



# 2017 Annual Report

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**The NCDHH Team Reached out to  
6006 People  
to Assist with Better Communication  
January 2017-December 2017**



*Where It All Begins*



**Pete Ricketts**  
Governor

**Margie Propp**  
Chairman of the Board  
Lincoln

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Vice Chair  
Omaha

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Secretary  
Omaha

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Board Member  
Omaha

**Diane Schutt**  
Board Member  
Fairbury

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Board Member  
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**Candice Arteaga**  
Board Member  
Greenwood

**Dr. Stacie Ray**  
Board Member  
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**Norm Weverka**  
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March 9, 2018

Governor Pete Ricketts  
Office of the Governor  
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RE: 2017 Annual Activities Report

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing primarily strive to provide access and equitable opportunity for Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing citizens of Nebraska, conducive to achievement of maximum participation and productivity in society. As a proactive and reactive state agency, the Commission strives to enhance collaboration by creating support, cooperation, and understanding to achieve fairness and equality in all aspects of the mainstream for Nebraskans who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing.

Some of the notable 2017 highlights of more than passing merit include:

- Hired an Interpreter Program Coordinator
- Hired a Full Time Advocacy Specialist in the Kearney area
- Collaboration with agencies throughout Nebraska to create the ADA Task Force
- Introduction of LB 269: Open Captioning in Movie Theaters in Nebraska
- Introduction of LR 167: Interim Study on Hearing Aid Coverage in Nebraska
- Collaboration with Univeristy of Nebraska Athletics to promote for captioning pilot program in Memorial Stadium
- Hosted NCDHH Education Summit

Included in this report are more notable highlights as well as all the work our agency has done throughout Nebraska to continue to make life for Nebraskans who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing "the good life".

Sincerely,

Ms. Margie Propp  
Chairperson

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# State Statutes

The following is a partial listing of services mandated by Nebraska Revised Statutes:

- 1. Inventory services available for meeting the problems of persons with a hearing loss and assist such persons in locating and securing referral to such services.** Services that the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing offers include hearing aid banks for individuals with financial needs; text telephones (TTYs) and assistive device loan programs, newsletters and making information available to the general public regarding hearing loss.
- 2. License interpreters under N.R.S. § 20-150 to § 20-159 and prepare and maintain a roster of licensed interpreters.** The roster shall include the type of employment the interpreter generally engages in. The roster is made available to local, state and federal agencies and is used for referrals to private organizations and individuals seeking interpreters.
- 3. Promote the training of interpreters for Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons.** NCDHH conducts skill assessments of interpreters by using the Mid-America Quality Assurance Screening Test (QAST). NCDHH sponsors workshops and other learning opportunities in cooperation with the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), the national association of sign language interpreters.
- 4. Assist Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons in accessing comprehensive mental health, alcoholism, and drug abuse services.** A Mental Health Specialist provides assistance, education, and training to mental health therapists regarding Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals' communication needs. A five-member advisory committee reviews the activities of programs quarterly.
- 5. Conduct a voluntary census of Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons in Nebraska and compile a current registry.** NCDHH makes an effort to identify Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans throughout the state via online registration, mailings and interaction.
- 6. Promote awareness and understanding of the rights of Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons.** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), passed by the federal government in 1990, protects qualified individuals with disabilities from discrimination on the basis of disability. To promote understanding and awareness regarding hearing loss, NCDHH provides presentations, distributes information through fairs and conventions, conducts sensitivity training, such as workshops, and develops informational brochures.
- 7. Promote expanded adult educational opportunities for Deaf or Hard of Hearing persons.** NCDHH partners with agencies and service providers at major events to expand adult education opportunities including seminars on national issues, technology and various training opportunities.
- 8. Promote statewide communication services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons.** NCDHH drafted legislation that established the statewide telecommunication relay system and the equipment distribution program. NCDHH works in tandem with the Public Service Commission to provide free specialized telephone equipment to Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans. NCDHH also offers sign communication classes to state agencies.

