

THE COMMUNICATOR



FULL BOARD VACANCIES

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) Full Board has two opportunities to serve: a deaf and hard of hearing representative.

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 Commission conducts quarterly meetings, generally with the meeting occurring on a Friday. In addition, the Commission members may serve on a subcommittee, which generally meets during the board meeting or possibly an additional four times a year. Members will be reimbursed for their travel expenses. Appointments are selected by the Nebraska Governor.

Anyone interested in becoming a Full Commission Member needs to submit an application to the Governor's Board and Commission Office, attention Pat Selk, PO Box 94848, Lincoln, NE 68509-4848. Contact Ms. Selk at (402) 471-2256 (voice) or apply online at:
<https://governor.nebraska.gov/board-comm-req>



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Executive Director Recap!



It has been more than six months since I started my position as Executive Director at the Commission. There have been opportunities for collaboration, networking, and supporting the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities. Our agency team, from Advocacy Services to Communications and Outreach to Behavior Health and Education, and Interpreter Coordinator have been working hard to educate and inform.

Our agency works to stay connected with each other around the state of Nebraska through monthly staff meetings. One big goal our team is continuing to work on is brainstorming strategies on how we can serve rural parts of the state, in areas such as communication access and education.

The next legislative session is around the corner! Our team is working with the community and our Full Board on what legislation and efforts we can make to continue our mission – Access for All. Our Full Board has their next upcoming public meeting in Lincoln in December! If you have any questions, comments, or ideas for me, please do not hesitate to reach out at arlene.gunderson@nebraska.gov or (VP) 402-261-2670. Have a wonderful remaining of the 2023 year!

OUR TEAM

 Arlene Garcia Gunderson Executive Director	 Kim Davis Lead Advocacy Specialist	 Sharon Sinkler Interpreter Program Coordinator	 Kelsey Cruz Marketing & Communications Specialist					
 Vacant Behavioral Health Coordinator	 Ashley Wulf Advocacy Specialist Omaha	 Jeremy Daffern Advocacy Specialist Omaha	 Aaron Rothenberger Advocacy Specialist Kearney	 Kathy Scusa Advocacy Specialist North Platte	 Susan Whitaker Advocacy Specialist Scottsbluff	 Cindy Woldt Administrative Assistant	 Jackie Novak Business Manager	 Gina Petersen Administrative Assistant

Importance of Ethical Practices and Professional Behavior in the Interpreting Field

*Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator / Staff Interpreter
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Unfortunately, a common theme that has been discussed at national conferences that I have attended this year are the lack of ethics within the interpreting field and a perceived increase in unethical behavior by interpreters. As professionals in a trust profession, what we say and do within any interpreter-related activity or discussion can have a tremendous and far-reaching impact on our consumers, especially those who are members of marginalized and oppressed communities. Consumers deserve professionalism, accountability, and integrity in all aspects from sign language interpreters.

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) has a legal and ethical obligation to ensure the integrity of RID certification, foster accountability and integrity among professional practitioners and ultimately protect our consumers. RID worked with a legal consultant who is a leader in the field of grievance systems and with a group of Subject Matter Experts (SME) and leading thinkers, practitioners, and educators within our field to review and make recommendations to revisit the scope of and enhance the efficiency of our Ethical Practices System (EPS) in accordance with the needs of our consumers and members. RID is obligated to protect our members and consumers, and the changes made to the EPS will achieve this goal. Additionally, these changes were made to align with RID's goal of applying for accreditation by the National Commission of Certifying Agencies. The new policies became effective during the recent membership renewal period in June of 2023.

The goals for the reform include the following:

- Protect consumers of interpreting services – ASL interpreting is a “trust” profession, thus we are held to high standards of ethical and professional behaviors.
- Protect the integrity of the profession – RID is expected to develop and uphold high ethical and professional standards for their members and holders of their certification.
- Build trust within our profession – Having a robust grievance system that holds our members and certificants accountable demonstrates RID's commitment to their certification's integrity and protects the public, thereby rebuilding trust between members and consumers.
- Provide guidance to members and holders of RID certification – Revised EPS, along with RID's Code of Professional Conduct (CPC), can provide guidance to members who may be unsure how to navigate certain situations. Members can make more informed decisions about their behavior(s) since expectations and consequences for professional misconduct are established.
- Align RID with industry best practices and standards – RID's goal is to align our practices with the needs of consumers and with industry “best practices.”
- Uphold the organization's mission – The EPS policy and the CPC work hand in hand to support the organization's mission and values by promoting and upholding high standards of integrity and accountability in our field.

