

THE COMMUNICATOR

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Workshop: March 17 & 18, 2018: Creating Connections-Building Bridges: Together

On March 17 & 18, 2018, Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) is hosting the “Creating Connections-Building Bridges: Together” conference, designed not just for sign language interpreters, but for anyone who works with Deaf/Hard of Hearing individuals.

About

Over the course of two days, 14 hours will be dedicated to the following topics: Allies in Deafhood: which looks at Deafness as the Grand Narrative and Deafhood as the Counter-Narrative about Deaf people; a brief history to demonstrate relationships that Deaf people have with Hearing people; and other dimensions on Deaf people, organizations working with Deaf people, and being a Deafhood Ally. Interpreting for Highly Visual Communicators: which by its title sounds like it is directed only to interpreters, when in reality, this interactive workshop will seek to explore how we can honor the expressive and receptive knowledge and skills of individuals who have unique communication skills. Why Accessibility Matters – Moving Beyond the Accommodations: builds the business case for embracing communication accessibility while deepening your understanding of the differences between providing reasonable accommodations and creating an inclusive, accessible environments for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Individuals.

Presenter Information

Saturday: Marvin T. Miller- Having taught over 800 hours of Deafhood classes during his term as president of the Indiana Association of the Deaf, Marvin currently teaches Deafhood 101 and 201 as well as Deafhood and Allies workshops all over the country. Currently he is pursuing a Masters degree in Sign Language Education at Gallaudet University.

Sunday (AM): Kim Davis- Deaf since birth, Kim has provided public speaking, workshops and training for over fifteen years. She has served on local, regional and state committees and councils, and served as an individual and systematic advocate.

Sunday (PM): Corey Axelrod- Found and CEO of 2axend, a Deaf-owned strategic consulting and training firm guiding organizations to become more inclusive and accessible to Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals. Corey is a Hard of Hearing individual who is also culturally Deaf and 4th generation in his family with deafness.

Official event flyer and information on the inside cover.

Creating Connections-Building Bridges: Together Workshop March 17 & 18, 2018

When: 8:00am-4:00pm (**Saturday**) / Registration 7:15am
8:00am-4:30pm (**Sunday**) / Registration 7:15am
Option to attend ONE or BOTH days

Where: La Vista Conference Center
12520 Westport Parkway La Vista, NE 68128

Cost: \$200/Sat&Sun or \$125/Single Day
STUDENTS: \$125/Sat&Sun or \$75/Single Day

Register: Deadline March 9, 2018

Registration Link: <http://ne.gov/go/2018workshop>

Breakfast & Lunch Provided (Lunch Break 1 hr)

*Dietary Accommodations contact Pamela.Duncan@nebraska.gov

HOTEL / LODGING INFORMATION

Courtyard by Marriott
12560 Westport Parkway
La Vista, NE 68128
402-339-4900
Last Day to Book: 2/15/18

Discount under Nebraska
Commission for the Deaf and
Hard of Hearing

Saturday, March 17: 'Allies in Deafhood' CEUs: 0.7 PS

Description: Covering deafness dimension as the "Grand Narrative" and Deafhood as the counter-narrative about Deaf people, history of relationships with Deaf and hearing people before and during Oralist colonialism, history about Deaf Resurgence up to current situation, other dimensions on Deaf people of organizations working with Deaf people, and being a Deafhood Ally.

Presenter- Marvin T. Miller: Having taught over 800 hours of Deafhood classes during his term as president of the Indiana Association of the Deaf, Marvin currently teaches Deafhood 101 and 201 as well as Deafhood and Allies workshops all over the country. Currently he is pursuing a Masters degree in Sign Language Education at Gallaudet University.

Target Audience: ASL Interpreters and anyone working with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population.

Educational Objectives:

- 1) Recognize through a brainstorming exercise on what the differences are between deafness and Deafhood dimension
- 2) Learn about the historical and current tendencies and potential among hearing lay people and hearing professionals in Deaf-related fields, namely, those who are our past and current Allies
- 3) Engage in an Identity Wheel activity and small group discussions about identity as an integral part of everyone's lives
- 4) Discuss the effects of Oralist colonialism and oppression, as well as, the impacts that the Deafhood dimension has on current organizations working with Deaf people
- 5) Engage in small group discussion to share/ pinpoint similarities that they can see or apply from their own experiences of a Colonization pattern of other marginalized groups to that of Deaf people
- 6) Examine "hearing" privileges through the Identity Wheel activity which will highlight each participant's "privileges" and "disadvantages of not having that privilege" so they can better understand the dynamics of oppression on Deaf people and also understand how they can prevent exercising "hearing privileges" on Deaf people
- 7) Identify the characteristics of being an ally, especially a Deafhood Ally
- 8) Define Colonialism and Audism and give an example of what they can do as an Ally to help put an end to Colonialism and Audism.



