

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Full Commission Board Meeting

Held at – University of Nebraska Omaha, 6400 University Dr South, Room 128, Marian Ivers
Board Room, Omaha, NE

September 12, 2025, Meeting Minutes (8:30 a.m.)

A. Welcome

Chairperson John Culver called the meeting to order for the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) Full Commission Board on September 12, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. at the University of Nebraska Omaha, Marian Ivers Board Room.

Mr. Culver conducted the meeting as Chairperson, and Ms. Diane Schutt served as Secretary.

B. Notice of Open Meeting

Chairperson Culver announced that notice of the meeting was duly given, posted, published, and tendered in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. All board members received notice simultaneously by email. The agenda was kept current in the NCDHH office and on the Commission's website. Materials used by the board were made available in a public folder for this meeting in accordance with the Open Meetings Act {Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1412 (8)}. A copy of the Act was available for the duration of the meeting.

C. Roll Call

Board members present:

- Mr. John Culver, Chairperson
- Ms. Diane Schutt, Secretary
- Ms. Candice Arteaga
- Dr. Kay Crabtree
- Mr. Richard McCowin

Board members absent:

- Ms. Julie Mruz
- Mr. Roy Christensen

NCDHH staff present:

- Mr. Kyle Miers, Executive Director
- Ms. Kim Davis, Community Services Manager
- Ms. Sakura Yodogawa-Campbell, Behavioral Health Liaison
- Ms. Ashley Altman, Education, Youth & Family Liaison
- Ms. Vali Hitz, Events & Programs Coordinator
- Ms. Jackie Novak, Business Manager
- Ms. Kendall Couture, Marketing & Communications Specialist

Sign Language Interpreters: Sharon Sinkler and Ben Sparks

CART Services: CART provided by Don Rombach

D. Review of Agenda

Executive Director Kyle Miers reviewed the agenda with the board members.

E. Acceptance of Agenda

Ms. Arteaga moved to accept the agenda as presented. Dr. Crabtree seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

F. Acceptance of Minutes

Dr. Crabtree moved to accept the minutes of the June 13, 2025, Full Commission Board Meeting. Ms. Arteaga seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

G. Chairperson of the Board's Report

Chairperson Culver expressed appreciation to staff and board members for their continued commitment to the agency's mission. He recognized progress toward the 2025–2030 Strategic Plan goals and thanked staff for collaboration across departments.

No formal motions were made under the Chairperson's Report.

H. NCDHH Report (Consolidated)

Executive Director Kyle Miers provided a consolidated report, summarizing department updates and agency progress during the quarter.

1. Executive Director (Mr. Kyle Miers)

- Upcoming Interpreter Leadership and Stakeholder Roundtables planned for October to address interpreter quality, professional standards, and statewide collaboration.
- Continued outreach and engagement with partner agencies and community organizations.

2. Budget (Ms. Jackie Novak)

- FY25 spending remains below projected budget.
- Governor's Office requested agencies consider voluntary 10% budget reductions; NCDHH is monitoring the situation but has not been required to implement cuts.
- Forecasted underspending in salary and operations lines noted.

3. Community Services (Ms. Kim Davis)

- Outreach Liaisons (Aaron, Tiffany, Katia, and Jeremy) continue providing education and sensitivity training to law enforcement, local government, and healthcare providers.
- The North Platte office officially closed; the new Kearney office is open and accessible for community services.
- Ongoing coordination with emergency management partners to improve accessible alerts and messaging.

4. Behavioral Health (Ms. Sakura Yodogawa-Campbell)

- OPD grant funding used to expand training materials for law enforcement, reaching approximately 900 sworn officers.
- Exploring new grant opportunities, including a pilot program pairing licensed therapists with Deaf liaisons to bridge gaps in mental health care.

5. Education, Youth & Family (Ms. Ashley Altman)

- Assisted a family in obtaining interpreter access at a local library through collaboration with Disability Rights Nebraska.
- Continued support for IEP advocacy and accessible education across the state.

6. Events & Programs Coordination (Ms. Vali Feliciano)

- “Deaf and Hard of Hearing Night” at the Lincoln Saltdogs drew strong attendance and community engagement.
- Planning underway for “Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at the Joslyn Art Museum,” scheduled for November 16, 2025.

7. Communications & Marketing (Ms. Kendall Couture)

- Social media engagement continues to grow, with high-performing posts reaching over 25,000 viewers.
- Ongoing collaboration with partner organizations, including the ACLU of Nebraska, to share resources and public education materials.
- Website redesign through the OCIO SOWER Pilot Project is progressing on schedule, with completion estimated in 4–6 months.

Motion:

Ms. Arteaga moved to accept the consolidated NCDHH Report as presented. Mr. McCowin seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

I. Committee Reports

No committee reports were presented.

Mr. Miers and Chairperson Culver led discussion on the structure and purpose of NCDHH committees. The board agreed to revisit committee definitions and assignments at the next meeting.

Motion:

Dr. Crabtree moved to table committee discussion until the December 2025 meeting, with the Executive Director to provide committee descriptions prior to that meeting. Ms. Arteaga seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

J. Old Business

No old business was presented.

K. New Business

1. Board Briefing Document

The board entered closed session to discuss personnel and equipment matters referenced in the briefing document.

2. Reinstatement of a VRI Agency

Mr. Miers explained that this item was included on the agenda in case a reinstatement request was received prior to the meeting. No applications were received.

Discussion held; no motions made.

L. Public Comment

Public comment was opened.

Ms. Arteaga spoke on behalf of a Nebraska family, discussing accessibility of Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) equipment in hospitals and clinics. Concerns were raised about fixed wall-mounted devices and limited sightlines for Deaf patients. Recommendations included ensuring portability and appropriate positioning of devices, as well as staff training on communication access protocols.

M. Adjourn

Ms. Arteaga moved to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Crabtree seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at **11:14 a.m.**

Meeting Dates for 2025:

- December 12, 2025 – Lincoln