# MDTAP Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

# January 29, 2024

## Zoom Meeting Attendees:

Lori Berrong, MDTAP, Executive Director

Stephen Polacek, MDTAP, Director IT Accessibility Policy & Programs

Matt Hackert, IT Accessibility Program Specialist

Shawn Bateman, AT Reuse Coordinator

Keyonna Baker, Access MD, ADA, Fiscal Manager

James Whitney, AT Clinician

Nora Walker, AT & Public Health Coordinator

Heather Ferguson, Director AT Financial Loan Program

Sarah Calhoun, AT Loan Fund Administrator

Betsy Hein, CIL Representative

Kristine Nellenbach, UCEDD Representative

Karl Belanger, Consumer Representative

Kevin Cross, Consumer Representative

Jeanne Dwyer, Consumer Representative

Conchita Hernandez, MSDE Representative

Kristen Patterson, DLLR Representative

Al Sonnenstrahl, Consumer Representative

Melissa Day, DORS Representative

**Public Guests:**

Amy Drewek, ASL Interpreter

Sam Aoie, ASL Interpreter

### Intro & General Updates

* Attendees & staff introductions
* Lori provided an in-depth overview of the FY23 data for MDTAP, with comparisons to the FY22 data. Discussion around sustainability included revenue from direct services, grant funding, and in-partnerships. Revenue billing will include direct pay from consumers as well as assessments for state agencies and programs. Sustainability initiatives will begin in FY24. Additional goals for FY24 include expanded outreach & partnership around education and employment, and increased awareness of programs for AT vendors.
* Additional conversation provided an update to the Council on the creation of an AT Needs Assessment Survey that will be distributed in May/June to the council. This survey will help us hone in on areas to improve, expand or initiate. This survey will help us create the 3-year AT Program Strategic Plan that is slated to be completed by end of calendar 2024.
* A reminder was shared that the Council can find program updates on the TAP website including our calendar of trainings for 2024, the 2023 Year in Review, and our most recent AT Winter Newsletter. Lori also noted that two additional emails will be headed out to the council including a news brief on the new guidance related to AT & IEPs as well as our upcoming calendar of trainings.
* Lori also noted that the FY26 Access MD Application has opened for state agencies and universities seeking to make architectural upgrades to their facilities.

### Assistive Technology Financial Loan Program

* Heather Ferguson shared updates on the ATLP initiatives including: Identifying additional lender; developing relationships with AT vendors and AT dealerships for adapted auto; creating tutorials on program application; conducting outreach at events, assessing needs in the more rural areas of the state to build on our rural outreach, and identifying the points at which someone is approved through the ATLP but doesn’t close the loan (in order to help those approved with getting their loans).
* Lori also noted additional recent improvements including paper reduction processes internally and streamlining the loan closing process by allowing for docusign for all loan documents.

### AT & Public Health

* Nora Walker, AT & Public Health Coordinator, provided updates on the AT Public Health initiatives including: the work of the 3D printing/fabrication station and partnership with UMBC. Nora noted the online 3D printing guide and request form is now available and that she is working on customize prints in some instances when able.
* Nora provided an update on the Disability, Mental Health, Substance Abuse & AT intersections training she’s developed and the intent to build this out through the MOOR grant application.
* Lori also noted that we’re close to completing the 3-part video series to share with health professionals on when & how to integrate AT into services for patients with disabilities. These 3 videos will focus on understanding AT, recommending AT, and accessing AT.

### Equipment Reuse

* Shawn Bateman, AT Reuse & Access Coordinator, shared an update on a recent donation to the high-tech AT Reuse Center from MD Low Vision Specialists. She noted the donation is valued at approximately $96,000 worth of AT and that we’re in process of inventorying most of these items for MATR while setting some aside for demo and loan in the AT Library. It was noted that we will share a brief announcement about this donation and its impact in the coming weeks.
* Shawn also noted the research partnership with University of Notre Dame, and their OT program as they delve into our reuse data to identify areas where we can demonstrate “green” growth (essentially demonstrating that the program is environmentally friendly). The students will examine data and identify areas where we could collect additional data to then make a request for grant funding to support & expand the reuse work.
* It was also noted that as we pause the contracts with Lollipop Kids Foundation and Equipment Connections for Children, it will be vital to build additional partnership with other programs, including MDoA’s DME reuse program. A visit to their site and partnership discussions are scheduled for February.

### Information technology Accessibility Initiative (ITAI)

* Stephen Polacek outlined recent initiatives under ITAI, including current work around on-demand IT Accessibility Trainings.
* Matt Hackert and Stephen shared updates regarding the new Office of Accessibility housed at DoIT and what a future partnership will look like with this office.
* Matt also shared a lineup of the ITAI trainings scheduled for the first of 2024 and updates on some of the trainings we host in partnership with the NFB CENA team.

### Good, New & Exciting

Lori provided updates on the following topics:

* + AT Champions 2024 has launched and videos created by the Champions can be found on MDTAP’s Facebook reels and Instagram.
  + Lori also encouraged council members to schedule visits to the Baltimore AT Library as we have been organizing and laying out a new look, initiated by some furniture donated to the program.

### Additional Discussion

* Al Sonnenstrahl asked about TAPs working relationship with MDoA and noted some outdated language on MDoA’s materials regarding requests for accommodations. Lori asked Al to scan & forward that information and then Lori would forward to Kim McKay to facilitate a conversation with the MDoA Communications team.
* Conchita Hernandez asked about the eligibility of Johns Hopkins University applying for Access MD funding. Keyonna noted she will check and follow up since the funding is specific to universities under the USM umbrella.

Next meeting will be held in May 2024 – Date TBD