

Dave Heineman  
Governor

Dillard Delts  
Chairperson

Dr. Peter Seiler  
Executive Director

# The Communicator

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



A newsletter surveying health, government and issues affecting Nebraskans.

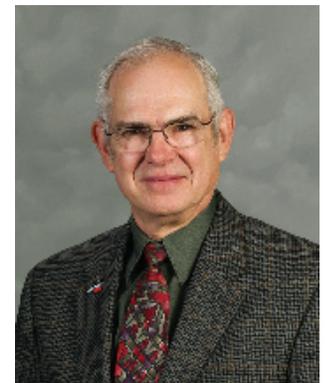
## NCDHH Seeks Legislation to Strengthen Interpreter Licensure Law



In an effort to improve sign language interpreting services statewide, The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) is working to expand on the current law. Currently, any sign language interpreter who provides service to any state agency must be licensed by NCDHH. Examples of state agencies would be NCDHH, The University of Nebraska Medical Center, any law enforcement agency, and the courts. Public and private service providers are not required to hire certified or licensed interpreters. Some public and private service providers have taken it

upon themselves to ask for either certified and/or state licensed interpreters as an extra measure of protection for themselves and their patients.

NCDHH is now working with legislators to require all interpreters to be licensed with some exceptions. “This bill will protect effective communication between deaf and hard of hearing citizens and public service providers by requiring interpreters to be licensed,” states Senator Haar. “An important part of this protection is the protection of privacy for deaf and hard of hearing citizens; for example, we heard of situations where children were required to interpret medical information for parents.”



Senator Haar  
District 21

Senator Ken Haar, District 21, plans to introduce a bill in the next legislative session which would require that:

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“...no person shall practice as an interpreter for the deaf or hard of hearing, hold himself or herself out as a licensed interpreter for the deaf or hard of hearing, or use the title Licensed Interpreter for the Deaf, Licensed Transliterater for the Deaf, or use any other title or abbreviation to indicate that the person is a licensed interpreter unless he or she is licensed...”.

“This bill will protect effective communication between deaf or hard of hearing citizens and public service providers by requiring interpreters to be licensed,” states Senator Haar. “An important part of this protection is the protection of privacy for deaf and hard of hearing citizens. For example, we have heard of situations where children were required to interpret medical information for parents.”

## NCDHH Calendar of Upcoming Events

Additional information on the listed events can be found online at [www.ncdhh.ne.gov/calendar.html](http://www.ncdhh.ne.gov/calendar.html).

### December

**2**, 5pm – 6pm, Sign & Dine-Ogallala, McDonald's, 301 Stagecoach Trail; Norma Hamm, (308) 284-6087

**7**, 2pm – 3pm, Hearing Loss Support Group – Scottsbluff, State Office Complex, Donita Mains, Field Representative for NCDHH

**10**, 8:30am, NCDHH Full Board Meeting, Omaha State Office Building, 1313 Farnam, Classroom 219, Ben Sparks, Public Information Officer for NCDHH

**11**, 11:30am - 3:00pm, Luncheon, Social & Children's Holiday Party, Lied Learning & Technology Center, 425 North 30th Street, Omaha, please RSVP before December 3 with Melinda Brown, [melinda.brown@boystown.org](mailto:melinda.brown@boystown.org), VP (402) 682-7070

**12**, 6:30pm – 8:30pm, A Christmas Carol (shadow interpreted), Omaha Community Playhouse; 6915 Cass St, Lanelle or Jennie at (402) 553-0800, [www.omahaplayhouse.org](http://www.omahaplayhouse.org)

**13**, 11am – 12pm, Lincoln Deaf Senior Citizens luncheon, Valentino's, 70th & Van Dorn, Albert Sparks, (402) 261-2557 VP

**14**, 6:30pm, Hearing Loss Association of America meeting, Dundee Presbyterian Church, 5312 Underwood Ave, Omaha, Beth Ellsworth, Field Representative for NCDHH

**17**, 10:00am – 11:00am, Hearing Loss Support Group-Omaha, Dora Bingel Senior Center, Dealing with Stress at Christmas Time, Beth Ellsworth, Field Representative for NCDHH

**18**, 5:00pm - 7:00pm, OAD Mexican Christmas Dinner, OAD Hall, 4050 Hillsdale Avenue, Omaha, Marla Hansen, contact via email at [hansen3kids@aol.com](mailto:hansen3kids@aol.com)



