

Nebraska Sign Language Interpreter Review Board Meeting

December 1, 2017 – 1:30pm – 3:30pm

Conference Room 227

1313 Farnam, Omaha NE

I. Introduction

II. Roll Call

The meeting of the Nebraska Interpreter Review Board (IRB) was called to order at 2:15pm by Ms. Vonda Apking, Chairperson in Conference Room 227, Omaha, NE

Board Members Present: Ms. Vonda Apking, Ms. Bethany Koubsky, Ms. Peggy Williams, Ms. Nancy Flearl, Mr. Jerry Siders, Mr. John Wyvill

Board Members Absent: Mr. Heath Focken, Ms. Jessica Nickels

Interpreters: Ms. Katrina Watton & Ms. Sharon Sinkler

CART: CART Services of ERI, 406 S 48th Ave, Omaha NE 68132

Staff: Ms. Traci Cooney, Ms. Natasha Olsen, Ms. Pamela Duncan

Public: Ms. Crystal Pierce

Publication of official notice of the meeting appeared in the February 23, 2018 edition of the Omaha World Herald, a legal newspaper of general circulation in this state, as required by the Open Meetings Act.

III. **Approval of Agenda** – Ms. Flearl accepted the agenda as written and Ms. Williams seconded. With no further discussion the motion carried with Ms. Apking, Ms. Koubsky, Ms. Williams, Ms. Flearl, Mr. Siders, and Mr. Wyvill all voting aye. Mr. Focken and Ms. Nickels both absent.

IV. **Approval of Minutes from June 7, 2017** – Mr. Siders accepted the minutes as written and Ms. Flearl seconded. With no further discussion the motion carried with Ms. Apking, Ms. Koubsky, Ms. Williams, Ms. Flearl, Mr. Siders, and Mr. Wyvill all voting aye. Mr. Focken and Ms. Nickels both absent.

V. Public Comments

VI. Old Business

No discussion was held

VII. New Business

- **Elect Vice – Chair** – Mr. Siders elected Ms. Williams as the Vice-Chair, Ms. Williams accepted. Ms. Koubsky seconded. With no further discussion the motion carried with Ms. Apking, Ms. Koubsky, Ms. Williams, Ms. Flearl, Mr. Siders, and Mr. Wyvill all voting

aye. Mr. Focken and Ms. Nickels both absent.

- **Case 2503** – Mr. Siders made a motion to go into executive session and Ms. Williams seconded. With no further discussion the motion carried with Ms. Apking, Ms. Koubsky, Ms. Williams, Ms. Flearl, Mr. Siders, and Mr. Wyvill all voting aye. Mr. Focken and Ms. Nickels both absent.

The meeting moved to executive session at 1:33pm.

Ms. Flearl made a motion to come out of executive session and Ms. Koubsky seconded. With no further discussion the motion carried with Ms. Apking, Ms. Koubsky, Ms. Williams, Ms. Flearl, Mr. Siders, and Mr. Wyvill all voting aye. Mr. Focken and Ms. Nickels both absent.

The meeting was re-opened from executive session at 2:12pm.

Ms. Koubsky made the motion in reference to Case 2503. The interpreter should receive additional training of the referral services system, as well as providing an explanation of their business practices going forward within 60 days of being notified of the recommendation. Ms. Flearl seconded. With no further discussion the motion carried with Ms. Apking, Ms. Koubsky, Ms. Williams, Ms. Flearl, Mr. Siders, and Mr. Wyvill all voting aye. Mr. Focken and Ms. Nickels both absent.

- **Educational Interpreters** – Mr. Wyvill reported that NCDHH has been in conversation with Boys Town. NCDHH has asked Boys Town to consider what would be the feasibility and logistics of having educational interpreters take a test and become licensed interpreters in a community setting. Doing so would address the shortages of interpreters as well as freeing up qualified educational interpreters. For example, there would be an eligibility threshold like an EIPA score of 3.0, and then some sort of testing tool or instrument. Boys Town has said that they would look at it and discuss with Brenda Schick in CO and get some feedback to NCDHH.

Conversation on the tests that educational interpreters can take to become licensed. Mr. Wyvill added that NCDHH is still proctoring QAST (Quality Assurance Screening Test). Feedback that NCDHH has received from educational interpreters is that it is not worth their time and money to take QAST, and other types of certifications are available such as BEI (Board for Evaluation of Interpreters). The goal is to find a more low-cost option that could be considered. Ms. Koubsky asked for clarification on the cost for taking QAST. Ms. Cooney replied that it is \$25 for written and \$220 for performance. Ms. Koubsky asked for clarification that QAST is the other test that educational interpreters can take. Mr. Wyvill replied that NCDHH has asked Boys Town to come up with a testing tool that will be a lower cost option. Ms. Duncan added that the purpose is to certify knowledge because EIPA (Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment) tests completely different measures than QAST. For EIPA interpreters to show their skill level in the community area, there would have to be some sort of new testing devised so that they could.

Discussion on the different testing tools that are available and the cost involved. Ms. Koubsky added that if you want to work in the community you will take what is available. If you develop another test, then anybody who is a community interpreter should be able to take that test. Ms. Williams suggested that another option was approaching the schools systems to see if the schools systems will pay for their interpreters to take QAST to improve their interpreting.

Mr. Wyvill commented that this is an interesting conversation because the educational interpreters are saying that this sounds good, they are excited about having another testing tool. NCDHH has received feedback from the educational interpreters that we are the roadblock to them working in the community.

Conversation regarding skillset of EIPA interpreters verses community interpreters.

Mr. Wyvill added that we have two practical problems, 1) an interpreter shortage and 2) how we can grow and develop the interpreters that we have through education and CEU (Continuing Education Unit) programs. This discussion is just one small piece, it is way too premature to say that's where we're going to go.