Importance of Ethical Practices and Professional Behavior in the Interpreting Field

continued

According to the RID's website, "RID certificants and members working toward RID certification will be expected to continuously comply with and uphold appropriate standards of professionalism while demonstrating integrity and accountability in all interpreting settings and interpreting-related activities. While the RID-NAD's Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) outlines the baseline of professional standards for all certificants and members, the EPS is a crucial additional layer of protection that holds RID certificants and members accountable to the CPC." The revised ethical practices now also includes ANY professional-related activities related to applying for membership, testing and certification, maintaining certification, and also includes CASLI testing candidates.

To promote accountability within our profession, the policy also states that those who witness or are aware of harm being caused – not just those who experience the harm – may file a grievance. The revised policy helps protect the overall profession's reputation by holding "bad actors" (members who engage in inappropriate or unethical behaviors) accountable for the harm they cause. RID may impose disciplinary sanctions on any individual who violates the EPS. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to:

- the assignment of remedial education,
- non-public or public reprimand and warning,
- suspension and/or revocation of RID membership or eligibility for RID membership,
- suspension and/or revocation of certification or eligibility for RID certification,
- temporary or permanent ineligibility to take CASLI examinations, or
- other disciplinary action as determined at the discretion of RID.

Disciplinary actions may be reported to any state licensing authority, the federal government, the certificant's employer, and other interested parties, including individuals seeking information about the certificant's credentials, in accordance with procedures outlined in the EPS policy.

For full details about the revised EPS, please visit RID's website: [RID](#)

(Ethics and RID's Ethical Practices System, 2023)



Optimizing Your Hearing Aid or Cochlear Implant Programming Appointment

From 2023 HLAA Convention - Michelle Hu, Au.D.

Susan Whitaker, Advocacy Specialist - Scottsbluff

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I attended the 2023 HLAA Convention in New Orleans June 29-July 1. I wanted to share with you the highlights of one of the workshops, how to make the most of your next audiology appointment. The speaker was Michelle Hu who is a person with a hearing loss and an Audiologist. She is looking at this topic from both sides. Here are some of her suggestions to making your next visit the best it can be.

Her first point was that people with hearing loss experience similar frustrations like finding a clinic and Audiologist that you like and you feel listens to you. Some have frustrations with their devices. Most everyone also experiences frustrations with listening situations like group conversations. She went on to talk about the things that cannot be changed such as: Most Audiologists are hearing; The range of technology options; The nature and degree of hearing loss; Environmental noise.

Now there are things that can be changed. These include: Who you choose to work with (meaning which audiologist); Choose to work together as a team; Not playing the comparison game (self vs. others); And your mindset

Dr. Hu gave some great tips to optimize your device programming appointments.

1. Write your concerns or problems down. When you experience an issue write it down at that time.
2. Write down what sounds are good and why. Note what IS working / what situations you hear BEST in.
3. Answer these questions: Does the sound physically hurt? Can you recreate it? Is it only in certain situations? Is it only in certain voices? Does it bother you with and without the device on?
4. Be open – it might just take time for your brain to adjust. You may need to try a new program. Understand that chasing “how it used to sound before” can sometimes be a slippery slope.
5. Take a sound break. Turn off your device for a few hours if possible and put the device back on. Does that sound still bother you?
6. Be as descriptive as possible. Tell the Audiologist, it sounds like: Robotic; Screechy; Like I’m in a box; Too much background noise; Muffled; Empty; Echo-y.

These are just some ideas given by this speaker to help you have a better experience and more success with each audiology appointment. I hope these ideas work for you.

