

KATS Network Advisory Council Minutes

Date: December 8, 2022

Time: 9:30 – 11:40 AM, Eastern Time

Place: enTECH, Spalding University, Louisville, KY

Welcome & Introductions – Kevin McCormack

Advisory Council Members

Present: Mindy McGirt, Kevin McCormack, Bill Titus, Samantha Farthing (Zoom participant), Gerry Gordon-Brown, Nancy Perry, Joe Cowan, Andre Ryssemus, Jessica Endler Smith, Nicole Maher (Zoom participant), Traci Burks, David Allgood (proxy for Lisa McKeown),

Absent: Melanie Peskoe, Suhas Kulkarni

KATS Network Coordinating Center and ATRC/Project CARAT Staff

Pat Kitzman, Keisha Hudson, Crystal Hignite (ACAT Hazard), Darrin Breeding (Carl D. Perkins – Zoom participant), Jocelyn Warren, Alison Amshoff, Laura Stimler (enTECH), Betsy Eiserman (Easterseals Redwood), Jana Billingsley, Cindy Huston, Sandy Hayden (Wendell Foster), Christina Espinosa (HDI-CATS), Carol Weber, Lisa Staub, Alex Ingram (KATS)

Others in Attendance

Tracy Lundergan (Captioning and CARAT Services), Missy Miller, Tara Eversole (ASL Interpreters)

Approval of Minutes from Past Meeting(s)

Joe Cowan motioned for approval of the September 7th, 2022 meeting minutes. Bill Titus provided a second. Motion carried.

Old Business:

ATRC Invoicing Portal – Lisa Staub

- The invoicing portal is still being set up on the website and is not yet available. The ATRCs will continue to provide invoices as in the past.

New Business:

Updates of KATS Network Coordinating Center Activities

- Alex Ingram
 - Social Media - Focus on program awareness and marketing primarily with Facebook. Sharing content from other relevant sites, and from our ATRCs. Request to the ATRCs to share their activities with Alex and she will post on the KATS Network and Project CARAT sites. Plan to increase presence on Instagram, which will require more engaging content (videos and pictures) from the centers.
 - Outreach/Trainings
 - Booth for the ADA Sidewalk Fair at ECU – October 2022
 - Booth at Kentucky Rehab Association (KRA) Conference – November 2022
 - Transition Fair for Individuals with Blindness and Low Vision – January 2023
 - Jefferson Community and Technical College – February 2023
 - Unite Us – national organization working to build a coordinated care network of health and social service providers in local communities – they have a subsection for assistive technology and DME. We can contact other organizations when needs arise out of our scope and other organizations can contact us when they have clients in need of AT/DME.
 - Resource and Funding guides – working on updating the information on these. Updates have been completed on our Deaf and Hard of Hearing Resource Guide and Alex will be sending that out to the centers, and it will be updated on the website.
 - Ramp building update: Custom build was done in Kenton County through partnership with Crossroads Church who built four ramps on a property to allow access at all entrances. Holmes High School in Covington has agreed to pilot a project starting in January with their carpentry students to build modular ramps.
- Lisa Staub:
 - Site visits were made to each of the ATRCs
 - Plan to complete desk audits to review the data that has been entered on our AT Locator website for federal reporting
 - Carl D Perkins is moving over to a Project CARAT only site, and has some items that they are making available to the other centers

- Alex Ingram – Smart Home update:
 - The smart home items that were reserved for our centers will be given out to the centers after the meeting. The Program Awareness and Marketing committee discussed ideas for getting the remainder of the items out as quickly as possible before the technology becomes outdated. Ideas included working with adult day centers, nursing homes, teachers, schools, daycare programs, stroke clinics, Kentucky Home Place and other community partnerships. Welcome other ideas from the committee, but keep in mind that these need to be loans, due to the grant funding.

Updates on Regional AT Resource Centers/Project CARAT Sites: Appalachian Center for Assistive Technology (ACAT) Hazard – Pat Kitzman

- Hired Crystal Hignite to oversee the ATRC, and planning a grand opening in January to mid-February
- Project CARAT – to get items repaired, cleaned, and back out to community members following the flooding
- Received funding through other programs to work with high school students of all abilities on an adaptive park and adapting toys
- Art class from local high schools designing wall art for the ATRC

enTECH – Alison Amshoff

- Transition program for teens with Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) and Louisville duPont Manual.
- Loans of equipment with VA consumers
- Project CARAT working with the Coalition for Homeless
- Expanded services with Seven Counties and local agencies in Louisville
- Dr. Laura Stimler was introduced later in the meeting as the program chair of the Auerbach School of Occupational Therapy, and the Director of the KATS program at enTECH-Spalding

HDI-CATS – Christina Espinosa

- Approximately 200 items sent out through reutilization in last quarter

- Space to store items is huge barrier. Using free space from a church a few miles away
- Have a lot of pediatric equipment available for reuse
- Presentations for students in wide range of fields from UK and ECU on AT and universal design.
- Suggested contacting local community college with carpentry program for ramp building
- Home assessment and promotion of smart home equipment for individual returning home from Cardinal Hill.

