

THE COMMUNICATOR

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



NCDHH Celebrates 5th Annual Deaf & Hard of Hearing Day at Omaha Henry Doorly Zoo

The Commission hosted Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at the Omaha Henry Doorly Zoo on Sunday, October 3rd. NCDHH partners with Nebraska Association of the Deaf and Hands and Voices to bring families, community leaders and organizations together for a fun day at the zoo while sharing information and resources in Nebraska.

There were multiple different activities throughout the morning including an animal craft table and coloring, an animal sign class taught by NCDHH Advocacy Specialist, Ashley Wulf, as well as two Deaf Connect book readings, read by UNL Sign Language Instructor, Amy Willman, and Ashley Wulf.

Organizations such as Nebraska Association of the Deaf, Nebraska Hands and Voices, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention, Nebraska VR, Linguabee, ZVRS/Purple, and Deaf Ministry of Christ Community Church all came out to have a booth at the event and mingle with guests. There were fantastic door prizes donated by Sprint/Nebraska Relay, Nebraska Hands and Voices, and Deaf Ministry of Christ Community Church.



NCDHH team at the Zoo!



Amy Willman signing 'Stellaluna' during Deaf Connect Reading

The Importance of Self Advocacy

John Wyvill, Executive Director



Self-advocacy

noun

The action of representing oneself or one's views or interests
Synonyms: self advancement, self-help, self-improvement, self-support

Antonyms: self-harm, self-sabotage

I am providing the definition of self-advocacy to help highlight the work that we do here at the Nebraska Commission of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. We work with you to advocate for your rights, needs or interests related to communication access, equality and inclusion. These areas include education, employment, medical, first responder settings... the list goes on. The most important part of this is: YOU. We need you to assert your rights, contact us, and advocate for what you need. NCDHH has had advocacy success in various areas including raising the educational interpreter standards, captioning at Memorial Stadium for football games and access improvements at Omaha Eppley Airfield. All of these examples are a result of someone contacting our office, sharing their concerns and requesting us to advocate with you. This is self-advocacy at its best. We cannot effect change unless we hear from you and work together.

While the broader deaf and hard of hearing community has accomplished so much in the last several years, there is still much so much to do. Do not hesitate to contact us to help you self-advocate. Together we will make a difference, once step at a time.

If not you- who?

If not now-when?

You may reach us at 402-471-3593 or ncdhh@nebraska.gov

NCDHH Full Board Seeking Hard of Hearing Representative

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) is seeking an individual who is hard of hearing to serve on the Full Board. Our legislation requires 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 applicant must be able to express themselves through sign language.

Anyone interested in becoming a Full Commission Board Member may submit an application to the Governor's Board and Commission Office, attn: Ms. Kathleen Dolezal, PO Box 94848, Lincoln, NE 68509-4848 or you may apply online at: <https://governor.nebraska.gov/board-comm-req>

Apprentice License

Abby Giambattista, Advocacy Specialist/Staff Interpreter - Lincoln



Exciting times are here! You may have heard, as of August 1, 2021, NCDHH updated the Rules and Regulations Relating to Sign Language Interpreters. This was a thrilling and slightly arduous endeavor; however, it was a vital step towards the stewardship of Nebraskan interpreters. The 2021 Rules and Regulations for Sign Language Interpreters now include a piece of licensure entitled the Apprentice License.

Despite the title, this license is not attached to the Commission or any agency providing an apprenticeship; rather, it *does* provide the ability to practice as a state-licensed interpreter for up to three years within the State of Nebraska, with a few situational exceptions (some scenarios are not recommended for AP licensees to facilitate).

The Apprentice License fills the gap between the no-longer existing Nebraska QAST (Quality Assurance Screening Test) and those unable to pass the NIC, BEI, or EIPA just yet. Creating this license was a team effort between the Commission and several other hard working, talented individuals over at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) and across the state. Sharon Sinkler, NCDHH's Interpreting Coordinator, was kind enough to facilitate all meetings and lead this task force toward the finish line.