Youth and Family Advocacy Services

Ashley Wulf, Youth and Family Advocacy Specialist - Statewide
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I have been serving in my role at NCDHH as an Advocacy Specialist for the Omaha area for over three years and have recently moved my focus in advocacy toward youth and family services. My new title is a Youth and Family Advocacy Specialist. My focus is now providing programs and support throughout the entire state of Nebraska, working with deaf, deaf-blind, deaf-disabled, and hard of hearing youth under 19 years old and their families.

I will be collaborating and partnering with stakeholders that work with youth and families, as well as providing ongoing support and guidance to youth communities and individuals. For example, providing training or presentations on self-advocacy, leadership development, and more. Providing guidance, coaching programs for the youth individual, and providing youth opportunities are one of many different areas to advocate in.

I will be working with early intervention and transition programs, collaborating with organizations such as Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI), Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation, and Nebraska Regional Programs for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or interest in collaborating with me.

NCDHH Media Center Materials Available for Purchase!

NCDHH will no longer be offering our media center out of our Lincoln location. This difficult decision was made primarily due to the evolving world of technology and resources available online, and little use of the media center.

There is an opportunity to purchase any of our items at a minimal cost, located at: <https://www.govdeals.com/nesurplus/filters?category=203&categoryName=Books,%20Music,%20and%20Video>



Media center items are separated into various categories such as: Children's, Cochlear Implant, Coping with Hearing Loss, Deaf Blind, Deaf Culture, Deaf History, Education, Games, Interpreting, Legal, Lip Reading, Mental Health, Parent Resources, Professional Resources, Public Awareness, Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Test Prep, Sign Language, and Teaching Material.

Any additional questions, please contact Cindy Woldt at cindy.woldt@nebraska.gov.



Interview with Hayley Jelinek

Aaron Rothenberger, Advocacy Specialist - Kearney

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For our fall newsletter I had the pleasure of interviewing Hayley Jelinek of the Two Rivers Health Department.

Please talk a little about yourself and your position: My name is Hayley Jelinek and I am a Health Educator at Two Rivers Public Health Department (TRPHD) for about 3 years. I do health education at events held around the

district regarding mental health, substance misuse, Narcan, minority health, immunizations, sexually transmitted infections and a number of other health care topics.

How does the health dept. work with groups of people with disabilities?

TRPHD provides immunizations to those with and without disabilities. We set up pop up clinics at different places that house and work with those with disabilities. It is TRPHDs goal to work with all people in the district and foster a sense of belonging and inclusion.

Do you have some personal experience with hearing loss? My husband currently experiences hearing loss and wears hearing aids. Without hearing aids, it is really hard for him to hear anything and I am thankful that he has them.



HAYLEY JELINEK

What is a good reason for deaf or hard of hearing people to be familiar with their health department?

It is important for community members whether they are deaf or have hearing loss to be familiar with their local Health Departments to keep up on vaccination news and to be informed about the spread of disease and how to reduce the risk of contracting it.



Work is for EVERYONE, Including People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing!

Jeremy Daffern, Advocacy Specialist - Omaha

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Perhaps when you were in high school, you thought about what you wanted to do when you finished school. Maybe it was college or trade school. Maybe you were eager to move out on your own. Graduation day arrives and you may be overcome by a flurry of emotions. Then, you suddenly realize, you are responsible for yourself. How are you going to survive? Perhaps you considered it may be challenging to obtain employment, concerned about the impact of working on your Social Security benefits? You suddenly realize that you need money to survive on your own, without your parents involved. You pondered what are the benefits of having a job of your dreams?

There is good news. Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation is a state agency that offers prevocational preparation and training, assists with accommodations and college/trade school depending on your unique abilities and goals. Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation has Deaf, ASL fluent counselors to assist you with your future career goals.

Work is for EVERYONE, Including People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing!

continued

If you have other disabilities you may qualify for Medicaid waiver services through the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to assist with your goals, including ongoing supported independent living to maintain your personal needs, attend a day program to participate in positive activities and/or obtain job shadowing to assist you to maintain employment.

Some of us may only work to earn an income. However, there are some ways we can enjoy working! Some benefits may include according to several sources:



Out of the house

Exposure to fresh air

Get more vitamin D from the sunshine

Learning and gaining knowledge of a skill set

Potentially work in your desirable field

Gain skills from the company's training programs

Some employers offer training to increase skills, provide advancement in your career

Use your college degree to get that dream job!

