

*DRAFT – Subject to Board review and approval on the  
November 19, 2021, meeting date*

**Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
Full Commission Board Meeting  
Country Inn & Suites, 5353 N 27<sup>th</sup> ST, Lincoln, NE**

**October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, Meeting Minutes**

**A. Opening**

Chairperson Candice Arteaga started the meeting of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) full commission board meeting on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, 8:33 am at the Country Inn & Suites, 5353 N. 27<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

**B. Notice of Open Meeting**

Chairperson Candice Arteaga announced that 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. Publication of official notice of the meeting appeared in the October 21, 2021, edition of the Omaha World Herald, a legal newspaper of general circulation in this state, as required by the Open Meetings Act. The agenda was kept current in the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's office and on the NCDHH website. The materials generally used by the Board for this meeting today are on the table in a public folder that is available to the general public for the purpose of this meeting in accordance with the Open Meetings Act {Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1412 (8)}. A copy of the Open Meetings Act is available for the duration of the meeting.

**C. Roll Call**

For the record, Board Members Ms. Candice Arteaga, Mr. Robert Feit, Mr. Jeremy Fitzpatrick, Ms. Valerie Hitz, Ms. Diane Schutt, and Dr. Josh Sevier were all present. Ms. Frances Beaurivage, Mr. Jonathan Scherling and Ms. Sandra Shaw were absent for roll call. NCDHH Staff members present were Mr. John Wyvill, Executive Director; Kelsey Cruz, Public Information Officer; and Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator. Sign Language Interpreters present were Ms. Lorelei Waldron and Ms. Amber Tucker. Ms. Margaret "Mydge" Heaney with Inclusive Communication Access Nebraska provided CART services.

**D. Review of Agenda**

Executive Director John Wyvill reviewed the agenda with the Board Members.

**E. Acceptance of Agenda**

Ms. Diane Schutt moved to accept the agenda as written. Dr. Josh Sevier seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Mr. Feit, Ms. Beaurivage, Mr. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt, Dr. Sevier all voting aye. Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw were absent.

**F. Acceptance of Minutes**

Mr. Bob Feit moved to accept September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021, minutes. Ms. Diane Schutt seconded the motion.

With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Mr. Feit, Ms. Beaurivage, Mr. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt, Dr. Sevier all voting aye. Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw were absent.

#### G. Chairperson of the Board Report

Mr. Bob Feit made a motion to move into closed session for John Wyvill's performance evaluation. Dr. Josh Sevier seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Mr. Feit, Ms. Beaurivage, Mr. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt, Dr. Sevier all voting aye. Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw were absent.

NCDHH Board entered closed session at 8:42 a.m. The proceedings were captioned but not transcribed.

The NCDHH Board came back to open session at 10:13 a.m. The board made no motions or recommendations. The board then took a 15 minute break.

#### H. Strategic Planning Working Session (Serenity Kinney)

Serenity Kinney, Department of Administrative Services Human Resources – Shared Services Administrator, led the board through a discussion of what mission, vision, goals and objectives are. She shared the proposed mission, vision, goals and objectives that incorporated feedback previously gathered. There was discussion around the proposed mission, vision and goals and they were finalized to the following:

##### *Mission Statement*

We advocate to create opportunities by raising awareness through collaboration.

##### *Vision Statement*

Access for all.

##### *Goals*

1. Empower through training and provide services to create awareness.
2. Ensure access to effective and quality interpreting.
3. Promote awareness through the collection and distribution of information.
4. Ensure access to health care.
5. Ensure access to effective and quality interpreting.
6. Education and promote awareness of deaf culture.

Mr. Jeremy Fitzpatrick made a motion that the mission and vision statement in the about section of the NCDHH website be revised to reflect the language and changes that the board discussed. Mr. Bob Feit seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Mr. Feit, Ms. Beaurivage, Mr. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt, Dr. Sevier all voting aye. Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw were absent.

The board asked to have another special meeting to work on the objectives.

## I. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

## J. Old Business

Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Coordinator, gave an update on the feedback received from the community on the changes that the Board wants to make on the website effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, regarding removing interpreter contact information. Ms. Sinkler shared that there was only one comment in opposition and several letters from different agencies that are in support of the change. There will be more reminders sent out in December about the upcoming changes. Ms. Arteaga asked about guidelines as to what will be considered a referral business. Ms. Sinkler explained that there have been internal discussions about this issue and that the Interpreter Issues Committee will most likely be defining the guidelines.