Easterseals Redwood – Betsy Eiserman

- Participated in Gateway Rehab Hospital Expo which led to meeting with stroke support groups. Betsy demonstrated a few items for individuals with single-sided weakness to allow them to participate in activities of daily living more fully in the kitchen. Items demonstrated were affordable and purchased on Amazon. These items included a jar opener, Kitchen Mama can opener, milk frother that can also be used to make sauces, Dycem to hold the items in place easier, and a cheese grater, and switch adapted potato peeler.
- Have a 3D printer that they have been using to create adaptive materials. Planning to create kits of items that can go out. Demonstrated a soda can opener, soda bottle opener, and seat belt release. Using an open repository for 3D models, so they have been reaching out to the developers for permissions.
- Follow-up visits to ATRC from participants in the stroke support group
- Introduced smart home items to stroke support group, and have plans for future in-services and support on how to use the items
- Booth at Expo with May We Help, an international non-profit that provides custom solutions for individuals
- Working with an Ohio high school whose engineering program students are adapting electric cars, and one will be made for the child of a member of our Advisory Council.

Wendell-Foster – Cindy Huston and Jana Billingsley

- Coordinated a Special Needs Expo in Owensboro on October 22nd, that is now in its fourth year. Information on the event was sent out to KATS

Network in November - [Wendell Foster Special Needs Expo](#) and [TV Station news release](#), 50 vendors participated including non-profit state agencies, and private businesses that provide services to people with disabilities. They partnered with several vendors to help sponsor the event. Occupational therapists from Wendell Foster, along with their outpatients, set up an adapted gaming system that was available for attendees to trial.

- Beamz interactive music system for individuals with limited mobility was demonstrated. Wendell Foster has this item in their lending library. They reported on the loan to a consumer whose daughter had cerebral palsy and was able to use the device to interact and bond with her brother who is a musician. This loan led to a purchase by the family.

Carl D Perkins – Project CARAT - Darrin Breeding

- Moving KATS loan equipment to other sites. Smart Home items were moved to Frankfort to be distributed to other sites. Working with Hazard to deliver some of the loan equipment to their ATRC. Checking inventory from AT Locator list, and will send out list of available items
- Working on hiring a new instructor who will assist with Project CARAT

Centers for Accessible Living (Murray and Bowling Green) – Lisa Staub

- KATS has partnerships with both locations. They have ramps for loan and a limited number of reuse items. Ashley Evans, who managed our outreach in Bowling Green will be leaving at the end of December. Lakeysha Covington will be taking over these responsibilities.

Updates on ACL Public Health Grant – Lisa Staub

- Ryan Creech is working with Jennifer Harp from the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) Office of Application Technology Services. Ryan has been evaluating their website and is working to schedule a meeting with Jennifer and a group from the cabinet to go over some of his findings.

KATS Advisory Board Committees

- Strategic Planning/State Plan for Assistive Technology – Carol Weber
 - Looking at the mission statement: The KATS Network mission is to make assistive technology (AT) information, devices and services easily obtainable for people of any age and/or disability. AT is any

item or piece of equipment (both low-tech and high-tech) used to improve and/or maintain independence in the home, at work, school, or play.

- No current vision statement – we will send out something to the board to get input on the mission and vision
- During the committee meeting, Suhas suggested these parts of a strategic plan:
 - Required activities: Start with what you are required to do. We have eight total state level and state leadership activities we are required to do by law.
 - Resources: Look at funding and other resources we have
 - Partners: identify partners and their potential resources
 - Gaps: Identify gaps between what we need to do and what we can do. This will be driven by our data
 - From information and assistance we know there is a large need for hearing aids, ramps, wheelchairs/batteries/repairs, and transportation of donations and reuse items
 - County service data lets us look at areas we are not serving, which can help us to determine where we need a new center
 - State report gaps – make sure we are addressing transition needs in training and technical assistance, and that we are finding ways to provide alternative financing.
 - Once we know what we need to do, how can we fund these initiatives? Discussed presenting data to workforce system, and helping the centers to identify potential funding streams and pulling data to allow them to apply for grants
- Assistive Technology Conference Planning – Mindy McGirt
 - 2023 conference will be in June. It will be a 3-day conference with half-days on the first and last day
 - Registration information – include transportation needs
 - Location – would like to keep it more centrally located. Looking at KSU Farm and UK student center ballrooms.
 - Looking at variable length presentations

