

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH)

Mental Health Advisory Committee Meeting

Date: Thursday, June 4, 2026 | Time: 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM CST

Location: Omaha State Office Building

1313 Farnam Street, Omaha, Nebraska, Meeting Room E (next to NCDHH Office)

Approved 08.27.2026

Voting Members Present: Cody McEvoy (Chair), Scott Loder, Erica Ziemann

Voting Members Absent: Diedra Shaw

Technical Advisors Present: Sara Petersen, Paulissa Kipp

Technical Advisors Absent: Ronda Rankin

NCDHH Staff Present: Kim Davis (Interim Executive Director), Sakura Yodogawa-Campbell (Behavioral Health Liaison), Vali Hitz (Events and Programs Coordinator), Kendall Couture (Communications & Marketing Specialist)

Interpreters: Ben Sparks and Sharon Sinkler

I. Meeting Call to Order

Mr. Cody McEvoy called the meeting to order at 2:06 PM.

Mr. McEvoy announced that notice of the meeting was duly given, posted, published, and tendered in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. Committee members received notice simultaneously by email. The agenda was kept current and available at the Commission's office and on the NCDHH website. A copy of the Open Meetings Act and meeting materials were made available to the public.

A quorum was present.

II. Public Comment Period

No public comments were made.

III. Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Scott Loder moved to approve the agenda as presented. Ms. Erica Ziemann seconded the motion.

No vote was taken following the motion and second. As a result, the committee took no action on the motion.

IV. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

Ms. Sakura Yodogawa-Campbell clarified that the February meeting minutes accurately reflected that prior meeting minutes were unavailable due to the cancellation of the November 2025 meeting and the absence of approved records from earlier meetings.

Ms. Erica Ziemann moved to approve the February 26, 2026 meeting minutes. Mr. Scott Loder seconded the motion.

No vote was taken following the motion and second. As a result, the committee took no action on the motion.

V. NCDHH Agency Updates

Interim Executive Director Report – Kim Davis

Ms. Davis reported that agency outreach efforts continue statewide and introduced Michael Brummer as NCDHH's new Education, Youth, and Family Liaison. She noted his extensive background in Deaf education and expressed enthusiasm for the expertise he brings to the agency.

Ms. Davis also provided an update on NCDHH's recent collaboration with the Nebraska Public Service Commission and Hamilton Relay through a radio appearance on 93.7 The Ticket. The partnership provided an opportunity to discuss how the organizations work together to support Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans.

Ms. Davis reminded committee members that the next NCDHH Board of Commissioners meeting would provide an opportunity for MHAC to bring forward recommendations or concerns for Board consideration.

Ms. Davis acknowledged that Ms. Erica Ziemann had not previously received formal notification of her appointment to the committee and apologized for the oversight.

Discussion followed regarding the committee's role in advancing change and advocating for improved services. Mr. Scott Loder expressed concerns regarding the pace of progress

and the challenges of navigating bureaucratic systems when addressing community needs. Ms. Davis reiterated that MHAC serves as an advisory body and may develop recommendations for consideration by the Board of Commissioners and other decision-making entities.

Mr. Cody McEvoy noted that previous discussions regarding updates to MHAC bylaws and committee structure had been paused during the leadership transition and may warrant future review.

Discussion also occurred regarding NCDHH's authority under state law and the limitations placed on the agency's ability to directly change statutes and regulations.

Committee members discussed the importance of continuing advocacy efforts despite challenges and barriers encountered when working within larger systems. Members emphasized the need for ongoing dialogue regarding accessibility, behavioral health services, and systemic improvements for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans.

Behavioral Health Liaison Report – Sakura Yodogawa-Campbell

Ms. Yodogawa-Campbell shared updates regarding recent outreach and coalition-building efforts, including participation in statewide behavioral health and accessibility initiatives.

She discussed the importance of framing communication access as an accessibility issue rather than an accommodation, noting that this distinction can help educate decision-makers and reinforce the concept of equitable access.

Ms. Yodogawa-Campbell also shared updates regarding recent outreach activities, including participation in Westside High School's Multicultural Fair, which experienced significantly increased attendance compared to the previous year. She reported continued efforts to expand partnerships and participation in statewide coalitions and committees.

