

KATS Network Advisory Council Minutes

Date: June 9, 2022

Time: 9:37 AM, Eastern Time

Place: McDowell Center Auditorium and Zoom

Welcome & Introductions – Kevin McCormick

Advisory Council Members

In person: Kevin McCormack, Mindy McGirt, Nancy Perry, Bill Titus, Jessica Endler Smith, Suhas Kulkarni, Lisa McKeown, Andre Ryssemus

Virtual: Samantha Farthing

KATS Network Coordinating Center and ATRC/CARAT Staff

In person: Joe McCombs, Alison Amshoff (enTECH), Peggy Farmer, Betsy Eiserman, Julie Roell (Redwood), Cindy Huston, Jana Billingsley, Sandy Hayden (Wendell Foster), Carol Weber, Lisa Staub, Jimmy Brown, Alyssa Whitis (KATS)

Virtual: Christina Espinosa-Bard (HDI-CATS); Pat Kitzman (Hazard)

Absent: Darrin Breeding (Carl Perkins),

Others in Attendance

In person: Tracy Lundergan (Captioning and CARAT Services), Chelsea Naugle, Tara Eversole (ASL Interpreters)

Approval of Minutes from Past Meeting(s)

Suhas Kulkarni motioned for approval of the March 10, 2022 meeting minutes. Lisa McKeown provided a second. Motion carried.

Old Business:

ACL Public Health Grant – Lisa Staub

Met with representatives at Northern Kentucky Health Department to pursue working on accessible documents, websites, and videos. They expressed interest but didn't have manpower to provide staff to work with accessibility expert so they would be able to carry it over. They get a lot of the information on their website from the state, and these tables were not accessible. We created a recording as an example of how an individual who is blind would get this information from the website and contacted Dr. Stack with the Kentucky Department for Public Health. He was very interested and put us in contact with representatives from the Cabinet for Health and Family Services. Secretary Friedlander, who is over this cabinet is committed to making the information put out by that cabinet accessible. First meeting was on May 31st. Waiting to hear back from them as to how we can move forward.

New Business:

KATS Advisory Board Committee Reports

- Strategic Planning/State Plan for Assistive Technology – Suhas Kulkarni
 - Suhas encouraged others to join this committee. First step will be to clarify the mission for KATS. Need to identify our customers and suppliers, inputs, outputs, and operationally what we need to be doing. If we create a document that mirrors the state plan as a strategic document plan it will make for better alignment.
- Assistive Technology Conference Planning – Lisa Staub
 - The conference will be September 7th, 8th, and 9th in Frankfort. The Advisory Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday morning from 9:30 to 11:30, and then the conference will follow that afternoon and continue all day Thursday and Friday morning. Lisa will send out the registration form when it is available, and it will be on the website.
- Nominating Committee – Samantha Farthing

- All members whose terms were expiring have submitted documentation to serve another term, along with new applications to serve as representatives of individuals with a disability who use AT and we are waiting on approval. Discussed other agencies involvement including the Bluegrass Council for the Blind, an agency that represented people who are amputees, representation from people who have psychological disabilities and more diversity in general. We want to be sure that our members who represent individuals who have disabilities who use AT represent different demographics beyond our own state agencies. A questionnaire is now available to send out to KATS members to gain more information on their involvement and expertise areas.
- Program Marketing/Awareness – Mindy McGirt
 - This group has not met, but Mindy will help to set up a meeting. Current members are Mindy, Peggy Farmer and Joe McCombs

Updates of KATS Network Activities

Updates from ATRCs:

enTECH – Alison Amshoff

- Continues to work with Jefferson County Public Schools. enTECH participates in a transition program for individuals between 18 and 21 years of age to be able to work with assistive technology. Identified individuals to take part in a pilot study along with occupational therapy and doctoral students. Worked with a third grader from a local school that needed access to curriculum, utilizing a Chromebook and a head mouse to allow him to be more independent with less help from his assistant and his nurse. Able to get this mounted so he can travel around the school and be independent with his schoolwork. Introduced an app so the classroom teacher can quickly take a picture of the worksheet that they're doing in the classroom, and he can write on that worksheet in his Chromebook and submit it with the other

students. Worked with a child aging out of First Steps to provide an Eye Gaze to communicate with his family.