- Topics discussed included toy adaptation, smart home items, do it yourself ramps and ramp resources, accessibility of college campuses and housing possibly with college campus coordinators/services available, adaptive books, AT and apps, advocacy
- Livestreaming the conference
- Nominating Committee – Joe Cowan
 - Terms expiring in March, 2023
 - Nancy Perry – hopes to continue if schedule for meeting allows
 - Joe Cowan – finishing out a term, and plans to continue
 - Mindy McGirt- finishing her teaching degree right now. Will not be able to continue to serve on the council, as she plans to take a teaching job, and her schedule will not allow the flexibility to attend meetings.
 - Independent Living Center representative update
 - Lisa McKeown is changing jobs and will no longer be able to represent the Independent Living Centers. David Allgood will serve as her proxy. Her term expires in March 2024. David had agreed to submit a resume and application to replace Lisa. Council members agreed to have David apply to finish out the term for Lisa.
 - Seeking at least one more individual, possibly two, to serve on the council to represent individuals with a disability who use assistive technology. The committee suggested looking for individuals from the western side of the state, and reaching out to Wendell Foster, Voc Rehab counselors in the area, CAL Bowling Green and Murray, and mental health departments to see if they could reach out to individuals that might be good representatives of their region
- Program Marketing/Awareness – Keisha Hudson
 - Using social media for marketing promotion. Asked that centers send her information so it can be shared on KATS sites
 - When ATRC representatives and council members attend conferences and expos, please share information on the KATS Network
 - Discussed smart home ideas and sharing information with support groups and hospital rehab centers. Some challenges with individuals

that can't currently access the internet, and problem-solving ways to overcome this.

- Creative ways to expand print marketing
- Improving public awareness through partnerships with other agencies
- Increasing the KATS Network presence on Instagram and other platforms.
- Socialization Committee – Kevin McCormack
 - This committee was suggested during a previous meeting based on council discussion
 - Very few people indicated interest in this committee when we were setting up our meetings. Current considerations:
 - If interested in joining this committee contact Kevin or Lisa
 - Discontinue the committee
 - Insert the idea of a socialization committee into an already existing committee
 - Open discussion on the topic
 - David Allgood – Discussed the importance of learning from the experiences of peers that have disabilities in his life and growth. Suggested that creating opportunities for socialization between individuals with disabilities is a tremendous resource and asset to help the population we are focused on through the KATS Network.
 - Joe Cowan – agreed it would be beneficial
 - Jocelyn Warren – asked for clarification between existing support groups and this type of committee or group
 - David Allgood – cited difficulties following COVID with many group gatherings, and a general lack of knowledge in terms of access to technology
 - Mindy McGirt – discussed the benefits of being able to communicate as a greater disability community and building knowledge of resources that are available to address other areas of need, rather than in more isolated pods that only reflect a specific disability. If the socialization committee moved under another committee, it might fit well under program marketing and awareness, where the committee could also focus on spreading awareness and offering opportunities

for socializing with other people and seeing what else is out there.

- Alex Ingram – there are also opportunities to organize evenings out during the AT conference.
- Nancy Perry – suggested trying to organize things more locally, for those that want to join, but either can't travel long distances, or may not be able to stay due to travel distance.

Updates from Agency Representatives

- Kentucky OVR, Andre Ryssemus and Carol Weber – Reported on the KRA conference in November, which was very well attended. There are a couple of new AT hires for Voc Rehab, and in January they will be posting for another person to work with Clinton in their vehicle modification program. Clinton is very well known and respected in this field, both locally and nationally, and will help to train this individual.
- State Independent Living, David Allgood - Working on the State Plan for Independent Living.
- Education Cabinet, Kevin McCormack - Department of Education. Discussed lack of teachers and substitutes and bus drivers. Kevin works at the School for the Blind and runs the Assistive Technology Lending Library. He reports that it is becoming more widely known and utilized around the state. Teachers can borrow items from the library, collect data on how it is being used, and if they can show that it is beneficial to the student, they can submit to buy the item for the student. The library is funded by a charitable foundation, which allows them to purchase the AT devices.
- Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Jessica Endler Smith - Established partnership with the Heuser Hearing Institute for a Kentucky hearing project. They have purchased a mobile trailer and will do hearing test screenings for schools all over the state of Kentucky. They have already identified about 80 children who failed their hearing screenings. Many of these live in the Ohio Valley and have struggled with allergies so that is where a lot of issues may have come from. However, eight of these children failed further hearing testing. The Commission is providing a toolkit containing different phones, iPhones and iPads that are taken to the schools to educate staff on hearing issues such as hearing loss, lipreading, and total communication. The Commission is also working on getting a hearing screening bill passed. She noted that vision and

