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Steve Hamerdinger, Editor

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Signs of Mental Health



SUSAN CHAMBERS NAMED NEW ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER FOR MENTAL ILLNESS

Susan Chambers was appointed Associate Commissioner for Mental Illness Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation Commissioner John Houston announced on Monday, November 7, 2005.

Prior to her appointment as Associate Commissioner, Ms. Chambers was the director of Greil Memorial Psychiatric Hospital, where the planned Bailey Deaf inpatient unit will be located. She began her career at Bryce, where she was involved with community placement. She then moved to Greil where she held a number of increasingly responsible positions in the hospital before being named Director early in 1997.



Ms. Chambers was closely involved in the development of Deaf Services, first as a member of the Deaf Services Task Force in 2001 and then as an active member of the Deaf Services Advisory Group since its inception in 2003. A strong supporter of

the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate services, she has worked diligently to help Deaf Services overcome numerous and frustrating system roadblocks to opening the Bailey Unit.

With Ms. Chamber's assumption of the top position in the Mental Illness Division, ADMH/MR appears well positioned to continue its strong support of improving services to deaf and hard of hearing consumers. "The Office of Deaf Services is fortunate to have such a proven friend in this position," said ODS Director Steve Hamerdinger. "Ms. Chambers is intimately familiar with the mission of Deaf Services and has a good understanding that Deaf people with mental illness have unique needs."

The Bailey Deaf Unit is still in the process of hiring direct care workers. No opening date has been set.

NEW GROUP HOMES OPEN IN BIRMINGHAM

*By Shannon Reese,
Coordinator, Region II*

Two new three-person group homes for deaf consumers opened in the Birmingham area this fall. The two facilities, operated by the Jefferson-Blount-St. Clair Mental Health Authority, join two previous homes for deaf consumers run by J-B-S.

The Vaughn House opened to new residents on October 17th. This house is designed for consumers needing behavior modification services (short and long term care). Della Daugherty is the home coordinator.

elementary schools in the Birmingham area. She later worked with Great Day, Inc. with the Community Supports Division in Decatur, GA, connecting consumers with community services. In this position, she also provided education in substance abuse and improving communication for families with Deaf members.

The second home, the 18th Avenue House, will work with deaf and mentally ill residents from either the hospital or community to teach skills needed to move to independent living settings. The home coordinator for the 18th Avenue House is Michelle Belcher. Ms. Belcher has been working in



Vaughn House serves consumers needing special behavior modification

Ms. Daugherty received her BS, with a dual major in psychology and anthropology. She has been working in the mental health field for 5 years. She started as a Prevention



Della Daugherty

Counselor with Gateway Family Services in the Community Connections Division with

the mental health field for 10 years, first working with children and adults at Glenwood, Inc., and later as a social worker at Gateway Family Services. She holds a BA in Psychology from Alabama A & M University in Huntsville. She learned sign language through staff at Glenwood, Inc.,



Michelle Belcher

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Region 1: Northern Alabama Recruiting, Coordinator

Mental Health Center of
Madison County
4040 South Memorial Pkwy
Huntsville, AL 35802
(256) 533-1970 (Voice)
(256) 533-1922 (TTY)

Region 2: Central Alabama Shannon Reese, Coordinator

J-B-S Mental Health Center
956 Montclair Road, Suite 108
Birmingham, AL 35213
205-591-2212 (Voice)
205-591-2216 (TTY)

Region 3: Wiregrass Region Liz Hill, Coordinator

Montgomery Area
Mental Health Authority
101 Coliseum Boulevard
Montgomery, AL 36109
(334) 279-7830 (Voice)
(334) 271-2855 (TTY)

Region 4: Mobile Recruiting, Coordinator

Mobile Mental Health Center
5750B Southland Drive
Mobile, Alabama 36693
(251) 662-2226 (Voice)
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2005 INTERPRETER INSTITUTE A SUCCESS

The 2005 Interpreter Institute, part of the Office of Deaf Services' Mental Health Interpreter Training Project, ran from August 8 – 12 in Montgomery.



