



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Nebraska Commission
for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

WELCOME MESSAGE



NCDHH CHAIRPERSON, *FRANCES BEURIVAGE*

NCDHH was established to provide services, resources, information, and referrals. Each Governor-appointed board member has a purpose, passion, and interest in improving services and programs to benefit Nebraskans who are deaf or hard of hearing.

One quality that is essential to promoting agency services, programs and advocacy is collaboration and involvement with the deaf and hard of hearing community and our stakeholders. Without this partnership and continued efforts to work together, our mission and vision to advocate for Nebraskans can only go so far. It is these valued connections, relationships and partnerships with community members, organizations and businesses that are the foundation of our work.

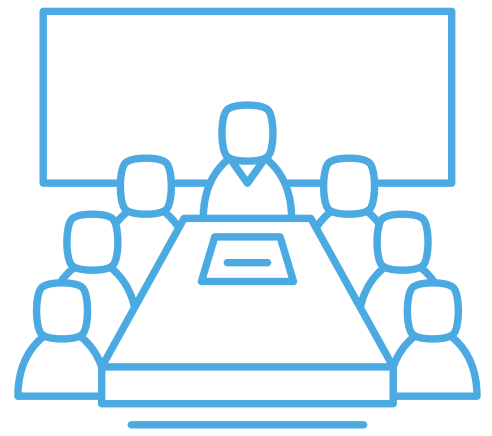
Some of the valuable work NCDHH has accomplished in 2023 are:

- Multiple interpreter workshops: Topics including teaming of deaf and hearing interpreters as well as ethics in interpreting. With a nationwide interpreter shortage, it is critical that we encourage professional development and growth opportunities for interpreters in Nebraska.
- Community Forum – Interpreting & Mental Health Needs Assessments: NCDHH team worked with both community members and interpreters to identify areas of need to grow the number of qualified interpreters in Nebraska. NCDHH also worked with medical professionals and the Mental Health Advisory Committee to identify areas of improvement for mental health services and access for people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- Coffee with a Cop: Fostering a positive relationship between law enforcement and the deaf and hard of hearing communities is both critical as well as necessary. This community event involved education and shared experiences between both local law enforcement as well as community members.

We are proud of the Commission's accomplishments and are eager to see what 2024 has in store for residents of Nebraska!



BOARDS & COMMITTEES



FULL COMMISSION BOARD

Consists of nine members who are appointed by the Governor subject to approval by the Legislature. Statute 71-4720 requires that a majority of the Commission members who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing shall be able to express themselves through sign language. The Commission members shall include three Deaf persons, three Hard of Hearing persons and three persons who have an interest in and knowledge of deafness and hearing loss issues. The Commission was created to improve the quality and coordination of existing services for deaf and hard of hearing people and development of new services when necessary.

INTERPRETER REVIEW BOARD

Created to develop guidelines and regulations for assuring competencies for sign language interpreters. Regulations were crafted and approved to include assurances that sign language interpreters have and maintain minimum levels of competency to interpret for state entities, courts, police and probation officials.

MENTAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A special advisory committee is appointed by the Commission. Created to ensure full access of comprehensive mental health, alcoholism, and drug abuse services are available for Nebraskans who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mandated in 1990 to appoint members to serve on the Relay Advisory Committee administered by the Nebraska Public Service Commission. The Committee advises the Public Service Commission on matters related to the telecommunications relay system, the Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program and its operations.

