



NEVADA LEGISLATURE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

(Nevada Revised Statutes [NRS] 218.53791)

SUMMARY MINUTES AND ACTION REPORT

The sixth meeting of the Nevada Legislature's Legislative Committee on Persons with Disabilities was held on June 19, 2006, at 1 p.m. in Room 4401 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 3138 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. A copy of this set of "Summary Minutes and Action Report," including the "Meeting Notice and Agenda" ([Exhibit A](#)) and other substantive exhibits, is available on the Nevada Legislature's Web site at www.leg.state.nv.us/73rd/Interim. In addition, copies of the audio record may be purchased through the Legislative Counsel Bureau's Publications Office (e-mail: publications@lcb.state.nv.us; telephone: 775/684-6835).

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT IN LAS VEGAS:

Senator Barbara K. Cegavske, Chairwoman
Assemblywoman Susan I. Gerhardt
Assemblywoman Valerie E. Weber

COMMITTEE MEMBER PRESENT IN CARSON CITY:

Senator Bernice Mathews

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Assemblywoman Ellen M. Koivisto, Vice Chairwoman (Excused)
Senator Maurice E. Washington

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU STAFF PRESENT:

Michelle L. Van Geel, Senior Research Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB)
Leslie K. Hamner, Principal Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division, LCB
Yvonne M. Goodson, Senior Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division, LCB
Bob Guernsey, Principal Deputy Fiscal Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division, LCB
Ricka Benum, Senior Research Secretary, Research Division, LCB

OPENING REMARKS

- Chairwoman Cegavske called the meeting to order and welcomed Committee members and the public to the meeting of the Legislative Committee on Persons with Disabilities.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE APRIL 19, 2006, AND THE MAY 31, 2006, MEETINGS

Senator Mathews requested the minutes from the May 31, 2006, meeting reflect her attendance as an excused absence. Chairwoman Cegavske concurred.

- The Committee **APPROVED THE FOLLOWING ACTION:**

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WEBER MOVED FOR APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 19, 2006, AND THE MAY 31, 2006, MEETINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, HELD IN LAS VEGAS, WITH THE MAY 31, 2006, MINUTES TO REFLECT SENATOR MATHEWS AS EXCUSED. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY ASSEMBLYWOMAN GERHARDT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

TRANSITION PLAN FROM THE NEVADA SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION (NSHE) AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND REHABILITATION (DETR) CONCERNING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AS THEY TRANSITION THROUGH VARIOUS LEVELS OF EDUCATION AND INTO ADULT LIVING

(As directed by Chairwoman Cegavske, this agenda item was taken out of order.)

- Dr. Jane Nichols, Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs, NSHE, discussed the transition services currently offered to students, and the plan to enhance and improve the quality of the transition services. Dr. Nichols provided an overview of the portion of the transition plan of the preliminary report and information ([Exhibit B](#) and [Exhibit B1](#)) associated with issues pertinent to higher education and focused on the following items:
 1. A summary of the NSHE student population with disabilities. Over 1,700 students with disabilities are being served through on-campus disability resource centers; and
 2. An outline of the NSHE transition services, and specifically the brochure to be distributed in high schools throughout the State ([Exhibit C](#)).
- Chairwoman Cegavske requested affirmation from representatives of the Clark County and Washoe County School Districts that the districts are comfortable with the transition service contact information provided by Dr. Nichols. In addition, she

requested that all future data provided on behalf of the school districts and NSHE indicate the actual number of students rather than being represented by the percentages of the number of students.

- Assemblywoman Weber requested that the brochure be made available through the NSHE Web site. In addition, she requested that the number of hearing impaired students be itemized in each of the four disability categories outlined on page 2 of [Exhibit B](#).
- Dr. Michael T. Coleman, Administrator, Rehabilitation Division, Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR), stated that the brochure is currently available on the DETR Web site. He briefly outlined the programs and services NSHE and DETR have in place to assist students with disabilities in their transition to postsecondary education, as listed in the preliminary report ([Exhibit B](#)). In addition, he commented that the brochures created by DETR are available on its Web site ([Exhibit D](#) and in Spanish as [Exhibit D1](#)). Dr. Coleman emphasized that the different levels of services offered and the amount of effort and work put into each step to assist students during their course of transition is difficult to capture on paper and to accurately depict in the preliminary report.
- Dr. Nichols responded to an inquiry from Assemblywoman Weber by stating that students are reassessed when they leave the K-12 system and enter the NSHE. There are many environmental differences when attending a facility of higher education and once a student applies, those services need to be identified. She emphasized the importance for NSHE representatives to be involved in all transition meetings to design the appropriate program from the services available to fit each student's specific service needs. The advance notice is a critical factor to ease the transition process.