Participants concentrating hard on new material at the Interpreter Institute

The Interpreter Institute is an intense, 40 contact-hour program which covers a wide range of areas related to mental health interpreting. It is the national benchmark training, drawing participants from around the country. This year, in addition to interpreters from Alabama, participants also came from Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, North Carolina, New Jersey, Texas, Florida, Louisiana and Georgia. Altogether, 30 people participated.

As in previous years, the faculty was led by several national experts in mental health and interpreting. Back for the third straight year were Dr. Robert Pollard, one of the most prolific researchers and writers in mental health and deafness,



Robyn Dean and Bob Pollard share a lighter moment

and Roger Williams who is internationally recognized both as an interpreter and a clinician. ODS Director Steve Hamerdinger, who has developed a national reputation as a mental health interpreter trainer was also back for the third year. They were joined for the second straight year by Robyn Dean, who has done ground-breaking work in Observation-Supervision and Demand-Control theories of interpreting. Sue Scott did a repeat performance examining professional development goals and mentoring. Rounding out the faculty were Alabama Mental Health Interpreter Coordinator Charlene Crump, who has lectured nationally on Psycholinguistics, Keven Poore, who chairs the Chemical Dependency Special Interest Section of the American



Roger Williams clarifies a technical point during practice and review

Deafness and Rehabilitation Association, who focused on the unique issues in chemical dependency in the Deaf Community, and Brian McKenny, Bailey Unit Staff Interpreter, who addressed interpreting in substance abuse settings.



Keven Poore, Director of the New York Society of for the Deaf Substance Abuse Program makes a point

They were joined by Kathy Seifried, of the Division of Substance Abuse, who led a fascinating activity called "Hearing Voices," which simulates the experience of auditory hallucinations. This activity gave interpreters a better understanding of the difficulties people who are hallucinating have. As an interesting aside, a preliminary research was done on responses to questions presented in spoken English versus questions presented in Sign Language. A summary of those results will appear in these pages in a future edition.

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DMH, ODS EXPLORES PROGRAMMING FOR SED DEAF KIDS

*By Liz Hill
Coordinator, Region III*

The Office of Deaf Services (ODS) is working towards establishing a statewide program for severely emotionally disturbed (SED) deaf children and adolescents. As previously reported, Steve Hamerdinger and Liz Hill collected data on deaf youth that required some type of psychiatric care for fiscal years 2004 and 2005. The data collected showed that a significant number of SED deaf children in Alabama need a continuum of care that does not currently exist.

Alabama presents a unique opportunity because of the unusual level of interagency cooperation found here. Rarely do state agencies work so closely together to maximize resources. The various agencies recognize the need to "do something different" because of the high cost and low success rate of traditional services.

Ms. Hill has expanded the Summer Referral program at Alabama School for the Deaf in which services were coordinated for select students in their home region while they were out of school. Instead of limiting it to summer, She is working closely with the psychology department in an effort to provide more community resources for SED children year-round. Community resources include individual and family counseling from Regional

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As I See It

By Steve Hamerdinger



"Don't get stuck on stupid."

This pithy one-liner by Army Lt. General Russell Honore, military commander of the relief effort in the Gulf States post-Katrina, became an instant buzz phrase after he used it in a response to a reporter who continued to ask totally asinine questions that had no answer and had been asked many times before. During the aftermath of Katrina, the media was doing it very best to continue to earn the opprobrium in the eyes of the body public. People who are presumably intelligent seem to become incapable of reason when confronted with situations that challenge their cherished worldviews.

We are amazed at how many people, who are otherwise bright and seemingly well-balanced, are "stuck on stupid" when it comes to serving deaf people. In a meeting a few weeks ago, considerable time and effort was spent on laboriously building, step by step, a case that a linguistically accessible environment would lead to better consumer outcomes than one that is not. Around the table heads nodded as the dots were connected between being able to communicate effectively with the staff in a "treatment" environment and the likelihood of actually benefiting from such treatment. A consensus seemed to develop. A plan emerged. Then, as it often happens, someone objected. "It's not the least restrictive environment." "This patient needs an integrated placement." It didn't matter that only moments earlier, most people in the room had clearly understood the need for and accepted the idea of a specialized treatment program. Forget that, for deaf people, integration almost invariably leads to communication and social isolation. Homage must be paid to the hallowed notion that "it's a hearing world out there." If you can't win an argument on the merits, then by all means, invoke a hoary shibboleth or volubly repeat some sacrosanct mantra. "LRE is God." "Family Preservation." "Community-based services."

