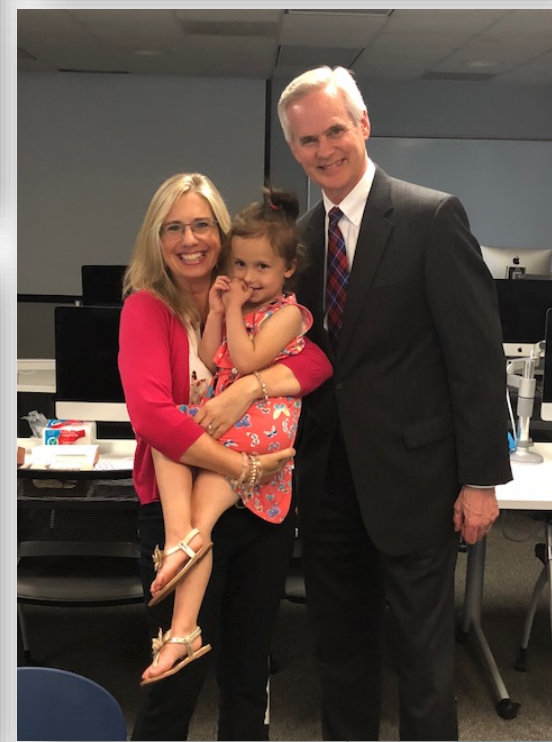


# NCDHH

Nebraska Commission  
for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



# ANNUAL REPORT 2018





Communication • Advocacy • Equal Access

**Pete Ricketts**  
Governor

**Jeremy Fitzpatrick**  
Chairman of the Board  
Omaha

**Candice Arteaga**  
Vice Chair  
Greenwood

**Dr. Peter Seiler**  
Secretary  
Omaha

**Dr. Marc Brennan**  
Board Member  
Lincoln

**Margie Propp**  
Board Member  
Lincoln

**Dr. Frank Turk**  
Board Member  
Omaha

**Dr. Stacie Ray**  
Board Member  
Lincoln

**Norm Weverka**  
Board Member  
Brainard

**Diane Schutt**  
Board Member  
Fairbury

**John Wyvill**  
Executive Director  
john.wyvill@nebraska.gov

March 15, 2019

Governor Pete Ricketts  
Office of the Governor  
Post Office Box 94848  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4848

RE: 2018 Annual Activities Report

Dear Governor Ricketts:

Attached you will find a report summarizing the achievements of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) in 2018. On behalf of the Full Board, I am pleased to report the Commission and it's staff did great work to serve citizens of Nebraska.

In 2018 NCDHH served more than 7,000 Nebraskans all across the state. Some of the notable 2018 highlights include:

- Assisting parents statewide in interacting with local schools regarding education for students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing;
- Participating in the creation of a new Council of Organizations who Service the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to improve teamwork among the diverse entities which advocate for Nebraskans who are deaf or hard of hearing;
- Assiting multiple law enforcement agencies on interaction with deaf and hard of hearing individuals;
- Collaborating with Nebraska hospitals to improve access to health care for Nebraskans who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing;
- Hosting Grand Island and Kearney Town Hall Meetings;
- Created an interpreter conference: 'Creating Connections, Building Bridges – Together'; and
- Collaborating with Marcus Theatres Lincoln Grand Cinema on an open captioning pilot program.

The annual report sets out in more detail on these achievements and also provides other information on our work to improve the lives of all Nebraskans by increasing the access to communication and society for those who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind or Hard of Hearing. We are proud of the Commission's achievements in 2018 and are looking forward to an even better 2019 serving the citizens of our state.

Sincerely,

Mr. Jeremy Fitzpatrick  
Chairperson

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www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov

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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.