## Statutory Authority

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing was created by LB101 in 1979 by the Nebraska Unicameral. The duties and responsibilities of the Commission can be found in N.R.S § 71-4728 - § 71-4728.05 and § 20-150, § 20-151, and § 20-156, 2004.

## Agency Vision

As a proactive and reactive state agency, the Commission strives to enhance collaboration by creating support, cooperation, and understanding to achieve fairness and equality in all aspects of the mainstream for all Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans.

## Agency Mission

The mission of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is to promote and advocate for Nebraskans who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind or Hard of Hearing; to achieve equality and opportunity in social, educational, vocational, and legal aspects impacting their daily lives; and to enhance and monitor access to effective communication and telecommunication technology.

## Agency Principles

The Commission's responsibilities include the following areas: Collect data and disseminate information on Nebraskans who have a hearing loss, and conduct research in the area of Deafness; Develop communication processes involving the training and licensing of sign language interpreters statewide, and promote an awareness of hearing loss to state and local community agencies; Inventory, monitor and assess services available to people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. The Commission's overall purpose is to ensure that people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing have the opportunity to be productive citizens of the State of Nebraska.

# Boards & Committees

**Full Commission Board:** Consists of nine members who are appointed by the Governor subject to approval by the Legislature. Statue 71-4720 requires that a majority of the Commission members who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing shall be able to express themselves through sign language. The Commission members shall include three Deaf persons, three Hard of Hearing persons and three persons who have an interest in and knowledge of Deafness and hearing loss issues.

**Interpreter Review Board:** Created to develop guidelines and regulations for assuring competencies for sign language interpreters. Regulations were crafted and approved to include assurances that sign language interpreters have and maintain minimum levels of competency to interpret for state entities, courts, police and probation officials.

**Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Committee:** Mandated in 1990 to appoint members to serve on the Relay Advisory Committee administered by the Nebraska Public Service Commission. The Committee advises the Public Service Commission on matters related to the telecommunications relay system, the Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program and its operations.

**Mental Health Advisory Committee:** A special advisory committee is appointed by the Commission to serve for a three year term. The advisory committee meetings are held four times a year. The committee is to ensure full access of comprehensive mental health, alcoholism, and drug abuse services for Nebraskans who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

# 2017 Highlights

**New Team Additions:** 2017 was a great year for adding to the NCDHH Team. We welcomed Omaha Advocacy Specialist, Teresa Hevner, to advocate in our Omaha office. We hired a Full Time Advocacy Specialist, Aaron Rothenberger, for our Kearney office. Lastly, we hired Pamela Duncan as our Interpreter Program Coordinator.

**LB 269:** With support from the NCDHH Full Board, Senator Watermeier introduced Legislative Bill 269- a bill to require motion picture theaters to provide open captioning as prescribed. Any public accommodation that operates as a motion picture theater within Nebraska shall provide open movie captioning during at least two showings per week of each motion picture otherwise shown at the theater that is produced and offered with open movie captioning.

**LR 167:** By direction of the NCDHH Full Board, Senator Morfeld introduced LR 167, an interim study on hearing aid coverage costs for Nebraska families. The committee met over the course of 2017 with stakeholders to identify areas of concern and explore various ways to address needs such as how other states cover hearing aid costs, whether hearing aid coverage should be included as an essential health benefit under the Affordable Care Act, examination of health insurance coverage options, and recommendations on how to improve the services being provided by hearing aid banks.

**Creation of ADA Task Force:** A legislative agenda item for the NCDHH Full Board is becoming reality with the establishment of the Nebraska ADA Task Force. NCDHH has worked with the Nebraska Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and other agencies to develop this task force. The mission of this task force is to coordinate the efforts of state agencies, boards and commissions to comply with Title II of the ADA.

**Open Captioning Pilot Program in Memorial Stadium:** Continued work and advocacy with the University of Nebraska has led to a new program in an effort to improve the fan experience for all Nebraskans and Husker fans. All play descriptions, scoring, player information, referee and penalty announcements, in-game promotions, entertainment action, advertising videos, and post-game messages will be transcribed to all fans via Twitter at @HuskerCaption.