### NCDHH Staff

Dr. Peter Seiler, Executive Director  
Lori Burrage, Business Manager II  
Traci Cooney, Staff Assistant II  
Beth Ellsworth, Field Representative II  
Janet Killam, Field Representative II  
Donita Mains, Field Representative III  
Ben Sparks, Public Information Officer  
Norman Weverka, Field Representative III  
Peggy Williams, Mental Health Specialist  
Cindy Woldt, Staff Assistant II

### January

**6**, 5pm – 6pm, Sign & Dine-Ogallala, McDonald's, 301 Stagecoach Trail; Norma Hamm, (308) 284-6087

**20**, 1:30pm – 2:30pm, Hearing Loss Support Group-North Platte, First Lutheran Church, North Platte, Donita Mains, Field Representative for NCDHH



# Sign Language Interpreter Licensure

Continued from Page 1

This means anyone who says he/she is an interpreter must meet the requirements for and be licensed by NCDHH. If you are a person that uses sign language interpreters, you will be able to ask for the interpreter's license before agreeing to pay for the interpreting assignment. This will give you the comfort of knowing that your interpreter has gone through the necessary training and/or certification processes to do the job professionally and as accurately as possible.

Continued from page 1

“The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that, for certain situations, qualified interpreters are to be hired,” states NCDHH Executive Director, Dr. Peter Seiler. “The proposed interpreter licensure bill will help define qualified interpreters for the state of Nebraska. In addition, the proposed bill will help the interpreting profession elevate itself to a recognized and crucial partner in providing services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing people who rely on interpreters for accurate conveyance of information. Obviously, having accurate information and giving accurate information go a long way to resolving situations or obtaining needed and appropriate services.”



The purpose of requiring that all interpreters must be licensed parallels efforts made by other states and those within the profession itself. Currently, 40% of all states require interpreters to be licensed or be registered with a state agency. Interpreter licensure creates a system in which a state entity can oversee services that are provided by professional interpreters. A license holder is obligated to follow rules and standards that are established by the state agency with feedback from professional interpreters and stakeholders. If a licensed interpreter, through due process, is found to have violated rules set forth by the licensing agency, then the agency could take action against the license of that interpreter. The license could be suspended, put into a probationary status, or even revoked. Without a licensure system in place, the state agency in charge of interpreter standards can only request the interpreter to adhere more closely to an interpreter code of professional conduct. Also, there will be exceptions written into the proposed law that will allow for special circumstances.



NCDHH would like to hear from you. If you have questions or concerns about how this might impact you, please contact Ben Sparks, Public Information Officer, at (800) 545-6244 (v), (866) 875-2931 (vp) or email me at [ben.sparks@nebraska.gov](mailto:ben.sparks@nebraska.gov).



**Peggy Williams**, Mental Health Specialist for NCDHH, received the **Every Day Hero** award from YWCA Omaha, The Shelter, Catholic Charities Domestic Violence Services, Ponca Tribe of Nebraska Family Violence Program and Domestic Violence Coordinating Council-Family Justice Center of the Midlands as part of the 1st Annual Metro Domestic Violence Awareness Month Kick-off on September 30th, 2010. The event was held at the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge between Omaha and Council Bluffs.

Peggy received this award for her valuable work towards improving access of services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities. An example of this work was a workshop that Peggy developed called “Breaking the Silence; Domestic Violence in the Deaf Community.” Peggy was able to bring in a national expert to educate service providers about Deaf culture, language barriers that face people who are Deaf, and the differing needs between those who are Hard of Hearing and those who are Deaf.



**Left: Nikki Boulay**, voice talent for Star 104.5 radio station, Mistress of Ceremonies with **Peggy Williams**



**Right: Peggy** receiving her award

“It was with great pride that the Douglas County Domestic Violence Candlelight Vigil Committee recognized Peggy Williams for her spirit and dedication in bringing together the deaf community and the domestic violence programs to end the violence. Peggy has been dedicated for over 25 years to educating the deaf community about domestic violence and working with agencies to educate them on Deaf Culture. Peggy received the Every Day Hero Award for excellence in service.”