Building your self-confidence

Increase your communication skills and work duties to boost self esteem

Increase healthy boundaries and interpersonal skills

Friends

Gain more friends who share similar interests

Build a network, increase support system

Can do the fun things you wanted to do

Can save up for traveling, sports, desired items

Build up savings for a rainy day, for example: car trouble, medical expenses

Build up your retirement and receive health benefits from your employer

Invest yourself within the community and the world for them to recognize you

Get yourself involved in community activities, for example, Park clean up with your city where your employer provides support with.

Privacy and not depending on government benefits

Some of you do not like to give out personal information about yourselves, desire to keep it private

Some of you may be able to keep their Social Security benefits depending on what type of benefits you are getting

The benefits of working are endless. There are many benefits of working for your health and mental well-being too. Live longer. Be healthier. Having a steady stream of funds not only to survive but if you have some extra money, may consider saving for a rainy day or a fun activity.



Hunting and Your Hearing: Are You Doing Enough?

Kathy Scusa, Advocacy Specialist - North Platte
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It's that time of year again! Everyone knows that gunshots are loud, and that shooting without hearing protection can cause tinnitus and noise-induced hearing loss. What many don't know is that exposure to even a single unsuppressed gunshot can, and often does, lead to permanent hearing damage.

Studies show that **between 70 and 80% of hunters never wear earplugs or earmuffs**. In fact, for every five years of hunting, hunters become seven percent more likely to experience high frequency hearing loss. WOW!! Shooting without hearing protection practically guarantees you will suffer at least some degree of hearing loss in your lifetime. A .22-caliber rifle produces a noise level of 140 decibels, and a typical deer rifle can produce noise greater than 175 decibels. At this level, a single shot near unprotected ears can induce permanent hearing damage.

Most hunters choose not to wear hearing protection in the field because they want to hear their surroundings. The most common complaints about hearing protection devices are that they don't allow hunters to hear game, and the devices are uncomfortable.

Hunters are safest when they remain aware of their surroundings. The ability to hear approaching game can serve as the determining factor in a successful hunt. More importantly, being able to detect and localize the sound of livestock, pets, and nearby humans, especially when outside the hunters line of sight, can mean the difference between a safe and unsafe experience.

Traditional hearing protection devices (HPDs) like passive earplugs and earmuffs tremendously hinder the users ability to hear their surroundings and localize sounds. Electronic HPDs can help users detect sounds, but are limited in their ability to accurately localize noise sources. Electronic HPD options can make softer sounds louder, but shut off when there is a loud noise, like gunfire. Electronic HPD earmuffs, instant fit and custom in-ear versions allow hunters to talk and hear animals without removing the devices. An audiologist can test your hearing and help you find higher-quality options that may not be available from retail stores. The distinction may seem small, but, detecting a sound and knowing where it came from are two very different things.

From a hearing conservation standpoint, the most comprehensive way to protect hearing is to use suppressors in conjunction with conventional hearing protection. Be sure to check legal requirements for purchasing, owning and utilizing suppressors. When it comes to protecting your hearing, there is no complete solution. **Gunshots are simply too loud.** On average, suppressors provide similar levels of noise attenuation to traditional HPDs. When using a suppressor in the field, hunters can maintain open-ear conditions and reduce their exposure to dangerous sound levels. This allows hunters to retain full situational awareness while mitigating their hearing damage risk.

Hunting and Your Hearing: Are You Doing Enough?

continued

Suppressors are the only tool that allow hunters to maintain full auditory situational awareness while simultaneously attenuating dangerous sound levels at the source for everyone in the vicinity. The result is a safer hunting experience for hunters, partners, guides and even dogs.

Once you select a hearing protection option: Practice wearing your new hearing protection, just as you practice your aim. Make it part of your routine. A good time to start is during target practice or sighting. Always have disposable hearing protection like foam earplugs handy. Consider double-protecting your ears by wearing muffs over plugs. Utilize suppressors on your weapons, and avoid shooting in locations where noise reverberates in the space.