Assemblywoman Weber requested additional information from the school district representatives on the reasons why 7.4 percent of Nevada students with disabilities have dropped out of high school during the 2003-2004 school year, as stated on Page 2 of the report.

PUBLIC COMMENT

(As directed by Chairwoman Cegavske, this agenda item was taken out of order.)

- Gary Olsen, Executive Director, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advocacy Resource Center, stressed the importance of classifying deaf and hard of hearing students in a separate category. He explained that the correct classification is necessary to improve the State's research to advance educational approaches. Deaf students have unique needs, different from teaching children with other disabilities and it is important not to do away with the programs specific to their needs in order to provide access to professional help at any age.

- Joyce Messer, the parent of a disabled child, spoke on problems associated with the services provided by the Rehabilitation Division, under DETR. Ms. Messer reported her daughter's employment success was hampered by the lack of assistance from the assigned job coach, provided by DETR. According to Ms. Messer, during the two-week employment, the job coach spent only two hours with her daughter. She stated that distributing additional brochures to hearing-impaired high school students will not resolve the current problems that occur because the vocational rehabilitation staff cannot adequately provide services.
- Dr. Coleman (previously identified) responded briefly to the comments from the parents and was requested by Chairwoman Cegavske to review the specific problems associated with Ms. Messer's daughter. The Chairwoman said she has heard similar complaints from other deaf clients and requested that Dr. Coleman develop recommendations to be presented to the Committee during the next meeting. Secondly, she requested a breakdown of the ratio of students per job coach and the frequency of visits to the place of employment. Dr. Coleman explained that job coaches are recruited from the private sector and the quality of their job ethics vary. He admitted there are problems and work is being done to rectify those situations and improve the organization.
- Kathy Treants, Las Vegas, the parent of a 25-year-old deaf child, echoed the concerns stated regarding vocational rehabilitation job coaches, the lack of information, and incorrect information provided by different agencies. Oftentimes, a student who desires to enter a different field than those encouraged by DETR does not receive the support or services they should. Students are "pigeon-holed" or urged to enter only certain programs and other choices are discouraged. Ms. Treants stated that transition should be started earlier with the significance of a successful transition emphasized to both parents and students. Additionally, correct resource data should be provided to help students make informed choices.
- Gillian Wells, Las Vegas, encouraged the Committee to establish detailed recommendations for guidelines to aid families and youths who could benefit from an improved system which includes accountability. It is important for students to receive the help and guidance needed to successfully transition to the next step and lead productive lives.
- Lorie White, Las Vegas, the parent of a visually-impaired daughter, agreed with the comments provided by Gary Olsen (previously identified) and encouraged individual and specialized classification of students who are blind or visually-impaired. She said it is necessary to identify each student's specific need for successful transition, since each child's needs are unique.
- Randy Lane, Las Vegas, the parent of a 17-year-old son, provided a detailed history of the problems encountered by his son since 1990 in the Clark County School District (CCSD) and the struggle experienced in his attempts to have his son accurately diagnosed regarding his learning disability and associated problems. Since 2001,

CCSD employees and teachers determined his son has a learning disability and changed the diagnosis to a serious emotional disturbance. Mr. Lane stated his son's frustration level increased yearly, and the school district insisted he be placed in a special behavioral school in order to receive academic help. According to Mr. Lane, his son was not properly represented during the individualized education plan (IEP) meetings, which were attended by CCSD staff unfamiliar with his son's case. In addition, he claimed there was refusal by CCSD to follow federal and State laws.

Mr. Lane provided testimony recounting the unreasonable attitudes of the CCSD and Nevada Department of Education representatives. Chairwoman Cegavske requested that Craig Kadlub, Director, Government Affairs, CCSD, meet with Mr. Lane on behalf of the school district. Senator Mathews requested that the CCSD provide the Committee with a status report of any subsequent action or resolution.