## 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.

## 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.

## Goals

1. Provide and promote services and training to create awareness through the delivery of programs designed to empower Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans
2. Implement and maintain programs through collaboration with consumer groups, the Governor, legislature, organizations, service providers, and governmental agencies and units
3. Initiate, broaden and maintain the collection and dissemination of information regarding the strategies for living with, the prevention of, and the impact of deafness and hearing loss
4. Ensure and monitor full access to comprehensive and appropriate mental health, alcoholism and substance abuse services for Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing persons by collaborating with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and behavioral health service providers
5. Ensure and implement access to effective and quality interpreting services by collaborating with consumer groups, organizations, service providers, and governmental agencies and units

# Boards & Committees

**Full Commission Board:** Consists of nine members who are appointed by the Governor subject to approval by the Legislature. Statute 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. Created to ensure full access of comprehensive mental health, alcoholism, and drug abuse services are available for Nebraskans who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

# 2018 Highlights

## **AWARDS & RECOGNITION**

- ▶ NCDHH Deaf Services Coordinator, Carly Weyers, receives Excellence in Leadership Award
- ▶ Outgoing Board Member, Margie Propp, receives Nebraska Admiralship & Award for service on Full Board
- ▶ Boss of the Month Continuation
- ▶ John Wyvill receives NSLHA Meritorious Service Award
- ▶ Kim Davis receives NAD Distinguished Service Award
- ▶ John Wyvill elected Vice President of National Association of State Agency Directors for Deaf/HH

## **BOARD MEMBER APPOINTMENTS**

- ▶ Dr. Stacie Ray Re-Appointed to Full Board
- ▶ Jeremy Fitzpatrick Re-Appointed to Full Board & elected Board Chair
- ▶ Candice Arteaga elected Vice Chair to Full Board
- ▶ Dr. Seiler elected Secretary to Full Board
- ▶ Thomas Beyer Appointed to Nebraska IRB
- ▶ Jerry Siders Appointed to Telecommunication Relay Service Advisory Committee

## **TEAM NEWS**

- ▶ Hiring of Omaha Advocacy Specialist, Cody McEvoy
- ▶ Hiring of Interpreter Program Coordinator, Sharon Sinkler
- ▶ Hiring of Education Advocate, Jessica Larrison
- ▶ Carly Weyers becomes Deaf Services Coordinator
- ▶ Teresa Hevner becomes Lead Advocacy Specialist
- ▶ Longtime employee Beth Ellsworth retires

# 2018 Highlights

## ***EVENTS, COLLABORATION & OTHER NEWS***

- ▶ Council of Organizations for Services to Deaf & Hard of Hearing created
- ▶ 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Education Summit
- ▶ 5<sup>th</sup> Annual D/HH Awareness Day at Lincoln Saltdogs
- ▶ 4<sup>th</sup> Annual D/HH Awareness Day at Omaha Zoo
- ▶ D/HH Awareness Day at Scottsbluff Zoo
- ▶ Wellness Weekend
- ▶ NCDHH participated in Scottsbluff Night Out
- ▶ NCDHH participated in Husker Harvest Days
- ▶ NCDHH participated in Nebraska State Fair
- ▶ Marcus Theatres – Lincoln Grand, Open Captioning Pilot Program
- ▶ Marcus Theatres – Lincoln Grand, recognition ceremony
- ▶ NCDHH attends NAD Conference
- ▶ NCDHH attends HLAA Conference
- ▶ John Wyvill & Jeremy Fitzpatrick hold meeting with Congressman Don Bacon
- ▶ John Wyvill attends Face the Chamber events – Introductions with Nebraska AD Bill Moos and Governor Ricketts
- ▶ NCDHH attends National Deaf Center conference in TX
- ▶ NCDHH team members, Kathy Scusa and Aaron Rothenberger, create new agency coloring book
- ▶ Board Member, Dr. Stacie Ray, hosts meeting with Lt. Governor Foley regarding hearing aid accessibility in children