**Education Summit:** October of 2017 was the first Education Summit hosted by NCDHH, with attendees including teachers, school leaders, service providers, parents, speech-language pathologists, audiologists, interpreters and more. Focus areas included addressing issues within Individualized Education Plans, parent involvement, how to serve students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing with different communication modalities.

**Continuation of Education Task Force:** The NCDHH Full Board voted to create a task force to diagnose and recognize the challenges and opportunities needed to improve education for students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in Nebraska. The task force is comprised of various leaders in the education field and Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities.

**Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at Omaha Zoo:** This third annual event at the Henry Doorly Zoo was again a wild success. Interpreted animal encounters and train/tram scripts, Deaf Connect readings to kid attendees, coloring contest and door prizes were all part of a day of awareness to show all Nebraskans can enjoy the zoo.

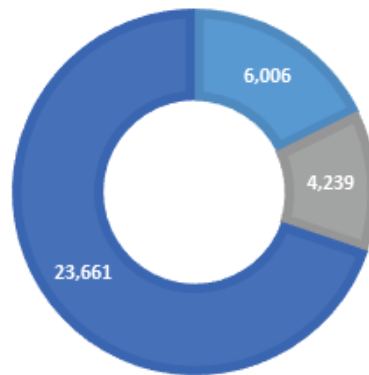
**Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Night at the Lincoln Saltdogs:** 2017 was the fourth year we have had this outreach event. With activities such as the signing of the National Anthem, a 'Silent Inning', interpreted 7th Inning Stretch, and information and services available throughout the evening, this evening is always a fun way to enjoy America's favorite past time.

# Information, Outreach & Referral

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is mandated to act as an information and referral service for Nebraskans who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Below are statistics and figures to reflect a portion of the work the Commission has done in 2017.

## CONSUMER OUTREACH

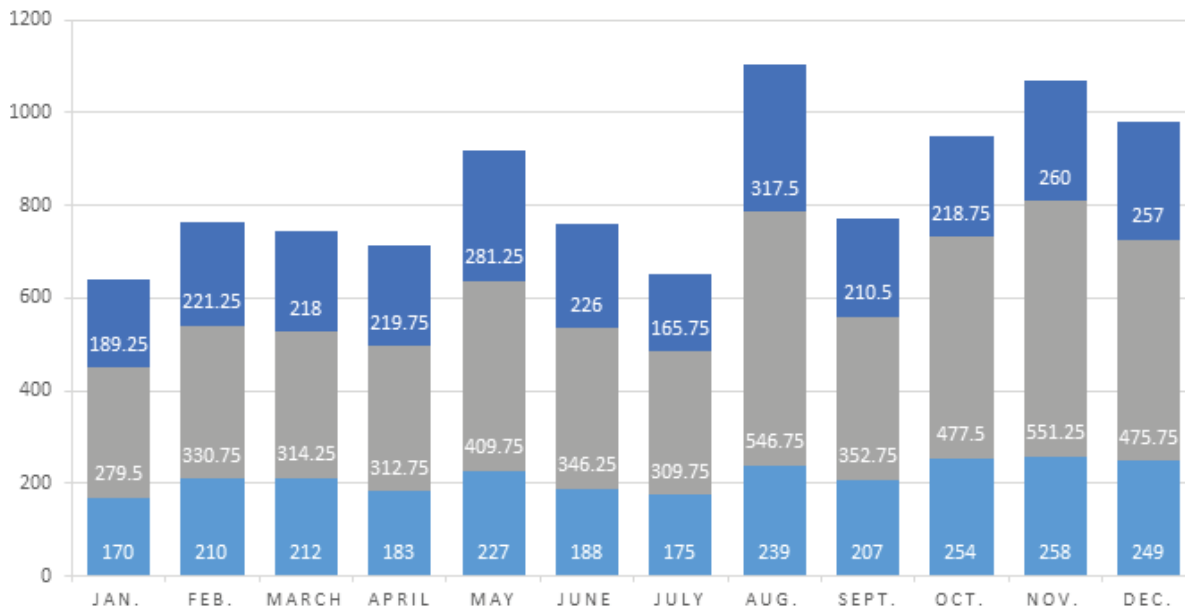
■ Consumers Assisted   ■ Presentation Attendees   ■ Booth Attendees