- Brianna Messer, Las Vegas, a 24-year-old person with a disability, testified on the problems she has encountered working with Vocational Rehabilitation, DETR, which began when she was 16 years of age. Ms. Messer reviewed the problems with job coaches and employers in which she has been accused of taking drugs, been sexually harassed at work, and has not received assistance or encouragement from job coaches.
- Assemblywoman Gerhardt inquired what recruitment procedures are in place to increase the number of job coaches. Dr. Coleman stated that additional coaches and counselors will be requested in the upcoming budget. He added that DETR is within its goal of 50 successful employments and continues to strive for quality job outcomes. Assemblywoman Gerhardt requested Dr. Coleman to provide information on the ineligibility status Ms. Messer spoke of when she reached 21 years of age. He explained there are multiple points of transition and any time there is a disability that impairs employment, the client is considered to be eligible.

AVAILABILITY OF PROGRAMS AND COURSES TO PREPARE TEACHERS TO TEACH STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

(As directed by Chairwoman Cegavske, this agenda item was taken out of order.)

- Dr. Jane Nichols (identified previously), spoke on the availability of programs and courses in the NSHE's four, four-year teacher education programs designed to prepare educators to instruct students who are deaf or hard of hearing. These programs offer courses in sign language, but are not mandatory for the degree. Dr. Nichols stated that the basic teaching strategies are covered, including laws and theories, but are not considered to be in-depth. She polled the administrators of the four campuses to determine whether there is a desire to expand the content and opportunities for teachers of deaf students. Dr. Nichols reported there were positive responses from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), and Reno (UNR), and the Nevada State College, in Henderson. The Great Basin College, Elko, indicated there was no interest in expanding its curriculum, due to lack of student enrollment. The current required curriculum of teacher preparatory students is typical of colleges across the nation.

- Chairwoman Cegavske requested Dr. Nichols to research the cost for NSHE if a teacher program designed specifically to train teachers for deaf students were implemented. Secondly, she asked whether Dr. Nichols would support such a program.

PUBLIC COMMENT

(As directed by Chairwoman Cegavske, this agenda item was taken out of order.)

- Mr. Olsen (previously identified) emphasized that the cost for these types of programs is not the main concern, but rather the attitude towards the specialized programs. Mr. Olsen voiced concern by the fact that legislation has not been successful to have American Sign Language (ASL) approved as a recognized language at UNLV. He added that the educator programs are stalled by methodology and modality, not by cost. Mr. Olsen, attempting to present facts from his perspective from a lifetime of deafness, stated that:
 1. College administrators and professors lack the training to understand the disability of deafness, which creates obstacles in establishing a teacher training program; it may be necessary to recruit from outside the State;
 2. Interpreting and teaching are two separate professions and should not be addressed by committees reviewing them as interchangeable;
 3. Teachers of the deaf should understand sign language and communicate with deaf children at a fluent level; current teaching programs do not emphasize the necessity for teachers to master the ability to converse well with deaf students and strive to be fluent;
 4. Completion of long-term teacher training may take five to six years before teachers are ready to step into the classroom; meanwhile deaf children are waiting for professional help; and
 5. Higher education administrators need to accept more responsibility than they currently do to realize that deafness is only one segment of a large problem. When training special education teachers or increasing disabled student services, colleges need to view deafness from a wide-range perspective and take an in-depth approach when training educators.
- Caroline Preston Bass, Instructor, Sign Language and Interpreter Preparation Program, Community College of Southern Nevada, and a member of the Legislative Committee on Persons With Disabilities Advisory Committee, Las Vegas, testified many students begin with the goal of becoming teachers of the deaf, but currently there is no training program in Nevada. Ms. Bass suggested administrators review the successes of a

program at the University of California at Northridge, as a model for implementing a teacher program.