Now that you know a little bit about the license, how does one actually qualify for it? Being that the Apprentice License was designed for those working toward their National Interpreter Certification (NIC), one must have passed the knowledge portion of that exam before applying. In addition to this, applicants must have the following: a copy of their current Associate Member card to the RID, copy of government issued I.D. proving they are over the age of 18, proof of completion of an interpreter training/preparation program, a recommendation letter from the chairperson of said program attesting to competency, and a one-time fee. There are yearly CEU and workplace submissions required, but more details can be found on www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov/licensing.com

There are some stipulations on how this license can be used in the state, but not to worry, a technical assistance guide was created to go along with this license. The hope here is that this opportunity will create a space for new interpreters to build experience and grow, ultimately making Nebraska the most accessible that it can be.

If you have any questions or comments about this, please do not hesitate to contact me at abigail.giambattista@nebraska.gov.

***Follow NCDHH on Social Media for Information, Updates,
Community Events, Advocacy Tips, and More!***



Deaf Awareness Month

Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator



In September we celebrated Deaf Awareness Month, a time to celebrate the rich cultural history of the Deaf community and continue our work advocating for the rights of Deaf people here in Nebraska. Deaf Awareness Month, an initiative of the [World Federation of the Deaf](#) (WFD) corresponds with International Week of the Deaf People 2021 and International Day of Sign Languages 2021. First celebrated in 1958, the annual events aim to increase awareness and advocacy among all people with hearing loss.

According to the World Health Organization, more than 5% of the world's population has 'disabling' hearing loss, which requires rehabilitation, support and/or advocacy. Additionally, more than 1 billion young adults are at risk of permanent hearing loss due to unsafe listening practices. It is estimated that more than 700 million people – or 1/10 people – will have disabling hearing loss by 2050. When unaddressed, hearing loss can impact individuals in various ways, including their communication and speech, cognition, education and employment opportunities, social isolation, and mental health.

To support those with hearing loss around the world, you can take action into your own hands. Here are a few things you can do not just during Deaf Awareness Month, but any month!

- Learn sign language
- Share stories from deaf creators
- Support deaf businesses
- Learn about d/Deaf culture
- Join a d/Deaf group
- Advocate deaf accessibility at work and in your community
- Volunteer at non-profits, civil liberties groups, or schools for the Deaf
- Contact your representatives to support the rights of deaf people through legislation

According to Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD), here are some fun facts!

- Sign language is not universal. Why not? Because sign languages develop naturally out in communities, the same way spoken languages do. Sign languages aren't artificially created, nor are they gifts given to deaf people by hearing ones—they're fully-realized, complex languages with their own grammars, syntaxes, and vocabularies.
- In North America, the primary sign language used is American Sign Language (ASL).
- There is an International Sign language that *was* artificially created (by Deaf people) to communicate worldwide, in situations like the United Nations—think Esperanto.
- According to the World Federation of the Deaf there are more than 200 signed languages used worldwide!
- Since signed languages are created by Deaf people, they are not related to the spoken languages used in the same areas. For example, ASL and British Sign Language (BSL) are very different, even though many people in American and the UK use the same spoken language, English.
- When learning sign language, you should *always* seek out a Deaf teacher. Signed languages are the heart of Deaf culture and community. Deaf people are the experts on their language, so they should be the ones consulted, and paid, for the work of teaching. Historically, Deaf people have been stigmatized and oppressed by hearing society for their use of sign language, so for hearing teachers to take Deaf jobs and profit from teaching sign is a form of cultural appropriation.

Deaf Awareness Month *continued*

Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator

Here are some of their favorite online resources to learn sign language:

[The ASL App](#): Created by the Deaf-owned company Ink & Salt, this app has free and paywalled content to help you learn to sign.

[ASL Connect](#): Run by Gallaudet University, ASL Connect offers free introductory vocabulary videos, as well as paid virtual courses.