**-Sakura Yodogawa-Campbell, Volunteer Coordinator at YWCA**

“We are pleased to see Peggy receive this award. It is a culmination and also a validation of her work advocating for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing battered women and those women with hearing loss who have suffered from sexual assaults. We at NCDHH are proud of her and her commitment to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community and to promoting deafness awareness to the providers of services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assaults. This award is proof of her success. The real beneficiary of her receiving the award, I am sure Peggy will agree, are the women with hearing loss in the community.”

**-Dr. Peter Seiler, Executive Director for NCDHH**



**From Left to Right: Frances Hauptman** - Director of Domestic Violence Services for Catholic Charities –Omaha, **Peggy Williams**, **Sakura Yodogawa-Campbell** - Volunteer Coordinator at YWCA.



*The Nation's Voice for People with Hearing Loss*



We had such a wonderful fall and the leaves turned such beautiful colors! The past several months at the Hearing Loss Association – Omaha Area Chapter there has been a variety of speakers addressing different ways to improve the lives of Nebraskans with a hearing loss; FM systems, Computer Assisted Real Time Transcription, communication tips to learning about oral interpreters and how they can benefit those who do not use sign language. Dr. Seiler presented to the Omaha Chapter HLAA and, among other topics, spoke about the importance of requiring licensing for interpreters (oral and sign). This would be a benefit in many ways; gives credence to the fact that interpreting is a profession, provides accountability and holds interpreters to a professional standard, provides clear guidelines for both the user and the interpreter, and creates a means to address issues that may come up from either the interpreter or the individual using the interpreter.



In conjunction with the National Hearing Loss Association goals HLAA – Omaha is working on “looping” buildings in Nebraska and raising awareness of hearing loss. We are sharing information with people with hearing loss as well as their friends and families. Hearing loss is a family affair. Hearing loss affects not just the person with the hearing loss but everyone they try to communicate with. I have met with families that have one or more family members with a hearing loss. I hear over and over again how hearing family members and those with a hearing loss are frustrated. From hearing members I have heard how frustrated they are with repeating. The person who has a hearing loss says how tired they are of having to ask for a repeat and both are often emotionally overwhelmed. There are different solutions! One way of communicating doesn't necessarily work for all families so it is important to learn about the different options and see what fits best for your environment.



The Omaha HLAA chapter is a terrific resource and welcomes family and friends. For more information call or email. And don't forget about the National HLAA. Their website has a wealth of information. Click on [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org) and see for yourself.



## What is a...

### Hearing Test?

By Donita K. Mains,  
PhD, CSW

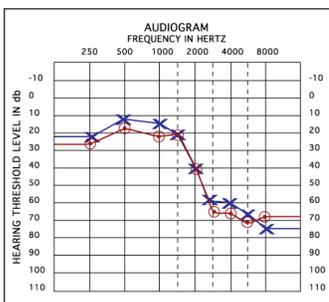
A hearing test evaluates a person's ability to hear and their sensitivity to sound.

Sounds start as vibrations which produce sound waves. These waves vibrate at a certain speed (frequency) and have a certain height (amplitude). The vibration speed determines how high or how low a sound is (pitch). The height of the sound wave determines how loud the sound is (volume).

Hearing happens when the sound wave vibrations travel through the ear and are turned into nerve impulses. These electrical impulses are sent to the brain, which "hears" them.

A complete hearing evaluation should involve several tests.

The most common is the audiometer test. The audiometer plays a series of tones through a headset. The tones vary in pitch (frequency, measured in hertz) and loudness (intensity, measured in decibels—dBs). The audiologist or hearing health professional controls the volume of a tone and reduces the intensity until you can no longer hear it. Then the tone will get louder until you can hear it again. The procedure will be repeated several times using a higher pitch tone each time. Each ear is tested separately.



A bone conduction test (tuning fork test) should also be given. In this test a tuning fork is placed behind the ear on the mastoid bone. The fork is struck to make it vibrate and produce a tone. This test assesses how well sound moves through the ear. Sometimes the fork will be moved in front of the ear and/or above the forehead. This test will help determine if the hearing loss is conductive (problems in the outer or middle ear) or sensorineural (problems in the inner ear, cochlea, or auditory nerve).

Another test is the whispered speech test. This is sometimes combined with the speech reception and word recognition test. The hearing professional will whisper a series of words for you to repeat. If you can not hear the words at a soft whisper, the words will be repeated a little louder until you can hear them and repeat them correctly.