Questions: Contact
Pamela Duncan
pamela.duncan@nebraska.gov

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is an Approved RID CMP Sponsor for continuing education activities. This Professional Studies program is offered for 0.7 PS CEUs at the Little/None Content Knowledge Level. There are no refunds available. NCDHH promotes an environment of mutual respect free of discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, or any other protected class. Special Accommodations please contact Pamela.Duncan@nebraska.gov

Creating Connections-Building Bridges: Together Workshop March 17 & 18, 2018

Sunday, March 18 (AM): 'Interpreting for Highly Visual Communicators' CEUs: 0.4 PS

Target Audience: Sign language interpreters, Sign language interpreting students (2nd year and above), Teachers of the Deaf

Description: Communication comes in all shapes and forms, especially when working with individuals who have unique communication skills due to language deficiencies, learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, behavioral health issues, or as refugees or immigrants from another country.

Presenter- Kim Davis: Deaf since birth, Kim has provided public speaking, workshops, and training for over fifteen years. She has served on local, regional and state committees and councils, and served as an individual and systematic advocate. Kim currently works for NCDHH as an Advocacy Specialist. Her passion is collaborating with groups that seek to explore effective ways to enhance accommodations through the use of technologies and communication services.

Educational Objectives:

- 1) Learn how to identify a Deaf individual who may rely on highly visual communication.
- 2) Increase their knowledge and skills in communicating or interpreting in various contents.
- 3) Will be able to apply more body language and facial inflections when communicating or interpreting various contents.
- 4) Will receive resources and tools to continue honing their knowledge and skills.

Sunday, March 18 (PM): 'Why Accessibility Matters- Moving Beyond Accommodations' CEUs: 0.35 PS

Target Audience: ASL Interpreters and anyone working with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population.

Description: Building the business case for embracing communication accessibility while deepening your understanding of the difference between providing reasonable accommodations and creating inclusive, accessible environments for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals.

Presenter- Corey Axelrod: Founder and CEO of 2axend, a Deaf-owned strategic consulting and training firm guiding organizations to become more inclusive and accessible to Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals. Corey is a Hard of Hearing individual who is also culturally Deaf and 4th generation in his family with deafness. Shaped by his experiences growing up in a Deaf family and attending a mainstreamed program, Corey's consulting, training and speaking emphasizes the organizational benefits of being more proactive and responsive to the communication challenges Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals face on a daily basis.

Educational Objectives:

- 1) Participants will identify five unique differences between providing reasonable accommodations and creating inclusive, accessible environments for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals.
- 2) Participants will be able to analyze and determine the most appropriate course of action to take in creating inclusive, accessible environments for Deaf and Hard of Hearing consumers.



Questions: Contact
Pamela Duncan
pamela.duncan@nebraska.gov

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Effective Communications in Medical Settings

John Wyvill, Executive Director



Many patients who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing find that communication in a health-care setting can be difficult. When faced with communication barriers, poor or ineffective communication relating to medical issues can have avoidable consequences. These communication breakdowns between patients and healthcare providers can include misdiagnosis, increased patient pain, medication errors, extensions of hospital stays, and even death. Effective communication should be a priority because it directly affects the quality of patient care, medical outcomes and patient satisfaction. Examples such as: “How much medicine did the doctor tell me to take?” “What medical procedure did I just agree to?” “How often do I need to clean this wound?”

It is necessary for all healthcare providers to recognize and remove any communication barriers that we encounter. This is all part of best health care practices to ensure the patient is well informed and able to make good health choices based on understanding complex health issues.

Health care providers should assess each situation on an individualized, case by case basis to determine how effective communication can best be had. The type of communication access may also depend on the length and complexity of the communication involved. Examples of communication access being provided include:

- A qualified sign language interpreter
- Assistive listening devices
- Telecommunications/relay services
- Emails
- Alternate formats for printed materials (e.g. large print or Braille)
- Accessible internet sites

With this in mind, the only way to achieve effective medical care is to create an environment built on good communication. Such an environment promotes a clear channel of communication between the patient and health care professionals. This is where NCDHH comes in. We work with health care professionals and patients to ensure that effective communication is achieved. If you are aware of anyone that needs communication access in a medical setting, I would encourage you to reach out the Commission for support and advocacy.