[ASL at Home](#): Deaf-made curriculum designed with families of deaf and hard-of hearing children in mind.

[The ASL Lab](#): For more advanced students, Deaf actor Justin Jackerson breaks down ASL history and etymology on Instagram.

[The ASL Shop](#): Deaf teacher with a large following teaching basic signs on Instagram

[Dawn Sign Press](#): Print and video resources for purchase from a Deaf-run press

[Life Print](#): This organization runs a free ASL video dictionary, as well as an active community Facebook group.

[The Sign Language Center](#): This New York-based ASL teaching hub offers virtual as well as in-person classes in Manhattan.

[Signed With Heart](#): Deaf signer teaching ASL vocabulary on Instagram and YouTube, now also offering low-cost courses.

For Kids:

[ASLIZED](#): Storytelling and read-along videos in ASL

[My Baby Fingers](#): This Deaf-hearing team offers a variety of classes for kids and families, including ASL immersion, story time, sign and stretch Yoga classes, and music-based classes. There are some free video resources on their site, too.

[Hands Land](#): An ASL-based educational program created by Deaf performers.

[RMDS YouTube](#): Immersive storytelling from Rocky Mountain Deaf School.

[Signed Stories](#): Animated storybooks signed by a fluent narrator, available in ASL and BSL.

If you would like more information or resources, don't hesitate to contact me at sharon.sinkler@nebraska.gov.



Don't forget to check out our YouTube channel. See updates and VLOGs of our team with what is happening around the office and around Nebraska!

YouTube Channel: *Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing*

Interpreter Workshop

Saturday, November 13, 2021 via Zoom

"Demand Control Schema: An Introduction to the Normative Ethics of Interpreting" by Robyn K. Dean, CI/CT, PhD

Saturday, November 13th via Zoom
9:00 am to 5:00 pm CST
(1 hour lunch break at noon)

Interpreters who work in community settings face ethically complex situations every day. Unfortunately, the profession has not been consistent in how it guides and supports interpreters in making the right decision. Most ethical codes in the profession frame ethical ideals as, "interpreters always..." and "interpreters never...". Yet, how often is the phrase, "it depends on the situation..." uttered by interpreters? To add to the confusion, interpreters hear from trainers and colleagues that interpreters are just, "conduits" or should be "invisible". Or, interpreters hear the exact opposite: interpreters are "advocates" or they are "members of the team".

Neither a list of rules nor a series of metaphors can effectively advance ethical thought and action in a practice profession. What is needed instead is a set of professional values and the skills needed to effectively apply those values in a particular context. A values-based framework effectively accounts for the complex work of interpreters ~ in a manner that parallels other practice professions.

This workshop addresses the concerns of the current ethical dialogue in the field and instead offers interpreting practitioners a values-based teleological process for effectively analyzing each assignment for contextual factors and decision consequences.

Target audience: Practicing interpreters and students

Educational Objectives:

At the conclusion of the training, participants will be able to:

- Identify the primary concerns for the popular framework used in interpreting
- Define a practice profession and the implications of this shift in interpreting
- Explain DC-S as a work analysis tool and a decision-making model
- Outline the values to be considered in decision making model
- Explain the professional development tool of supervision and reflective practice.

Interpretek is an approved RID Sponsor for Continuing Education Activities. The RID activity code for this workshop is 0024112105. This Professional Studies (PS) program is offered for 0.65 CEUs at the little/none Content knowledge level.

There are **no refunds and no partial CEUs will be awarded.**

NCDHH promotes an environment of mutual respect, free of discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, or any other protected class.

This workshop is presented in spoken English.

