secretary position were both eliminated. The Commission no longer exists as a stand-alone agency, but instead has become a part of a larger organization. Services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing are still very much a part of our commitment and our mission, but they are now provided along with our services to other disability populations.

The level of deaf and hard of hearing services under DORS remains the same as it was under CDHI prior to the consolidation. I know that the services are not at the same level they were many years ago, but there have been many retirements, layoffs and budget cuts at CDHI. However, service staff and deaf and hard of hearing services under DORS remain the same as they have been for the past several years except for Stacy and Carmen's positions.

Under DORS, my intention is to stabilize this level of service for deaf and hard of hearing consumers, get the staff the support that they need, and continue to meet the needs of the community. Our hope is that, through partnerships with all of you, we may be able to build on the level of service. Please keep in mind, however, that we have no additional dollars and no additional staffing coming into the organization to expand services.

Let me again describe some of the changes that I am putting in place:

- Interpreting Unit: The Interpreting Unit continues to exist as it has for a number of years, with two Interpreter Coordinators and two Office Assistants.
 - The biggest changes involve the use of an electronic scheduling system, Avianco, to streamline our response to interpreting requests. This was developed prior to the consolidation, and continues to be the system used by the office staff and the majority of interpreters.

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

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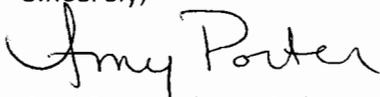
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- Under DORS, the Interpreting Unit will be part of the Business Services Division. This will allow for better coordination with the staff who handle contracts, billing and payroll. These are the areas where the staff felt they needed the most support, and this structural change will help them get their jobs done more efficiently.
- Counselors for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing: The counselors also continue to do their work in the same way they did prior to the consolidation. The challenge continues to be that there are only two counselors to provide services to the whole state.
 - One of their greatest needs is being able to access and work collaboratively with the deaf and hard of hearing populations with limited resources. The two counselors now work with our BRS Rehab Counselors for the Deaf as we try as an agency to improve and strengthen relationships, create new resources and partnerships, and continue to serve the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing communities.
- Contact Information: Many of you have expressed concerns about how you will be able to contact the staff. The contact information is all the same. We have the same phone numbers, the same TTY numbers, the same VP numbers. We have the same address and physical location. So nothing has changed there.

It is going to take all of us, working together, to make this work. I know that the change is difficult, but the reality we have in front of us is going to require that we all work together and identify the best way to continue services within the community, utilizing the existing resources. I believe that these two structural changes make the best use of our resources, and provide better support to the staff so they, in turn, can provide the most effective services within the community.

Please let me know if you continue to have questions, and thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,



Amy Porter, Commissioner
Department of Rehabilitation Services