

Annual Report

2021



For Fiscal Year July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021

**West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
100 Dee Drive
Charleston, West Virginia 25311**

Phone: 304-558-1675 Video Phone: 304-400-6959 Fax: 304-558-0937

WVCDHH is an office within the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources.

Overview

The mission of the West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WVCDHH) is to advocate for, develop, and coordinate public policies, regulations, and programs to assure full and equal opportunity for persons who are deaf and hard of hearing in West Virginia.

Background

WVCDHH was established in 1989 and is committed to working statewide to provide opportunities through which the deaf and hard of hearing can participate fully as active, responsible, productive, and independent citizens.

Obligations

Information: Collect and maintain information regarding education, communication, independent living, recreation, employment, health and mental services, substance abuse and other services necessary to support the ability of deaf and hard of hearing individuals to function in society.

Interpreters: Provide services related to interpreters, by establishing and maintaining a registry of qualified interpreters throughout the state of West Virginia.

Outreach: Familiarize the public with the rights, needs and services of deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Investigate: Investigate the condition of deaf and hard of hearing West Virginians to access currently offered programs and to recognize the need for the establishment of new programs.

Training: The Commission is *able* but *not required* to establish workshops for teaching interpretive skills, in-service training, and counseling for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Staff

Executive Director – Erik Essington – Began working on February 14, 2022

Project Director – Sarah Lowther – April 2015 to Present; served as interim Executive Director until February 14, 2022

Board Members

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community Representatives:

Paul See – Chairperson – term expires June 30, 2023

John Burdette – WV Association of the Deaf (WVAD) Recommended – term expires June 30, 2023

Gloria Hollen – WVAD Recommended – term expires June 30, 2023

Roy Forman – WVAD Recommended – term expires June 30, 2023
Deaf/Hard of Hearing position – term expired June 30, 2019 – Currently vacant and accepting applications.

Parent of a Deaf/Hard of Hearing Child:

Gwen Bryant – term expires June 30, 2022

Professionals Working Within the Community:

Dr. Nancy Gillispie – Audiologist – term expires June 30, 2022

Dr. David Blaine – Otolaryngologist – term expired June 30, 2020

Cyndi Shaver – Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing – term expires June 30, 2024

Ex-Officio Members:

Angela Wilson – West Virginia Division of Labor

Designee for Mitchell E. Woodrum, Commissioner

Mary Anne Clendenin – West Virginia Department of Education

Designee for W. Clayton Burch, State Superintendent of Schools

Emily Hopta – West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources

Designee for Bill J. Crouch, Cabinet Secretary

Rachel Gill – West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services

Designee for Pisnu Bua-lam, Acting Director

Mekell Golden – Bureau for Public Health

Designee for Dr. Ayne Amjad, Commissioner

Pam Roush – WV Birth to Three Program

Melanie Hesse – West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Blind

Dawn Embrey King – West Virginia Advisory Council for the Education of Exceptional Children

Meeting Schedule

The quarterly meetings of WVCDHH were temporarily suspended due to COVID-19. This action has been in accordance with guidelines of the West Virginia Secretary of State's Office and with the State of Emergency declared by Governor Justice on March 16, 2020.

Strategies, Activities and Programs

W. Va. Code §5-14-9 states that WVCDHH shall submit an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature which includes its recommendations and programs. Currently, WVCDHH has the following areas of responsibility:

Information

Goal: Maintain accessible information relevant to the deaf and hard of hearing communities.

Strategy: Provide educational information to the deaf and hard of hearing, their families, and the public. Develop an information clearinghouse.

- WVCDHH staff distributes informational brochures to interpreters, hiring entities of interpreters, and deaf and hard of hearing individuals regarding standard practice in the state of West Virginia, as well as the rights of individuals with hearing loss.
- WVCDHH provides information on social media and at events and exhibits to inform the public on Commission activities and programs.

Recommendations: WVCDHH recommends purchasing additional resources with the focus on improving interpreter skill and communication access for families with deaf or hard of hearing children to be added to the resources housed at the West Virginia Library Commission.

Interpreters

Goals: Develop and maintain programs that support the interpreting needs of the deaf and hard of hearing in West Virginia.

Strategy: Maintain an interpreter registry with appropriate fees and continue gathering interpreter input to understand needs.

- WVCDHH maintains the West Virginia Registry of Interpreters (WVRI). The Commission ensures that working interpreters within West Virginia meet a minimum qualification in order to provide the most appropriate and effective services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals who use American Sign Language.
- WVCDHH staff continue to revise and publish an interpreter directory containing all publicly listed qualified interpreters throughout the state. The directory includes information for hiring entities on standard practices for utilizing an interpreter when working with individuals with hearing loss. The directory is updated as needed to reflect the addition of newly qualified interpreters, as well as removal of expired credentials. The information in the directory is also updated to provide current and relevant information.
- WVCDHH is a Local Test Administrator for the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA). These tests are administered by a proctor at no

cost to the interpreter except for fees paid to Boys Town National Research Hospital for the assessment.