If you need reasonable accommodations, please contact Sharon Sinkler

PRIOR TO OCTOBER 15, 2021



About Robyn

Robyn has been a nationally certified signed language interpreter for over thirty years with particular service in the field of healthcare. Her scholarship in decision-making and ethics in community interpreting is recognized internationally. Robyn has over twenty publications, all of which focus on the theoretical and pedagogical frameworks used to advance the practice of community interpreters. She is currently an Assistant Professor at the Rochester Institute of Technology, where she is the lead instructor on the institute's postgraduate degree in healthcare interpretation. Robyn also teaches on a postgraduate degree designed for signed language interpreters in Europe.

DC-S PHILOSOPHY: INTERPRETING IS A PRACTICE PROFESSION

Robyn, in her work with Bob Pollard, has advanced the idea that community interpreting (such as in medical, mental health, and educational settings) is best understood as a practice profession. A practice profession is a type of service-based profession where practitioners (for example, nurses, teachers, and therapists) must address and deal effectively with the complexities of the human condition, human communication, and human interaction. One aspect of a practice profession is its use of a values-based approach to ethical reasoning. Rules-based ethics or a one-size-fits-all approach is not effective in light of the numerous, often unpredictable variables that influence decision-making. Community interpreters, like all practice professionals, need to be guided in their ethical decision-making through a series of values, not a list of rules.

Workshop participants will leave with a comprehensive list of values as well as a process for developing the skills needed to apply them in their practice.



Panhandle Happenings

Susan Whitaker, Advocacy Specialist - Scottsbluff



The panhandle has had some great awareness events and booth opportunities. This is vital to spreading the word about NCDHH services. The Scottsbluff area holds a big event for National Night Out in August. We participated in this night by setting up a booth. Along with the usual booth set-up we provided a carnival game for the kiddos to play. This brought a large number of families to our booth where we were able to share our services.

On September 11, 2021 we had our annual Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at the Riverside Discovery Center in Scottsbluff. We had a beautiful day as the weather was warm with little to no wind! There is a long path leading into the zoo where I put signs with facts on hearing loss as well as the services NCDHH provides. This is a good opportunity to educate the public as they come in. Guests are handed a scavenger hunt as they enter. When they complete the hunt they bring it to the NCDHH booth for a small gift. As guests look at each exhibit they will see a sign with the ASL word for that animal helping them learn the sign for the animal. We also had a member of our Deaf community sign a children's book which was interpreted by one of our local interpreters. There were 393 people in attendance including several of our panhandle Deaf community families.



Susan Whitaker with Scottsbluff area interpreter, Dawn Westbrook

Our final event of the year was the comedy performance of Keith Wann, "Watching Two Worlds Collide". We are very excited to have Keith come to Scottsbluff. This event raises awareness in our community to Deaf culture and what it's like living life as a CODA (child of deaf adult). Keith combines side splitting physical humor, with heartfelt real life stories from his childhood as a hearing child with Deaf parents. This has been a great year of fun, successful events. I look forward to having more opportunities to share with our communities the great things NCDHH is doing for our Deaf, Deaf/Blind and Hard of Hearing population in the coming year.



Susan Whitaker with Keith Wann



Sharon Sinkler, Keith Wann, and Board Chair, Candice Arteaga

Special Education vs. Accessible Education

Jessica Larrison, Education Advocate



As parents of a child with a disability, we often just say to people “our child has special needs,” sometimes we might get into specifics and other times we don’t, but we don’t think of it as a negative meaning. The disability community has come out and mentioned how they have always hated this term and the reasoning why. One of those many reasons is in an education setting we call the teachers and classroom SPED in short for Special Education.

The word SPED has now been turned into a word that children and adults use to mock people and insult them. We often hear “stop acting like a SPED” or “wow you need to go to SPED” and their giggles and taunts have become hurtful to the disabled community who do need a Special Education teacher or who needs to go to the Special Education classroom for services.

The other reason parents have grown to dislike the word may be the misconception of a special education child receives greater benefits than other students. Parents have made comments such as, “I wish my child could get that” or “must be nice to have all the extra support sure wish all of the children could have that.” It would be great if every child who is struggling receives accommodations and services to help. However, the truth is, students receiving special education accommodations do not benefit more than any other student does. Instead, it provides them equal access *that their peers do without accommodations*.

