

Nebraska Sign Language Interpreter Review Board Meeting

Final, approved December 6, 2024

Friday, September 6th, 2024

Omaha Association for the Deaf

4050 Hillsdale Ave, Omaha, NE 68107

A. Welcome

The meeting of the Nebraska Interpreter Review Board was called to order by Chairperson Meghann Cassidy at 1:01 PM

B. Notice of Open Meetings Act

Chairperson Meghann Cassidy announced the notice of the meeting was duly given, posted, published, and tendered in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, and all board members received notice simultaneously by email. The agenda has been kept current and available at the Commission's office and on their website. The materials generally used by the board for this meeting are on the table in a public folder that is available to the general public for this meeting in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, {Neb. Rev. Stat. 84-1412 (8)}. A copy of the Open Meetings Act is available with the public folder for the duration of the meeting in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

C. Roll Call

For the record, board members Meghann Cassidy, Margie Propp, Tami Richardson-Nelson, Vicki Steinhauer-Campbell, and Briana Stradinger were present. NCDHH administrative assistant/licensing specialist Gina Petersen was also present.

Board member Vonda Apking was absent.

NCDHH management Kim Davis arrived at 1:20 PM.

Interpreters: Ben Sparks and Alecia Barnes

Minutes: Gina Petersen

D. Review of Agenda

Chairperson Meghann Cassidy reviewed the agenda with the Board Members.

E. Acceptance of Agenda

Ms. Margie Propp moved to accept the agenda as written, seconded by Ms. Briana Stradinger. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting eyes.

F. Acceptance of Minutes

There were no changes suggested. Ms. Vicki Steinhauer-Campbell made the motion to

approve, and Ms. Briana Stradinger seconded. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting ayes.

G. Chairperson Updates (Meghann Cassidy, Chairperson)

a. Task force update – response from board

- Chairperson Cassidy shared with the group that Full Board Chair Frances Beurivage suggested that establishment of a task force be put on hold until a new executive director is found.
- Chairperson Cassidy asked the group if anyone was able to find any past information on previous taskforces, as she was unable to. Ms. Vicki Steinhauer-Campbell responded that she thinks Kim Davis is looking into that, and if Ms. Davis brings no information when she arrives, then table the discussion until information is found.
- Ms. Steinhauer-Campbell asked if the Commission has any record of past taskforces, and how long would they keep those documents for? Ms. Gina Petersen responded that the commission is mandated to keep some documents for a minimum of 5 years but isn't sure whether documents older than that are still in the agency's drive. Ms. Petersen volunteered to look and find out. Ms. Steinhauer-Campbell asked the group if there needs to be a group within the IRB that is established to do that research, to which Ms. Cassidy responded that the discussion should be tabled until the arrival of Ms. Kim Davis

b. Canadian certificate of interpretation review

• Suggestion to full board

- Ms. Cassidy gave the IRB some history regarding this agenda item, explaining that a VRI agency that applied for licensure in Nebraska has interpreters that hold a Canadian Certificate of Interpretation (COI). The IRB needs to determine whether their certification system is close enough to RID or BEI's certification level; can the COI be accepted for licensure.
- Ms. Gina Petersen explained that the Canadian Certification is active in Canada, but not recognized or accepted here in the states. Ms. Petersen encouraged the group to look at the communication and certification criteria in the IRB binder, explaining that the COI is currently in the process of change, but the list of requirements included in the binder are what were formerly required from interpreters in Canada. So the issue was brought to the IRB to determine if those requirements are equivalent to those in Nebraska.
- Ms. Margie Propp asked for clarification on the question that needs to be answered. Chairperson Cassidy clarified that the VRI company is asking for Nebraska licensure, but some of their

facilities reside in Canada where their interpreters hold a COI which is not accepted in the US.

- Ms. Petersen explained that this VRI company applied for licensure in Nebraska, which includes submitting a roster of all their contracted interpreters. Two interpreters on their roster hold the COI, which causes issue because it is required that all interpreters who contract with a VRI service that is licensed in Nebraska must meet the qualifications for individual licensure. Although the interpreters do not have to hold an individual license while working under a VRI company, their qualifications must still be appropriate as required by Nebraska law. The COI is not recognized or accepted here, so the main question is: Is the COI equivalent to the certifications recognized here in Nebraska and can it be recognized from now on?
- Ms. Petersen stated that the IRB's job is to suggest a "yes" or a "no" to the full board, as it is ultimately the full board's decision.
- Chairperson Cassidy asked the group if the COI should be accepted, to which Ms. Margie Propp responded that it seems like a lot of work is involved. Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson added that the rules and regulations would likely need to be changed should the answer be yes, which is a long process.
- Ms. Propp stated that if the answer is yes to accepting COI, there are questions that must be asked about the process of accepting it as well as what new requirements would be necessary, such as citizenship.

Discussion

- Chairperson Cassidy guessed that it is likely the rules and regulations will have to be changed should the COI be accepted. With that in mind, Chairperson Cassidy referenced the interpreter shortage and mentioned that others have suggested the idea of allowing EIPA level 4 interpreters to become licensed as community interpreters, so perhaps that could be considered as well.
- Ms. Margie Propp responded that there would need to be investigation and comparisons done between the EIPA level 4 and the current accepted certifications first.

Discussion

- Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson proposed that from now on, interpreters be included in roll call. Additionally, Ms. Kim Davis's

late arrival should be recognized and documented. Chairperson Meghann Cassidy recognized Ms. Kim Davis and her presence at the IRB.