Mr. Wyvill shared that the Interpreter Issues Committee will also be addressing the specific question that was brought up by the board regarding the procedure if we have a founded complaint that is acted on by the board and whether the board refers that complaint to RID or any other applicable licensure agency. Another issue that will go to the Committee is that we will be submitting a document to be consistent with other agencies if there's an unfounded or frivolous complaint that does not have merit, we would give the IRB board chair and vice-chair the authority to dismiss that complaint before it goes to IRB and before it comes to the full board. The right of appeal would be preserved so that they can petition the full board for reinstatement if desired. This is consistent with licensure complaint procedures for Health and Human Services.

Mr. Wyvill gave a legislative update. He shared that the application for American Rescue Plan funds has been challenging as it is unchartered water for the Governor's office, the Budget office and the Appropriations Committee. NCDHH testified in person about how to use the rescue funds and followed up with dollar amounts and additional conversation. The Governor's office is choosing to spend the money according to a plan that will be submitted at the start of the legislative session and the Appropriations Committee is waiting for guidance from the Governor's office and the Budget office to say how that formal request will come. If money is appropriated to NCDHH, there are restrictions around it so the issue of spending authority and also authorization legislatively to spend that money will also have to be addressed.

Mr. Wyvill shared that the Commissioner of Education wants to meet to discuss NCDHH requests for funding as it is related to the Department of Education. We are asking for funding for deaf and hard of hearing students to bolster educational interpreter training, to create a fund for interpreter services in the community for equipment and also for services for students from grades 1 through 12.

For the funding request related to the Nebraska Public Service Commission, Mr. Wyvill shared that NCDHH is advocating for an app that has been used in South Dakota that can call up a sign language interpreter if the user is in a situation where they need help facilitating communication. This could be a bridge solution until broadband internet access is built up throughout the State of Nebraska. NCDHH is asking that the PSC handle those funds and administer similarly to the relay service.

One other item we are looking at is a rural relief fund that would help provide interpreters in rural areas. Howard Rosenblum, NAD CEO, is advocating for a community relief fund for interpreters specifically for legal and medical settings. Mr. Wyvill commented that the entire American Relief Plan funds appropriation process is very fluid and will happen very fast.

Another legislative topic that NCDHH is working on is proposed legislation related to communication access in the medical setting. If you're admitted into a hospital, you need a written communication plan in place in order to ensure effective communication based on our conversations with the Department of Health. From a licensure perspective, if there's no documentation or written plan in place, DHHS can't hold the hospitals accountable should someone file a complaint. As a result of that information, we have a meeting set with the state medical director and the head of the judiciary committee to see where we're going with that particular item.

The other item related to our legislation is the two items we have for captioning. Jonathan Scherling is asking us to consider legislation from the state of Washington that requires in public areas TV captioning be turned on in the bar areas, and then the other one for state elected officers to have captioning in all videos and campaign ads for elected office. For both of these, NCDHH has had communications with the ACLU, Disability Rights Nebraska and the Accountability and Disclosure Commission and all seem very receptive of the legislation. We have not identified sponsors and hope to have that information in December.

#### **K. New Business**

A Doodle poll will be sent out to set the next meeting date for a special meeting to work on NCDHH strategic objectives. It was mentioned that a meeting in Omaha would be beneficial to meet the Omaha staff. Mr. Wyvill updated the board that possibly there will be an out of town meeting in June or September 2022 in North Platte if the budget allows and a March meeting in Omaha could also be setup if desired. The staff could also travel to Lincoln if you want to meet them.

#### **L. Adjourn**

Ms. Frances Beaurivage moved to adjourn at 11:43 a.m. Ms. Valerie Hitz seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Mr. Feit, Ms. Beaurivage, Mr. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt, Dr. Sevier all voting aye. Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw were absent.

#### **Next Meeting Dates**

- Special meeting TBD by Doodle Poll
- December 10, 2021 – Country Inn and Suites, 5353 N. 27<sup>th</sup>, Lincoln, Nebraska

## NCDHH STRATEGIC PLAN

- Overall Goal:
- Simplify Mission, Vision, and Goals of the Agency.

## MISSION

We advocate to create opportunities and equality by raising awareness through collaboration.

## VISION

Equality for all.

## GOALS

- GOAL 1: Empower through training and provide services to create awareness.
- GOAL 2: Collaborate with stakeholders to implement and maintain programs.
- GOAL 3: Promote awareness through the collection and distribution of information.
- GOAL 4: Ensure access to behavioral health services.
- GOAL 5: Ensure access to effective and quality interpreting.
- GOAL 6: Make the world a better place through Deaf Culture.

# CURRENT MISSION & VISION

## MISSION

- The mission of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is to promote and advocate for Nebraskans who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind or Hard of Hearing; to achieve equality and opportunity in social, educational, vocational, and legal aspects impacting their daily lives; and to enhance and monitor access to effective communication and telecommunication technology.