# 2018 Highlights

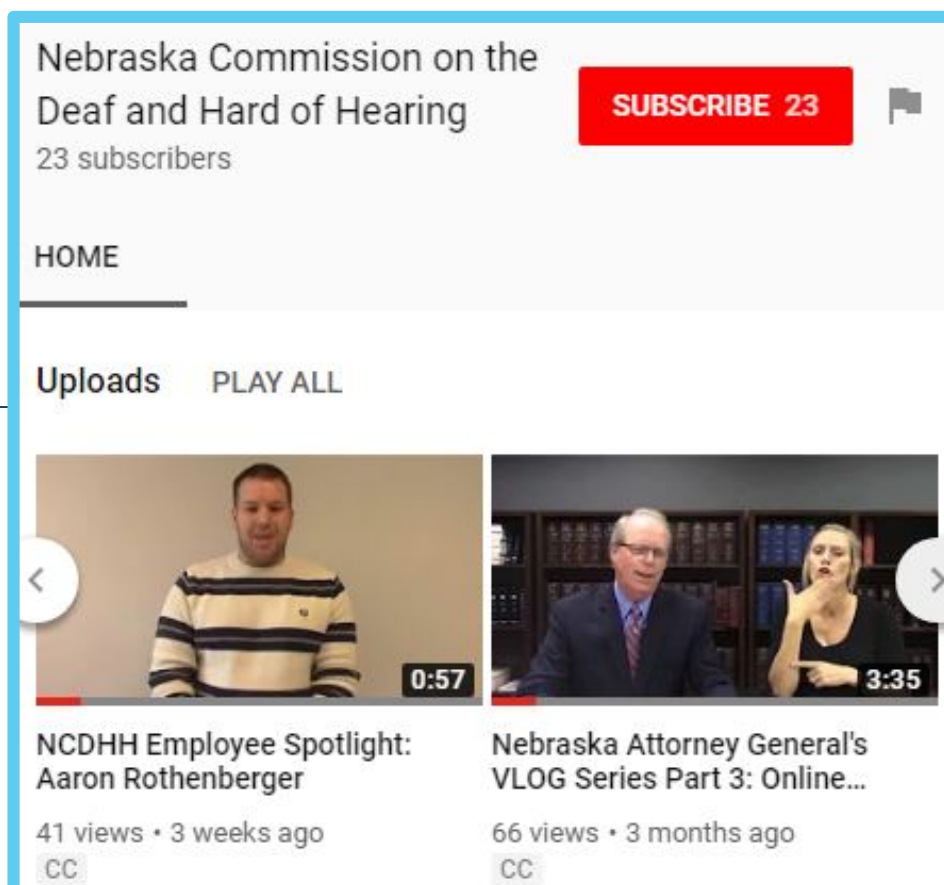
## ***EVENTS, COLLABORATION & OTHER NEWS***

- ▶ NCDHH hosts Town Hall Meetings in Grand Island & Kearney
- ▶ NCDHH representatives attend Deaf Cultural Celebration at Iowa School for the Deaf
- ▶ Interpreter Conference, 'Creating Connections, Building Bridges – Together'
- ▶ Continued work on Education Steering Committee
- ▶ Workshop, 'Wellness Recovery Action Plan'
- ▶ Jeremy Fitzpatrick & John Wyvill meet with Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission on possible pilot program

