

Nebraska Sign Language Interpreter Review Board Meeting

Approved on February 25, 2022

December 3rd, 2021; 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

Country Inn and Suites, 5353 N. 27th, Lincoln, NE

A. Welcome

The meeting of the Nebraska Interpreter Review Board (IRB) was called to order at 11:00 am by Ms. Nancy Flearl, Acting Chairperson, at Country Inn and Suites, 5353 N. 27th, Lincoln, Nebraska.

B. Notice of Open Meeting

Acting Chairperson Ms. Nancy Flearl 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.

Publication of official notice of the meeting appeared in the November 26, 2021, edition of the Omaha World Herald, a legal newspaper of general circulation in this state, as required by the Open Meetings Act.

C. Roll Call

For the record, Board Members Ms. Vonda Apking, Ms. Meghann Cassidy, Ms. Margie Propp, Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson, Ms. Tricia Tighe and Mr. John Wyvill, Executive Director, were present.

NCDHH staff present was Ms. Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator.

Interpreters for the meeting were Mr. Ben Sparks and Ms. Amber Tucker.

D. Review of Agenda

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

E. Acceptance of Agenda

Ms. Tricia Tighe moved to accept the agenda as written. Ms. Margie Propp seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Apking, Ms. Cassidy, Ms. Flearl, Ms. Propp, Mrs. Richardson-Nelson, Ms. Tighe, Mr. Wyvill all voting aye.

F. Acceptance of Minutes

Ms. Vonda Apking made a motion to adopt the September 3rd, 2021, minutes and Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Apking, Ms. Cassidy, Ms. Flearl, Ms. Propp, Mrs. Richardson-Nelson, Ms. Tighe, Mr. Wyvill all voting aye.

G. Public Comments

None.

H. Executive Director Report – presented by Mr. John Wyvill

a. Agency updates

- Mr. Wyvill shared that IRB has a vacancy for a government representative as Jessica Nickels has left the board. The vacancy has been advertised and the plan is to present applications to the full board at the March board meeting. He also shared that there is a vacancy on the full board and that interested applicants should apply with the Governor’s office.
- Mr. Wyvill reported that NCDHH is currently having a dialogue with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as they have created a unity and inclusion video that is shown before every basketball game at Pinnacle Bank Arena that is not captioned. The UNL Athletic Department is refusing to add captions.
- Mr. Wyvill shared that the legislative session is coming up soon and the full board is looking at several items. The first being the application for American Rescue Funds. We are advocating for additional funds to be applied to interpreter training and education settings. Also, we are applying to get funding for a rural initiative program for interpreters.

b. Update on SOP regarding discipline action taken

- Mr. Wyvill reported that the Interpreter Issues Committee met on this item and is presenting at the full board meeting next week. If the NCDHH Board takes a licensure action on an interpreter, being considered by the board is an additional step to be taken to report it to RID and also, if applicable, any state entity that is holding a license out of state. The 2nd piece up for consideration is allowing the IRB Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson to dismiss a complaint that has been deemed without merit before it goes to the IRB or NCDHH board. There will be a due process mechanism for the complaining witness to petition the full board for reinstatement if they desire to do so.

I. Public Comment

None.

J. Old Business

None.

K. New Business

- **Set 2021 meeting dates/locations/times**
A Doodle Poll will be sent out

- Ms. Tricia Tighe asked the members for feedback regarding VRI interpreting in the schools. Ms. Margie Propp asked if more information could be researched regarding how many schools are actually using VRI in the classroom as opposed to a live interpreter. Ms. Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator, commented that we seem to be seeing VRI used more in classrooms now because of COVID. Many of them found it was very convenient and easier to get an interpreter in rural areas, so maybe many of those rural areas are continuing to use VRI even when they don't really need to because it is convenient and they can easily get an interpreter. Ms. Nancy Flearl commented that she has a meeting with Teresa Coonts from the Department of Education and she will run this topic by her at that time. Mr. Wyvill commented that Amy Rhone, Director of Special Education for the Department of Education, will be speaking at the full board meeting and he will ask her to address this topic also.
- Ms. Tighe commented that she has a concern regarding interpreters being required to be vaccinated to work in the hospitals. Mr. Wyvill commented that the healthcare industry as a whole has made vaccinations a condition of employment in order to be in their facilities. He also shared that there are instances of interpreters not wanting to interpret in a medical setting due to the risk of COVID. Ms. Margie Propp commented that the Lancaster County Health Department has deemed interpreters essential workers in order to get their vaccines quickly and it should be easy to get one.

L. Announcements

- Ms. Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator, shared that Cody McEvoy, Behavioral Health Specialist, had an enrichment grant in which he provided a workshop to train deaf interpreters and out of that workshop there are several participants who passed the test and now are eligible to become deaf interpreters here in Nebraska. Mr. Wyvill shared that there was an encouraging instance regarding the use of deaf interpreters in a Supreme Court case where they allowed an interpreter and a deaf interpreter. He also shared that CHI has seen an increased need for deaf interpreters as they are seeing more and more situations where they have a positive impact.

M. Adjourn

Ms. Nancy Flearl thanked everyone for what they do for the board and also thanked Mr. Wyvill and NCDHH staff on the growth in advocacy and education in the past five years along with the efforts to strengthen the interpreter pool and the quality of interpreters and providing good education and opportunities for them as well.

Ms. Meghann Cassidy made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:36 am. Ms. Margie Propp seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Apking, Ms. Cassidy, Ms. Flearl, Ms. Propp, Mrs. Richardson-Nelson, Ms. Tighe, Mr. Wyvill all voting aye.