A majority of the disability community has talked about the term SPED and how they dislike that term. The main reason behind this is that there is nothing “special” but it does allow them access. So how about we change out this terminology. Instead of Special Education teacher, why don’t we call them accessible teachers? This shows that they have to modify and adapt to ensure your child has access to their education and can also help bridge the gap where there should be access but currently isn’t.

If we remove the negative meaning, it doesn’t change what is happening inside that classroom or the teachers qualifications but it does use more acceptable terms and really describes what is happening in that room. The children are getting an accessible education, the teachers are providing accessible help to general education teachers, the service providers go to the accessible classroom in order to provide a services which in returns helps students gain access and independence in their school environment and so much more. These are the hard conversations that need to be held and need to have the whole community come together and express their feelings.

If you or a family you know would like assistance or support for a child with special education accommodations, don’t hesitate to contact me at jessica.larrison@nebraska.gov

Omaha Children’s Museum Seeking ASL Volunteers!

The Omaha Children’s Museum is doing an ASL translation video for their new upcoming exhibit, “Santa’s Magic” near the end of November or beginning of December. The production needs three or four volunteers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and fluent in American Sign Language (ASL). Characters to be played are: Santa, Elf, Snow Queen, and Rudolph the Red-Nose Reindeer.

If you are interested for this fun and festive opportunity, or if you have any questions please contact Omaha Advocacy Specialist Ashley Wulf at ashley.wulf@nebraska.gov.

A VLOG in ASL regarding this information can be found [here](#).



Communication Access in State and Local Courts

Cody McEvoy, Behavioral Health Coordinator



The ADA requires state and local courts to ensure effective communication based on Part A of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).³ 42 U.S.C. §§ 12131-12134. The U.S. Department of Justice has issued regulations to enforce the ADA. 28 C.F.R. Part 35, 56 Fed. Reg. 35694 (July 26, 1991) (U.S. Department of Justice Final Rule: Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in State and Local Government Services).

Despite that, often times in the court system there are frustrations among the community regarding effective communication. And what is more frustrating, it is usually after we notify them of our accommodation request. The face masks do not help as well, if a Deaf/hard of hearing individual enter the court room and await their name, but everyone is wearing a mask, it becomes difficult to know what is going on, particularly when court matters can already be stressful! Some ways to advocate for yourself is to talk to someone inside the court room using paper/pen, phone, or some way of communication to inform them that you have requested an interpreter and that it appears the court did not provide one. If you are not provided or denied effective communication by a court, there are a number of administrative legal remedies available. Generally the ADA, could be one of those options and compliant with the U.S Department of Justice (filed within 180 days) and several other agencies.

Some types of effective communication can include but not limited to: Sign Language Interpreters, Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), Assistive Listening Devices. If you have questions or concerns regarding obtaining full access in courts, please contact me at cody.mcevoy@nebraska.gov or you may visit [Nebraska Supreme Court](https://www.nebraska.gov/courts) for accommodation requests.

Omaha Eppley Airfield Updates

Ashley Wulf, Advocacy Specialist - Omaha



Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) wrote a letter to Omaha Eppley Airfield in March with a request to improve their communication access for travelers who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Through continued advocacy, the airport will improve their communication access at with installing Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) Services and will also have VRI portable tablets for staff to use.

The airport will also be adding 17 voice-to-message monitors in gate areas along with an information display system. There are development plans for an app with gate information onto your phone. While these improvements are promising, I still encourage travelers who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing to provide input to the airport if you or someone you know is experiencing access issues.