BY THE NUMBERS

7,297
BOOTH ATTENDEES

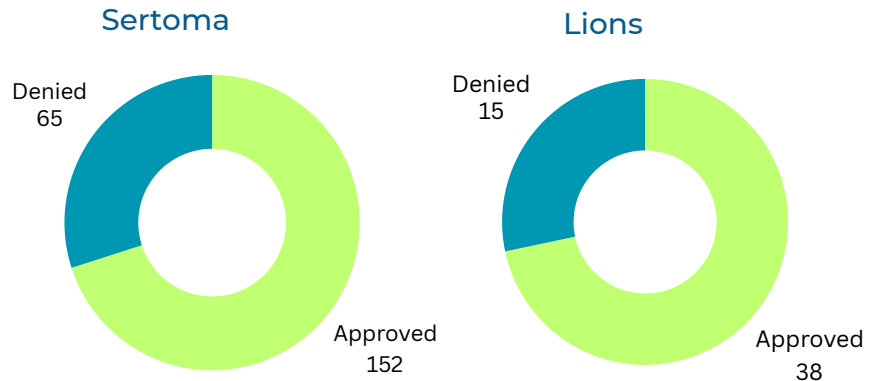
2,257
CLIENTS ASSISTED

113
PRESENTATIONS & TRAININGS

24,740
PRESENTATION ATTENDEES

Hearing Aid Banks

NCDHH works with the Barkley Memorial Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, HearUNebraska, Sertoma, and the Nebraska Lions Foundation to provide hearing aids to individuals who qualify. HearU Nebraska provides hearing aids to children ages birth-18. Sertoma is an international organization providing refurbished hearing aids to individuals 65+. The Nebraska Lions Foundation promotes the collection, refurbishing and distribution of donated hearing aids to Nebraska residents ages 19-64. Applications to these programs are available through the Commission.



Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program

Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program (NSTEP), an equipment program that provides monetary assistance to persons with disabilities. These persons will then use the financial assistance to aid in the purchasing of specialized telephone equipment such as amplifiers, signaling devices, cell phones and more. The Public Service Commission (PSC) was mandated to develop specific procedures necessary for implementation of the program and is responsible for management of the program.

A voucher will be issued to approved applicants for the purchase of telecommunication equipment. The equipment can be purchased from any merchant selling the specialized devices.

NCDHH teammates work around the state to educate and inform Nebraskans who could benefit from this equipment to help ease their communication access needs. NCDHH processed 82 applications in 2023.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE WONDERFUL ADVOCACY AND OUTREACH MOMENTS OUR TEAM WORKED ON ACROSS NEBRASKA!

Scottsbluff Disaster Preparedness Workshop: NCDHH partnered with Nebraska VR and Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Independence Rising, Region 22 Emergency Management and Panhandle Public Health District. This workshop is designed to help educate with preparing an emergency kit, learn about what you need to do if you find yourself in an emergency or disaster, and the opportunity to speak with first responders.



Interpreter Workshops: NCDHH fosters and encourages involvement for the continued education and growth for the interpreting community by hosting interpreter workshops throughout the year. Workshop and training topics involved Immersion Training with Deaf & Hearing Interpreter Teams and Interpreter Ethics.

Text to 9-1-1 Workshop: NCDHH has long advocated for accessibility in technology advancements, including Text to 9-1-1 in Nebraska. NCDHH partnered with local first responders in Norfolk for residents to learn a “how-to” guide on using the Text to 9-1-1 service, as well as a tour of the Dispatch Center.

Interpreter Community Forum: The Nebraska Interpreter Review Board and Commission teammates worked with community members and interpreters in Nebraska to host a Community Forum to discuss how to improve and grow the number of qualified interpreters in Nebraska. The emphasis in this community event is to create and conceptualize goals and improvement plans for the interpreting field in Nebraska.

Youth and Family Advocacy Services: NCDHH provides advocacy and support for youth and family services by facilitating a robust youth engagement strategy, working closely with Nebraska’s programs and services to assist the overall coordination of services for youth and families who are deaf or hard of hearing in Nebraska. For individuals or families who would like more information or support, please contact Youth and Family Advocacy Specialist, Ashley Wulf, at ashley.wulf@nebraska.gov.



Coffee with a Cop: NCDHH partnered with the Lincoln Police Department to educate both community members as well as law enforcement on working and interacting with people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Meaningful discussion, Q&A and learning involved communication cards for both community and law enforcement officers, as well as sharing experiences.

Americans with Disabilities Act Workshop & Training: NCDHH hosted multiple trainings on Effective Communication and Americans with Disability Act (ADA) to the deaf and hard of hearing community, medical field as well as legal professionals. Topics discussed include introduction to effective communication, multiple titles within the ADA, reasonable accommodations, and filing grievances.

Deaf Centric Hospital Event: This event held at University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) aims to unite medical providers, medical students and hospital staff by working with people who are deaf and hard of hearing to better improve medical settings. Many stakeholders and community representatives were a part of this project, including role-playing exercise, where UNMC students became “patients” who seek medical care from “doctors” who are local members of the deaf community. The main goal is to reduce inequities within the deaf and hard of hearing communities in medical situations.



LET'S CONNECT



www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov



*Nebraska Commission for the
Deaf and Hard of Hearing*



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