HDI-CATS – Christina Espinosa-Bard

- Trying to catch up on drop off DME, defining which products and equipment to accept, entering all items and looking at ways to redistribute some of the equipment that has been there for a while. Wanted to brainstorm ideas for re-disseminating or re-distributing any of the equipment, especially the pediatric equipment, that we've accumulated. HDI-CATS is hoping to coordinate some sort of community use of their HubScrub, as they realize that a lot of people need things to be sanitized and pressure cleaned. May try to have a day during the summer that people can drop things off to be cleaned.

Redwood – Peggy Farmer, Betsy Eiserman and Julie Roell

- Peggy shared one reutilization was a collaboration with the KATS Coordinating Center. A 65-year-old man had trouble with mobility and contacted CARAT through the website. At the same time a family in Northern Kentucky wanted to donate a scooter which needed a new battery. They purchased the battery for the scooter and delivered it to Redwood. Coordinating Center staff delivered it to him in Louisville. He was able to use his scooter to take the bus to get to the grocery, get his medications, and go to the clinic. He said, "I just want you to know what a life-changing experience it was for me. I can once again go when and where I want. I can't thank you enough, God bless."
- Redwood demonstrated two items:
Betsy reports that Redwood had a trial of the Obi Robotic Feeder and is trying it with a lot of clients. One client has submitted for one through her insurance and plans to start using it at Redwood and then transport it back and forth. The feeder has several compartments and allows the individual to independently select which item they would like to eat. They use one switch

to move through the choices to select and one to scoops and delivers to the height that was adjusted for their mouth.

Julie demonstrated Envision Glasses which hook up like a pair of glasses with a speaker. They have a screen so if you are visually impaired instead of blind, you can still see the screen. It interfaces with your phone to allow you to call people. The glasses can tell you what is in front of you and around you, scan money, so you can get the correct bill to the correct people. They memorize people so you can use them to identify people. They can attach through Bluetooth to a speaker so you can hear what the person wearing them is hearing, which is very helpful if you are training somebody to use them.

Wendell Foster – Cindy Huston

- Shared a success story: A 59-year-old leg amputee from Hardin County fell and injured his residual limb and needed a way to access areas with steps in his home while he healed from reconstructive surgery. He borrowed an eight-foot ramp which allowed him to access the dining room to participate in meals and family gatherings and gave him the opportunity to prepare his own meals. Once he was healed, he was able to use a walker with a prosthesis again to gain access to these areas.
- Glenmore Distillery in Owensboro donated a communication board for use in Wendell Foster's Sensory Park. The board is about 50 inches wide and 13 inches high. It is mounted at playgrounds, double sided, and has playground vocabulary using symbols and words, so all of the people that they serve will be able to utilize it.
- Using remaining KATS funds, were able to replace quite a few pieces of equipment, update the new and improved version of some of the communication devices, the TrackerPro head mouse. Purchased a new laptop for demo with the head mouse and the Eye Gaze. Purchased a KidWalk gait trainer to replace one that was not returned. Very grateful to the KATS Network for the funding to purchase new equipment.

Carl D Perkins – Lisa Staub

- Darrin reported that they have been busy picking up and delivering DME. Dalton, who works with him there, is now just working 20 hours a week and he's been doing the updates on their AT page and posting to Facebook. Darrin notes that reuse continues to be their driving force.

Updates of KATS Coordinating Center – Lisa Staub and Carol Weber

- Carol reported that the Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation is still not able to provide funding. Looking at how we can still make assistive technology affordable and available to people in Kentucky. Talking with the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation, the alternative financing corporation for Pennsylvania. They are submitting a grant for funding to provide interest free micro loans, \$7,000 and under, to individuals with disabilities in the whole Appalachian region. In Pennsylvania they serve as their own bank. In Kentucky we partner with a bank, but do not have a bank partner, despite multiple RFPs to find a bank partner. Kentucky continues to pursue this, and there will continue to be a great need as the Pennsylvania fund is only \$7,000 and under. Another state financing activity that we are going to be supporting is a maker space that will allow us to make assistive technology.

Pat Kitzman reported on the maker space that they are establishing in Hazard. Over the course of the last six months they have also received various foundation fundings for 3D laser printing. Working with KATS on providing services for anyone across Kentucky to adapt whatever you need and collaborating with Toyota on a maker space concept that can be used directly to adapt and create assistive technology.