## ***VLOGS***

*You can find all of our agency VLOGs on our YouTube channel!*

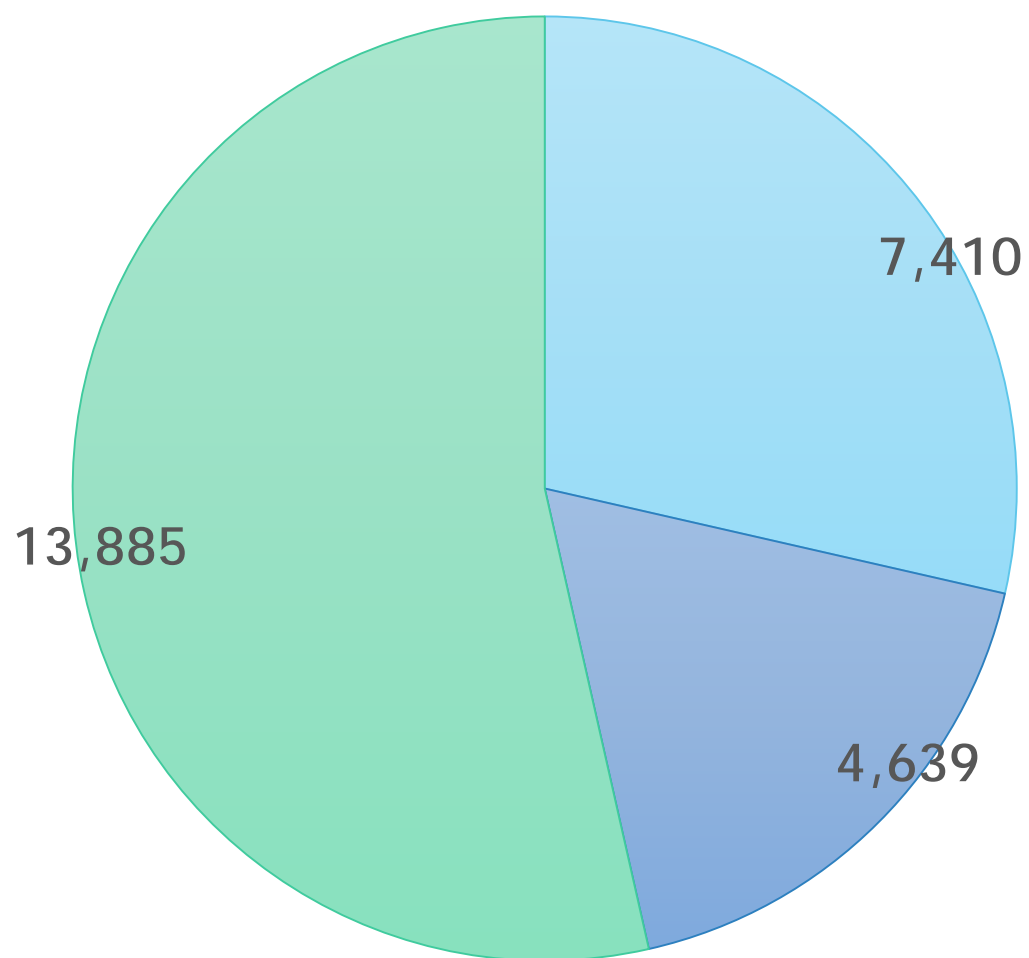
- ▶ Creation of Employee Spotlight series
- ▶ 3-part Consumer Protection series with Nebraska Attorney General
- ▶ Promotion for D/HH Awareness Night at Lincoln Saltdogs
- ▶ Promotion for D/HH Awareness Day at Omaha Zoo
- ▶ Education Summit Information
- ▶ Promotion for Wellness Day
- ▶ Back to School Information
- ▶ Open Captioning Program



# Consumer Outreach

NCDHH is mandated to act as an information and referral service for Nebraskans who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. The chart below depicts some of the different avenues we have served consumers in 2018. Our teammates work across the state assisting Nebraskans through meetings, appointments, educational and training presentations, attending conferences, marketing outreach and more. Examples of some of our team at work are below:

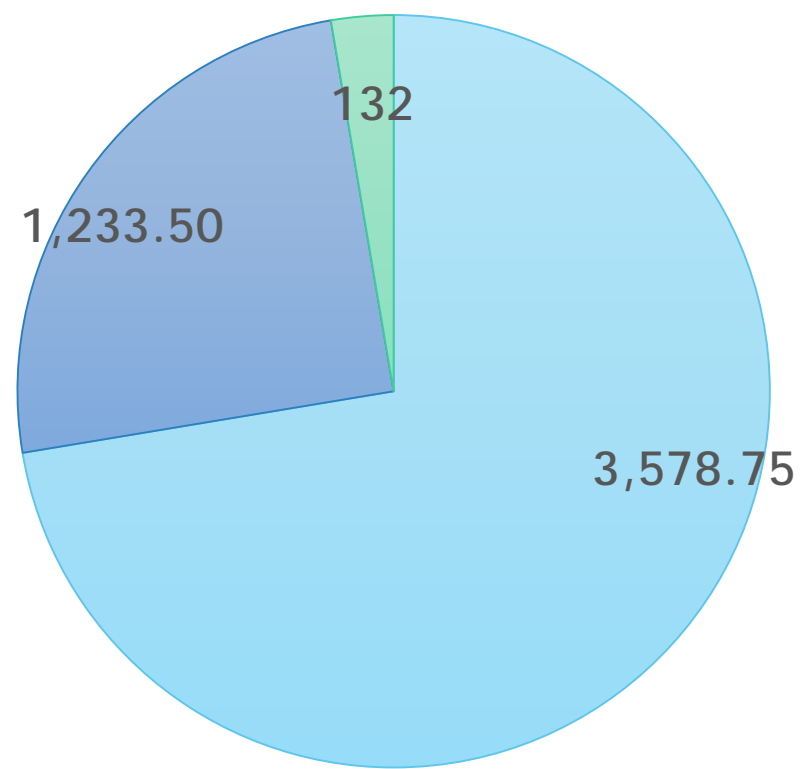
■ Consumers Assisted ■ Presentation Attendees ■ Booth Attendees