In addition, a test called a tympanogram is generally done. In this test, a small probe is placed in the ear and the air pressure is varied. This test tells how well the eardrum and other structures in the middle ear are working.

The last test an audiologist may perform is an acoustic reflex test. In this test, a probe is placed in the ear and a loud tone, greater than 70dBs is produced. This test measures the reflexive contraction of the stapedius muscle, which is important in protecting the ear from loud noises. This test can also be used to estimate the hearing threshold of an individual.

There is normally no discomfort involved in a hearing evaluation and no known risks. If you think you may have a hearing loss, make sure you are getting a complete evaluation.

## Interpreter Spotlight: Bethany Koubsky

**What are your certifications?** RID CI/CT

**How long have you been a certified interpreter?** I've been working in the field since 1997. I got my CT in 2001 and my CI in 2005.

**How did you become interested in the field of interpreting?** I took community education classes in high school because I have always been interested in Sign Language. I continued these classes throughout college. I received my BA degree in Theater and English from Creighton University and went to work full time as a customer service agent on the phones all day. I was still taking sign language classes at the time and the teacher and I had become good friends. She encouraged me to go back to school at IWCC to become an interpreter...and the rest is history!!

**What is the most frustrating part of the profession?** Unethical behavior from interpreters that holds our profession back.

**Can you describe a highlight of your interpreting career?** The highlight of my career was attending the Interpreter training for the Theater workshop in New York City through the TDF(theater development fund) This was a fabulous one week experience that I will never forget. Because I do a lot of performing arts interpreting, this was a great benefit to me. I was learning from the best interpreters in the best place in the world for performing arts, and I even got to interpret ON BROADWAY!! It was so much fun and I learned so much.

**Who are the interpreters that you admire the most?** Those who have earned their RID certifications through hard work and sweat and sometimes tears, and continue to work hard through earning CEUs and helping up and comers along the way. Those who keep moving and progressing our profession forward, but also remember where we came from.

**What is something that readers would be surprised to learn about you?** I was once a model. I worked locally here in Omaha for an agency called Nancy Bounds International.



**Do you know what your rights are under the American's with Disabilities Act?** Do you know how to get the accommodations you need to fully participate in today's society? Do you know what to do if your requests for accommodation are denied?

Have you ever gone to the doctor or lawyer and not understood what your doctor or lawyer said? Asking for an assistive listening device is your right under the ADA. This is only one of many ways to make sure you have full access to communication.

**Beth Ellsworth  
Field Representative II**



I used to be so frustrated when I would go see my doctor. She would talk with me while she was walking down the hall, she would try and talk with me during the exam, or talk with me while she wrote in my chart. Finally, I said to her, "You know, I depend on seeing your lips and I cannot understand what you are saying unless you are looking at me." We ended up talking and here is what we came up with.

1. No more talking to me unless we are face to face. So now the first thing the doctor and I do is sit down in the exam room and we review what has brought me to the office. Then she tells me what will occur during the exam.
2. We also have established a way for her to let me know if she needs to speak with me during the exam. She taps my shoulder and waits for me to look at her. Even with my hearing aids on, I still need to see her lips to understand what she is saying. After the exam we sit and discuss the visit and what follow up is needed.

Wow, what a difference this has made! No more guessing what happened. And no more stress...

We all have a right to be fully engaged in our lives. This means meeting our communication needs. The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has a wealth of services and programs that can assist you in meeting your needs. This includes presentations and workshops, equipment programs, advocating for your rights and much more.

I would love to hear from you! Let me know what your needs are and let's see what options are available. Together we can work on a plan that works for you.

Have a wonderful Fall!!

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36,000,000

"According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 36 million (17%) Americans have some degree of hearing loss making it a public health issue third in line after heart disease and arthritis."  
from [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org)

## An Interview with Peggy Williams, Mental Health Specialist

By: Ben Sparks

You were recognized for providing assistance to Domestic Violence/ Sexual Assault programs statewide, bringing the Deaf and Hard of Hearing perspectives to the forefront. Personally, I'm proud to work in the same office as someone as strong as yourself. You make NCDHH a stronger agency. Thank you.

