

KATS Network Advisory Council Minutes

Date: March 10, 2022

Time: 9:32 AM, Eastern Time

Place: Zoom

Welcome & Introductions – Mindy McGirt

Advisory Council Members

Andre Ryssemus, Lisa McKeown, Suhas Kulkarni, Kevin McCormack, Jessica Endler, Bill Titus, Samantha Farthing, Gerry Gordon-Brown, Mindy McGirt, Nancy Perry

KATS Network Coordinating Center and ATRC Staff

Joe McCombs, Peter O'Connor, Alison Amshoff (enTECH), Christina Espinosa-Bard (HDI-CATS), Peggy Farmer, Beth Icerman (Redwood), Jana Billingsley (Wendell Foster), Darrin Breeding, Dalton West (Carl Perkins), Carol Weber, Lisa Staub (KATS)

Others in Attendance

Jimmy Brown, Alyssa Whitis (OVR), Alexander Castlen, Bethany Hukle (OVR Interns)

Approval of Minutes from Past Meeting(s)

Nicole Maher motioned for approval of the December 9, 2021, meeting minutes. Nancy Perry provided a second. Motion carried.

Old Business:

Advisory Council Timelines – Jimmy Brown

Jimmy Brown asked everyone to look at their meeting book to check under their names to see if the city they're from and expiration dates are correct. For those whose terms will be ending soon, they will be receiving an email

from the coordinating center asking if they want to reapply or be reappointed. Jimmy then went person by person to make sure everyone's information was correct. He also asked going forward to think of other agencies that might benefit the KATS Network as being part of the Advisory Council.

Advisory Council Subcommittees – Jimmy Brown

Jimmy Brown stated that we need to go through and reappoint members to the subcommittees for the Advisory Council. They need at least one agency representative and at least one individual representative who uses assistive technology. There are four subcommittees:

- State Planning/Strategic Planning Committee – They assist with identifying or exploring opportunities to grow. This includes everything from the demonstration and loan programs to the reuse Project CARAT program to trainings, public awareness, and all things KATS related.
 - Members: Suhas Kulkarni, Alison Amshoff
- Program Marketing and Awareness Committee – They assist with the direct marketing of the KATS Network and affiliated programs such as Project CARAT, SHARP, RampUP, and the regional ATRCs. They assist in identifying avenues that KATS should be marketing their programs to.
 - Members: Peggy Farmer, Joe McCombs, Mindy McGirt
- Assistive Technology Conference Planning Committee – Each year KATS partners with the Vocational Rehabilitation Assistive Technology Branch on a summer statewide conference. Individuals identify topics that would be covered, presenters, and handle overall planning of the conference.
 - Members: Lisa McKeown, Mindy McGirt, Andre Ryssemus, Jessica Endler, Jana Billingsley, Christina Espinosa-Bard
- Nominating Committee – They assist with identifying potential members for the Advisory Council, help with recruiting individuals for the Advisory Council, and identifying individuals that KATS might want to target for the Advisory Council membership.
 - Members: Kevin McCormack, Nicole Maher, Samantha Farthing, Lisa, and Bill

New Business:

Mindy McGirt turned the meeting over to Carol Weber to discuss changes that are happening at the KATS Coordinating Center.

Tour of the Demo Lab – Heidi Kesterson

Carol Weber asked Heidi Kesterson to give a video tour of a space that is going to be used for the new demonstration lab at the McDowell Center.

KATS Coordinating Center – Carol Weber

Carol Weber introduced herself and shared her screen for a PowerPoint presentation. She went over the following information:

- How the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is organized and that the KATS Network has moved into the Assistive Technology Branch.
- She explained that her role is going to be mostly working along the lines of the budget and contracts as well federal reporting.
- Lisa Staub is the Program Coordinator. In the future, they plan to increase the staffing of the KATS Network. They are reposting the position of KATS Network Director.
- Carol discussed KATS Network funding and explained how the budget breaks down:
 - State level activities have to do with providing assistive technology to individuals. This includes device demonstration, device loan, and device reuse.
 - State leadership activities is about getting the word out about assistive technology. State level is all about the equipment, state leadership is all about talking about assistive technology. This includes training, public awareness, and loaning.
- Carol discussed contracts next. In the past, \$60,000 is the budget amount for each contract with each of the ARTCs and that is going to stay the same. They're not going to competitive bid these contracts. They are going to stay with the current ARTCs. What they want to do is customize the required activities in the contract to each individual center, recognizing that we rely on the ARTCs to do state level activities.