- Mrs. Richardson-Nelson marked Ms. Kim Davis's Arrival at 1:20 PM.
- Chairperson Cassidy stated that she will reach out to Julie Delkamiller, Deb Cates and Bri Rodenburg for information on EIPA vs NIC Requirements. More research needs to be done on comparisons between the NIC and the COI before the rules and regulations can be changed.
- Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson commented that Vonda Apking, IRB board member and DHHS representative, is very knowledgeable about licensing so she may have a good answer.
- Chairperson Cassidy suggested developing a committee to investigate the COI and skills required to compare to the NIC. Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson suggested Ms. Vicki Steinhauer-Campbell's previous idea of reaching out to other states to see if they accept it. Ms. Margie Propp suggested checking to see if the COI has levels as well.
- Ms. Vicki Steinhauer-Campbell made a motion to establish a sub-committee to review information on the COI and bring their findings back to the IRB. Ms. Briana Stradinger seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion passed with all voting ayes.
- Chairperson Cassidy asked the group for volunteers to be part of the committee. Ms. Vicki Steinhauer-Campbell, Ms. Briana Stradinger, Ms. Margie Propp, Ms. Gina Petersen and Chairperson Cassidy all volunteered.
- Ms. Gina Petersen asked the group to clarify all questions that the IRB would like to ask regarding the COI. Ms. Petersen went on to list each question, receiving confirmation from the board members that they are correct.
- Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson suggested that Ms. Gina Petersen type out the questions for Vonda to send her in an email. Ms. Petersen requested that the questions for Vonda be repeated for clarity.
- Chairperson Cassidy asked Ms. Kim Davis if she had any information regarding previous taskforces. Ms. Davis responded that she couldn't find anything. Ms. Petersen mentioned a folder in the agency's shared drive titled, "Interpreter Issues Committee," which Chairperson Cassidy asked to be investigated by Ms. Petersen.

H. NCDHH – Kelsey Cruz & Kim Davis

a. Agency Updates

- The advocacy specialists have developed a quick reference guide to ARPA funds. Anything after December 1st will not be reimbursed. The Activity needs to happen before that date to qualify for reimbursement.
- Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson asked if this program is something that could be re-established in the future, to which Ms. Davis replied that the legislature could be reached out to, but how well the funds have been used will need to be verified by the legislature.
- Ms. Davis asked Ms. Gina Petersen if the funds are getting used often now, to which Ms. Petersen responded yes now that they are advertised. Ms. Davis clarified that the funds have always been advertised, but ever since Lincoln and Omaha areas were added the requests increased.
- Chairperson recognized the Interpreter Training Program Student in the room, Dyani Pelletier, as well as the public attendee Sakura Yodogawa.
- Ms. Kim Davis shared that the agency's full commission board is contracting with Innivee for the search for a new executive director and are currently developing a job description. Soon enough the job opening will be promoted.
- Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson asked if there is a date for when the job opening will be released. Ms. Davis answered that there is no date yet but that Kelsey Cruz, NCDHH Public Information Officer, will surely send out an E-Communicator, and Ms. Petersen can share the info with the IRB.
- Ms. Stradinger asked Ms. Davis if she will return to her former position as Lead Advocacy Specialist when the New Executive Director shows up. Ms. Davis responded that it is likely, but it depends on how much the new director wants to change.

I. Public Comments

J. Old Business

a. Complaint process

- Ms. Margie Propp mentioned a former discussion regarding the complaint process, commenting that it has been a while since the IRB has received any kind of complaint, which is a good thing. However, people may have forgotten about the complaint process since COVID, so is there a way for the commission to get the word out to businesses, interpreters and the Deaf community as a reminder of what the complaint process is for those who have issues with interpreters.

- Ms. Vicki Steinhauer-Campbell asked the group to clarify who is doing what task based on the minutes from the previous meeting. Chairperson Cassidy said that according to the previous meeting minutes there was discussion on having someone sign [use ASL] the complaint process to provide more access to the Deaf community. Ms. Steinhauer-Campbell asked if she needs to email to see where that process is. Chairperson Cassidy affirmed.
- Ms. Propp suggested looking at the NCDHH website to see if what they have is enough or if there could be something more. Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson agreed with MS. Propp’s former suggestion that Ms. Kelsey Cruz create a write-up to include in an e-communicator to send out and post on Facebook.
- Ms. Stradinger stated that there are students, including herself when she was in high school, who do not know how to speak up or file a complaint against their interpreter, and it is important that that cycle gets broken. Ms. Propp added that parents need to be informed as well.
- Chairperson Cassidy suggested that someone from NCDHH be recruited to sign a video. Ms. Stradinger suggested that NCDHH staff sign for their website and she will sign a video for the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE).
- Ms. Steinhauer-Campbell mentioned speaking to Kelsey Cruz to keep her in the loop, so that everyone is properly informed of the plan. Ms. Davis volunteered to do so and include everyone’s input on how to make the whole website more deaf friendly.
- Ms. Stradinger took the responsibility of developing a script for the video on the interpreter complaint process, assisted by Chairperson Cassidy.

Discussion

K. New Business

a. Meeting Dates for 2025

- Decision on setting the next meeting dates was tabled to allow the full board time to set their dates first, as the IRB must meet before them.
- Mrs. Richardson-Nelson announced to the group that she will not be present the first weekend of every month, but is willing to be present over Zoom, if possible. Ms. Petersen stated that she will consult the by-laws.

L. Announcements

- Next Meeting dates: December 6th (Lincoln) 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM**
- Interpreter recognition**

- Chairperson Meghann Cassidy announced that she would like to recognize the interpreters present so as to have them in the minutes. ASL Interpreters Alecia Barnes and Ben Sparks introduced themselves.

c. **ASL Game Night**

- Mrs. Richardson-Nelson announced that beach [chair] volleyball will be hosted at OAD at 6:30 PM

M. Adjourn

- a. Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:00 PM and Ms. Briana Stradinger seconded. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting ayes.