New Behavioral Health Facebook Page!



NCDHH would like to introduce our Facebook page specific to Behavioral Health: ‘NCDHH Behavioral Health’. ‘Like’ and ‘Follow’ the page for all updates related to behavioral health, tips, services, programs and updates throughout the state. There were be VLOG posts from Behavioral Health Coordinator, Carly Weyers, articles posted, and much more! If you have any questions, please reach out to Carly at carly.weyers@nebraska.gov!

Improvements in LPS Classrooms

Jenny Corum, Education Advocate

Schools are constantly working hard to explore different types of services and technology that are accessible for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students. One type of service that parents and students are sometimes not familiar with are class amplification systems. A classroom amplification system is technology that helps make sure the teacher's instruction is heard clearly throughout the classroom. The system works by connecting a wireless microphone, worn by the teacher, to the amplified system speakers, which are usually located throughout the room or in the ceiling. When a classroom uses an amplification system, students are able to hear more clearly in a classroom environment. These systems are mostly effective for students who are Hard of Hearing. In a classroom setting, there are always background noise whether it's coming from chatter, tapping of a student's pen, or when the air conditioner/heater unit kicks on which then becomes a distraction and makes it difficult for student to hear.



Lincoln Public Schools has made the commitment to install a classroom audio system from Audio Enhancement in every classroom within the district over the next three years. Audio Enhancement has a wireless microphone system for learning environments. The microphone distributes the teacher's natural voice throughout the room, which helps every student hear better in the classroom.

TRS Advisory Committee Seeking to Fill Three Vacancies

Please Pass On!

The Nebraska Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) is seeking three representatives to serve, effective now. A representative from the telephone industry, a Deaf representative and a representative for individuals with a speech impairment.

The purpose of the Telecommunications Relay Services Advisory Committee is to provide guidance for the development, monitoring, and promotion of state-wide telecommunications relay and equipment distribution program services in Nebraska. TRS discusses the surcharge and rules and regulations established by the Public Service Commission on an annual basis. The Committee was created in 1990. The Committee consists seven people: two hard of hearing people, one speech-impaired person, one person represents the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, one person represents the public.

If you or someone you may know is interested on serving on this committee, please contact John Wyvill at john.wyvill@nebraska.gov. An application can be found at: https://ncdhh.nebraska.gov/sites/ncdhh.nebraska.gov/files/doc/trs_application3.28.14.pdf

A New Year- A New Beginning!

Beth Ellsworth, Advocacy Specialist



Happy New Year! What would you like to see happen in 2018? It is so easy to set up resolutions (unrealistic goals) only to have them become regrets because they do not materialize.

Several years ago I decided to identify 3-5 things I want to work on throughout the year.

Dealing with my hearing loss has always come up & each year I re-examine the previous year; Here are some of the things I consider as I evaluate and examine my experiences:

1. Have I been isolating because social activities have been frustrating?
2. Have I been patient with people who forget to follow communication tips or do I become angry with them or withdraw?
3. Have I been assertive telling people what I need to be included in the conversation?
4. Have I been patient with myself and my expectations of others?

This doesn't mean that I will accomplish my identified aspiration perfectly. That is not realistic! I will not be perfect. I will make mistakes. Sometimes I may just want to take a break. It is natural for motivation to vacillate.

Because I have set up the intention to work on my list all year I no longer end up with feelings of guilt thinking; "I didn't do it "right" yesterday so I might as well give up". That feeling comes up for me when I set up a resolution to accomplish something that is really unrealistic.

My internal dialogue goes something like this:

1. Other people should know they need to look at me and do it all of the time.
2. People should not cover their mouth when talking.

I am so glad that I can start over and try again each New Year. This year I hope to be more flexible and patient with myself. I need to remember that hearing loss is invisible so other people do not know I have a hearing loss unless I tell them. At the same time I need to be patient with myself and my expectations. As the saying goes, progress not perfection!

I would love to hear from you and hear about your experiences. I can be reached at beth.ellsworth@nebraska.gov or call 402-682-7129 Video Phone

Smoke Alarm Signalers for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nebraskans

City of Lincoln Residents

Provided by Lincoln Fire & Rescue Department
<https://lincoln.ne.gov/city/fire/services/Smokeindex.htm>

Cities of Omaha, Millard and Elkhorn Residents

Provided by Omaha Fire Department
www.omaha-fire.org/request-a-smoke-detector
(402) 444-3560

Other Nebraska Area Residents

Provided by American Red Cross
<https://getasmokealarm.org/>

(After you submit your basic contact information, a Red Cross representative or one of their partner organizations will contact you. You will need to let them know you need a specialized alarm for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.)