Lisa reported on public awareness that was shared through a video for AT Awareness Day. At the same time all the state AT Act programs were asked to contact federal representatives and discuss the AT Act. This video was shared in an e-mail that was sent out to the legislative directors for our representatives and it really captured the attention of many. Carol and Lisa had a Zoom meeting with Sarah Coffman, the legislative director for

Congressman Comer. Also met with Seana Cranston, the legislative director for Congressman Massie, who was also able to participate in the call. Heard back from the legislative director for Congressman Brett Guthrie, who is in Wendell Foster's area and hopefully they can make a visit there. All were invited to visit our ATRCs. Jimmy met with Congressman Yarmuth in Jefferson County years ago. Congressman Yarmuth demonstrated support through signing on to the letter supporting the AT Act.

Jimmy reported on the technical assistance that has been provided over the last several months. Much of this revolves around accessibility issues with websites and documents, including work with KYStats. This has a web portal that they are setting up that secondary ed students who are getting ready to graduate and move on to postsecondary can use to find statistics on different majors, colleges that provide those majors, salary ranges, and qualifications. Testing was done with different screen readers, and they were provided with feedback on that system to improve the accessibility, so everybody has equal access. Worked on accessibility testing of Citizen Connect, Business Connect and Staff Connect online portals that are being set up with the Department of Workforce Investment. Able to provide a lot of feedback on color graphics, color charts and pie charts, along with information on improving the accessibility of the visuals so that individuals with color contrast deficiencies were able to better get that information. Reached out to the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet and the U.S. Department of Labor on forms specific to FMLA that our Personnel Cabinet provides for state employees that weren't accessible to those individuals, and they were very receptive, and made changes. Worked with the Education Cabinet and the Governor's office on accessible scholarship. Will continue to work with Vocational Rehabilitation and the KATS Network to ensure accessibility of documentation and forms.

Project CARAT sites

CARAT Paducah, Hazard – Lisa Staub, Patrick Kitzman

- Lisa shared story from Ashley with the Center for Accessible Living (CAL) in Bowling Green on a ten-foot suitcase ramp loaned to a consumer in Henderson, Kentucky. The family had been having a hard time finding a ramp

available in their area and drove to Bowling Green to pick up the ramp. The ramp was used to allow a man recently diagnosed with ALS to enjoy the rest of his life, in the words of his brother. He is now able to enter and leave his home without more than one individual assisting him, and to go outside with his family, enjoy his time outdoors and socialize with his neighbors.

- Pat reports that they have outgrown their space at the Center of Excellence in Rural Health in Hazard and are moving into an even larger space at the center to allow growth. Contacted in April by Spectrum News after a national news story had broken about the supply chain problems and the ability to get DME to people and the absolute importance of refurbishing program. They went to Hazard and met with one of the physical therapy student coordinators. Keisha shared the link for that video. It continues to be an exceptional need. They have an amazing community advisory committee that includes the Chamber of Commerce, the fiscal court, and the area development district, who have been helping get the word out to promote the program and find more efficient ways to get equipment in and equipment out the door.

State Agency Representatives

- Kentucky OVR, Andre Ryssemus – in the process of the official merger with Department of Labor. Carol Weber added there is a new entry level assistive technology specialist position open in the Paducah area.
- State Independent Living, Lisa McKeown - Agency has reorganized over the last couple of years. Melanie Piazza is their Executive Director. They are revamping a lot of their programs and working on outreach. Created a partnership in the Bowling Green office with the CARAT site. Each of the offices will have an ADA celebration in July. In the Louisville office it will be July 28th from 11:00 to 2:00. The mayor will read a proclamation and they will serve snacks
- Workforce KWIB, Suhas Kulkarni - From the workforce perspective, apart from equal opportunity, there is an economic imperative that we need to

have as many folks as possible, not just achieving their full potential, there is a lot of the support from the workforce side to enable accommodation and technologies because there is the need for qualified workforce. He suggests a linkage between open jobs or what employers feel they need and what we as a network start to cater to induce employers to create more assistive or accommodative technologies, which then we can fulfill. His objective is to aim for this alignment.