If it happens that appeals to emotion do not derail a good plan, hiding behind pseudo statistical arguments sometimes will. "I don't believe that your data is correct. You said there were 15 children who are deaf and need residential treatment, but I only show 13 so obviously you are wrong. The whole plan needs to be scrapped." We have watched four plans in three states -

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NEW GROUP HOMES OPEN IN BIRMINGHAM

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and became interested in working with deaf and mentally ill people. The 18th Avenue house will be used as a short-

service options available to deaf placement. The need for the expanded options became clear when consumers showed significant improvement when they were placed in an environment with sign language and full communication access.



The 18th Avenue House focus on teaching independent living skills

term transition home, with the length of stay around 18 to 24 months. The focus will be on teachings basic living skills, community skills, and money management.

These two new group homes greatly expand the continuum of

These homes represent the continued commitment on the part of J-B-S and the Office of Deaf Services to provide people who are deaf and mentally ill with culturally and linguistically appropriate options for mental health treatment. 

CURRENT QUALIFIED MENTAL HEALTH INTERPRETERS

Becoming a **Qualified Mental Health Interpreter** in Alabama requires a rigorous course of study, practice and examination that takes most people nearly a year to complete. It involves 40 hours of classroom time, 40 hours of supervised practica and a comprehensive examination covering all aspects of mental health interpreting. More than 75 people have started the process and many are nearing completion

The following people have successfully completed all the requirements for certification.

- *Charlene Crump, Montgomery*
- *Sue Scott, Mobile*
- *Nancy Hayes, Hayden City*
- *Brian McKenny, Montgomery*
- *Dee Johnston, Oxford*
- *Debra Walker, Montgomery*
- *Diane Alumbaugh, Birmingham*
- *Angel Dahlgren, Mobile*
- *Lisa Gould, Mobile*
- *Dawn Marren, Huntsville*
- *Jill Farmer, Birmingham*

PARK TERRACE PROGRAM SHARES IDEAS WITH JORDANIAN SISTER CITY

The city of Birmingham is the sister city of a region called Karak in Jordan. One of the goals of this partnership is to enhance services for mentally retarded people and specifically DeafBlind individuals in Karak. On November 3, 2005, Karak's Mayor, Moh'd Maaitah, was in Birmingham to visit Jefferson, Blount, St. Clair Mental Health Authority's programs for the mentally retarded. One of the stops on his tour was the Park Terrace House, which serves a mentally ill, mentally retarded, DeafBlind individual. Malissa Cates, Deaf Program Director, and Matthew Hutton, DeafBlind Home Coordinator, explained how the staff of 6 people work around the clock to support this individual.

Mr. Maaitah was accompanied by JBSMHA's MR Program Director, Audrey Gray and Assistant Director, Jackie Peeples. During the tour, ODS Regional Coordinator, Shannon Reese had the opportunity to talk with Maaitah and explain how Deaf Services is set up. Maaitah expressed great interest in improving communication for deaf and blind people in his home of Karak.