DISCUSSION OF AVAILABILITY OF EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

- Kevin Spilsbury, Founder, Nevada Blind Children's Foundation, and the father of a 2-year-old blind son, spoke on the critical need for accessible early intervention services. Following the birth of his son, Mr. Spilsbury established the Foundation and approached the issue from a business perspective. He reviewed the best practices from other states and compiled recommendations to present to the Nevada State Legislature to enhance early intervention services for blind children and provided the information to the appropriate agencies. The most effective model of services was taken from Phoenix, Arizona, where private early intervention services are contracted through a request for proposal (RFP) process, with oversight provided from the State of Arizona. The Foundation has implemented peer groups of parents, physicians, and providers to develop basic and necessary early intervention services to help blind children during their most formative years.
- Cyndy Ortiz, Research Consultant, Nevada Blind Children's Foundation, informed the Committee that blindness is a low-incident disability in Nevada. Ms. Ortiz termed Nevada "tragically behind" in terms of services for the blind and visually impaired. Nevada is one of four states that do not have a free-standing school for the blind, a center of excellence, or a preschool for blind children. She stated that in order to make a case for change, the Foundation has compiled data to aid parents struggling to access community resources. Parents reported many instances of little or no therapy for their blind children and the Foundation experienced barriers in its attempt to accumulate data from State and local agencies. In recent years the Nevada State Legislature has advocated early intervention by allocating increased funding, but the number of children being served has not been consistent with the growth in funding. Ms. Ortiz noted the federal mandates already in place under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), provided through the Bureau of Early Intervention Services, Health Division, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), (Exhibit E) have established the very minimum in services. The Foundation has implemented the State's first library for the blind, and designed the first curriculum for parent education and training of blind children.
- Brian Patchett, President and Chief Executive Officer, Easter Seals Southern Nevada, Las Vegas, has been visually-impaired since the age of seven. Mr. Patchett spoke on successful early intervention programs in other states that help children during the most critical period, birth to 3 years of age, to prepare for school and establish a life foundation. He expressed his frustration with Nevada's system and the difficulties he has experienced working with State agencies and the lack of willingness displayed by agency staff. He provided information on Easter Seals Southern Nevada. (Please refer to Exhibit E1.)

Mr. Patchett declared that the State's system of utilizing direct service staff has proved unsuccessful, and encouraged increasing the amount of funding for contracted service providers for early intervention. Parents should have the ability to hire the providers they consider appropriate to perform services they deem necessary and to hold those private and nonprofit providers accountable.

- Chairwoman Cegavske encouraged the Committee members to visit the primary location of Easter Seals Southern Nevada.

PUBLIC COMMENT

(As directed by Chairwoman Cegavske, this agenda item was taken out of order.)

- Janelle Mulvenon, Bureau of Early Intervention Services, Health Division, DHHS, explained that the early intervention services are provided by a combination of State employees within the administrative structure and developmental specialists who provide service coordination, in addition to contracted services. The contracted services may include: audiologists and vision specialists; behavioral aides; and occupational, physical, and speech therapists. During the past year, the Bureau's infrastructure was expanded to increase the number of community partnerships. The current involvement with Easter Seals is in its second subgrant process. The first subgrant was to develop a program application, which allowed for the opportunity to meet federal requirements under Part C of IDEA. The second subgrant allows for additional planning funds to complete the program application and ends June 30, 2006. The subgrant consists of a 30-point checklist created under IDEA; upon completion Easter Seals would progress into implementation of services for 60 children with disabilities and are under three years of age. Additional statistics provided by Ms. Mulvenon include:
 1. Approximately 1.3 percent of the eligible children are currently being served; the Bureau is not reaching its 2 percent target as developed by the Office of Special Education Programs, Nevada Department of Education;
 2. A year ago the waiting list for services was 517 children, with 182 children waiting over 45 days; and
 3. In March 2006, 216 children were in referral status with 24 children waiting over 45 days.
- Jan Crandy, Vice Chair, Strategic Plan Accountability Committee (SPAC), Las Vegas, confirmed the problems encountered in obtaining requested data from the Bureau of Early Intervention Services. She testified reliable data that would be beneficial has not been established or kept in a manner that could be easily accessible. Ms. Crandy commended the involvement of Wei Yang, M.D., Ph.D., State Biostatistician, Bureau of Health Planning and Statistics, Health Division, DHHS, and suggested the Committee direct the Bureau of Early Intervention to work with Dr. Yang. (Please

refer to [Exhibit F](#).) She was critical of the lack of category designations, such as statistics listed by disability, services needed, or services with waiting lists. Concluding, she said that SPAC supports the use of private-sector providers for services of the population from birth to 3 years of age. Additionally, Ms. Crandy suggested the Committee request the results of a parental survey conducted by the Mental Health Developmental Disability Commission, pertaining to disability services.