The above available programs do not necessary guarantee you a specialized smoke alarm signaler. As with any programs and services, please refer to their qualification criteria and availability. If you wish to purchase your own visual, tactile or audible smoke alarm, NCDHH will be happy to provide you a list of available vendors that sell them.

Diets? No- A Lifestyle Change

Carly Weyers, Behavioral Health Coordinator

Do you struggle with healthy eating? Is it because you are not quite sure where to start? The Zone diet, Ketogenic diet, Vegetarian diet, Vegan diet... what?!?! The list goes on and which one do I pick? Most people get so overwhelmed when their doctor tells them that they need to lose weight. Or some people just came to the realization that it is time to start taking care of themselves but they are not sure where to start because there are so many different kinds of diets out there.



There are many different philosophies when it comes to dieting, and there is not one perfect diet for everyone. Each person has to figure out what their bodies need to see results. It takes effort! Eating healthy is just like painting a picture, and you will need to know what color to mix to get the colors you want. It is the EXACTLY the same way for eating healthy. You will have to learn the importance of good nutrition, and which foods are good for what? Some people said that they need to eat more protein and reduce their carbs to lose weight, but for me on the other end I was told to eat more carbs because I want to gain more muscle. It is important to research the many different kinds of diets before you decide on which method you want to use. Some people are told to do a Vegetarian diet because their body reacts to eating meat, or other people choose to follow this diet due to religious choices or environmental reasons. Be sure to know your purpose of doing a diet and what result you wish to achieve before you decide on which kind of diet you want to go with. If you want to lose weight, the term diet might be off putting because typically a diet has an end point that when you finish your “diet” you will go back to eating how you originally ate, completely ruining any progress you achieved. If you change the term “diet” to lifestyle choice you then are able to focus on fueling your body in the right way for a longer period of time without thinking you are restricting yourself to a diet.

The line between dieting and lifestyle choices are often blurred. Dieting is when you focus on what you cannot have, while having a healthy lifestyle choice allows you to focus on moderation and balance. Eating healthy is about how to balance all foods in your diet. Most dietitians and personal trainers often tell clients it is ok to eat that cookie, as long as you balance your intake. It’s all about the progress each day. This method is more likely to be successful for most people who are serious about changing their lifestyle and eating healthy. Learn the importance of good nutrition and being aware of calorie intake and what kind of food you are putting in your mouth. You can still indulge in some food, just reduce your portion. If you apply that method and not deprive yourself, you are more likely to reduce unhealthy cravings.

Many people often think if you eat a salad for lunch that you will drop five pounds; and that goes the same way if you eat one slice of cake for a snack- it does not mean you will gain five pounds that day. Don’t get on treadmill and run 5 miles on the day you eat cake. That isn’t going to make any difference in your body. Keep that in your mind that everything requires work. You can’t get what you want without working for it, and it takes some time! Have patience- the results will be well worth it!

It is possible to eat healthy and sweet treats that are still good for you! Angie Asche, Registered Dietitian and business owner of Eleat Sports Nutrition*, has an amazing website with several different healthy guiltless recipes <https://www.eleatnutrition.com/>. None of her recipes have disappointed me, and I strongly encourage you guys to check it out and give it a try! I am obsessed with her gluten free and dairy free chocolate chip banana bread. I think I am going home to make some of it tonight! She is an amazing person, and good at what she does. She is definitely a role model of mine! Otherwise, feel free to contact me if you want some more information about nutrition or if you want some guidance on how to find sources to eat healthy!

*Editor’s note: Not an endorsement by NCDHH

Tinnitus: Some Facts to Know

Teresa Hevner, Advocacy Specialist



Tinnitus is a medical condition that effects a wide variety of individuals. Although there has been more and more research done, this condition is still surprising the scientific and medical communities. It effects a wide range of ages, genders and lifestyles. Approximately 50 million Americans have reported experiencing some form of tinnitus. According to an article published by The Lancet, tinnitus is defined as “the perception of auditory sensations, without any corresponding external stimuli.” It can be perceived as ringing, buzzing, whistling or clicking in the ears. Individuals may describe the perceived noises as constant (steady), and intermittent (coming and going). The pitch ranges of tinnitus can vary as well. One person may claim to hear a low pitch or roar while another individual may describe a very high pitch, similar to a whine or

squeal.