HPDs range in price from \$10 to more than \$1,000. But just as you invest in clothing, equipment, ammunition and firearms, consider the cost of high-quality hearing protection as part of your sport.

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.

https://www.hunter-ed.com/national/studyGuide/Protecting-Your-Vision-and-Hearing/201099_92910/#:~:text=To%20protect%20your%20hearing%2C%20always,block%20damaging%20levels%20of%20sound.

<https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/hunting-be-sure-to-protect-your-hearing>

<https://proears.com/hunting-with-hearing-protection/>

<https://www.silencercentral.com/blog/hunting-hearing-protection/>

<https://newsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/discussion/protect-your-hearing-while-hunting/>

<https://americansuppressorassociation.com/education/safer-hunting/>

<https://gunrightsattorneys.com/suppressors-nebraska/>



Holiday Gift Ideas

Kim Davis, Lead Advocacy Specialist - Lincoln

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The holidays are around the corner! If you have a family member or dear friend who has challenges with hearing, here are some technologies that may make great gift ideas.

Personal Assistive Listening Devices

Is the television playing too loud and disturbing others? A TV Listening System is something to consider that will assist with turning the television's volume down.

Does the person have challenges hearing a person speaking in a noisy room? A Personal Assistive Listening Device is great for one-on-one or small group conversations. This may also help block background noises and gear towards hearing the conversation more clearly. Special Note: NCDHH has several of Personal Assistive Listening Devices in our 90-day Equipment Loan Program. This is an alternative option to see if this type of device is of worthy purchase by testing it out first.

Specialized Telephones

Trouble hearing or understanding on a standard telephone? The Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program (NSTEP) is available for deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind and speech impaired Nebraskans who have challenges using a standard telephone. To name some of the popular specialized telecommunication devices this program covers are, as follows: audio-amplified telephones, voice-amplified telephones, captioned telephones, teletypewriter telephones (TTYs), wireless cellular or smartphones (through Verizon, T-Mobile, US Cellular or Vieraero); as well as audio/visual/tactile telephone signaler devices that lets you know when the phone is ringing. NSTEP is free for applicants who meet the criteria and it is not income based. Once approved, applicants receive a voucher to obtain their specialized telephone and/or signaler. Additional information and application can be found on [NCDHH's website](#).

Signaler Systems

Not answering the door? A doorbell transmitter sends a signal to a receiver to notify the family member or friend that someone is at the door.

Concerns about doors or windows being accessed, a Door/Window Access Transmitter sends a signal to compatible transmitter and receiver when a door or window is opened.

Can't hear the baby crying? A baby cry sound signalers or transmitters sends a signal to compatible transmitter and receiver when the baby makes noises or cries.

Emergency Signaler Systems

Can't hear the fire alarm signaler? For Omaha, Millard and Elkhorn residents, apply through the [Omaha Fire Department's website](#). And for Lincoln residents, apply through the [Lincoln Fire & Rescue's website](#). For those who live in regions outside of the Lincoln and Omaha metropolitan region, you may wish to apply through the [American Red Cross](#) and they will connect your family member or friend with our Nebraska regional representative. It will need to be made clear that a special visual/tactile fire alarm detector is needed when the rep contacts your family member or friend.

Holiday Gift Ideas

continued

Concern about severe weather warnings? The NOAA Weather Alert Radio broadcasts warnings with a short text message on the display. Compatible external devices, such as visual or tactile components, transmitters or receivers, may be helpful if one cannot hear the radio sounding the alert. Additional information concerning coverage areas may be found on the [National Weather Services'](#) website.

Available Places to Shop

Below are some available vendors on the market that sell various products for individuals who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing. There may be additional vendors available and one may wish to explore through a search engine via the internet.

- [ADCO Hearing Products](#)
- [Diglo](#)
- [Hear More](#)
- [HITEC Group International Inc.](#)
- [HumanWare](#)
- [LS&S Products](#)
- [MaxiAids](#)
- [Silent Call Communications](#)
- [Sonic Technology Products](#)
- [Teltex Inc](#)
- [Weitbrecht Communications](#)



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