- Richard Whitley, Deputy Administrator, Health Division, DHHS, explained the Health Division worked in partnership with the Commission to conduct the survey of disability services and indicated he would provide the Committee with a summary document of the results. The survey primarily focused on the services provided to children with autism. Secondly, Mr. Whitley clarified that the Bureau of Early Intervention Services relies on multiple funding sources, primarily from the State General Fund. However, the requirements are dictated by IDEA, Part C, which is administered by the U.S. Department of Education.

Responding to the comments from Mr. Spilsbury and Ms. Ortiz on the difficulties obtaining information, Mr. Whitley commented that as a State agency there seems to be resistance to change. The agencies are striving to implement changes and will do so. He added that the staff of the Bureau of Early Intervention Services does a poor job of explaining to parents that it is advantageous to their children for them to provide physical therapy at home in their own element. Subsequently, parents come away feeling as though they have not been provided any services. Further, State agencies are challenged by unfilled positions, not being competitive with the private sector salary schedules, and dealing with recruitment and retention of employees.

- Teresa Brooks, the parent of a child going through early intervention services, Las Vegas, spoke on the erratic services of home providers and complained the Bureau was very slow to recognize her child's needs. She emphasized that twice a month is an unacceptable amount of time for a young child to receive the critical early intervention services required to be most beneficial.
- Karen Wheeler, Las Vegas, voiced concern that the system of vocational rehabilitation directs more attention to persons with disabilities who need the least amount of help. When people require a great deal of services, beyond the basic, easy requirements, the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation Division, DETR, tends to "drag its feet." Ms. Wheeler suggested hiring more people with disabilities to be mentors for other people with challenges and help ease the caseloads.

Ms. Wheeler commented on a Medicaid proposal to do away with the position of independent contractors as caregivers for the disabled. The proposed change would result in the required involvement of an intermediary service organization (ISO), which would lower the independent caregiver's wages, restrict training requested by the person with the disability, and force Medicaid mandates to be used by the independent caregivers, which take away the choice of the person with the disability. An ISO would have the ability to terminate the employment of independent caregivers without notice

to the person with the disability. She emphasized that it is important for persons with disabilities to maintain their independence by exercising free choice, having continuity and familiarity with their caregivers, and the opportunity to live their lives with the same desire for choice as others. Ms. Wheeler reminded the members that she speaks on behalf of many people with a disability who are not able to attend the meetings.

- Janelle Mulvenon (identified previously) extended an invitation to the Committee members to visit the location of the Regional Early Intervention Services, Bureau of Early Intervention Services.
- Mr. Olsen (identified previously) spoke in regard to early intervention as it pertains to deafness and that it is vitally important to implement the beginning steps of a successful transition. Additionally, agencies and persons involved try to “fix” or cure the deaf to make them hear and alleviate the problem. There is a trend for deaf newborn babies in Nevada to have cochlear implants. He stated it is necessary to recognize and put in place broader perspectives where parents, not medical professionals, make the choices for their deaf children. He emphasized that all persons with any type of disability must have choices in order to grow as a community.

FINAL REPORT AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE THAT CONSIDERED ISSUES RELATED TO PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

- Karen Taycher, Chairwoman, Legislative Committee on Persons With Disabilities Advisory Committee (NRS 218.53796), commented on the various stages involved in successful transitioning for students. She offered support on behalf of Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP) to share the data collected by the agency regarding early intervention and transition issues. Ms. Taycher focused her comments on the different stages of transition and the importance of educating all stakeholders from educators to service providers regarding the extra support needed for children’s success. (Please refer to [Exhibit G](#).)

Ms. Taycher introduced the team leaders of the working groups of the Committee on Persons With Disabilities Advisory Committee and outlined the “Report and Recommendations” developed by the three work groups ([Exhibit H](#)). Ms. Taycher summarized the focus of each work group, which included the following topics: Interpreter Certification and Tier System, Oversight and Licensure, and Education, and explained each recommendation. (Please refer to [Exhibit H](#) for the Final Report in its entirety.)

1. Remove Part of Chapter 656A Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS), Move Provisions Under Chapter 426 of NRS, and Add Language Calling for Regulations.