The Sign Language Interpreter Referral Service receives requests to obtain a sign language interpreter, available via telephone or electronically. An after-hours emergency interpreter list is also available on our website. The process to request an interpreter begins with the highest skilled interpreters being contacted first, based on the geographical location of the assignment. The chart below reflects, in 2017 the number of interpreters requested, number of hours requested, and number of hours filled through our Interpreter Referral Service.

## INTERPRETER REFERRAL SERVICE

■ Interpreters Requested   ■ Hours Requested   ■ Hours Filled



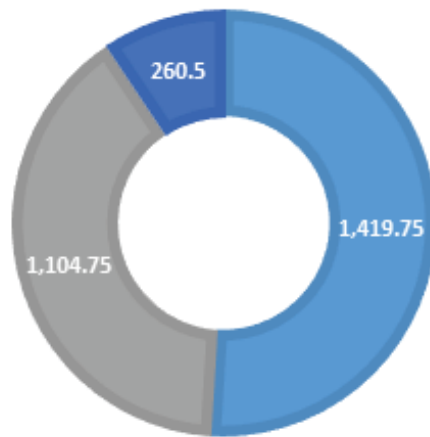


# Filled/Unfilled Interpreter Hours

The chart below gives reference to the number of interpreter hours that were filled and unfilled through the Commission's Referral Service. This data does not reflect the total number of hours interpreted in Nebraska; Sign language interpreters are regarded as independent contractors and are able to market their services outside of the Commission's Referral Service.