There are also different types of tinnitus, subjective or objective. Subjective tinnitus can only be heard by the individual themselves. This type of tinnitus is the most commonly reported according to the American Academy of Otolaryngology. Objective tinnitus, which is very rare, means the Doctor or Specialist examining the patient can also hear the sounds the individual is perceiving. This can be caused by blood vessel problems, conditions with the middle ear bones, or even muscle contractions.

Individuals who are diagnosed with a hearing loss may experience tinnitus as well. In some cases, ringing in the ears is noticed before the actual hearing loss is diagnosed. Tinnitus may also be associated with loud noise exposure, and may be present for a short time after the individual has been exposed to excessive noise. For example, someone may notice their ears are ringing after attending a music concerts. This tends to go away after a period of time, and unless the individual continues to expose themselves to excessively loud noises, the ringing is only temporary.

The onset of tinnitus, also referred to as the “new onset period” is present for less than 6 months. Chronic, or persistent tinnitus lasts continuously for longer than 6 months. According to the American Academy of Otolaryngology, one-in-five people claim to have bothersome tinnitus, which affects their overall quality of life. Although tinnitus has a very close association to hearing loss, or noise induced hearing loss (NIHL), there are many different reasons the ears may ring. Ear wax build-up and middle ear infections have also been associated with tinnitus. Anxiety, depression, insomnia and even stress have an association to tinnitus. Though there is no “cure” for this condition, there are several treatment options for those who suffer from tinnitus.

In instances where an ENT or Audiologist can pin-point the cause of tinnitus, these professionals may be able to help eliminate or lessen the symptoms. For instance, removal of impacted ear wax or the treatment of a middle ear infection may cause the tinnitus to subside. For those who experience bothersome tinnitus, or hearing loss and tinnitus, hearing aids which are equipped with ear-level-maskers may help the patient lessen the ringing in their ear, or ears. The symptoms of tinnitus may worsen at night, or when the individual is alone or in a quiet setting. It is not that the ringing has gotten worse during these situations, but rather, you now have the ability to focus on that noise rather than on other surrounding noises or tasks. Sound masking machines may help to reduce the noises perceived by the individual in these situations. Some tips to help prevent tinnitus, or to help lessen the impact it may have are:

1. Try and avoid or limit loud noise exposure.
2. Check your blood pressure regularly, if it is high, seek your Doctor’s help to regulate it.
3. Exercise daily, this helps with your body’s circulation.
4. Get an adequate amount to sleep, fatigue may increase the symptoms of tinnitus.
5. Try to find physical (sound machines/ear level maskers) or mental techniques to help suppress the symptoms.

References: Baguley, David, et al. “Tinnitus.” The Lancet, Elsevier, 2 July 2013; CDC, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Understanding the Facts.” American Tinnitus Association, 6 Feb. 2017; Communications. “Tinnitus.” American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, 3 Jan. 2018.

Hearing Loss Signs to Recognize

Brittney Isom, Advocacy Specialist

Did you know that about 20 percent of Americans, 48 million, report some degree of hearing loss? In fact, at age 65, 1 out of 3 people has a hearing loss (Medicine, 2005-2018). I think it is safe to say we probably know someone who is affected by hearing loss. Like any medical condition, the sooner you address it the better. Here are some common signs related to hearing loss:



You have trouble hearing on the telephone. You keep inching the volume up to the max and it is still difficult to hear.

The family (or your neighbor) complains that your TV is too loud. You consistently need the TV turned up so loud that it's uncomfortable for others in the room or your neighbors can hear it.

You're tired from straining to hear conversations. Constantly straining to hear and follow conversation is mentally and physically fatiguing. Think of it like eye sight. I know the two are very different, however, constantly squinting your eyes to read something is very exhausting. Putting on reading glasses helps reduce the strain on your eyes allowing you to read that good book with ease. Hearing aids or other assistive technology could help ease the stress of trying to hear conversations.

You have trouble hearing in noisy environments. Problems masking out background noise and focusing on speech.

People don't seem to speak clearly. Example: you are in Charlie Brown's classroom trying to understand his teacher.

You misunderstand what people say. Misunderstanding people can be hard, and it often stems from the beginnings of high frequency hearing loss that affect our ability to discern the sounds of speech.

You have trouble hearing children and women. Hearing loss within a specific frequency range is common, and with age, you're more likely to experience hearing loss in the high frequencies. Women and children speak at higher pitches/frequencies, it's more difficult to hear what your granddaughter or wife is saying to you than when your male friend speaks to you.

You may become annoyed and frustrated during conversations. The feelings of frustration are normal and understandable since communication is such an important part of life. If you're being honest with yourself, you may recognize that you are not actually annoyed at those speaking to you, but more so with a hearing loss you're beginning to notice.

