



# NCDHH

Nebraska Commission  
for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



## 2022 ANNUAL REPORT





# NCDHH

Nebraska Commission  
for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



## **OUR VISION**

*Access For All*

## **OUR MISSION**

*We Advocate to  
Create Opportunities  
by Raising  
Awareness Through  
Collaboration*

# 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. The Commission was created to improve the quality and coordination of existing services for deaf and hard of hearing people and development of new services when necessary.

## 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.

## 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.

## Telecommunication 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.



# NCDHH SERVICES

NCDHH works continuously with individuals including but not limited to: Nebraska residents, organizations, stakeholder representatives, educational representatives, parents and more. An NCDHH team member works with each client or organization to educate, inform, and/or provide assistance on our services.

Services include training, presentations, attending booths & conferences, 1-on-1 meetings, assistive technology, hearing aid banks, educational support in schools, behavioral health, communication access support and more.

As we come out of another year amid the global COVID-19 Pandemic, NCDHH was able to advocate, assist and support through many different avenues.

3,090  
People  
Assisted

233  
Presentations

61  
Booths

# HIGHLIGHTS

- **American Rescue Plan Act Funding:** LB1014 was signed into law by Gov. Pete Ricketts in April of 2022. This federal funding includes money appropriated to NCDHH for two funds- Rural Communication Access & Legal Communication Access
  - Rural Communication Access Fund (RCAF): Reimbursement of expenses incurred to obtain an on-site, in-person licensed sign language interpreter for an eligible appointment in any approved rural area in Nebraska. Rural is defined as outside of Lincoln or Omaha metro areas
  - Legal Communication Access Fund (LCAF): Reimbursement of expenses incurred to provide a qualified, licensed sign language interpreter (on-site or remote) or other auxiliary aid service, such as real-time captioning or CART, during a legal appointment. This includes meeting outside of a courtroom setting anywhere in the state of Nebraska
- **Collaboration with Public Service Commission with Next Generation 9-1-1:** In 2018, the Nebraska legislature passed LB993, approving the 911 Service System, Next Generation 911 Master Plan. Included in this plan is the ability to implement high speed data connectivity capable of receiving information to include text messages, pictures, and videos. This is very beneficial to Nebraskans who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- **Deaf & Hard of Hearing Awareness Outreach Days:** NCDHH collaborates with stakeholders to host outreach events for various activities to reach the community and promote our services, resources and how we can help Nebraskans who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
  - Lincoln Children's Zoo
  - Omaha Zoo
  - Riverside Discovery Center
  - Lincoln Saltdogs
  - Omaha Storm Chasers
- **Omaha Safety Day:** NCDHH worked in collaboration with Omaha Police Department, Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Omaha Fire Department and Douglas County 911 to host a Safety Day for the deaf and hard of hearing communities. This event is to continue to foster a positive relationship with people who are deaf or hard of hearing and law enforcement/first responders
- **Workshops**
  - Interpreter Workshop: "Ethical Application of Demand Control Schema: Today's Ethics and Evaluation" – NCDHH hosted a webinar to discuss relevant factors that guide ASL interpreters through ethical decision-making processes.
  - Disaster Preparedness Workshop: NCDHH hosted a workshop and training, featuring first responders and law enforcement in Scottsbluff to provide information and education on how best to be prepared in emergency situations such as weather and natural disasters

## **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding Program**

Federal funding provided through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is now available. In April, Gov. Ricketts signed LB1014 into law, a bill to appropriate federal funds to the state of Nebraska pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-901.03. This federal funding includes money appropriated to the Commission to provide support in rural areas of the state and access to legal services. Two programs have been created with these funds and are entitled 'Rural Communication Access Fund' and 'Legal Communication Access Fund.' The funding is available for two fiscal years, beginning July 1, 2022.

These two programs can provide monetary support for:



***The reimbursement of expenses incurred to obtain an on-site, in-person licensed sign language interpreter for an eligible appointment in any approved rural (outside of Lincoln or Omaha metro areas) area in Nebraska, and;***

***The reimbursement of expenses incurred to provide a qualified licensed sign language interpreter (on-site or remote) or other auxiliary aid service, such as real-time captioning or CART, during a legal appointment or meeting outside of a courtroom setting ANYWHERE in the state of Nebraska.***



Full information on the program funding including a reimbursement guide, forms, FAQs, and contact information can be found on the agency website at: [www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov/arpa](http://www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov/arpa).

# HEARING AID BANKS

## NSTEP

NCDHH works with the Barkley Memorial Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, HearU Nebraska, Sertoma, and the Nebraska Lions Foundation to provide hearing aids to individuals who qualify. HearU Nebraska provides hearing aids to children ages birth-18. Sertoma is an international organization providing refurbished hearing aids to individuals 65+. 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 the Commission.

### Sertoma Hearing Aid Bank

111

Applications  
Approved

84

Applications  
Denied

### Nebraska Lions Foundation

28

Applications  
Approved

46

Applications  
Denied

The State of Nebraska offers the Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program (NSTEP). The goal of this program is to provide monetary assistance to Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf/Blind, and Speech disabled Nebraskans to use for the purchase of specialized telephone equipment such as amplifiers, signaling devices, captioned telephones and mobile phones. Our advocacy specialists work with clients to assist them in finding the technology to best meet their unique needs and assist individuals in their application process.

92

Applications  
Processed  
by NCDHH

# SOCIAL MEDIA

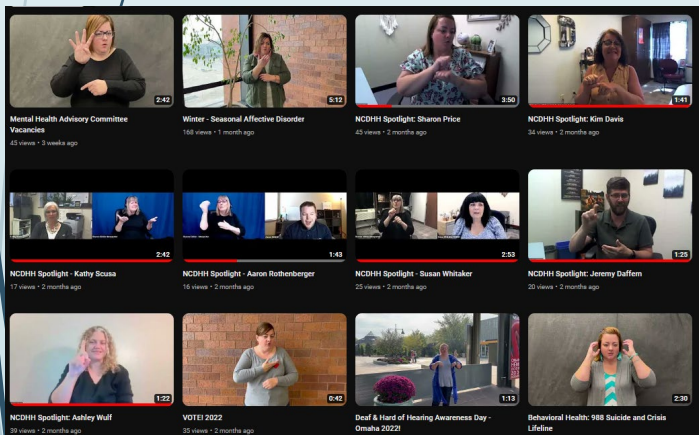
*In the ever-evolving world we live in, social media has been a great tool and resource NCDHH uses to communicate with stakeholders, the community, and representatives around Nebraska as well as nationwide.*



*Social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube have been a fundamental part of our agency mission and vision to advocate for full access as well as keeping the community engaged.*

## **Top Facebook Post of 2022:**

Collaboration with Deaf Community Leaders & Department of Education: LEAD-K Presentation – Commissioner Matt Blomstedt formally accepted the LEAD-K report, given by Advisory Committee Chair, Jonathan Scherling.



## **YouTube VLOGs in 2021:**

- Advocacy Specialist
- Employee Spotlight Series
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- VOTE in 2022
- NCDHH Media Loan Center



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