### **What motivated you to become an advocate in the areas of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault?**

My interest in the field of domestic violence and sexual assault began in 1969 when I became a victim of domestic violence; I was 18 years old at the time. I lived in a very abusive marriage for 3 ½ years and experienced all aspects of domestic violence during this time, physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual abuse. After being hospitalized for 8 days in 1972 due to this abuse, I realized I had to do something to help myself. I needed to know that this was not my fault and I had done nothing wrong in my marriage that would cause a person to abuse another in this way. My Dr. told me I would never recover from what had happened until I could actually sit down and talk to people about this experience. The bruises healed, the bumps went away but the emotional scars left behind, the need to always please people so I would not get hurt, still left me with a tremendous amount of insecurities and self worth issues.



In 1982, I began advocating for Deaf women who were experiencing domestic violence/sexual assault with a program in Lincoln by providing this program education and training on working with Deaf victims of domestic violence/sexual assault. In return, this program taught me about becoming a survivor of domestic violence. During this time in my career, my past became my reality, and I turned my weakness in to my strength. I began my recovery by listening to other victims of domestic violence, sharing my story, and giving strength and hope to others on what guided me through the time in my life when I did not feel I had any strength or hope.

### **Do you see an increase in DV/SA in correlation to current economic difficulties?**

From research I have done as well as in my own personal experience domestic violence is a learned behavior and often times is reinforced in the family as well as in all of society, a control issue. An abuser can use all kinds of reasons for abusing his spouse or partner, economic difficulties, the sun's not shining or the day is not going like he thought it should, it all comes down to control. Can the abuser change? Yes, most can learn not to batter if they have the motivation for making changes in this behavior.

### **How are you able to help women in crisis?**

When I meet with someone who is in crisis I spend as much time as possible listening to them and I address any safety concerns they might have. I discuss having a safety plan, which, I can assist the person to develop and provide her with resources that are available in her community. If the person is willing to begin the process in meeting with outside resources, I will then coordinate services for this person with domestic violence agencies and go with her on the first visit if requested. I will continue to advocate for this person and monitor programs to ensure that she is receiving accessible services.



Donita K. Mains, PhD,  
CSW  
Field Representative III  
North Platte Office

This fall has been wonderful...the colors, the weather and all. Sure makes all the driving scenery beautiful. This is much better than last year when we were already buried in snow! Fall is also harvest time and the farmers are having better weather too. Please remember to wear your hearing protection when around all that machinery. That goes for us city slickers as well during times of mowing, blowing & vacuuming leaves, sawing wood with chainsaws and soon using snow blowers.

Fall also means a busy schedule. Many organizations schedule health fairs, conferences, presentations, conventions, and etc. during September through November. I have had a wide variety of activities from senior festivals in North Platte & Kearney, to booths at health resource and information fairs to RailFest in North Platte. Add this to my regular travel and things get hectic, but reconnecting with old friends and contacts as well as making new ones makes it all fun and worth every minute.

I will also be your contact person if you have questions about hearing aids and the hearing aid banks. Both the Lions' Hearing Aid Bank (for those under age 65) and the Sertoma Hearing Aid Bank (for those over age 65) are our only income guided programs. Both banks provide reconditioned hearing aids at low cost to those who qualify.

For more information visit our website: [www.ncdhh.ne.gov](http://www.ncdhh.ne.gov) or email me at [donita.mains@nebraska.gov](mailto:donita.mains@nebraska.gov).

Have a great colorful autumn.



**Do you have difficulty hearing a one-on-one conversation?**

**Do you have your television volume up too high?**

If so, you may benefit from the use of an Assistive Listening Device (ALD). These wonderful new devices have been designed with you in mind! Equipment has been designed to not only increase the *volume* of the sounds in your vicinity, but you can adjust the *pitch*, higher or lower, depending on what frequency you hear better. Contact a Field Representative at one of our offices. They can prepare a 90-day loan to ensure the device meets your needs.

Going Green?

Receive  
*The Communicator* in your Inbox  
by sending us an  
email at

[ncdhh@nebraska.gov](mailto:ncdhh@nebraska.gov)



Norman Weverka  
Field  
Representative III  
Lincoln Office



Due to a change in our service model, I have been able to increase my time in training law enforcement statewide. I recently had the opportunity to train sheriffs and police officers from all over Nebraska at a centralized training facility in Grand Island. I was also given the opportunity to train the entire Ralston police department regarding issues that they may encounter in the line of duty while serving deaf and hard of hearing citizens. I will be doing a similar training for the Lancaster County Sherriff's department as well. The Omaha / Douglas county corrections department are preparing to provide a six week training course for their staff and I have been invited to provide information regarding people who have hearing loss. I look forward to expanding my training into western Nebraska, including North Platte and Scottsbluff.

