

Nebraska Sign Language Interpreter Review Board Meeting

Draft – current as of 09/07/2022

September 1st, 2022 from 1pm – 3pm

OAD Meeting Hall, 4050 Hillside Ave., Omaha NE

- **Welcome**

The meeting of the Nebraska Interpreter Review Board (IRB) was called to order on September 1st at 1:00 pm by Ms. Nancy Flearl, Chairperson at the OAD Hall, 4050 Hillside Avenue, Omaha NE.

- **Notice of Open Meetings Act**

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.

- **Roll Call**

For the record, board members Ms. Megan Cassidy, Ms. Nancy Flearl, Ms. Margie Propp, Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson, Ms. Tricia Tighe, and Mr. John Wyvill, Executive Director were present. Ms. Vonda Apking arrived late.

- **Review of Agenda**

Executive Director John Wyvill reviewed the agenda with the Board Members. Ms. Flearl presented a reminder that the agenda cannot be changed within 24-hours of the meeting except for emergency items.

- **Acceptance of Agenda**

Ms. Cassidy moved to accept the agenda as written, seconded by Mrs. Richardson-Nelson. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting ayes.

- **Acceptance of Minutes**

There were no changes suggested to the meeting minutes from May 24th, 2022. Ms. Cassidy made the motion to approve acceptance of the minutes, and Mrs. Richardson-Nelson seconded. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting ayes.

- **Public Comments**

- a. A member of the community, Lawrence (Larry) Schultz from Omaha, gave an example of an experience he had when he was using a relay service/VRI interpreter. He commented that the interpreter appeared uninterested and apathetic on screen, which made him feel that they did not want to be there as an interpreter. It seemed harder to effectively communicate/utilize interpreter

services when the interpreter did not seem friendly or seem to care about their job. He also expressed that oftentimes, the interpreters he has encountered using relay do not ask for correction and he often must repeat himself and correct errors on his own. He mentioned that he thought it would be a better experience if the interpreters appeared more friendly.

Ms. Margie Propp asked whether he had contacted the relay service company to report this experience. She suggested he write a letter. Ms. Sharon Sinkler added that if he wanted assistance in writing up a letter, that Larry should contact the Omaha office of NCDHH where their Advocacy Specialists would be happy to help.

- b. A second member of the community, Patti Reitz from Omaha, asked to clarify the services offered by NCDHH, specifically if they are still handling interpreter referrals. Mr. Wyvill offered clarification that NCDHH no longer handles interpreter referrals, but instead they refer out to interpreter referral agencies. There is a list of them on the website. If there is an issue with finding an interpreter through the interpreter referral agencies, Mr. Wyvill suggested contacting NCDHH at that point so they can take further action.

Ms. Flearl stressed that one of the greatest allies for members of the community is NCDHH. Ms. Flearl reminded those in attendance that for any issue with communication or access they should get in touch with the local NCDHH office where they will receive help from one of the advocacy specialists.

- c. Speaking as a member of the community, outside of her role on the board, Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson described a situation that had been brought to her attention. CHI Bergan has no available interpreters/VRI in the emergency room.

Ms. Flearl suggested that the individuals who reached out to Mrs. Richardson-Nelson contact NCDHH about this issue as well.

- d. A fourth community member, Rita Johnson, had a question about her rights when she is a patient at a doctor's office. She wanted to know if a doctor's office offers VRI interpreter services, does the patient have a right to request an onsite/live interpreter in place of the VRI service? Or does the patient have to accept the VRI services? Mr. Wyvill offered an answer and explanation; the patient has a right to "effective communication" – the definition of "effective communication" is defined by the individual/patient. Therefore, if an onsite/live interpreter is what the patient believes is best for their case and is the best way they can have access to medical information during their appointment then they have the right to request an onsite interpreter so they can make informed medical decisions.