- WVCDHH regularly fields inquiries regarding the process of hiring qualified interpreters for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

A list of qualifications held by professional interpreters in West Virginia may be found below. Please note that some interpreters have multiple qualifications and are counted in multiple categories.

Certification	FY 2021
Total Interpreters Listed	147
EIPA total	46
NAD certified, RID certified, and VQAS screened total	122
Interpreter Agencies	11
<i>NAD Level</i>	
Level V	3
Level IV	7
Level III	6
<i>RID Level</i>	
NIC Advanced	5
NIC Master	6
NIC	37
CI	0
CT	2
CI/CT	28
CDI	1
SC:L	5
<i>VQAS Level (transliterating)</i>	
Level IV	0
Level III	22
Level II	10
Level I	0
<i>VQAS Level (Interpreting)</i>	
Level IV	0
Level III	14
Level II	18
Level I	0

Recommendations: WVCDHH recommends the ability to outline repercussions for entities that hire an unqualified interpreter, as well as for interpreters continuing to work without meeting qualifications outlined in W. Va. Code §5-14A. WVCDHH recommends the development of a training to be offered to state agencies to ensure the understanding and familiarity of individuals utilizing the directory, along with hiring and working with interpreters and individuals with hearing loss. WVCDHH also recommends funding opportunities to assist West Virginia interpreters in becoming qualified and able to register.

Outreach

Goal: Attain high levels of citizen and stakeholder engagement and community problem solving for the deaf and hard of hearing to familiarize the public with their rights, needs and services.

Strategy: Utilize social marketing to promote the rights, needs, and services of the deaf and hard of hearing through a Facebook page and other social media as needed; implement and maintain projects/activities that support the rights, needs, and services of the deaf and hard of hearing communities; assure availability of Accessible Smoke Alarms; maintain relationships with emergency responders to improve services to the deaf and hard of hearing; and identify, monitor, and make recommendations regarding relevant governmental policies affecting the deaf and hard of hearing.

- WVCDHH staff maintains a Facebook page to communicate with community members. This page is used to disseminate important and time sensitive information that may not have been accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing communities if not translated into American Sign Language.
- WVCDHH holds an annual Deaf Awareness Day in the Upper Rotunda of the State Capitol during the legislative session. Deaf Awareness Day was created to promote awareness of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. The event also allows for networking opportunities with exhibitors from various agencies, Deaf associations, and other community resources focusing on services for people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Late Deafened, and Deafblind. Due to COVID-19, Deaf Awareness Day was not held during FY 2021.
- WVCDHH hosts other events during the year as planning and budget permit.
- WVCDHH continues to distribute Visor Cards to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, along with all law enforcement offices within the state. The Visor Cards assist with communication when a person is stopped by law enforcement. Since the project began, over 4,000 Visor Cards have been distributed to individuals and organizations, which includes law enforcement offices and West Virginia Division of Motor Vehicle offices throughout the state.
- WVCDHH continues to manage the Accessible Smoke Alarm Project, which distributes ADA compliant smoke alarms to deaf and hard of hearing homeowners. Information for recipients may be found below.

Accessible Smoke Alarm Project Summary FY 2021

During FY 2021, WVCDHH provided the following smoke alarm devices to qualified West Virginia residents

Type of Device	Number Distributed
Standard Smoke Alarm - First Alert SA320	6
Strobe Alarm - Gentex 7139LS	6
Bedshaker Alarm - Lifetone HLAC150	6

Due to COVID-19, number of devices sent is significantly lower than previous years.

- WVCDHH manages a Telephonic Communication Device Loan Program (TCDLP) in which TTY, amplified telephone, and captioned telephone equipment is distributed to qualifying applicants. Loan recipient information may be found below.

Telephonic Communication Device Loan Program Summary

During FY 2021, WVCDHH provided the following telecommunication devices to qualified West Virginia residents

Type of Device	Number Distributed
TTYs	0
Amplified Phones	0
Captioned Phones	1

Due to COVID-19, number of devices sent is significantly lower than previous years.

- WVCDHH fields inquiries from community members as well as the public on a daily basis. A listing of the nature of those inquiries may be found below.

Type of Inquiry	FY 2021
Assistance Finding an Interpreter	11
Interpreter Registration	15
Equipment Requests	9
Laws / State Code	5
Training or Seminars (including interpreter workshops)	3
Visitors to WVCDHH	3
General Information Requests	24

Due to COVID-19, number of inquiries is fewer than in previous years.

- WVCDHH maintains a presence on the following workgroups, allowing the establishment and continuation of relationships with organizations supporting the needs of deaf and hard of hearing individuals:
 - WV Hands and Voices Board
 - Newborn Hearing Screening Advisory Committee
 - Access Functional Needs – Threat Preparedness
 - Deaf and Hard of Hearing Stakeholders Collaborative
 - Pierpont Community and Technical College America Sign Language /Interpreter Education Program Advisory Board
 - BridgeValley Community and Technical College Interpreter Education Program Advisory Board
 - Disability Rights of West Virginia
 - WV State Team of the National Deaf Center

Recommendations: WVCDHH recommends revitalizing the TCDLP to distribute more current technology to provide persons with hearing loss equal communication access.