FOCUS ON THE TEAM



2005 INTERPRETER INSTITUTE A SUCCESS



Malissa Cates

My name is Malissa Cates and I became the new program director of Deaf Services for Jefferson-Blount-St. Clair Mental Health/Mental Retardation Authority on

November 1, 2005. I received my bachelor's degree in psychology from Auburn University in 1996 and my master's degree in Agency Counseling from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 1999. I have worked in mental health for over 10 years, and have been afforded the opportunity to work with various populations in a variety of settings. I completed my practicum and internship at a United Way agency providing outpatient services. I worked for seven years at an inpatient psychiatric facility in Decatur, AL. During this time, I provided services to children, adolescent, adult, and geriatric patients. Primarily, I was responsible for providing emergency psychiatric assessments to determine the appropriate level of care necessary to meet the needs of the patient. I also worked as a freelance court-appointed evaluator/expert witness for the Probate Court of Morgan County. I was responsible for evaluating individuals on whom a petition had been filed, and providing testimony to the court regarding the least restrictive treatment appropriate and available to the individual. I relocated to Birmingham two years ago to join JBS Mental Health/Mental Retardation Authority in the Bessemer Mental Health Court program.

My interest in the deaf community began my senior year in high school when my class traveled to Jamaica to help build a school for deaf children. In graduate school, I took a class in Working with Deaf Clients that focused on sign language skills. It was not until I met my "adopted" family that I began to interact with the deaf community at my church. My "adopted" father's brother is deaf and therefore, my father signs fluently. He served as an interpreter at our church and our family attended the majority of the deaf community events. I am working on becoming proficient in ASL. The staff and consumers of our program have taken a special interest in teaching me. During my spare time, I enjoy a variety of activities. I love reading, traveling, Auburn football, and spending time with my siblings. I am also involved in my local church.



*Sue Scott discusses
mentorship*

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As in the past, the response was overwhelmingly positive. One participant from Pennsylvania said, "So much to think about... The training for me was one of the best spent weeks of my career." Another participant said, "I very much appreciated the opportunity to join you... It has made a very big difference in my thinking, and helped me understand some very important components. In fact, it has allowed me to think about interpreting in a new and necessary way."

In a departure from previous years, all sessions were held in the RSA Union building, site of the Central Offices of the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. This change proved to be well accepted by all. Plans for the 2006 Institute are being made now. 

From Governing Magazine:

Number of public high schools that offer ASL for foreign language credit: More than 700

Source: *The Gazette*, 11/2/05

As I See It

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all premised on nationally proven models - shot down on purely philosophical, not practical grounds. In each case, there was little regard for the merits of the proposal. The objection was that these plans called for a departure from orthodoxy, an unspoken judgment on the failure of the pure gospel of integration. These plans called for creating a statewide center for working with deaf children, staffed with people who – gasp – could actually communicate with the children. They were trashed solely on the basis of the oft-discredited delusion that services could be provided equally well in the child's home community.

Never mind that "integrated community-based services" often fail deaf consumers, particularly children. Ignore the fact that staff in those programs are not trained in working with deaf children, nor do they have time to take such training. It doesn't matter that no one can understand what the child says or signs or, for that matter can determine if the child has any language at all. All that is unimportant compared with the need for the system to pay fealty to the "politically correct" concept of social services. Inevitably, the lemmings seem ready to follow the lone voice off the cliff and kill an otherwise viable plan than to buck "the system." I can reach no other

conclusion but such people are "stuck on stupid" when it comes to working with deaf people in general and deaf children in particular. When we deal with deaf children with emotional or behavioral problems, multiply the "stupid factor" several times.

The reason we have such a crisis of care with deaf children with severe emotional challenges in Alabama is that the "system" does not work. In a progression that should be obvious to a three-year old Inuit living in the Alaska Wilderness, when you take a child who is traumatized by lack of communication in her environment, stick her in another environment where there is lack of communication, the result will not be optimal. So when the child further decompensates, what does the system do? Put her in yet another environment where the caregiver is unable to establish effective communication. Of course, the resulting behavior problems are attributed to the child, never to the system. After all, received wisdom from omniscient and benevolent bureaucrats cannot possibly be wrong. So the system tries yet another linguistically inaccessible, culturally inappropriate, untrained and ill-prepared placement.

Albert Einstein defined insanity as "doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result." Of course, General Honore stated the same thing in a more colorful way. What Alabama's child care system has been doing for deaf children doesn't work and it's way past

time to try something different. **As I See It**, it's time to stop being "stuck on stupid." 