If you recognize just one or two of these signs, your hearing may not be affected. Even people with perfectly normal hearing experience times where we have trouble understanding someone or hearing in challenging environments. If you or someone you know could benefit from more information on Hearing Loss resources contact your local Advocacy Specialist. If you don't know who that is, reach out to the Lincoln office at 402-471-3593 and they can direct you to your local Advocacy Specialist.

References: Paul Dybala, P. p. (2017, March 21). Healthy Hearing. Retrieved from Ten signs you may have Hearing Loss.

Social Support for People with Hearing Loss

Kathy Scusa, Advocacy Specialist



In our daily lives, everyone needs support from family, friends, co-workers and even acquaintances. People who have hearing loss need extra social support from family and friends. Social support is not the same as social media! I don't mean being FaceBook friends or following them on Twitter! Offering social support is another way of saying, "I care" to everyone around us, at home, in the workplace and in our everyday lives. We all rely on others to help, support and encourage us as we go about our daily lives. Hearing loss affects one out of every five Americans! Over the age of 75, hearing loss affects between 50% and 75% of Americans! Sadly, only 20% of the people who suffer with hearing loss seek technology as a way to overcome it. Social support could help increase those numbers so more people use technology to assist themselves to hear better.

Social support for anyone with hearing loss is even more important for our elderly friends and relatives who are newly diagnosed, or those who are in the early stages of learning about their hearing loss. Admitting to ourselves that someone we love has a problem that we aren't able to fix can be very difficult. In most cases, people who are newly diagnosed with hearing loss have probably been struggling to hear for years. Denial of hearing loss only adds to the problem. Because hearing loss is invisible, it too often takes a long time to recognize as needing our attention. As humans, we are very capable at disguising hearing loss and compensating for it by learning to lip read, avoiding situations where we know hearing will be difficult, or just pretending that what is going on around us doesn't really matter or require our attention and participation. This leads to social isolation as people find it easier to withdraw from group activities rather than participate. Often a person would rather struggle with hearing loss than learn to use new technology to overcome their hearing loss. This is when social support and reassurance from family and friends is crucial. Social support for people with hearing loss can be given in many ways. I'd like to tell you about a few of those ways:

1. **Offer Encouragement.** We, as hearing persons, can in no way understand what it is like to lose the sense of hearing. What we can do is be willing to listen and offer our help in whatever way is needed. Just because hearing loss is invisible, it is not any less serious than another ailment or disability. Asking how things are and if there is anything that you can do to help can make a world of difference. Encourage your loved one to get that hearing test. Encourage them to wear their hearing aids. Encourage them to explore other hearing assistive technology like amplified and caption phones. Encourage them to stay active in groups and activities that they enjoy.
2. **Lend a hand.** Just ask! An offer to take them to their hearing test appointment and be a second set of ears to help remember what the audiologist says can be a huge help to someone with hearing loss. Often, the offer to help is as important to someone suffering from hearing loss, as actually helping them to do something is. Believe me, if you ask someone, and they truly need your help, they will let you know what you can do for them. It might be something as simple as making a phone call, or it might be that they need your support in getting and learning how to use new hearing aids. Be willing to do whatever they need!
3. **Help with New Technology.** Technology is always changing. Just about the time you have it figured out how to work with one device there is a new model out that you need to upgrade to. For elderly people, the changing technology is hard to keep up with. Do whatever you can to help them learn how to use their devices to enable them to communicate better. Be available to help your loved one with internet, computers, cell phones, new amplified or caption phones and personal amplifiers. There is so much new in the electronic world that many times elderly people feel overwhelmed. Many times it is easier for them to do without than try to learn something new and difficult. It will mean the world to them if you spend your valuable time teaching them how to use their new equipment!
4. **Teamwork.** Learn about hearing loss. Learn ways to help make communication easier. Take time to ask questions, be kind and offer encouragement. Remember that it takes two people to have a conversation. Do your part to help your hard of hearing family and friends communicate effectively.
5. **Put yourself in their place.** Hearing loss is one of those things you can only truly understand if you experience it, however, you can sympathize and empathize to a certain extent. Even people with perfect hearing can, at times, have difficulty hearing or misunderstanding. Not being able to hear clearly can be incredibly frustrating as you try to maintain normalcy while you go about your day. Hearing loss doesn't change who a person is, but it can change the confidence in a person and bring on social anxiety, isolation and depression. Your support can be life changing for someone with hearing loss.