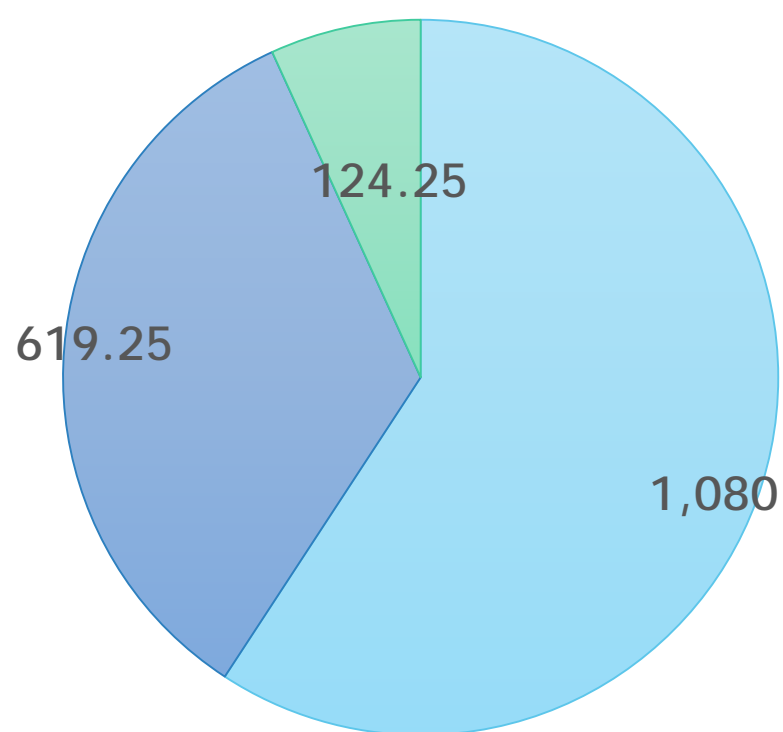
# Filled & Unfilled Interpreter Hours

▶ The charts below give 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



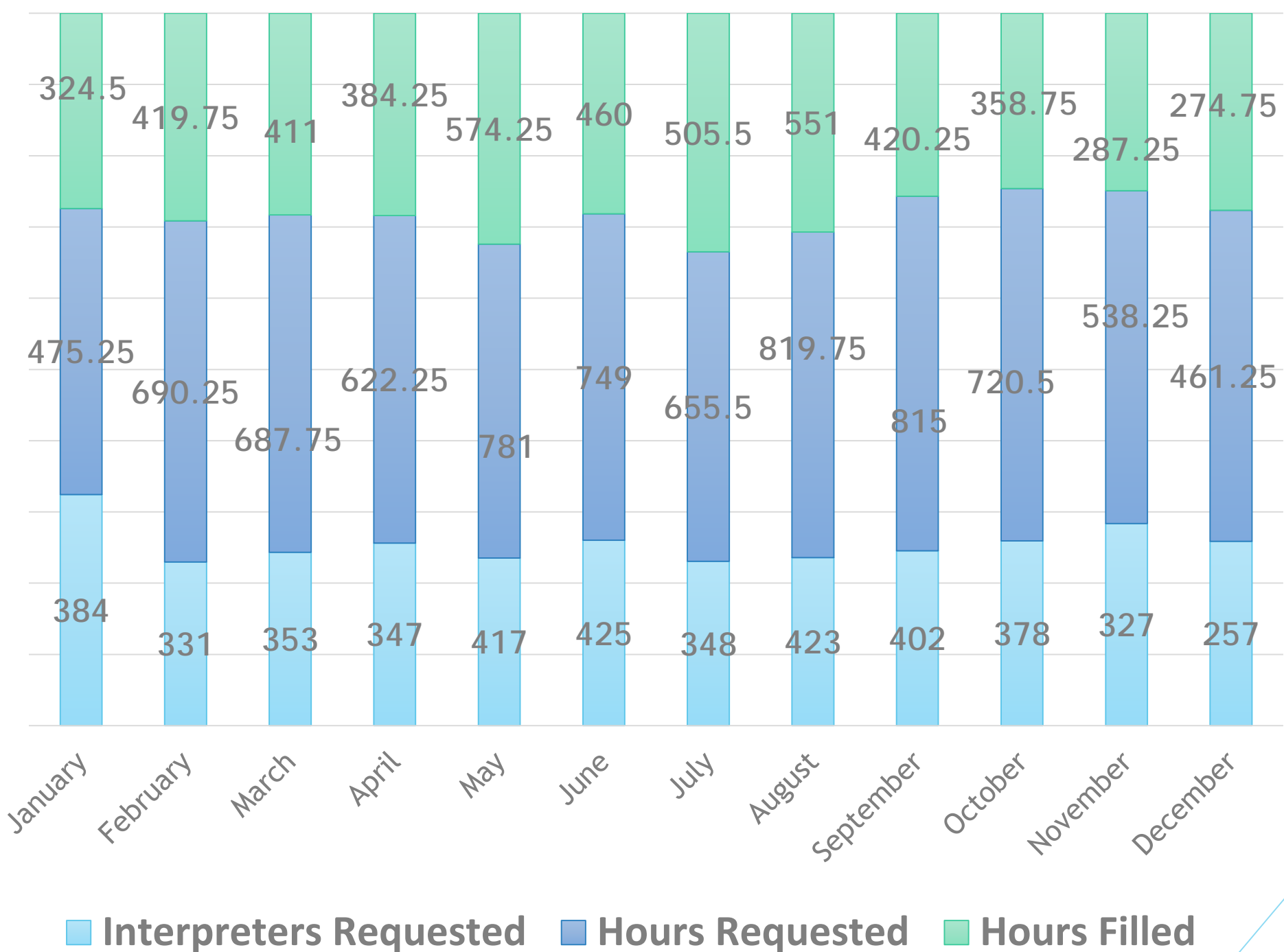
Unfilled Interpreter Hours by Region



■ Lincoln   ■ Omaha   ■ Greater Nebraska

# Interpreter Referral Service

▶ The Sign Language Interpreter Referral Service is administered by NCDHH. A request is made via telephone or electronically ([ncdhh.referral@nebraska.gov](mailto:ncdhh.referral@nebraska.gov)) to obtain a sign language interpreter. 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 2018, the **number of interpreters requested, number of hours requested, and number of hours filled** through our Interpreter Referral Service.