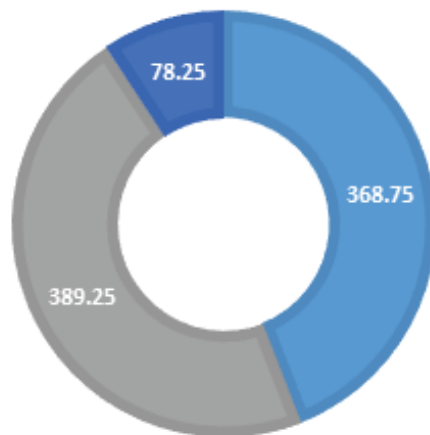
## FILLED INTERPRETER HOURS BY REGION

■ Lincoln ■ Omaha ■ Greater Nebraska



## UNFILLED INTERPRETER HOURS BY REGION

■ Lincoln ■ Omaha ■ Greater Nebraska

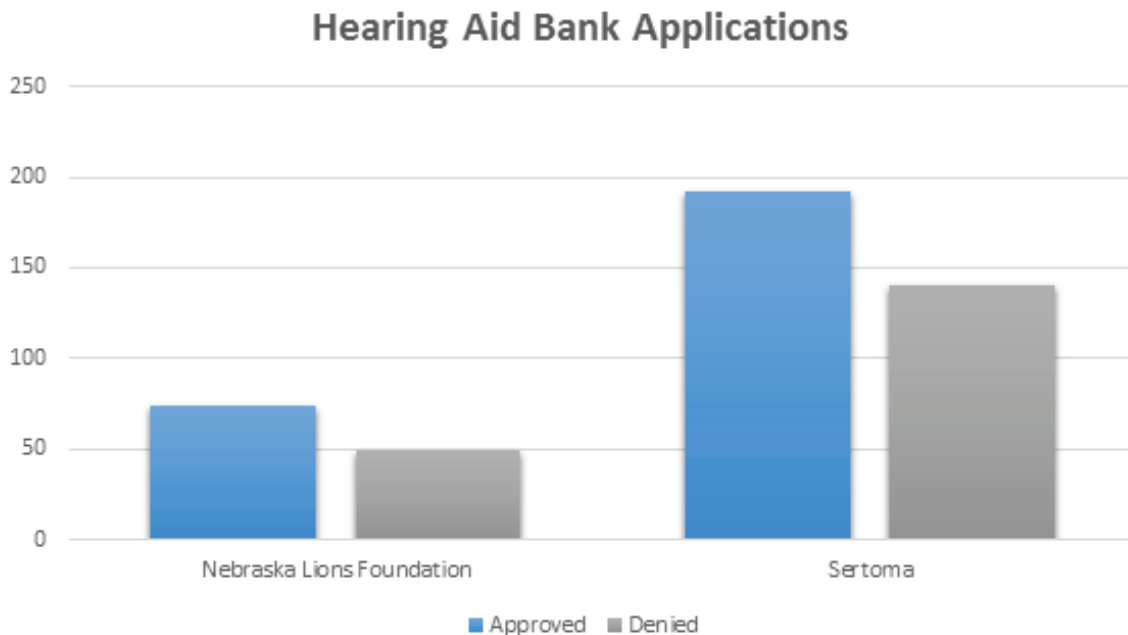


# NSTEP & Hearing Aid Banks

The State of Nebraska offers the Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program (NSTEP). The goal of this program is to provide monetary assistance to those with disabilities to use the financial assistance for the purchase of specialized telephone equipment such as amplifiers, signaling devices and TTYs. Applications are available through NCDHH. Our advocacy specialists work with clients to help find the technology to best meet their needs. The number of applications processed for NSTEP in 2017 was:

337

NCDHH works with the Barkley Memorial Center of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, HearU Nebraska, Sertoma, and the Nebraska Lions Foundation to provide hearing aids to individuals who qualify. Sertoma is an international organization whose purpose is to provide service to all mankind. Sertoma provides refurbished hearing aids to individuals ages 65 and older. The Nebraska Lions Foundation promotes the collection, refurbishing and distribution of donated hearing aids to Nebraska residents ages 19-64. Applications to these programs are available through NCDHH. Below is a chart reflecting applications for both the Nebraska Lions Foundation and Sertoma on applications approved and denied.