A quote I find fitting here is: **“People working together in a strong community with a shared goal and a common purpose can make the impossible possible” by Tom Vilsack.** It takes the whole community to help each other to help improve communication access at the airport. If you have any questions or concern about this please feel free to contact me ashley.wulf@nebraska.gov



Ashley Wulf with Eppley Airfield representatives: Stan Kathol, Steve McCoy & Jeff Harding

Husker Harvest Days

Aaron Rothenberger, Advocacy Specialist – Kearney



The time has come again for Husker Harvest Days. It's a big farm show in the middle of a cornfield between Wood River and Cairo, Nebraska. There are estimated to be about 50,000 visitors that come from all over the world. Everything farm-related you can think of is probably sitting somewhere out there. From tractors to combines to cows and pivots, there is so much to learn about and see.

As Kearney Advocacy Specialist, I cover 16 counties across the Tri-Cities (Kearney, Hastings, Grand Island) which is an estimated population of about 120,000 people. But the most important part of Husker Harvest Days for me is the farmers. Be it by advice, equipment, or protection, we try to make sure they can do their job a little easier. And there are a lot of farmers that roll through Husker Harvest Days.

This year, like most years, I got to chat with several farmers about the phenomenon of left ear deafness. A lot of older farmers had more hearing loss in one ear compared to the other. This was often the left ear. At first, it can seem confusing why one side would be worse than the other. But, the reason for this is that the engine noise on old tractors was thunderous, and the farmers would turn to look behind their right shoulder while they were running the tractors. This caused their left ears to get most of the damage while their right ear was slightly protected.



Aaron with Governor Pete Ricketts



I was also able to chat a little with the FFA kids that frequent the event. The Future Farmers of America. It is exciting seeing some of the faces who will be working farms in the next few decades. It is also encouraging that a lot of them take hearing protection seriously. When I was a kid, hearing protection was very far down my list of to-dos. I appreciate how much they seem to understand that you only get one set of ears.

Finally, I got to meet a lot of health personal over the three days of the event. We are a small part of an extensive system. It is always nice to see the different other levels of health care and prevention. It is a reminder of why we are there as well, to help people.

Even though the event gets pretty hot and very dusty, I do really enjoy the experience of being around so many different walks of life. And I am pleased to provide those people with a bit of help here and there whenever I can. This year, Husker Harvest Days turned out great, and I hope next year leads to much of the same.

If you missed our booth and have questions, please contact me at aaron.rothenberger@nebraska.gov.

Sound Simulators

Kim Davis, Advocacy Specialist – Lincoln



In September we celebrated Deaf Awareness Month. With the various purposes of Deaf Awareness Month, the topic of this article brings the opportunity to enhance awareness of how sounds may be experienced by individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Currently, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates there are over 430 million individuals worldwide who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Listed below are some options of many videos and sound recordings available on the Internet that provide examples of how sounds and conversations may be experienced by those who have mild, severe or profound hearing challenges. If any of the links below do not work on Internet Explorer, please try using a different browser.

The Minnesota Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division created several examples of the **“Vision and Hearing Loss Simulator.”** There are three functions to explore: the type of setting, the type of hearing loss, and the type of vision loss. This educational video also demonstrates how individuals who can hear but have low vision or are partly blind may experience sight. Experimenting with both hearing and vision loss may simulate what some individuals who are DeafBlind may experience.

<https://pathlore.dhs.mn.gov/Courseware/DisabilityServices/HRDHHS18/simulator/index.html#/>

Science Friday created an example of **“What Do Cochlear Implants and Hearing Aids Sound Like?”**

Examples of these two simulators serve to clarify the misconception that the use of sound amplifiers, hearing aids or cochlear implants worn by individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing enable them to hear the same way as those who have normal hearing.

<https://www.sciencefriday.com/educational-resources/cochlear-implants-hearing-aids-sound-like/>

Little Moving Pictures produced a video on **“Can You Read My Lips?”** This video provides excellent examples of what lipreading may be like for many individuals who may not benefit from hearing the clarity of speech with or without the use of sound amplifiers, hearing aids or cochlear implants.