NCDHH held a booth at Husker Harvest Days for the third year in a row. Over 4000 people stopped by our booth to collect information and free ear plugs. We held a drawing for several door prizes including my Corn People.

NCDHH also experienced great success with a project developed by Captain Jeffrey Hatcher and Lincoln Fire and Rescue. Ben Sparks and I coordinated with LFR in providing free smoke alarms for all deaf and hard of hearing Lincolnites. We were able to train the entire staff of LFR through a series of trainings conducted at several fire houses throughout Lincoln. The experience was rewarding. I learned much about how LFR keeps the city of Lincoln safe, and through our actions, we have made it an even safer place to live.

**Warning concerning the use of VRS or IP-Relay for 911 calls.**

**TTY calls are still the best means for emergency personnel to quickly identify a person's location.**

**In an emergency, dial 9-1-1 using a landline telephone or a TTY to ensure immediate attention and identification of your location.**

**At present, VRS and IP-Relay cannot guarantee an immediate answer to your call nor transmit your location information directly to emergency responders.**

# Real Life Situations ADA

Q

“My employer says that I am not disabled and shouldn’t have to make any accommodations for me because I wear hearing aids and that makes me “normal”. But I still can’t hear. What are my rights at work?”

A

A disability is described under the ADA as a substantial impairment to a major life activity. Hearing is a major life activity. Therefore, if one is having difficulty distinguishing all words due to interference or background noise even when wearing hearing aids, cochlear implants or using assistive listening devices, that person still should be entitled to legal protection of the ADA.

Q

“I am deaf but my employer says he can’t afford accommodations. What does he have to get for me?”

A

A reasonable accommodation is any change or adjustment to an environment that permits an employee to participate, perform and enjoy the benefits & privileges of employment. In order for an employer to claim “undue hardship” certain conditions should be considered: nature and cost of the accommodation, financial resources of the business, type of operation . The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or NCDHH may be able to assist in assisting your employer with assessing accommodations.

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## NCDHH Full Board Meeting December 10, 2010



Time - 8:30am  
Omaha State Office Building  
1313 Farnam Classroom 219  
Omaha NE

For more information, please contact Lori Burrage by phone at (800) 545-6244 v/tty or by email at [lori.burrage@nebraska.gov](mailto:lori.burrage@nebraska.gov).



This meeting is open to the public. NCDHH encourages anyone to attend who wants to know more about our agency.

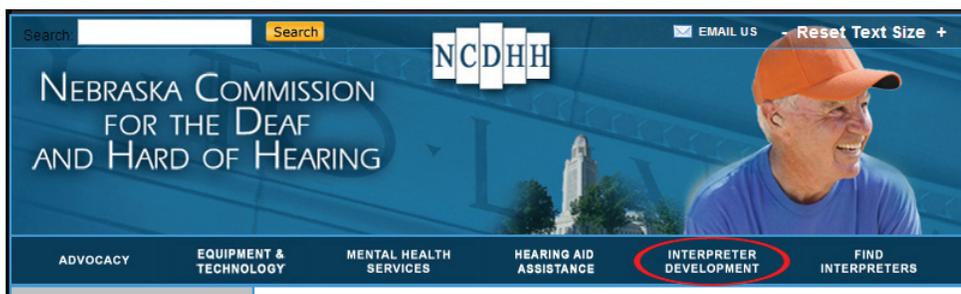


# Interpreter News

**QAST**  
Quality Assurance Screening Test

## Nebraska Sign Language Interpreter Licensure Renewal June 30th, 2011

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing would like to remind licensed sign language interpreters of the upcoming Sign Language Interpreter/Transliterators license renewal date, June 30th, 2011. We recommend interpreters review our applications for licensure renewal. They can be found online at [www.ncdhh.ne.gov](http://www.ncdhh.ne.gov). Click on the Interpreter Development tab and follow the Sign Language Interpreter Licensing link. Renewal applications will be subject to additional fees if received on or after July 1, 2011.