- Ms. Taycher explained that Recommendation No. 1 essentially asks for a Bill Draft Request (BDR) to move the language in Chapter 656A of NRS to Chapter 426 of NRS.

The concept was submitted to allow for the development of regulations for a Board of Interpreters and Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) providers under Chapter 426.

- Ms. Bass in the capacity of the Oversight and Licensure Work Group Team Leader, Committee on Persons With Disabilities Advisory Committee, explained that the Board would review qualifications, oversight, and compliance under a tiered system. Also the Board would monitor interpreters working in the State, establish methods of filing grievances, and provide for standardization of interpreters and CART providers.
- Ms. Taycher noted that the Office of Disability Services (ODS) has worked in conjunction with the work groups and has offered to provide funding for Recommendation No. 1.

2. Establish Tier System for Interpreter Certification.

- Cindy Frank, Certification and Tier System Work Group Team Leader, Committee on Persons With Disabilities Advisory Committee, stated that the primary goal during the work group meetings was to define acceptable levels for interpreter certification. Members from the deaf community and parents of deaf children provided testimony of inadequacies and abuses of interpreters.

Ms. Frank outlined the levels designed under the proposed tier system to become a certified interpreter. (Please refer to Appendix B of [Exhibit H.](#)) She emphasized the tier proposal is based on the ODS maintaining the State registry and Web site for interpreters.

- Assemblywoman Weber inquired how a determination is made on the amount of time it takes to graduate from each step of the tier system and asked whether reciprocity will be established with other states. Ms. Frank responded the proposal is provided as an outline, the specifics are yet to be determined by the interpreter education group, which will define each level further. Additionally, she explained that for community interpreters there is a nationwide registry for the deaf. Most states use the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) to evaluate educational interpreters, who are included in a nationwide registry.

Ms. Taycher restated that many of the proposed recommendations hinge on the approval of Recommendation No. 1 and the involvement of the ODS to provide oversight of the proposed certification board and maintenance of the proposed database and Web site.

- Ms. Bass (previously identified) explained that the national registry of interpreters for the deaf does maintain a Web site which lists certified interpreters and is considered public information.

- Mr. Olsen (previously identified) clarified that NRS requires the list of deaf interpreters to be public information.

3. Increase Funding for Training of Interpreters and Make Changes Concerning Provisions of Education to Interpreters.

- Ms. Bass (previously identified) explained that the upper level sign language classes are frequently very small due to either lack of interest or students' failure to complete prerequisite classes. Many colleges have regulations requiring a certain number of students per class to go forward with the schedule. All advanced language classes tend to be smaller, but because interpreters are considered a specialized group, sign language instructors nationwide have the same complaint. Successful interpreter programs depend on the removal of these types of class regulations and an end to the battle of small classes.
- Ms. Frank (previously identified) informed the Committee of the problems associated with the budgeting and financial plan of small classes, as well as trying to establish classes in rural areas. Nevada is close to a state of emergency regarding the lack of interpreters. The requested additional funding is vital for Nevada to produce interpreters who have at least a 4.0 level of certification and make a difference in the lives of deaf children. There are currently no interpreter training programs that can produce qualified interpreters in the State. The proposed tier system will only be possible if the NSHE creates the appropriate classes. She explained that the Western Nevada Community College (WNCC), NSHE, has only one interpreter instructor and there is a desperate need for another full-time position, additional mentors are also needed, and most interpreter programs are state funded.

4. Standardize Educational Interpreter Guidelines.

- Ms. Taycher (previously identified) directed the Committee members to the sample model handbook that the Advisory Committee chose after reviewing handbooks from several other states. The model handbook was obtained from the State of Colorado Department of Education. (Please refer to [Exhibit I.](#))

5. Qualifications of Legal Interpreters Must be Clarified and codified by the Nevada Courts.

6. Amend NRS 656A.100 to Reflect the Realities Associated with Court Operations in Nevada.

- Ms. Frank (previously identified) stated that often during legal proceedings, deaf people spend time in jail unnecessarily due to interpreter problems. She stressed the importance of listening to and learning from the people who use interpreters on a daily basis.
- Mr. Olsen (previously identified) stressed the importance of Recommendations Nos. 5 and 6. When a deaf person has an issue with either the justice system or a medical

concern, the first choice is usually a family member who is called to provide interpretive services; many times the family member is underage. Mr. Olsen stated that State standards must be set and noted that the work group accepted the concept that the main issue is for the deaf person to have a choice for his or her own interpreter.