- **Feedback on future duties (i.e. mentoring, professional development)** – Mr. Wyvill shared that he has realigned Ms. Duncan's job duties as the Interpreter Program Coordinator. Looking at CEU programs to be put in collaboration with NeRID (Nebraska Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf). Ms. Duncan is working closely with Ms. Crystal Pierce on a program that will be discussed later. Mr. Wyvill add that he is also looking at mentoring programs, reaching out to UNO (University of Nebraska Omaha) and Augustana College in South Dakota.

Conversation on how a Mentoring Program would benefit the interpreting community.

- **Task Force Update** – Mr. Wyvill shared in response to an interpreter concern that was addressed to the Full Commission Board. The Full Commission Board created an Interpreter Task Force Committee. The Interpreter Issues Committee which is comprised of Ms. Margie Propp, Dr. Peter Seiler, and Mr. Jeremy Fitzpatrick met earlier this week to decide the direction for the task force to take. Anticipate after the first of the year there will be more meetings. Looking at addressing an issue with what happens if someone doesn't renew their QAST application. Ms. Williams is representing the Interpreter Review Board (IRB) on the Interpreter Task Force Committee.

Discussion on what is the purpose of the task force. Ms. Duncan answered. There was an interpreter who missed the renewal process to renew their QAST certification. By default, by not renewing the certification, that interpreter was decertified. That interpreter then filed a grievance to the Full Commission Board and the Board listened to the interpreter's grievance and decided to hold off on making a recommendation. Therefore the Board established a QAST Task Force to look at other testing systems and their renewal process. The goal was to determine if we wanted to create some sort of

internal policy which would regulate reinstatement in the event that someone faced hardship. The Full Commission Board charged the QAST Task Force to come up with language mirroring what is out there for an appeals process. RID and BEI call it a reinstatement process, and there's a 12 step process to go through and document what your hardship was. It is a two page application, where you have to provide documentation, along with a fee.

Ms. Koubsky commented that QAST is not certification. Ms. Duncan replied that the QAST tool produces what we deem as a level of certification. From the national level there is an opinion that QAST is not certification, but according to the State of Nebraska and the license regulation, it recognizes QAST testing tool as a certification if you obtain a level 3, 4, 5. Ms. Koubsky added that QAST is certification in the state of Nebraska, but not national certification. Ms. Duncan responded with correct.

Conversation on what QAST is and why we have this as a testing tool in the state of Nebraska. In addition to the other testing tools that are available to sign language interpreters, along with RID having lifted the moratorium.

- **Review By-laws** – Ms. Cooney explained that the By-Laws need to be reviewed on a yearly basis. Suggestion that everyone review between now and the next meeting this can be added to the agenda for discussion if needed.
- **Review terms** – Ms. Cooney shared that Mr. Heath Focken submitted his resignation, that was received on November 30, 2017. Discussion on needing a deaf or hard of hearing committee member to replace Mr. Focken. Also discussed was that Mr. Siders term will be over on June 30, 2018. Discussion on the process for taking applications to become a committee member. Ms. Cooney shared that the application is posted on the Commission's website. Applications that are received are submitted to the Full Commission Board for approval. Discussion on how to promote the need for another committee member.

VIII. Executive Director Report – Mr. John C. Wyvill

- Ms. Natasha Olsen reported on the budget for the Commission. The state is reducing NCDHH's general funds by 1% in the third and fourth quarter. What this means for NCDHH is about \$10,000 a quarter, looking at \$20,000 overall. For a small agency, 1% is a lot.
- New Hires
 - Our Kearney office is now a full-time position, Mr. Aaron Rothenberger, Advocacy Specialist is the new staff member in that office.
 - The other Advocacy Specialist is Ms. Teresa Hevner who is based in our Omaha office.

- Ms. Pamela Duncan is our Interpreter Program Coordinator who is based in our Omaha office

Discussion on an upcoming workshop that Ms. Duncan will be organizing.

- Mr. Siders asked if LB299 – trying to cut the number of licenses in Nebraska, is this affecting sign language? Discussion on this bill and what it entails. Ms. Olsen noted that this does not pertain to sign language interpreters.
- CEU program that Ms. Duncan is working on. This being the workshop in the spring of 2018. Discussion on the cost for the workshop, the # of CEU's that will be offered, and the location. Ms. Duncan also added that she is working with Ms. Crystal Pierce in organizing one hour sessions. These are free to low-cost workshops. Looking to have these once a month.

IX. Public Comments

X. Announcements

XI. Next Meeting Date

- March 2, 2018 at 4600 Valley Rd, Room 4A, Lincoln NE from 1p – 3p.
- June 1, 2018 at 1313 Farnam, Omaha NE from 1p – 3p
- September 7, 2018 at 4600 Valley Rd, Room 4A, Lincoln NE from 1p – 3p.
- December 7, 2018 at 1313 Farnam, Room TBA, Omaha, NE from 1pm – 3pm.

Mr. Siders made the motion to accept the dates, time and locations. Ms. Koubsky seconded. With no further discussion the motion carried with Ms. Apking, Ms. Koubsky, Ms. Williams, Ms. Flearl, Mr. Siders, and Mr. Wyvill all voting aye. Mr. Focken and Ms. Nickels both absent.

Ms. Flearl motioned to adjourn the meeting at 3:04pm and was seconded by Ms. Koubsky. With no further discussion the motion carried with Ms. Apking, Ms. Koubsky, Ms. Williams, Ms. Flearl, Mr. Siders, and Mr. Wyvill all voting aye. Mr. Focken and Ms. Nickels both absent.