# Voluntary Registry

| County       | Deaf        | Hard of Hearing | Hearing   | HOH/Low Visior | Late Deafened | Late Deafened 20 | Other     | Speech Impaired |
|--------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------|----------------|---------------|------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Adams        | 5           | 147             | 4         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Antelope     | 0           | 25              | 1         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Arthur       | 0           | 1               | 1         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Banner       | 1           | 8               | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Boone        | 2           | 48              | 1         | 1              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Box Butte    | 2           | 68              | 3         | 1              | 0             | 1                | 0         | 0               |
| Boyd         | 0           | 14              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 1                | 0         | 0               |
| Brown        | 0           | 14              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Buffalo      | 7           | 286             | 17        | 3              | 2             | 1                | 0         | 2               |
| Burt         | 3           | 29              | 2         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Butler       | 4           | 45              | 4         | 0              | 1             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Cass         | 14          | 92              | 5         | 1              | 0             | 1                | 0         | 0               |
| Cedar        | 1           | 26              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Chase        | 0           | 23              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Cherry       | 1           | 32              | 0         | 1              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Cheyenne     | 1           | 44              | 0         | 0              | 1             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Clay         | 1           | 40              | 3         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 1               |
| Colfax       | 0           | 29              | 0         | 0              | 1             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Cuming       | 1           | 32              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Custer       | 0           | 62              | 2         | 1              | 2             | 0                | 0         | 1               |
| Dakota       | 4           | 17              | 1         | 1              | 0             | 1                | 0         | 0               |
| Dawes        | 1           | 55              | 0         | 1              | 1             | 1                | 0         | 0               |
| Dawson       | 2           | 139             | 2         | 1              | 1             | 0                | 0         | 1               |
| Deuel        | 1           | 14              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Dixon        | 0           | 17              | 1         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Dodge        | 11          | 186             | 2         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 1               |
| Douglas      | 209         | 1823            | 70        | 17             | 10            | 5                | 4         | 17              |
| Dundy        | 0           | 14              | 1         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Fillmore     | 1           | 30              | 4         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 1               |
| Franklin     | 1           | 26              | 1         | 2              | 1             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Frontier     | 0           | 28              | 2         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Furnas       | 1           | 42              | 2         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Gage         | 4           | 68              | 2         | 1              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Garden       | 3           | 25              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Garfield     | 0           | 24              | 1         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Gosper       | 1           | 18              | 1         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Grant        | 0           | 4               | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Greeley      | 0           | 27              | 2         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Hall         | 6           | 274             | 7         | 1              | 0             | 1                | 2         | 0               |
| Hamilton     | 1           | 43              | 7         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Harlan       | 0           | 17              | 1         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Hayes        | 0           | 9               | 0         | 0              | 0             | 1                | 0         | 0               |
| Hitchcock    | 2           | 30              | 2         | 0              | 0             | 2                | 0         | 0               |
| Holt         | 5           | 72              | 2         | 1              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Hooker       | 0           | 5               | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Howard       | 3           | 48              | 5         | 0              | 0             | 1                | 0         | 0               |
| Jefferson    | 0           | 31              | 2         | 1              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Johnson      | 1           | 12              | 2         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Kearney      | 0           | 62              | 1         | 0              | 1             | 1                | 0         | 0               |
| Keith        | 2           | 52              | 2         | 0              | 2             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Keya Paha    | 0           | 6               | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Kimball      | 1           | 30              | 2         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Knox         | 1           | 36              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 1         | 0               |
| Lancaster    | 107         | 816             | 51        | 10             | 0             | 5                | 1         | 6               |
| Lincoln      | 11          | 276             | 13        | 3              | 2             | 2                | 5         | 4               |
| Logan        | 0           | 3               | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Loup         | 0           | 2               | 0         | 1              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Madison      | 10          | 144             | 3         | 1              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 1               |
| McPherson    | 0           | 2               | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Merrick      | 2           | 49              | 2         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Morrill      | 3           | 39              | 2         | 1              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Nance        | 0           | 26              | 1         | 0              | 0             | 1                | 1         | 0               |
| Nemaha       | 1           | 17              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 1               |
| Nuckolls     | 0           | 23              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 1               |
| Otoe         | 7           | 60              | 1         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Pawnee       | 0           | 21              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Perkins      | 0           | 20              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 1                | 0         | 0               |
| Phelps       | 0           | 54              | 0         | 1              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Pierce       | 1           | 26              | 1         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Platte       | 11          | 162             | 5         | 1              | 1             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Polk         | 2           | 18              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 1               |
| Red Willow   | 2           | 89              | 0         | 0              | 1             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Richardson   | 1           | 31              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 1         | 0               |
| Rock         | 0           | 10              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Saline       | 6           | 61              | 2         | 1              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Sarpy        | 51          | 413             | 21        | 1              | 0             | 2                | 0         | 3               |
| Saunders     | 5           | 84              | 4         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 1               |
| Scotts Bluff | 13          | 414             | 14        | 2              | 1             | 1                | 2         | 1               |
| Seward       | 5           | 58              | 1         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 1               |
| Sheridan     | 0           | 43              | 2         | 1              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Sherman      | 0           | 34              | 4         | 0              | 0             | 1                | 0         | 0               |
| Sioux        | 0           | 6               | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Stanton      | 0           | 21              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Thayer       | 0           | 19              | 2         | 0              | 0             | 1                | 0         | 0               |
| Thomas       | 1           | 6               | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Thurston     | 0           | 15              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Valley       | 1           | 37              | 1         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Washington   | 3           | 71              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 1         | 3               |
| Wayne        | 0           | 23              | 1         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| Webster      | 1           | 24              | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 1               |
| Wheeler      | 0           | 4               | 0         | 0              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| York         | 3           | 54              | 4         | 2              | 0             | 0                | 0         | 0               |
| <b>551</b>   | <b>7624</b> | <b>303</b>      | <b>59</b> | <b>28</b>      | <b>30</b>     | <b>19</b>        | <b>48</b> |                 |

# Personnel Directory

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