- Senator Mathews stressed the urgency for the educators to submit the budget requests to their administrators as soon as possible. It is important that all the vocational programs be included in NSHE base budget to streamline the process during the 2007 Legislature.
- David O. Gordon, Court Interpreters Program Coordinator, Administrative Office of the Courts, Carson City, supported Recommendation No. 1 and pointed out that currently Chapter 656 of NRS does not work effectively and impedes access to justice. Mr. Gordon said the goal is for deaf clients to receive the services they need at the time of need. It is important to avoid the “nightmare scenario” of a deaf person being jailed and not able to communicate.
- Ms. Bass (previously identified) clarified that all discussion under Recommendation No. 6 was specified to certified interpreters only and that the court systems are required to make every effort to utilize certified interpreters, and that at no time would higher costs prohibit their use.

A general discussion ensued regarding the crisis situation and the lack of certified interpreters in northern Nevada.

7. Expand Access Of Pre-Kindergarten Through 12 (PK-12) Students with Deafness to Appropriate Education Services.

- Ms. Taycher (previously identified) summarized Recommendation No. 7 to consolidate the deaf education services PK-12 through the development of regional “model” programs for Nevada in statute by setting up the structure for “model regional” school-based programs for students with deafness and a legislative appropriation to fund these sites.
- Ms. Frank (previously identified) stressed the importance of Recommendation No. 7. Deaf children often feel totally isolated because they do not have anyone to communicate with and cannot interact with others (bus drivers, cafeteria workers, or teachers). Oftentimes, they are lonely and spend time by themselves, and this recommendation allows them the opportunity to come together with others and establish relationships. She suggested the ideal learning scenario would be to blend a family and social affair involving games and dinner.

Chairwoman Cegavske inquired whether there are classes to encourage families to learn sign language and to become involved. Ms. Frank indicated that surprisingly very few parents of deaf children learn sign language.

- Mr. Olsen (previously identified) said the critical problem is that children are not receiving language early enough during their childhood. Deaf children cannot communicate with siblings or in the home or school environments. Language is the crucial element to a child's development and the lack of language skills does not allow a child to grow.

8. *Expand Pool of Qualified Teachers of the Deaf.*

- a. Supplemental signing bonus for new teachers of the deaf.**
 - b. Yearly training stipend for existing teachers.**
 - c. "Mentoring a teacher" support network.**
 - d. Increased number of training programs.**
- Ms. Taycher (previously identified) outlined the recommended concepts listed as recruitment incentives to bring qualified teachers to the State. The proposals would include a supplemental "signing bonus" for new teachers of the deaf in addition to funds already available for new teacher bonuses.
 - Mr. Olsen (previously identified) emphasized the importance of Recommendation No. 8. In order to accomplish successful education of deaf students, it is necessary to have direct education between teachers and students, not the teacher instructing the interpreter then the lessons passed on to the student. The current methods are simply not effective. Referring to increasing the number of training programs (paragraph d) Mr. Olsen said it is within the scope of higher education to take responsibility and to recognize the dire need to provide both educators and interpreters, which currently are not being provided. It is reasonable that the Nevada State Legislature should hold NSHE accountable.
 - Ms. Bass reiterated that it is important to remember that interpreters are not necessarily teachers. The professions are not usually interchangeable and require separate skills; it is a rare person that is a qualified teacher and interpreter. It was noted that in many instances, interpreters make good teachers aides.
 - Senator Mathews expressed her gratitude for the effort put forth to create the Committee to address the concerns of children and persons with disabilities. She commended the members of the Advisory Committee, interested parties, and stakeholders.
 - Ms. Frank (previously identified) asked for the Committee to recognize the importance for parents to learn sign language and teach their deaf children and to incorporate it into its upcoming Work Session as a recommendation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Kim Medina, CCSD, offered support for the concept of the interpreter tier system and requested consideration for Spanish speaking deaf students and their parents. Ms. Medina stated that CCSD does have a voluntary sign language class staffed primarily by teachers who are deaf. Ms. Medina encouraged the addition of a deaf education program to be taught at UNLV and UNR. The school districts could benefit if they were able to acquire teachers for the deaf that were certified in a deaf education program. Chairwoman Cegavske requested that Ms. Medina, Dr. Kadlub, and Dr. Nichols meet to discuss the program needs of the NSHE.
- Anne Loring, Washoe County School District, Reno, also offered support for the work of the Committee and the Advisory Committee.