- Carol then explained that we need to document that our expenses are reasonable, allocable, allowable, and necessary to carry out the program. Timely and accurate reporting of expenses is very important so that we are making sure that we meet the federal guidelines.

ACL Public Health Grant – Lisa Staub

Lisa Staub began by giving a few updates on the KATS Coordinating Center. My New Kentucky Smart Home grant through the Reeve Foundation is currently on hold. They recently switched over to the new AT locator website and they're going to have a training for all the centers and other participants on Monday March 14th.

Key Points about the ACL Public Health Grant:

- The KATS Network has received funding from the Administration for Community Living through the American Rescue Plan and the purpose is to expand the public health workforce within the aging and disability networks and prepare for future health challenges.
- The grant amount received is \$80,000 and this is just one-time funding. We have until September 30, 2024, to spend those funds.
- The funding is to expand the workforce that support public health needs with people with disabilities, their families, providers, and staff.

The meeting participants were asked to talk about some of the needs they've seen during COVID regarding individuals with disabilities.

- The pandemic has turned everything virtual and not all technology is accessible to individuals with disabilities. Websites are not always accessible to someone using a screen reader (Lisa McKeown and Jimmy Brown).
- A lot of our consumers in independent living still must deal with the normal needs of housing, transportation, and food (Lisa McKeown).
- Ways of addressing social isolation that's occurred because of the pandemic and ways to reintegrate people back into the community (Jimmy Brown).
- Transportation is a huge issue due to the pandemic (Lisa Staub).
- Access to access, for example Zoom (Andre Ryssemus).

- Medical websites, telehealth, and MyChart (Lisa McKeown and Jessica Endler).
- Carol Weber clarified that the money is available to hire a healthcare worker to address these needs. For example, regarding issues for the deaf and hard of hearing community with accessibility of telehealth because interpreters aren't always provided and the need to be educating people about using VRI. That could be someone we hire to educate doctors about using VRI.
- Creating a training video that can be archived due to high turnover at medical offices (Nancy Perry).
- There needs to be education of all disabilities so medical staff can assist them (Lisa McKeown).
- Education for all providers to understand the needs of people with intellectual disabilities and sensory disabilities who might need more time, attention, and better explanation through interpreters or communication devices (Mindy McGirt).
- Partnerships between different organizations like the KCDHH and independent living centers to give feedback to someone. Then OVR could give information on what is needed and to provide outreach to consumers (Lisa McKeown).
- This person could be applying to get an AmeriCorps grant, or something similar, to help continue those services past September 2024 (Mindy McGirt).
- Raise awareness in the employer community. Get a census of the availability of workforce-oriented folks with disabilities who employers might be motivated to help so that they can bring them into their own workforce (Sahas Kulkarni).

Updates from ATRCs:

enTECH – Joe McCombs

- Over the previous quarter, there were more long term AT loans. There were 24 items returned, many of which were significant in dollar value.
- Alison has been helping with the community. For example, she's been working with an OT student to identify needs with pediatric cancer patients and educating them on items available for loan.

- Speech-language class – 48 sessions in October, 53 in November, and 30 in December.

HDI-CATS – Christina Espinosa-Bard

- During the last quarter, they had 65 items that went out on loan.
- They hosted ADA talks in October and November.
- They're continuing to do a live presentation and tour with pediatrics residents every month which gives them a good overview of their resources so that they could carry those back with them.
- They worked with an SLP and were able to get her some AT. She's working with a student with cortical visual impairment, so they have some options for speech and consideration of vision impairment for a child.

Redwood – Peggy Farmer

- During the last quarter, they loaned 23 items to 16 individuals. For example, Carl D. Perkins had several items that they were no longer able to house, and Darrin brought them up. One of them was an adapted bike and they had a family who had been searching for one for their child.
- They continued to accept donations. Some of them include a Bruno scooter vehicle lift, Rifton Pacer Gait Trainer, electronic magnifier, and light magnifier, and three wheelchairs.
- They provided 3 demonstrations in October. One was during an IFSP Zoom meeting for a First Steps client, the second was a family member that needed some communication options for her sister who was no longer able to verbalize, and the third was provided along with a physical therapist to look at mobility options for a First Steps client. In December they did another demonstration for another First Steps family and their speech therapist looking for communication options.
- In October they provided training to staff at Redwood on a communication app for the iPad. They also provided training on the use of JAWS to navigate 3D printer websites. Training was also provided to an occupational therapist on AT items for a First Steps child.
- They had 4 ramps loaned out in October, two in November, and 1 in December.

