The Vermont Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Advisory Council

Dr. Linda Hazard, Chair & Bill Hudson, Vice Chair

*The mission of the VT Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Advisory Council is to improve the lives of all Vermonters who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or DeafBlind by recommending policy that promotes diversity, equality, awareness and access.*

**2017 Accomplishments**

* Nine East Network and VT Early Hearing, Detection, Intervention continue to partner with Maine and New Hampshire to develop more resources for families who need support with communication options.
* The First Six Visits Emotional Support initiative was implemented by Nine Easy Network and VT Parent Infant Network. This initiative focuses on supporting families who have infants/young children with hearing loss.
* Facilitate family engagement opportunities.
* Support and encourage local Hands and Voices chapter.
* Nine East Network provides school age services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deafblind students so that they can access education.
* A draft Educational interpreter guideline was developed.

**Challenges**

* A single point of entry is needed for services.
* Funding for early intervention services.
* State grant for school age children currently is not sufficient.
* Systematic data collection and tracking to better understand our population across the age span.

**Recommendations**

* A shared position between AHS and AOE to leverage and coordinate current efforts and provide single point of entry for information and referral.
* Funding for early intervention program.
* Equality in health insurance: hearing devices and services covered in all plans
* Identification and treatment of hearing loss in the elderly population.
* Final guideline and oversight plan for educational interpreters.

**\*\*\*Approximately 10% of all Vermonters have some form of hearing loss according to national data\*\*\***