Community Access Collaboration: Supporting Deaf and Hard of Hearing Victims/Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence

Report to VAD Board

by Rachel Bavister, Representative and Advocate
June 30, 2020

On January 30, 2019, VAD signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Shelter for Help in Emergency (SHE) to partner in a Collaboration as SHE was seeking a grant from the Office on Violence against Women (OVW) (Federal). This grant, to support Deaf and Hard of Hearing people, was awarded some time in 2019. There’s a time-line for this grant – 3 years (with a possible extension).

The Collaboration service area includes Virginia Planning District 10 (City of Charlottesville, Counties of Albemarle, Greene, Fluvanna, Louisa, and Nelson) and the County of Augusta, and Cities of Waynesboro and Staunton.

The Partners in this Collaboration are SHELTER for Help in Emergency (SHE), Sexual Assault Resource Agency (SARA), Virginia Association of the Deaf (VAD) and Susanne Wilbur, LCSW. The Partners have agreed to provide advocacy and support services to (Deaf/Hard of Hearing) victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

Work has begun in earnest. A) the Coordinator for the Deaf Project (Laura Mahan) was hired in March (before Covid-19 put us all under quarantine) I attended the interview on February 28 in Charlottesville, and haven’t met Laura or the Collaboration in person since then. B) The Collaboration (usually 5-6 people) meets via Zoom every Friday. We were supposed to meet two Fridays a month, one for 2 hours and the other for an hour just to check in. This hasn’t happened yet … it’s been every Friday. I’ve been trying not to skip one.

Right now, we are in the Planning and Development Phase:
- Creation of a Collaboration Charter - So far the 35 page Charter for the Collaboration (us) is 99% drafted. We will submit it to OVW for probable editing, then approval, by the end of July.
- **Community Needs Assessment -- the next step .. this is where VAD will have to provide input.

then comes
- The Report on the findings from b) above.
- A Strategic Plan (which is supposed to guide organizational changes that will maximize accessibility, safety, and services for
victims/survivors of sexual and domestic violence who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing).

- Implementation … hopefully when COVID-19 has been arrested.

I will try to remain as VAD’s representative, if you still want me, but I’m asking for a backup, please. Ask our chapters for help/volunteers/recommendations. This is not even my field of expertise. I just don’t want this grant to be wasted and Deaf/hard of hearing folk cheated out of a necessary service.

Thank you, Rachel

Any questions, send them my way.