WKATC – Jana Billingsley

- Wendell Foster continued during the last quarter to provide information and assistance for First Steps providers across the state about how to access assistive technology resources.
- In October they had a device demonstration with a child, a five-year old child with autism from Henderson County. The speech therapist determined that a Nova Chat 10 would work so they are currently trialing that.
- The AT staff and therapists provided information and assistance to over 1,000 people.
- They returned 57 items that were loaned out in October. For example, one business that creates accessible voting systems for people with disabilities borrowed their sip and puff switch because theirs suddenly broke. They were able to demonstrate how someone with motor difficulties could vote independently using their product.
- They hosted their annual expo which is an opportunity for families to see what is available to them. There were vendors there that represented adult day services, advocacy, AT behavior support, DME, education employment, and future planning.
- In October, they gave out over \$4,000 in equipment through the reuse program. In November, they gave away over \$1,500 in items. In December, they gave out over \$300 in items.
- In November, they had two device demonstrations. One was an AAC assessment with a student with autism to work on communication skills and to find a device that works for them. They also had a team of educators from Webster County schools come in looking for an adapted toy that would allow one of their five-year old students with a vision impairment to work on switch skills.
- They provided two virtual trainings for the Kentucky Early Intervention providers on the types of AT available and the First Steps policy and procedure. This reached 23 service coordinators and providers across the state.
- They hosted a Lunch and Learn featuring Superior Van Mobility showing vehicle modifications and solutions. It was attended by 14 physical therapists.

Carl Perkins – Darrin Breeding

- They're still getting lots of donations moving in and out. Most of the items are hospital beds, wheelchairs, walkers, and shower chairs.
- They have 10 ramps on loan right now. There are some that have been damaged, and they are working on getting them repaired and cleaned up.
- Dalton was able to start a Facebook page, it's listed as Project CARAT Paintsville.

Project CARAT sites

CARAT Paducah, Hazard – Lisa Staub

- Paducah has a total of 82 items that are currently out on loan and since January they have had 15 items go out.
- Hazard has 2 new trained PT students that have been trained to assess and refurbish the durable medical equipment and they have had a lot of major equipment donations. They have a program there called CARAT top and it brings together students of all abilities from local high schools and they apply classroom skills to refurbish used medical equipment and other devices.
- They are also developing an internship program and a dedicated maker space at the Center of Excellence and Rural Health that will be used for skills training as well as help with CARAT. They have new toys with a purpose adaptive toy lending library. The toys with a purpose program is working on supporting play in children with disabilities by providing access to adapted toys. Then they are going to provide the students with the opportunity to adapt the toys, prototype, develop universally designed educational materials, and provide them experience engaging community leaders.

CARAT Louisville – Joe McCombs

- Over the quarter they donated 220 items valued at about \$22,000.
- They sent about 20 wheelchairs to Western Kentucky after the tornado.
- Someone donated several gait trainers, mini gait trainers, a couple pediatric chairs and some standers.

- They have about a dozen ramps out. Multiple requests for if any of them are returned to go out to other families, but right now everything is out.

CARAT Lexington – Christina Espinosa-Bard

- Lexington also currently has all their ramps out.
- They distributed 177 items during the quarter to 72 individuals and the value was about \$76,000.
- They are working with the NIH funding that they have with the biomedical engineer students. Those students are using some of the Project CARAT equipment to learn how to customize it, how it works, break it down and put it back together.
- They received two chill-out chairs with footrests.

CARAT Paintsville – Darrin Breeding

- Darrin discussed all the Project Carat updates in the previous section.

Open Discussion from Advisory Council

- Nancy Perry: There were people who lost everything from the tornado in western Kentucky. There was a deaf person able to get some technology and support from TAP. If another tornado hits in the future, they could reach out to them to see if people with disabilities in that area need assistance.
- Lisa McKeown: Their office in Bowling Green was able to get people replacement devices through CARAT. Also, the Red Cross brought in battery power supplies for people to charge their wheelchairs.

Announcements

- Lisa McKeown: The Center for Accessible Living has a new director. The center has also started a women's peer support group that meets on the fourth Monday of every month.
- Jessica Endler: The commission on the TAP board is looking for two people to join.

Next council meeting date:

June 9, 2022

Time: 9:30 am-12:30 pm, Eastern Standard Time

Location: McDowell Center with Zoom Link to be provided

Adjournment: 12:22 PM

Motion called by Lisa and Jessica provided the second for the motion.