<https://littlemovingpictures.com/index.html#can-you-read-my-lips>

Please note that these sound simulators do not necessarily represent how all individuals who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing may hear or understand sounds and conversations with or without sound amplifiers, hearing aids or cochlear implants. It is encouraged that you ask the individual directly how they experience sounds, understand spoken words, or see persons, objects or texts. Also, be cognizant of environmental sounds that may affect the individual when interacting with them.

As Helen Keller quoted, **“Blindness separates us from things; deafness separates us from people.”** This may have been true long before Helen could experience the various communication and technology accommodations that we have today. The only barrier that would make this quote ring true is people’s attitudes. Attitude is one of the critical factors that determines if you are willing to interact with an individual who is deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing or separate yourself by being unwilling to take the time to use any effective modes of communication or technology. Our agency is happy to educate or inspire interested individuals to the world of visual or tactile “sounds” when audible sounds may pose challenges in both public and private settings, as well as home life.

For any questions or comments, please reach out to me at kim.davis@nebraska.gov.

Disasters in Nebraska! Are you Prepared?

Kathy Scusa, Advocacy Specialist – North Platte



Nebraska may not have hurricanes, and tsunamis, but we do live in a land of extreme weather. Just about every other natural disaster can happen in Nebraska. We have wild/grassfires, drought, extreme sustained cold, blizzards, ice storms, excessive heat, high wind, thunderstorms & lightning strikes, tornadoes and floods. Nebraska even has earthquakes!

Nebraska's most recent earthquake was on June 4, 2021 near Butte, NE and was magnitude 3.7. With all the potential disasters in Nebraska, planning ahead and being prepared is your key to survival. An emergency can happen anywhere and anytime. You can usually expect some help from emergency responders, but you should be prepared for that help to not come right away.

Planning for a disaster takes a significant amount of time. That's why it is essential that you do it now and not at the moment that you are in the middle of an emergency situation. Information and communication are very important when planning for a disaster. I'm not going to go into a lot of details, there are lots of websites that you can visit for preparedness planning. Some of those will be listed at the end of my article.

Some things you can do to prepare ahead:

- Get Informed: Learn about all of your potential disasters and make a plan for how you would respond to each type.
- Make an evacuation plan.
- Have a meeting place identified for all members of the family to get back together.
- Know the location of your local emergency shelter. (Contact local first responders)
- Do an assessment for each person in your household:
 - What are your personal abilities and limitations?
 - Document Medical History & Medications needed.
 - Do you have transportation or need accommodations?
- Plan for you Pets and Service Animals:
 - Transportation.
 - Kennel/Bedding.
 - Harness/Leash/Collar.
 - Food/Water.
 - Temporary housing/shelter for them.
- Create Emergency Kits:
 - Carry-with-You Kit: Small items for every day emergency use.
 - Grab & Go Bag for evacuating: Daily items that you will need in addition to what is in your car kit.
 - Bedside Kit: Necessities for if you are trapped in your bedroom and can't get outside.
 - Shelter at Home Kit: The largest kit needed if you are ordered to shelter in place, or trapped for an extended time.
 - Car Kit: Large supply that can sustain your family for at least three days.

Creating effective kits takes time, planning and significant investment. A disaster supplies kit is a collection of basic items your household may need in the event of an emergency. The largest kits contain a large amount of items and will take planning to accumulate everything needed. Of course it's up to you to decide what you want in your kits.

Disasters in Nebraska! Are you Prepared? *continued*

Kathy Scusa, Advocacy Specialist – North Platte

There are numerous websites and pamphlets that can help with lists of what to place in each type of kit. After an emergency, you may be in a situation where you need to survive on your own for several days. Being prepared means having your own food, water and other supplies. Make sure to stock your largest emergency kits with the items on the checklist below. Once you take a look at the basic items, now consider what unique needs your family might have, such as supplies for pets, seniors, babies or disabilities.