dental screenings are required in the schools, but hearing screenings are not. An update was also provided on over the counter hearing aids. She agrees that for funding and financial purposes this may present a good option but hearing evaluations by an audiologist or hearing aid professional are necessary to verify the hearing loss and range to provide individuals with the hearing aids that they need. They are suggesting to audiologists to have changes made to hearing aids so that all of the environmental sounds don't interfere with being able to focus on speech. The TAP cabinet that was located in Paducah has been moved to the Center for Accessible Living in Murray.

- Council on Developmental Disabilities – Nicole was not available to make report

Nominations and voting for new Co-Chairs – Lisa Staub

- KATS Advisory Council Bylaws were sent to all council members prior to the meeting
- Lisa reviewed Article V: Officers: One Co-chair will be a consumer or family member of a consumer who uses AT, and the other Co-chair will be an agency representative. Co-chairs serve a one-year term to coincide with the fiscal year of the KATS Network, which would have ended with the September meeting, but the time may be extended by majority vote. Prior to the meeting, the current co-chairs agreed to continue to serve and cover the meetings through September of 2023 if that was the consensus.
- The Council voted and agreed to extend their term, allowing that Mindy would facilitate the meeting in March, and Kevin would cover the meetings in June and September. Voting will be held in September 2023 to elect new Co-chairs.

Open Discussion from Advisory Council

- Carol Weber – OVR AT Branch met at the Louisville Automation and Robotics Research Institute (LARRI). This program is out of the Speed School Engineering program with the University of Louisville. They were interested in working with OVR and KATS on senior design project ideas. Difficult to work in Voc Rehab because consumers need things quicker than senior design projects can provide. If we have things that would be relevant that they could work on, we can contact them and have them work on AT for people in specific areas.

- Pat Kitzman – University of Kentucky has five teams of engineering students. Two teams are working on developing add-ons to protect electronics on wheelchairs when they are put on a plane. One team is working on a manual wheelchair that will lift a person up and pull the wheels in to allow movement through a narrow doorway. Two groups are adapting toys and looking at how to make more high-tech toys hands-free. These groups are always looking for more capstone projects, so he welcomes ideas also.
- Christina Espinosa – taking OT and PT students to Cardinal Hill for 200-hour observations to identify needs and improve patient care.
- Andre Ryssemus – from the LARRI tour: working on seating sensors in chairs for kids that are linked to an app to help them better understand positioning and movement. Stated that the director and students are eager to work on projects that we might have for them.
- Nancy Perry – asked for suggestions on helping preschool students with limited language skills whose parents are not able to communicate with them. No visual language such as signing is occurring. Looking for ideas to encourage language learning, possibly using an iPad. Looking for mentors to work with children from about two years of age to six years to help develop signing skills
- Mindy McGirt – Hands and Voices is a parent support group with a deaf mentor program for families to teach families how to interact with their own kids. Jessica adds that it is for siblings also. Mindy reports on a new program she is part of as a deaf and hard of hearing guide. Working with foster families right now and hoping to expand. Talks with parents and families and interacts with kids to model things like gaining attention. She is also using a free communication app on her iPad. There are a number of providers, and the program is expanding all over the state, but they are hoping to find more money to help it grow.
- Nancy Perry – Reported on another group involved in outreach within the school systems, which she thought was hoping to develop a language deprivation intervention project. Jessica suggested this might be called LeadK. Nancy noted she was unsure, but that they were trying to establish a project for preschool age children and develop partnerships to find deaf people willing to serve as mentors and role models.
- Kevin McCormack – Suggests that KATS invites one of the engineering groups that is interested in developing projects, to attend our next meeting.

At the meeting the group could explain the types of projects they are interested in, and council could provide input. Pat will bring this up with groups at UK.

Announcements

- Nancy Perry – requested to establish future meeting dates and times
- Wendell Foster offered to hold March meeting in Owensboro. Discussions were held on the day of the week and time to best accommodate the members.

Next council meeting dates:

- **Monday, March 6th 2023**
Time: 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 p.m. Central Standard Time
Location: Wendell Foster, Owensboro
- **Wednesday, June 14th 2023**
Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time
Location: To coincide with AT conference in Lexington or Frankfort
- **Friday, September 8th 2023**
Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time
Location: to be determined
- **Monday, December 4th 2023**
Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time
Location: to be determined

Adjournment: 11:40 a.m.

Motion called by David and Andre provided the second for the motion.