Please refer to [Exhibit J](#) for a document submitted during Public Comment.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 5:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ricka Benum
Senior Research Secretary

Michelle L. Van Geel
Senior Research Analyst

APPROVED BY:

Senator Barbara K. Cegavske, Chairwoman

Date: _____

LIST OF EXHIBITS

[Exhibit A](#) is the “Meeting Notice and Agenda” provided by Michelle L. Van Geel, Senior Research Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.

[Exhibit B](#) consists of the “Status of Transition in Nevada Preliminary Report Interagency Transition Advisory Board” prepared by Mrs. Kris Christiansen, Vice Chair of Interagency Transition Advisory Board, Assistant Superintendent, Washoe County School District; Dr. Jane Nichols, Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education; and Dr. Michael Coleman, Administrator, Rehabilitation Division, Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation, dated June 19, 2006.

[Exhibit B1](#) consists of testimony provided by Dr. Kris Christiansen, Vice Chairwoman, Interagency Transition Advisory Board, Assistant Superintendent Washoe County School District, dated June 19, 2006.

[Exhibit C](#) is a brochure titled *A Practical Guide for High School Teachers and Counselors, Students with Disabilities: Transitioning to Postsecondary Schools in Nevada* submitted by Dr. Jane Nichols, Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education.

[Exhibit D](#) consists of a brochure titled *Vocational Rehabilitation Services for High School Students* prepared by Department of Employment, Training & Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation Division, Vocational Rehabilitation.

[Exhibit D1](#) is the Spanish version of the brochure described above as titled *Vocational Rehabilitation Services for High School Students* prepared by the State of Nevada Department of Employment, Training & Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation Division, Vocational Rehabilitation.

[Exhibit E](#) consists a document titled “Early Intervention” compiled by Nevada Intervention Services – South, submitted by Kevin Spilsbury, Founder, Nevada Blind Children’s Foundation, and Cyndy Ortiz, Research Consultant, Nevada Blind Children’s Foundation, Las Vegas.

[Exhibit E1](#) consists of “Easter Seals Southern Nevada State Program Efficiency Proposal” submitted by Brian Patchett, President and Chief Executive Officer, Easter Seals Southern Nevada, Las Vegas.

[Exhibit F](#) consists of documents submitted by Jan Crandy, Vice Chair, Strategic Plan Accountability Committee (SPAC), Las Vegas, which include:

- A document titled “Excerpts from draft SPAC minutes of meeting on May 2, 2006”; and

- A Memorandum to Sherry Blackwell, Budget Analyst V, Budget Division, from Amy Roukie, MBA, Administrative Services Officer IV, Nevada State Health Division, dated February 1, 2006.

[Exhibit G](#) is a document titled “Transition Across the Life Span” prepared by Tom Pierce, Ph.D., Department Chair and Professor, Department of Special Education, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, NSHE, and Karen Taycher, Executive Director, Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP), Las Vegas, Nevada.

[Exhibit H](#) consists of the “Report and Recommendations to the Legislative Committee on Persons With Disabilities from the Legislative Committee on Persons With Disabilities Advisory Committee, Karen Taycher, Advisory Committee Chairwoman” dated June 19, 2006, compiled by Michelle L. Van Geel, Senior Research Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.

[Exhibit I](#) is the *Educational Interpreter Handbook* prepared by the Colorado Department of Educational Student Services, 2nd Edition 2004, submitted by Michelle L. Van Geel, Senior Research Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.

[Exhibit J](#) consists of a document submitted after adjournment by SteVee Stayer, Las Vegas, Nevada. (Ms. Stayer did not testify.)

This set of “Summary Minutes and Action Report” is supplied as an informational service. Exhibits in electronic format may not be complete. Copies of the complete exhibits, other materials distributed at the meeting, and the audio record are on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, Carson City, Nevada. You may contact the Library online at www.leg.state.nv.us/lcb/research/library/feedbackmail.cfm or telephone: 775/684-6827.