Basic Items for the largest kits:

- Water (one gallon per person/animal per day for several days, for drinking and sanitation)
- Food (at least a three-day supply per person/animal of non-perishable food)
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert
- Flashlight
- First aid kit
- Extra batteries
- Whistle (to signal for help)
- Dust mask (to help filter contaminated air)
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape (to shelter in place)
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties (for personal sanitation)
- Tools, wrench, pliers, hatchet (turn off utilities or help with rescue)
- Manual can opener
- Local maps
- Cell phone with chargers and a backup battery
- Masks for everyone ages 2 and above, soap, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
- Prescription medications
- Non-prescription medications (pain relievers, anti-diarrhea medication, antacids, laxatives)
- Prescription eye glasses and contact lens solution
- Infant formula, bottles, diapers, wipes and diaper rash cream
- Cash or traveler's checks
- Copies of important family documents (insurance policies, identification, bank account)
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person
- Complete change of clothing appropriate for the climate and time of year
- Sturdy shoes, hiking boots or waterproof boots for each person
- Fire extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container (or fire starter tool)
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates, paper towels and plastic utensils
- Water purification kit
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children

Once you have assembled your kit, everything should be kept in tightly closed plastic or metal containers. Store it in a cool, dry place. Make sure all family members know where it is kept. Replace expired items as needed. Examine your kits yearly and update as your family needs change. "Hope for the best, prepare for the worst." Being prepared for a worst-case scenario will give you peace of mind. Don't put it off. Please contact me, or you can visit with your area NCDHH Advocacy Specialist. We will be happy to help you prepare for any disaster. If you would like to discuss my article, 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.

Communicating with First Responders during Natural Disasters

Jeremy Daffern, Advocacy Specialist – Omaha



Nearly 36 million people in America have hearing loss. That's one out of ten people who could seriously be left alone, unaware and vulnerable in dangerous situations (1). As Robert Jacaruso, a survivor of World Trade Center 1, explained his experience when his workplace was attacked, *"Everyone dropped everything and ran into a stampede toward the escape doorway. They dropped papers, everything and ran toward the stairs, except me (1)."* The co-worker saw him and told him to get out. If he didn't see him, Robert wouldn't survive it.

Unexpected emergencies can happen any time across Nebraska in many different forms: tornadoes, floods, fires, and other natural and manmade disasters. In emergencies, up-to-date information is life-saving. But too often, this information is not always being accessible to deaf and hard of hearing people. Lack of knowledge of whereabouts and locations of deaf and hard of hearing people from police or emergency services can occur in injuries or sometimes death.

There are several ways to avoid this to happen:

- Inform the first responders where you and your family live and tell them that you are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing. Provide them your phone numbers and addresses so they can contact you or check on you to ensure all of you are okay.
- Establish a person or persons who are willing to volunteer and do the work to contact all deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing people to ensure that they are okay.
- Establish a town hall meeting with emergency responders and American Red Cross on how to establish a place for all deaf and hard of hearing community members to meet in one place.
- Prepare your emergency kits and put it somewhere easy to reach when disasters occur. Make one for your residence and one for your vehicle. Including medications and information about allergies and health issues, ie: diabetes.

After the disaster strikes, everything always is in chaos. It is best to be calm and try to be safe as much as you can until you get help from the first responders. Always inform the first responders that you are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing, that way they can provide you accurate services.

For more resources or information you can find on emergency preparedness:

<https://www.nad.org/resources/emergency-preparedness/>

<https://www.redcross.org/sound-the-alarm.html>

<http://2tdzpf2t7hxmggqh3njno1y-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/WFD-and-WASLI-Communication-during-natural-disasters-and-other-mass-emergencies-for-deaf-people-who-use-signed-language-Jan-2015-FINAL-1.pdf> (this document was focused on international situations, but it can be applied in Nebraska).

For more information or help on how you can be fully prepared for all natural disasters or emergencies and communicating with first responders, please reach out to me at jeremy.daffern@nebraska.gov.

NCDHH

Nebraska Commission
for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



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