Ms. Propp spoke up and suggested that if a patient is wanting an onsite interpreter, they need to request one at the time of making their appointment to give adequate time for the doctor's office to find an available interpreter. Mr. Schultz added a comment in that often doctor's offices have a hard time securing interpreters and sometimes a scheduled interpreter doesn't show up for the

appointment and he is left to write back and forth. Ms. Propp added that if there are issues with an office not being able to supply an interpreter, the patient needs to file a complaint and contact NCDHH. Mr. Wyvill also added to his explanation that sometimes, a patient needs to be prepared to self-advocate and be able to explain outright what and why they feel a specific type of communication is their most effective communication. He suggested that if you use “legal” terms like “best practice” it can sometimes really grab the attention of the office you’re working with. If these experiences are not reported, the issue will become a pattern.

Further discussion on this.

- e. Mr. Schultz recounted another experience on behalf of a friend using VRI/relay service for a medical appointment. A female friend had a medical appointment concerning women’s health. Her VRI interpreter was male and she was uncomfortable having a male interpreter interpreting the content between the doctor and patient which led to her not getting the appropriate information from her medical appointment. Ms. Propp offered a reminder that there is an option to “request a different interpreter” on most VRI services.

Further discussion on this.

- **Executive Director Report – John Wyvill**

- a. **Agency Updates**

- Mr. Wyvill shared with the board and the audience that NCDHH is offering 2 upcoming interpreter workshops. Ms. Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator, has put together both workshops. The first workshop will be presented by Steve Hammerdinger, the Director of the Office of Deaf Services in the Alabama Department of Mental Health. He will be presenting on interpreting in mental health settings. This workshop will be held in 2 parts on Friday, September 30th and October 1st. Flyers were included in the board packets.

The second workshop is this Fall on October 12th and 24th via Zoom. The presenter will be Johnathan Shive, covering Ethical Application of Demand Control Schema: Today’s Ethics and Evaluation. These workshops are open to interpreters and students.

- Mr. Wyvill advertised the upcoming NCDHH event for a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at the Omaha Zoo. This event is coming up on Sunday, September 25th. Free tickets will be first come, first serve at the Henry Doorly Zoo starting at 9am. A Nebraska ID is required to receive a ticket.

- Mr. Wyvill also updated the board and the public on some new members of the NCDHH staff: Jamie Petersen, Administrative Assistant working part-time in Omaha and part-time in Lincoln; Briana Stradinger, Advocacy and Technology Specialist in Omaha; and Sharon Price, Behavioral Health Coordinator in Omaha.

b. Legislative Updates

- Mr. Wyvill provided information on LB1014. NCDHH received \$500k for COVID pandemic funds. It will be dispersed into two separate programs. Informational cards were provided for each program in the board packets. The two programs are as follows: the Legal Communication Access Fund and the Rural Communication Access Fund. The legal communication fund will pay for interpreter services (on-site interpreter, VRI, CART, etc.) needed for any legal communication you have with a lawyer outside of a courtroom. The rural communication access fund applies to people outside of the Omaha and Lincoln metro areas and will pay for interpreter services (on-site interpreters ONLY) and will reimburse the cost for portal-to-portal travel and interpreter expenses. A reimbursement form will be filled out and submitted to NCDHH, and the expenses for the interpreter will be paid by the agency.

- **Old Business**

- a. No old business was presented.

- **New Business**

- a. The next meeting will be held in Lincoln. Due to the constraints of the board members' schedules along with the holiday season surrounding the next meeting, Ms. Sinkler will send out a Doodle poll and then the chairperson will set the meeting date.

- **Announcements**

- a. Mr. Wyvill shared that NCDHH's next Full Board meeting is on September 9th in North Platte.

- **Adjourn**

- a. Ms. Flearl extended thanks to everyone for joining and sharing their thoughts and experiences. Before adjourning, Ms. Flearl reminded those in attendance to lean on NCDHH and its resources. Ms. Cassidy made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:35pm, and Ms. Tighe seconded. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting ayes.