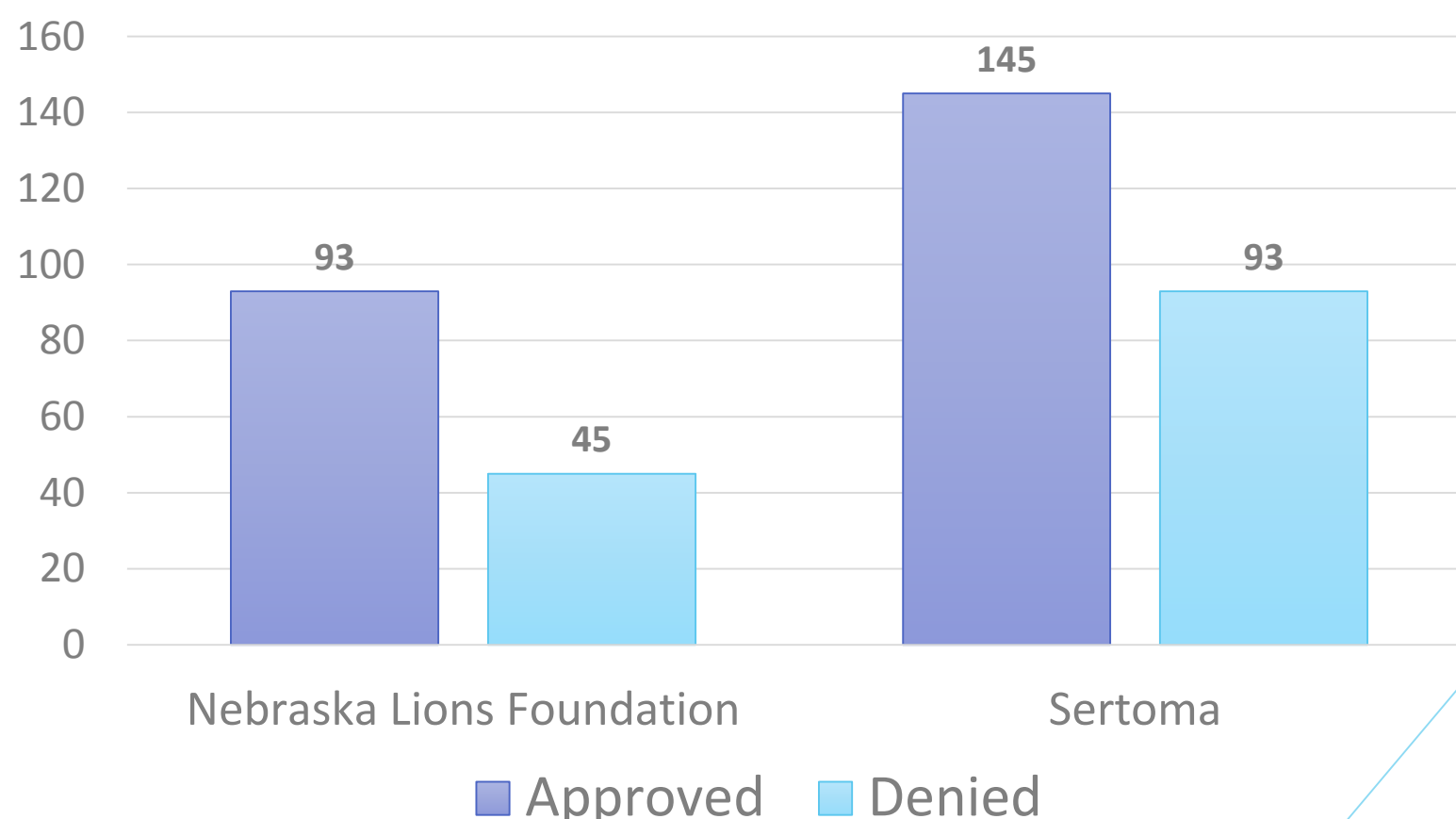
## ▶ NSTEP

- ▶ 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 NCDHH processed for the NSTEP program in 2018 was:

331

## ▶ Hearing Aid Banks

- ▶ 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 that were approved and denied. HearU provides hearing aids to children ages birth-18.