If you would like to discuss anything hearing related or NCDHH's programs and services, please contact me at my North Platte office phone number (308) 535-6600 or you can email me at kathy.scusa@nebraska.gov. I look forward to serving you.

Hearing Loss & Falls

Aaron Rothenberger, Advocacy Specialist

According to the Center for Disease Control, one out of every five falls causes a serious injury. Each year 2.8 million older people are treated in emergency departments, and over 800,000 patients are hospitalized because of injuries related to falls. Falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries and are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries in older adults. Falls are the leading cause of accidental death in adults over the age of 65.



Research done by Johns Hopkins has shown that people with a 25-decibel hearing loss, which is classified as a mild hearing loss, were nearly three times more likely to have a history of falling. The research also showed that for every additional 10 decibels of hearing loss, their chance of falling increased by 1.4 fold, or 140%. Researchers believe that one of the possible explanations for the link between falls and hearing loss is due to decreased spatial awareness. Spatial awareness is defined as the ability to be aware of oneself in space. It is an organized knowledge of objects in relation to oneself in that given space. Spatial awareness also involves understanding the relationship of these objects when there is a change of position of oneself. People who cannot hear well may not have a good spatial awareness of their overall environment. This decrease in spatial awareness makes tripping and falling over objects more likely.

A loss in spatial awareness is very much like walking in a dark room or with your eyes closed. You have an idea where your coffee table and rocking chair are, but you are not getting the entire picture and could easily bump into them. Without the cues that hearing gives us, we end up with a decreased spatial awareness and possibly an increased chance of falls.

Another possible explanation for the link is cognitive load. Cognitive load refers to the total amount of mental effort being used in the working memory. Gait and balance are very cognitively demanding and the relationship between heavy cognitive load and control of center of mass are heavily correlated in the elderly population. Researchers at Uppsala University in Sweden found that as cognitive load increases, the sway in center of mass in elderly individuals increases. Researchers believe that those with hearing loss are using more of their working memory on hearing which leads to an increased cognitive load and could lead to increased falls.

Can Hearing Aids Help? Researchers at Washington University of St. Louis wanted to find the relationship between hearing aids and balance. They wanted to know if using hearing aids helps balance and if not using hearing aids hurts balance. Participants of the study were asked to do increasingly difficult balance tasks with their eyes covered so they would be unable to use visual cues. They performed the tests with both their hearing aids turned on and off. The balance tasks included standing with their feet together on a foam pad and standing with one foot in front of the other.

The researchers found that during the easier tasks, there were a small number of participants that maintained balance the same whether their hearing aids were turned on or off. But as the tasks became more and more difficult, all of the subjects had trouble maintaining balance with their hearing aids turned off. The results of the testing showed that hearing aids make a huge difference in balance. One task, the one foot in front of the other, showed participants with their hearing aids turned on were able to maintain balance for twice as long as when their hearing aids were turned off.

Dr. Timothy Huller at the Washington University of St. Louis believes that wearing hearing aids helps people get sound cues from their environment.

“We don’t think it’s just that wearing hearing aids makes the person more alert,” said Dr. Timothy Huller. “The participants appeared to be using the sound information coming through their hearing aids as auditory reference points or landmarks to help maintain balance. It’s a bit like using your eyes to tell where you are in space. If we turn out the lights, people sway a little bit, more than they would if they could see. This study suggests that opening your ears also gives you information about balance.”

References: https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/news/media/releases/hearing_loss_linked_to_three_fold_risk_of_falling
<https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/52548-New-research-links-hearing-loss-to-an-increased-risk-of-falls>
<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2016/p0922-older-adult-falls.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationsafety/falls/adultfalls.html>
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0361923002007700?via%3Dihub>

Bringing Deaf & Hard of Hearing and the Arts Closer

Pamela Duncan, Interpreter Program Coordinator



NCDHH is proud to shine a spotlight on two venues in the Omaha area, Omaha Performing Arts and SNAP! Productions. The Omaha Performing Arts brings Broadway shows, Jazz, Blues, Dance, Comedy, Family and Popular Entertainment to Omaha at the Orpheum Theater and Holland Performing Arts Center. They are eager to ensure every patron's experience is a convenient, safe, and remarkable one. The Orpheum Theater is proud to announce the following enhancements in providing accessibility and accommodations.

American Sign Language Interpreters: Available during the Saturday matinee time for Broadway shows. Other dates/times can be arranged, in advance, by contacting the ticket office, at least two weeks prior to the event. Loop, Audio Description: Thanks to Outlook Nebraska, Inc., audio description is available upon request for patrons with vision loss. Requests for accommodations should be made when purchasing tickets. Please call (402) 345-0606, or email ticketomaha@omahaperformingarts.org to make arrangements.