## VISION

- As a proactive and reactive state agency, the Commission strives to enhance collaboration by creating support, cooperation, and understanding to achieve fairness and equality in all aspects of the mainstream for all Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans.



# CURRENT GOALS & OBJECTIVES

## Provide and promote services and training to create awareness through the delivery of programs designed to empower Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans

- Educate consumers on their legal rights under federal and state laws
- Educate consumers on available technology, equipment and telecommunication access options and services
- Train consumers on self-empowerment and self-advocacy
- Advocate to service providers, organizations, and governmental agencies in support of the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing person(s) to assure that the rights and benefits are available to that consumer
- Educate parents of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children about opportunities available to their children
- Advocate with parents to assure equal access to quality education for their Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and/or Hard of Hearing children

## Initiate, broaden and maintain the collection and dissemination of information regarding the strategies for living with, the prevention of, and the impact of deafness and hearing loss

- Promote community awareness about programs and services operated by NCDHH
- Initiate a viable and reliable system for developing a census of the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing people in Nebraska
- Update the media lending library and newsletters in order to increase usage by clients
- Provide information through the NCDHH web page by increasing the use of vlogs and video presentations and by redesigning the web site
- Develop information packets and resources on home safety issues for placement on the NCDHH website
- Research, gather and expand the dissemination of information through electronic and/or visual mediums
- Disseminate brochures and service information on a scheduled basis to identified groups such as audiologists, professional groups, hospitals, nursing homes, Interpreter Training Programs, and private business groups
- Increase traffic to our web site using contact with other agencies; e.g., insert our links to other web sites

# CURRENT GOALS & OBJECTIVES

## Implement and maintain programs through collaboration with consumer groups, the Governor, legislature, organizations, service providers, and governmental agencies and units

- Establish access to effective and accessible communication through various mediums
- Identify and collaborate with stakeholders, agencies, organizations, hospitals, social service entities, law enforcement agencies and educational institutions to identify gaps in service and work together to resolve those issues and build a relationship in the process
- Educate consumers and especially low income families on acquisition and use of telecommunication through internet accessibility
- Educate staffs at hospitals, jails, law enforcement and care facilities regarding access rights and reasonable accommodations for Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing clients
- In collaboration with appropriate state agencies and service providers, promote the establishment and installation of public access videophones
- Collaborate with various organizations to help Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing individuals access personal-social programs and other types of programs
- Collaborate with agencies and consumers on home and community disaster preparedness plans.
- In collaboration with appropriate state agencies and service providers, promote the establishment and implementation of accurate weather alerting services through weather and general emergency alerting devices
- Work closely with parent groups, Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing organizations, and school units to empower Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing students through developing leadership skills and deaf awareness activities
- Work closely with higher education institutions to develop better sign language skills in teachers and interpreters

# CURRENT GOALS & OBJECTIVES

## Ensure and monitor full access to comprehensive and appropriate mental health, alcoholism and substance abuse services for Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing persons by collaborating with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and behavioral health service providers

- Create recommended strategies to assist adults and youth in coping with late onset of hearing loss
- Establish a domestic violence/sexual assault support system in Nebraska
- Establish an alcohol drug/substance abuse support system in Nebraska
- Establish training programs to educate staffs at all Nebraska behavioral health programs
- Provide mental health/substance abuse training to certified and licensed interpreters in Nebraska
- Establish local support systems with mental health providers, domestic violence programs, regional programs
- Identify, contact and provide hearing loss/deaf awareness to agencies, programs & services that provide mental health, addictions and abuse services (support groups, eating disorder clinics, AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), NA (Narcotics Anonymous), communication access, equipment and technology for existing programs)
- Work closely with NCDHH Staff Assistant for IT and Interpreter Program Assistant to provide information mental health-related topics and issues through the NCDHH web page by increasing the use of vlogs and video presentations and by redesigning the web site

## Ensure and implement access to effective and quality interpreting services by collaborating with consumer groups, organizations, service providers, and governmental agencies and units

- Promote and/or provide interpreter training in cooperation with other organizations and agencies
- Monitor the licensing of sign language interpreters
- Promote and encourage sign language interpreters to be certified and licensed in Nebraska
- Provide review of alleged violations of rules and regulations governing the sign language interpreters
- Recruit qualified interpreters
- Implement and maintain an effective and efficient referral system
- Implement and maintain a system to measure, maintain and improve interpreter's skills
- Inform consumer groups and agencies how to use an interpreter, use of complaint procedures, and the NCDHH referral system
- Establish a system for recognizing Nebraska interpreters
- Coordinate with state and national interpreter groups to ensure maintenance of certification