Scottsbluff  
Brittney Isom

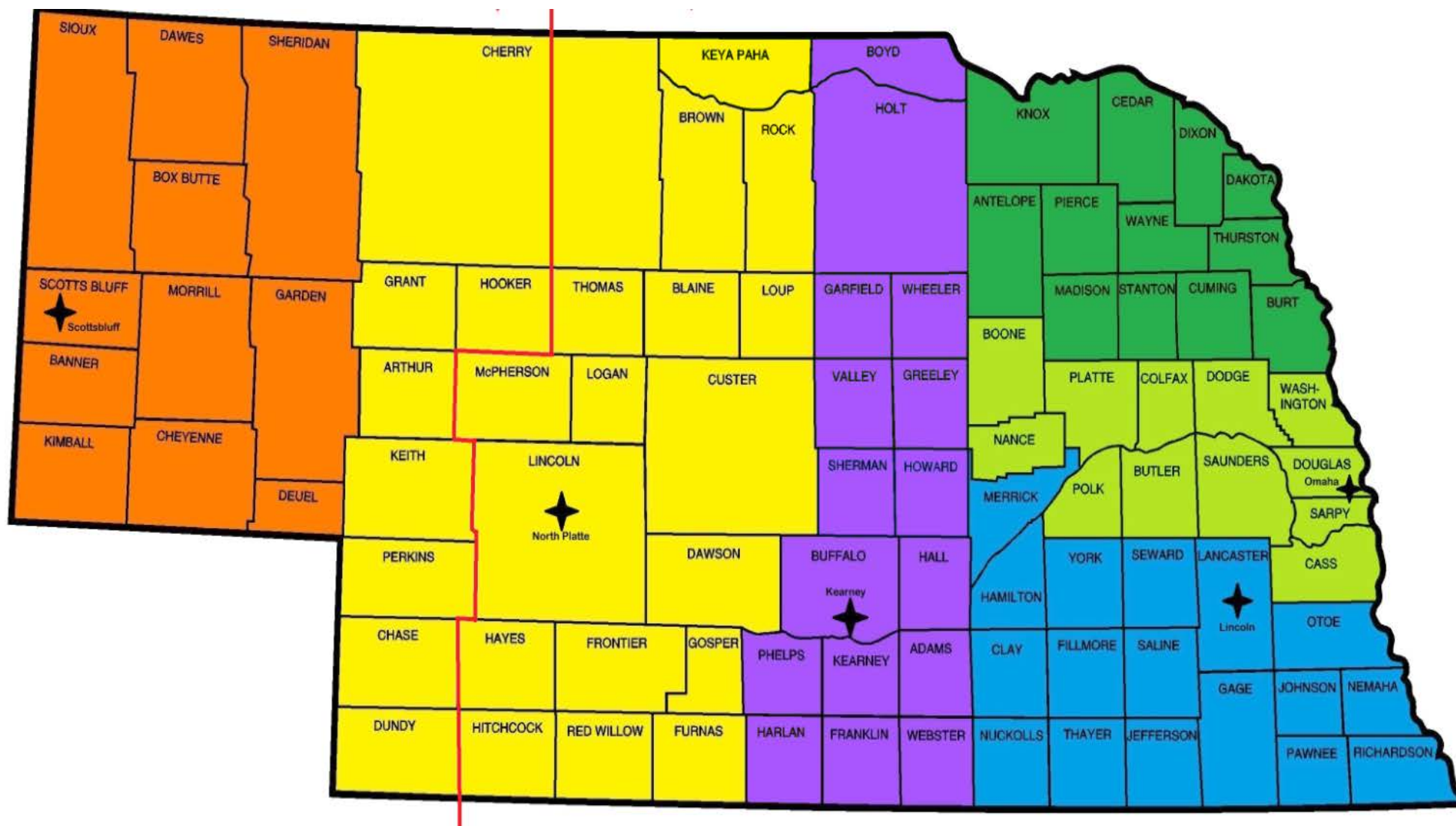
North Platte  
Kathy Scusa

Kearney  
Aaron Rothenberger

Omaha  
Teresa Hevner

Omaha  
Cody McEvoy

Lincoln  
Kim Davis



## Advocacy Specialist Coverage Map

Our advocacy specialists provide assistance, resources, information, training and presentations all over the state for Nebraskans. The above map is coded for each Advocacy Specialist's coverage area.

# NCDHH

Nebraska Commission  
for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
Communication - Advocacy - Equal Access



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