SNAP! Productions, Omaha's Diversity Theatre, has been making their productions available to members of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing community for quite some time now by way of providing ASL Interpreting for one show per production. However, there have been special requests made and granted to provide ASL Interpreters for multiple days/times. These arrangements are done two weeks ahead of the run dates. SNAP! is known for its' intimate setting, where audience members are no further than 15 feet away from the stage. "With a goal to both educate and inspire, SNAP! Looks to provide quality theatre that is 'a celebration of life'".

SNAP! Staff works with their ASL Interpreters by reaching out to the Deaf/Hard of Hearing community via surveys to determine the date/time the community would most likely want to attend a production, that date is then set and advertised on all marketing materials. The staff is always looking for opportunities to enhance the process and spread awareness that they are providing accessibility and bringing art to those who want it.

Please do not hesitate to contact SNAP! directly at (402) 341-2757 or webmaster@snapproductions.com.

Workshops or Training Events for DeafBlind

Kim Davis, Advocacy Specialist

Event hosted by Nebraska DeafBlind Project

www.nebraskadeafblindproject.org (click on "Upcoming Events")

(1) DeafBlind Summer Institute

For additional information, contact: Teresa Coonts, Director of the Nebraska DeafBlind Project at (402) 595-1810 or Teresa.Coonts@nebraska.gov.



Events hosted by Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults (HKNC) Confident

www.helenkeller.org/hknc/campus-services (click on "Specialized Programs")

(1) Living Program (for DeafBlind adults age 55 and over)

(2) DeafBlind Immersion Experience (for individuals who are DeafBlind and have intellectual disabilities and the staff who supports them)

(3) Summer Assessment Program (for High School Juniors, Seniors and Recent Graduates)

(4) Summer Youth Vocational Program (for DeafBlind teens age 16-22)

(5) Young Adult Summer Program (for DeafBlind teens age 16 – 22)

For additional information, contact: Beth Jordan, Regional Representative for the HKNC Region 7 Great Plains at (913) 677-4562 V or (913) 227-4282 VP or Beth.Jordan@hknc.org.

Programs & Services for Nebraskans who are DeafBlind

Kim Davis, Advocacy Specialist

Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) Great Plains Region 7 (Covers Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas & Missouri)

www.helenkeller.org/hknc/great-plains-region

The HKNC regional rep is your lifelong point of contact for information and resources. They serve transition-age teenagers through senior citizens. HKNC also has an array of training programs for teenagers through adults available at their headquarters on Long Island, in New York. HKNC also maintains a National Registry of people who have both hearing and vision loss.

For additional information, contact: Beth Jordan, Regional Representative at (913) 677-4562 V or (913) 227-4282 VP or Beth.Jordan@hknc.org.

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI)

www.ncbvi.nebraska.gov

NCBVI is a state vocational rehabilitation agency for the blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind. They serve individuals of all ages from transition to senior citizens. NCBVI assist individuals to achieve full and rewarding lives through independent living skills and assisting with finding and maintaining employment.

For additional information, contact: NCBVI's main office at (877) 809-2419.

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH)

www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov

NCDHH is a state agency that's mission 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.

For additional information, contact: NCDHH's main office at (800) 545-6244 or NCDHH@nebraska.gov.

Nebraska DeafBlind Project

www.nebraskadeafblindproject.org

A federal grant that provides training, technical assistance and information specific to children and youth birth to age 21 with combined vision and hearing loss. The grant oversight is through Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Special Education. The Nebraska Deaf-Blind Project strives to provide technical assistance, information and support to families, early intervention and educational teams, and other key stakeholders who support students with a combined vision and hearing loss. As part of grant requirements, they maintain and report federally a DB Child Count for students in Nebraska who have combined hearing and vision loss. They also host an annual training event specific to deafblindness and topics specific to this population of students. This activity is part of the 5-year federal grant and in partnership with the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. It always occurs in the month of July.

For additional information, contact: Teresa Coonts, Director at (402) 595-1810 or Teresa.Coonts@nebraska.gov.

Nebraska iCanConnect (iCC) – also known as Nebraska DeafBlind Equipment Distribution Program)

<https://atp.nebraska.gov/services/equipment>

This program was mandated by the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 and established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and coordinated by the Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP). This program will ensure that low-income individuals who have combined hearing and vision loss can access telephone, advanced communications and information services.

For additional information, contact: Kristi Berst, Coordinator at (877) 201-4141 or Kristi.Berst@nebraska.gov.