SED DEAF KIDS PROGRAM EXPLORED

Continued from page 4

Coordinators, interfacing with mental health centers, and collaborating with the Department of Human Resources.

Mr. Hamerdinger and Ms. Hill are working closely with DMH/MR's Office of Children's Services, Department of Human Resources, Alabama Multiple Needs Child Office, and Alabama School for the Deaf, among others. This kind of interagency collaboration is almost unprecedented. The committee had a preliminary meeting in November and will meet on a regular basis to design a culturally and linguistically appropriate continuum of care for SED deaf children and adolescents. To make this happen, agencies are challenged to redefine terms such as "community integration," "family preservation," and "least restrictive environment."

ODS looks forward to a positive collaboration in this effort and looks forward to being able to provide our SED deaf children with an array of culturally sensitive treatment options. 

POSITIONS WITH THE OFFICE OF DEAF SERVICES

MENTAL HEALTH LPN

SALARY RANGE: 57 (\$ 20,625 - \$30,604)

QUALIFICATIONS: Graduation from a standard high school, supplemented by graduation from a state-approved school of practical nurse education. Current license or eligibility to practice as a LPN in the State of Alabama. Preference given for experience in a psychiatric setting.

DEAF UNIT MENTAL HEALTH WORKER

SALARY RANGE: 46 (\$16,502 - \$23,322)

QUALIFICATIONS: One year of college/post-secondary technical training and one year of experience in providing direct care or teacher aide services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals, preferably in mental health psychiatric hospital, group home, or nursing home. Other job-related education and/or experience may be substituted for all or part of these basic requirements upon approval of the Job Evaluation Committee.

All positions will be based at Greil Memorial Psychiatric Hospital, 2140 Upper Wetumpka Road, Montgomery, AL. 36107

For more information or for application, please contact:

Dr. Frances Ralston, Program Director
Bailey Deaf Unit
Office of Deaf Services
Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation
100 North Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130

Frances.ralston@greil.mh.alabama.gov

(334) 353-4701 (TTY)
(334) 262-0363 ext 322 (Voice)

OFFICE OF DEAF SERVICES

COORDINATOR, Region I (Huntsville)

SALARY RANGE: 78 (\$42,458 - \$64, 623)

QUALIFICATIONS: Master's degree in a clinical human service field such as Psychology, Sociology, Social Work, Counseling, or Rehab Counseling, plus experience (48 months). Other job related education and /or experience maybe substituted for all or part of these basic requirements upon approval of the Job Evaluation Committee.

COORDINATOR, Region IV (Mobile)

SALARY RANGE: 78 (\$42,458 - \$64, 623)

QUALIFICATIONS: Master's degree in a clinical human service field such as Psychology, Sociology, Social Work, Counseling, or Rehab Counseling, plus experience (24 months). Other job related education and /or experience maybe substituted for all or part of these basic requirements upon approval of the Job Evaluation Committee.

For more information or for application, please contact:

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THE BAILEY DEAF UNIT

The Bailey Unit, is hiring qualified clinical specialists who are fluent in American Sign Language to open this 10-bed specialized unit for deaf and hard of hearing people who have mental illness. The following positions are now open and applications are being accepted:

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATE I

SALARY RANGE: 69 (\$27,079 - \$41,035)

QUALIFICATIONS: Graduation from an accredited four-year college or university with a Master's degree in Psychology, Counseling or Social Work. Preference given to individuals with clinical area of concentration and practicum experience in working with deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

MENTAL HEALTH R.N. I

SALARY RANGE: 73 (\$31,358 - \$47,543)

QUALIFICATIONS: Graduation from an accredited School of Nursing or graduation from an accredited four-year college or university with a degree in Nursing. Possession of or eligibility for a certificate of registration to practice nursing as issued by the Alabama Board of Nursing.

Preference will be given to candidates having some experience in working with the deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Happy Holidays From All of Us at

The Office of Deaf Services

Jill E. Jauner



Pam Mc

Frances Ralston

Liz Hill

Shannon Reese

Healy Bailey

Leahon Denton

Steve Hamerdinger