- Education Cabinet, Kevin McKormack - students are out for the summer, while a lot of teachers will be working. Starting the AT Lending Library at the School for the Blind to allow teachers throughout the state to borrow technology for students who are blind or visually impaired to see if it will work for them. Many of the items were donated by the KSB Charitable Foundation.
- KCDHH, Jessica Endler - working on changing all their phone equipment across the state of Kentucky and hiring a new person, O.J. Disney. He is a Telecommunications Program Specialist who will take over for the phone equipment so Jessica can focus on the telecommunications program. Another focus is the Emerging Leaders Program with educators and the workforce cabinet which has been an incredible experience for people who haven't gotten into the college experience and involves networking with a lot of different people throughout the state. Working with voc rehab to create a guide for employers so they would be more apt to hire deaf and hard of hearing individuals within their companies. Plan to market via a job fair and at the Deaf Festival in Danville. Hope that Tara will be a point of contact to handle this. Hope to share through the Commission's website. Going to partner with someone in the Cabinet for Economic Development and pull in a lot of different companies
- DD Council, Nicole Maher - Looking for a new Executive Director for the council. The job posting has not gone out but asked members to send qualified, interested candidates. Also looking for someone for their council who has a developmental disability, and/or a parent of someone who has a

disability. Targeted disparity for the next five-year plan is rural, they have changed the system in which they are doing grants and are doing requests for proposals. Just closed out some and will be doing those throughout the year as money comes available or when different needs come up.

Opportunity to partner with some AT centers especially those that are serving rural areas to do different things.

Open Discussion from Advisory Council

- Nicole Maher described a program called Partners in Policymaking, an internationally recognized program. It is an eight-month program that started with the council in Minnesota and meets once a month for a weekend or for two days. They liken it to getting your master's degree in disabilities. Covers everything from education, history, work settings, how to engage in meetings. Have speakers from both national and state perspectives. They are opening applications for the program starting in September. This is for people who have a developmental disability and/or are a parent. Brings the graduates back together for a mini conference each year to build a network of empowered advocates to make change in Kentucky.
- Lisa McKeown reported that all the Independent Living Centers are working on different reopening protocols through COVID. Doing combination hybrid and in-person services. Focus on social media and TikTok videos to poke a little fun at disability etiquette.
- Nancy Perry asked if there were any videos in production for hospital or medical settings with high turnover to help staff who need to assist deaf individuals.
- Lisa Staub responded that KATS is pursuing ways to help to make health information accessible on websites, videos and documents, but was not aware of any videos being created at this time
- Nancy Perry asked for information on an accessible place where people of any age to get together to see and learn about different technology.

- Carol Weber discussed the AT grant Act grant agency in Indiana. Their AT workshop focused on end users and covered things like what Nancy mentioned including different types of technologies and funding for them. Not something that was done in Kentucky before, but we do have groups that have come together like the Stroke Survivors Camp through KARRN.
- Pat Kitzman helped run this and reported to be in the process of figuring out next steps of how to reengage everybody after COVID. Planned to hold at Elkhorn State Park to totally reengage the eastern Kentucky Stroke Warriors Group.
- Lisa McKeown suggested demonstrations at the Center for Independent Living or holding a training course related to the consumers.
- Nancy Perry described experience from Michigan working with children with a large variety of disabilities that came to a three-day retreat. There were presentations, demonstrations, and children playing with the technology. The camp was for deaf and hard of hearing and hearing blind individuals and low vision who all share their equipment. They brought equipment for low vision and other technology. Noted the individuals were really uplifted, and they know what's out there, know what's available. Nancy would like to see that in Kentucky.
- Nicole Maher asked how that would be different than the AT Conference that is held. What is the vision, the difference between a retreat or a conference?
- Jessica Endler Smith described a conference as more to educate, but for an end user it could be more of utilizing the equipment, testing it out, and it's a more relaxed environment. With deaf and hard of hearing children, at the Deaf Olympics, Special Olympics, they have different sports and people get together and a feel of comradery to all be there together that's better than a conference. The Kentucky Lions Camp, and various camps for people that bring technology to those camps, so they can play with it and then they can maybe go home and tell their parents about it, would be a really good resource for them.