One requirement for license renewal is proof of 20 contact hours of approved Continuing Education. Section six in the Rules & Regulations Relating to Sign Language Interpreters defines the Continuing Education requirements. In this section it requires all license renewal applications:

Have completed 20 clock hours of approved continuing education during the preceding 24 month period. A minimum of 15 clock hours must be completed in the area of Professional Studies. Professional Studies contains content that directly affects the field of interpreting or transliterating. A maximum of 5 clock hours may be completed in General Studies. General Studies includes topics that enhance the interpreter/transliterators' critical thinking skills and general ideas typically understood within the mainstream American Culture.

NCDHH will also continue to accept RID transcripts spanning the licensure cycle. Please keep in mind that RID and licensure cycles are not synonymous and care should be given to the time frames in which each cycle exists. Only CEUs earned between July 1, 2009 and June 30th, 2011 will be applicable towards license renewal.

## INTERPRETER TOOLBOX

### Websites

Licensed Interpreters, have you considered your Continuing Education Unit requirements for licensure renewal next year? [www.tinyurl.com/deafblindinterpreting](http://www.tinyurl.com/deafblindinterpreting) is a webinar provider and RID Sponsor wrapped into one site, hosting one of the very few resources of online DeafBlind training.



# United States Legislative News



Federal laws that impact the lives of Deaf  
and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans

## 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act

On October 8th, 2010, joined by disability-rights advocates and tech industry representatives, President Obama signed into law the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act. The legislation requires smart phones, television programs and other modern communications technologies to be accessible to people with vision or hearing loss.

“The story of the disability rights movement is enriched because it’s intertwined with the story of America’s progress. Americans with disabilities are Americans first and foremost, and like all Americans are entitled to not only full participation in our society, but also full opportunity in our society,” stated President Obama.

Some of the specific requirements of the new law are:

- Mobile phone companies are to make web browsers, text messaging, and e-mail on smart phones fully accessible.
- Ensures that Internet-enabled mobile phones are hearing aid compatible.
- Provides \$10 million in funding each year for assistive technology for deaf-blind individuals.

“The Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act is one of the most significant victories for our community since the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed 20 years ago. It will enable 36 million deaf and hard of hearing people to participate in the Internet age by ensuring captioning of television programs on the Internet, a closed caption button on television remote controls, hearing aid compatibility for Internet telephones, and communications equipment for individuals who are deaf-blind, and more,” said Bobbie Beth Scoggins, National Association of the Deaf President. “While we fell short in some areas, such as requiring web TV episodes distributed only on the Internet to be captioned, this is a step in the right direction to make the web accessible. For many of us, the quality of our lives depend on an accessible Internet and we appreciate Congress’ recognition of this essential civil right.”

## H.R. 1646, Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit Act

This bill amends Internal Revenue Code to allow a nonrefundable income tax credit of up to \$500 for the purchase of a qualified hearing aid for an individual who is either: (1) age 55 or older; or (2) is claimed as a dependent of the taxpayer. It denies such tax credit to any taxpayer whose modified adjusted gross income exceeds \$200,000.

This bill is currently “in committee” and will be resubmitted to the House of Representatives. Congressman Lee Terry of Nebraska’s second Congressional district is a co-sponsor of this bill. There are currently 127 co-sponsors of this bill in a bipartisan effort to provide some financial relief for those purchasing hearing aids.

Continued from Page 9

### How can you help other agencies and service providers improve their services for women who are deaf or hard of hearing?

As the Mental Health Specialist for the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, my job is to ensure access to mental health and substance abuse programs for deaf and hard of hearing people in Nebraska. I can provide training and education to programs on various aspects of deafness and hearing loss that will benefit programs on having a better understanding of the needs of this population. I can also recommend technology that is available that will enable programs to have accessible communication for the deaf or hard of hearing person that needs to have communication access within their facility.



### If an agency or person wanted to contact you, how can they do that?

Please contact me at 471-3593 or by email at [peggy.williams@nebraska.gov](mailto:peggy.williams@nebraska.gov).



## Jitterbug J Cell Phone by GreatCall is NOW available through NSTEP!

The Jitterbug J is an amplified cell phone that's easy to hear, see and use:

- Hearing aid compatible with the highest M4/T4 rating
- Patented ear cushion reduces background noise
- Powerful, amplified speaker up to 101 decibels
- No contracts, no credit checks, no cancellation fees
- Friendly, live U.S. based Customer Service, 24/7

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