



A Brief History and Overview: MN Physical/Health Disabilities Community of Practice

Early History

Services in the area of Physically Impaired first began in Minnesota in the late 1950's, when a State Plan for Crippled Children (Senate File 6) was developed. The law included a definition that acknowledged both physically impaired and other health impaired learners. Up until 1975, services were provided in self-contained classrooms. In 1975, Senate File 6 was replaced by the Federal 94-142 legislation. In Minnesota, Marilyn Sorenson became involved in a tri-state Regional Resource Center system along with Wisconsin and Michigan. In the late 1970's, Ms. Sorenson developed the MN POHI Network. POHI practitioners were struggling with the proposed focus of only working with the severe and profound PI students, as the more academically able students were not included under this service delivery model.

During the 1980's, the POHI Network defined its membership and developed an action plan. At this time, the University of Minnesota was the only post-secondary institution in the state offering a licensure in the category of Physically Handicapped (PH). This licensure program continued to grow up through the early 1990's, until a limitation of 20 students per year was imposed. In 1992, the POHI Network merged with the Council for Exceptional Children's Division of Physically Impaired, allowing it to become a representative organization for members of both groups.

Recent History

Throughout the 1990's, the POHI Network continued to redefine its purpose and mission. The MN Low Incidence Projects became the fiscal host of the Statewide Network and all affiliated activities. The organizational name was changed to the Statewide Physical/Health Disabilities Network, and reflected a professional group that served students in the PI, OHD and TBI categories of special education. The teacher licensure name was changed to *Physical/Health Disabilities Teacher*, and included pre-kindergarten students (later defined as students aged birth and up) with physical impairments. Teachers were encouraged to take the necessary ECSE coursework to obtain this revised licensure.

In 2014, in recognition of current research and evidence-based practices in the educational field which recognize that educational networks operate as *communities of practice*, the network title changed accordingly. Currently, there are approximately 140 members on the MN Physical/Health Disabilities Statewide CoP, with approximately 70-80 members attending meetings on a regular basis, including Greater MN members who attend via remote technology. There are 2 full day meetings held each year, in addition to a shorter spring meeting held in conjunction with the annual Charting the C's/Cross-



Categorical Conference, of which the P/HD CoP is a conference partner. Past CoP initiatives have addressed the topics of professional recruitment, licensure standards, post-secondary training, revisions to professional manuals, and development of additional resource materials. Meetings are facilitated by the Statewide PI specialist and a P/HD CoP steering committee. For more information on how to join this Community of Practice, contact your regional low incidence facilitator, or the PI Statewide Specialist.

(Revised Nov. 2014)