

Nebraska Sign Language Interpreter Review Board Meeting

Draft – current as of 06/03/2022

May 24th, 2022 from 11am – 1pm

NCDHH Room 4a, 4600 Valley Rd., 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, Chairperson, NCDHH Room 4a, 4600 Valley Road, Lincoln, Nebraska.

B. 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.

C. Roll Call

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

D. Review of Agenda

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

E. Acceptance of Agenda

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

F. Acceptance of Minutes

There were no changes suggested. Mrs. Richardson-Nelson made the motion to approve, and Ms. Cassidy seconded. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting ayes.

G. Public Comments

None

H. Executive Director Report

a. Agency Updates

- Mr. Wyvill shared an update with the members that at this time, NCDHH has 6 licensed Deaf Interpreters (DI), 3 licensed apprentice interpreters, 71 nationally certified interpreters, 41 state-certified interpreters, and 15 licensed Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) companies. Renewals for VRI companies are due this year and licenses expire on 6/30/2022. There have been 4 renewals, and one new addition. Ms. Sharon Sinkler is the individual overseeing these operations.
 - A clarification was provided of state-certified interpreters, explaining that they are “grandfathered” in from when the QAST was available. They are able to remain state certified as long as they renew, but once they stop renewing their license they will be required to obtain other certification if they want to be licensed again.
- Mr. Wyvill shared that Ms. Sinkler is working on developing professional development opportunities for interpreters, including workshops for Deaf Interpreters (DIs). Ms. Sinkler will also be reaching out to neRID to determine whether their conference will be hosting any interpreter workshops.
- NCDHH has a new behavioral health coordinator, Sharon Price. She is a graduate of Nebraska School for the Deaf (NSD) and worked in the mental-health field in Ohio before returning to NE. She is working with Ms. Sinkler for a potential mental health/interpreter-related workshop.
 - Any suggestions for other workshops are welcome, please direct to Ms. Sinkler.
- NCDHH events
 - Tonight (05/24/2022) at OAD hall, Town Hall meeting where the Deaf/HH community will have an opportunity to voice concerns or comments regarding access in the healthcare setting.

The chief medical officer of the state and the health and human services CEO called a meeting at the request of Mr. Wyvill for a discussion between all medical officers of the major hospitals. With this meeting, social media outreach and sharing of some major cases regarding communication access in these settings, we are hopefully anticipating future announcements of upcoming changes.

- LEAD-K Advisory Committee is required to have their next/final meeting in-person, as they have already utilized their capacity for virtual/online meetings as per NE statute requirements.
- June 8th, 2022 – Deaf & HH Awareness night at the Stormchasers baseball game in Omaha, NE
- June 17th, 2022 – Deaf & HH Awareness night at the Pioneers baseball game in Scottsbluff, NE
- July 20th, 2022 – Deaf & HH Awareness night at the Saltdogs baseball game in Lincoln, NE
- Fall, 2022 - Omaha Zoo day at Henry Doorly zoo and Scottsbluff zoo day.

b. Legislative Updates

- LB 1014 – We have received 1.5 million dollars in pandemic funding, sponsored by Senator Wishart. 1 million of this funding is being dedicated to the NE Department of education for a few different purposes: 1) for educational interpreter training, 2) for services and programs for Deaf and HH students, like CART services and other technology/equipment services. Director of Special Education, Amy Rhone, will be presenting/updating at the next Full Board Meeting on June 17th, 2022.

Of these funds, NCDHH received \$500,000.00 over the next 2 years for communication access in 2 different settings: 1) legal communication access fund and 2) rural communication access fund

- Legal access fund – if a Deaf/HH individual needs access to a lawyer, law firm, or an advocacy organization that utilizes lawyers (disability rights, etc.), these funds will pay for an interpreter/VRI, CART, or other assistive technology necessary to facilitate communication throughout the state.

Discussion on examples of when/how these funds could be utilized.

- Rural access fund – reimbursement or funding will be provided for a live, on-site interpreter (no CART or VRI) for anyone living in rural Nebraska. Rural NE is being defined as outside of Omaha and Lincoln metro areas. This will be applicable for any setting where an on-site interpreter is requested except for 1) communication with the Federal Government and 2) communication in the K-12 school/education setting where an educational interpreter is needed, not a community licensed interpreter.

Discussion on examples of when/how these funds could be utilized.

- Conversation was had in the form of question and answer across members on different scenarios in which these funds could or could not be applied.

Discussion on various administrative concerns, such as interpreters setting different rates and expectations for rates. Mrs. Richardson-Nelson commented that rates, costs, and what can or cannot be charged should be discussed and decided on the front-end rather than after service was provided.

I. Public Comments

- a. Discussion amongst all board members regarding the state of the interpreter shortage. Clarification on UNO offering an interpreter training program (ITP), and other “surrounding” areas offering ITPs like Augustana college in South Dakota. Ms. Sinkler also added that there are online programs as well and that there are programs out there.

Mr. Wyvill noted that many interpreters are choosing to go the educational route as it is attractive to have summers off, steady income, and benefits.

Mrs. Richardson-Nelson asked if any of the communication access funds could be used to support some kind of paid interpreter mentor/mentee program. In response, Ms. Sinkler commented that she did not see that type of thing happening at this time. Mrs. Richardson-Nelson suggested looking for different grants to potentially fund this type of thing. Ms. Sinkler added that there is often a struggle to find mentors – just because someone is certified and licensed does not automatically qualify them as a mentor, so it is challenging to have a large pool of mentors.

J. Old Business

- a. Board chair requested that Mr. Wyvill inquire whether anyone wants to serve as vice-chair. No one volunteered, no discussion.

K. New Business

- a. Proposed next meeting date is in September 2022 and will likely take place in Omaha. Ms. Sinkler will be sending out a Doodle Poll for individual availability among members.

As a reminder, the next full board meeting after June 17th will be in North Platte.

L. Announcements

- a. Mr. Wyvill announced that NeAD will be hosting a 120th celebration in August.

M. Adjourn

- a. Ms. Tighe made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:54 am, and Ms. Cassidy seconded. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting ayes.