WVCDHH would also like to revitalize the terms of the loan program to ensure loan applicants are accountable for the equipment distributed.

Investigate

Goal: Investigate the condition of the deaf and hard of hearing prioritizing the aged, homeless, needy, victims of rubella, victims of abuse and neglect, group homes and services for the multidisabled deaf and hard of hearing.

Strategy: Every two years, conduct a meeting at the WVAD conference to gather information about the condition and availability of services; work with WVAD to schedule and hold town hall meetings; conduct a needs assessment to determine the needs and gaps of the deaf and hard of hearing communities; establish a workgroup to develop the needs assessment tool; disseminate needs assessment through a variety of channels; analyze data; and write and publish a report; attend local deaf and hard of hearing events: each member of the WVCDHH staff/board must attend at least two deaf or hard of hearing events per year.

- WVCDHH staff attends various community events throughout the state.
- WVCDHH staff fielded complaints from community members. A general listing of the nature of those complaints may be found below.

Total Complaints for FY 2021

Reason for Complaint	Count
Hiring unregistered/unqualified interpreters	2
Refusal to provide interpreter services	6
Refusal to provide reasonable accommodations	2

Recommendations: WVCDHH would like to establish a system to follow up with violating entities to provide guidance and education throughout the event of a complaint. WVCDHH will continue to create workshops to educate private and public organizations of necessary steps to comply with the ADA and W. Va. Code concerning the rights of deaf and hard of hearing citizens to allow prevention of future complaints.

Training

Goal: Provide opportunities for continuing education and learning in the areas of interpretive skills, in-service training, and counseling.

Strategy: Provide at least two annual workshops or videos each year on topics identified in meetings or needs assessment. Conduct a minimum of two workshops annually for various public groups (hospitals, state agencies, etc.); work with Disability Rights of West Virginia and others to develop a plan for training the medical community; and provide annual professional development opportunities for interpreters.

- WVCDHH is a Certification Maintenance Program (CMP) sponsor with RID, which allows Continuing Education Units (CEUs) to be offered.

- WVCDHH sponsored CEUs for an interpreter retreat held virtually on September 12, 2020. The retreat included two workshops for interpreters to attend. The workshops were titled “‘Into’ and ‘Enter’ - What is the Difference? Examining Structures to Improve Conceptualization” and “Name This! Learning and Identifying ASL and Linguistic Concepts.” 0.3 CEUs were awarded for each workshop.

Recommendations: The WVCDHH recommends allocation of additional funds for WVCDHH budget to increase its ability to provide the training/facilitation for various private/public entities.

WVCDHH Financial Report FY 2021

Total Appropriated for FY 2021:

General Revenue	\$225,534.00
Special Revenue	\$17,819.00
Total	\$243,353.00

Expenditures:

Personnel	\$43,910.00
Employee Benefits	\$16,506.28
Employee and Board Travel	\$0
Professional Services/Interpreters	\$48,864.78
Office Rent	\$1,453.02
Office Expenses/Internet Services	\$1,019.86
Computer Services	\$3,094.99
Rental Machines (Copier, Water)	\$1,989.00
Association Dues	\$350.00
Advertising/Promotional	\$0
Total Expenditures	<u>\$117,187.93</u>

Uncommitted/Unexpended Balance: \$126,165.07*

**Due to vacancies in staff throughout FY 2021, along with restrictions related to COVID-19, uncommitted/unexpended balance is higher than previous years.*

Acronyms

AA/AAS	<i>Associate Degree</i>
ADA	<i>Americans with Disabilities Act</i>
ASL	<i>American Sign Language</i>
BA/BS	<i>Bachelor's Degree</i>
CDI	<i>Certified Deaf Interpreter</i>
CED	<i>Center for Excellence in Disabilities</i>
CEU	<i>Continuing Education Units</i>
CI	<i>Certified Interpreter</i>
CI	<i>Cochlear Implant</i>
CMP	<i>Certificate Maintenance Program</i>
CT	<i>Certified Transliterater</i>
DOP	<i>Division of Personnel</i>
DRS	<i>Division of Rehabilitation Services</i>
EIPA	<i>Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment</i>
FY	<i>Fiscal Year</i>
LTA	<i>Local Test Administrator</i>
MUGC	<i>Marshall University Graduate College</i>
NA	<i>No Answer/Not Applicable</i>
NAD	<i>National Association of the Deaf</i>
OHRD	<i>Organization and Human Resource Development</i>
PERD	<i>Performance Evaluation and Research Division</i>
Ph.D.	<i>Doctoral Degree</i>
RID	<i>Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf</i>
TDD	<i>Telecommunications Device for the Deaf</i>
TTY	<i>Teletypewriter</i>
WVAD	<i>West Virginia Association of the Deaf</i>
WVCDHH	<i>West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing</i>
WVDE	<i>West Virginia Department of Education</i>
WVDHHR	<i>West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources</i>
WVSDB	<i>West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind</i>