- Jimmy Brown added that it would be more like a hands-on experience with the actual technology. Reflecting on the Indiana AT Act program, he described one of the things that they did in the past was like an AT road show. Maybe once a quarter they would have different partners that they work with like Independent Living Centers and other community rehab providers. They would travel the state and set up items for people to look at and they would have a different topic each quarter. One quarter may be specific to visually impaired equipment, one might be towards deaf and hard of hearing equipment, one might be towards mobility type equipment, and they would just bring a multitude of devices and show like the feeder feeding arm and the glasses and the different things like that where people could get hands on what all different types of technology is out there. This might be something that KATS could investigate. We have the centers that provide the demonstrations where people can always go and see the equipment, but I think if we go to the people more and go outside of that, as Nancy is saying, people will travel to go to places. She's been to other states to see these things, why can't we do these things in Kentucky where people within our own state are able to see that equipment? They can also kind of steer what equipment we're showing because they can provide feedback as to what they are learning new things, but they also know things that maybe we're not as aware of and they can share those for KATS to look at expanding out as well.
- Suhas Kulkarni agreed and suggested a lot of the assistive technology being discussed is also needed by the elderly. He mentioned a possible collaboration with the Thrive Center in Louisville and offered to try and make a connection with them. Also suggests we try to collaborate with research areas of UK and U of L as well as the local hospitals like Norton's University and Baptist and would like to try to collaborate. Feels an awareness campaign to get more and more people involved should be undertaken.
- Lisa McKeown suggests collaboration is the key. Talked about the initial diagnosis of a disability, the coping process and the importance of a peer

support network or collaboration group, Helpful to communicate with somebody that's going through what you're going through whether it be young person or elderly person. Important for us to look at ways to increase public awareness, as there are lots of resources available for the disability community, but you either have to know somebody or know somebody with a disability or have a disability to be aware of it.

- Jessica Endler Smith mentioned the Kentucky Hands and Voices organization for the parents of children of deaf and hard of hearing kids which has a program called Deaf and Hard of Hearing Superheroes. The program has an adult who has already experienced deafness and technology and they mentor that child, and so it's kind of like the Big Brothers, Big Sisters concept. It would be interesting if we could set up something similar with other disabilities.
- Nancy Perry suggested a local place with different activities like hiking, that can provide food, as sometimes if someone has disability they might stay home and not actually be physically active. Could encourage them to come and teach them the technology to have them actively involved, which can be uplifting, and can keep them more social.
- Alison Amshoff suggested talking to places like Fahrenheit Camp Courageous Kids, that already have a structure in place and focus on different needs each weekend, and then have KATS or technology centers be a part of this to exhibit different pieces of technology while the families are there. The families like to get together, talk through experiences, learn from each other, but then also you could have the assistive technology there to highlight and have things to try while people are outdoors.
- Kevin McCormack suggested these ideas could possibly go under a socialization type committee made a motion to create a socialization committee and requested a second
- Nicole Maher seconded the motion
- Kevin McCormack reported that we now have a socialization committee. Anyone interested can email Kevin or Lisa Staub to get it started.

- Suhas Kulkarni asked whether there is representation for learning disabilities. Noted there are a lot of people who have varying degrees of learning disabilities. Discussed research on overwhelming number of people who were incarcerated could not read and could not go to school. They were socially ostracized and consequently they followed the path, which they naturally do, which got them into jail. A significant number of people that fall into this category. Our education is not very adept at addressing these problems, and he wondered whether there is need or whether anyone here is already catering to learning disabilities as a way of fulfilling one's potential as well as leading a meaningful life and to serve the workforce.
- Andre Ryssemus suggested therapeutic recreation departments summer programs and camps for people with disabilities which ranges from young to adults might be the angle to investigate as well.
- Nancy Perry noted that many of the camps are very full in the summer and that Michigan purposefully pushes programs out into the fall or early spring to make more spots available for people with other disabilities to attend, enjoy, learn and be educated and be able to touch equipment and interact with each other and use the equipment.

Announcements

- Kevin McCormack offered devices called book ports. These were made 10, 15 years ago and older than that as well, and given to the Lending Library at the School for the Blind but nobody requested them because they have a lot of new technology, that is more in demand. The book ports are still usable, and basically like iPods or the MP3 players but with no screen. Will play music and books on it. Relatively easy to load and use
- Lisa Staub also offered equipment from McDowell for anyone to look at after the meeting
- Peggy Farmer offered non-latex, powder free gloves that Redwood received from a large Amazon donation
- Next council meeting dates:

- Wednesday September 7, 2022
 - Time: 9:30 am-11:30 pm, Eastern Standard Time
 - Location: Kentucky State University Farm in Frankfort. The meeting will be held in conjunction with the AT Conference.
- Thursday December 8, 2022 - enTECH
- March 2023

Adjournment: 11:25 PM

Motion called by Kevin and Mindy provided the second for the motion.