Ms. Paulissa Kipp inquired whether committee members could potentially attend conferences or networking opportunities with registration costs covered. Ms. Davis indicated she was uncertain whether such funding would be permissible and agreed to investigate further.

Committee members expressed interest in receiving information about conferences and training opportunities in advance. Ms. Yodogawa-Campbell agreed to share future opportunities with committee members as they become available.

VI. New Business

Events and Programs Discussion – Vali Hitz

Ms. Vali Hitz, NCDHH Events and Programs Coordinator, joined the meeting to gather feedback regarding future programming opportunities related to mental health and wellness.

Ms. Hitz explained that NCDHH’s Strategic Plan focuses on three core principles: Education, Engagement, and Equity. She expressed interest in developing future events that align with these principles while addressing mental health topics relevant to Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans.

Committee members discussed possible event concepts and community engagement opportunities.

Mr. Cody McEvoy suggested exploring events specifically designed to attract hearing community members and individuals who may not typically attend Deaf community events. He noted that many existing events successfully engage Deaf participants but often struggle to reach broader audiences.

Mr. McEvoy also shared a positive experience involving a recreational activity known as “Fowling,” which combines elements of football, bowling, and cornhole. He noted that the activity had been successful with students participating in Nebraska Regional Programs and suggested that similar social and recreational events could promote community connection and engagement.

Ms. Hitz encouraged committee members to continue sharing ideas and feedback regarding future mental health-related programming.

No formal motions were made.

VII. Committee Member Updates

Erica Ziemann

Ms. Ziemann provided updates regarding Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) across Nebraska. She noted that these clinics are required to provide interpreter services and communication access for clients as part of their program requirements.

Discussion followed regarding access to adaptive equipment and communication technology within behavioral health settings. Mr. Scott Loder clarified that many of the challenges he encounters involve access to equipment and technology rather than interpreter services alone.

Ms. Ziemann stated she would provide Mr. Loder with additional contacts and resources that may assist in navigating these systems.

Committee members discussed the challenges faced by individuals receiving inpatient behavioral health services, particularly when interpreters are not available around the clock. Participants emphasized the importance of adaptive equipment and communication technologies in supporting accessibility.

Cody McEvoy

Mr. McEvoy reported that he will conclude his counseling position with Boys Town in July due to changes resulting from Nebraska Department of Education funding decisions.

He shared that he will be transitioning to a new role with Nebraska Regional Programs and Educational Service Unit 3, where he will focus on advocacy, mentorship, and support for Deaf and Hard of Hearing youth statewide.

Mr. McEvoy also reported that Nebraska Hands & Voices' Guide By Your Side program experienced significant funding reductions related to recent Department of Education changes.

Additionally, he shared highlights from the Nebraska School Mental Health Conference hosted by the Kim Foundation, including a youth panel featuring Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students that received positive feedback from attendees. He noted that next year's conference is expected to be held in Kearney.

Scott Loder

Mr. Loder reported no additional updates.

Sara Petersen

Ms. Petersen announced that Diane Meyer will retire from Nebraska Regional Programs at the end of August. She reported that Sue Peterson has been hired as Diane's replacement and will begin work soon to allow for overlap and training during the transition.

Ms. Petersen clarified that Nebraska Regional Programs has not necessarily lost funding but is undergoing programmatic changes and reevaluating how resources are utilized. She expressed enthusiasm about developing new statewide mentorship opportunities under Mr. McEvoy's leadership.

Discussion focused on creating a statewide network of Deaf and Hard of Hearing mentors who could support students, provide role-modeling opportunities, and participate in professional development and training efforts throughout Nebraska.

Ms. Petersen stated that the long-term vision is to expand mentor availability statewide, including underserved rural regions.

Mr. McEvoy clarified that his new position will focus on advocacy, mentorship, and systems support rather than direct counseling services.

VIII. Next Meeting Date

The next Mental Health Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for August 27, 2026, in Lincoln, Nebraska. The anticipated meeting time will remain 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM unless otherwise announced.

IX. Meeting Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:22 PM.