

THE COMMUNICATOR

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



COVID-19 EDITION



**STAY HOME
STAY HEALTHY
STAY CONNECTED**

Inside this edition of the Communicator, our NCDHH team will be taking you through information and resources and what we, as an agency, are doing to help keep our community and state connected during this COVID-19 period.

As a reminder, Governor Pete Ricketts hosts daily press briefings with new and current information on COVID-19. These are available with a sign language interpreter and can be viewed on TV or Nebraska Educational Television (NET).

STAY HOME

KEEP NEBRASKA HEALTHY

Six Rules to Keep Nebraska Healthy

- 1 Stay home.** No non-essential errands and no social gatherings. Respect the ten-person limit.
- 2** Socially distance your **work**. Work from home or use the six-foot rule as much as possible in the workplace.
- 3 Shop alone** and only shop once a week. Do not take family with you.
- 4** Help **kids** follow social distancing. Play at home. No group sports and no playgrounds.
- 5** Help **seniors** stay at home by shopping for them. Do not visit long-term care facilities.
- 6 Exercise** daily at home or with an appropriately socially-distanced activity.



Office of Governor
Pete Ricketts

During COVID-19 Pandemic, Our Mission Remains

John Wyvill, Executive Director



We are experiencing some different and changing times as we all adjust to the new reality of working in a COVID-19 environment. The mission of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing remains the same as we are committed to Communication, Advocacy and Equal Access. While we are unable to meet with clients in person, our entire team is working through virtual offices, telephones, video phones and email. Here are a few things we are doing during this time:

- We are taking advantage of Zoom meetings, Facebook and email to share information and resources with each other and stakeholders
- Communication with the Governor's Office and the Mayor of Lincoln and Omaha regarding ASL interpreters at important, live TV press conferences providing critical up-to-date public health information
- We have written to our Congressional Delegation urging them to ask the White House COVID-19 task force to provide ASL interpreters as those briefings. Unfortunately, despite the calls of NAD, NCDHH and others, those briefings have not been accessible to all of us
- Kelsey Cruz educating statewide TV and public relation representatives in Nebraska about appropriate standards on news coverage of information relayed
- Communication access in the medical setting continues to be a major concern in the COVID-19 as we provide information and resources to health care facilities and working with Nebraska Medicine and Nebraska Health and Human Services Chief Medical Officer
- If you need advocacy support during this time don't hesitate to reach out to Cody McEvoy at cody.mcevoy@nebraska.gov and Carly Weyers at carly.weyers@nebraska.gov
- Jessica Larrison, our Education Advocate, has been fielding a number of contacts from concerned families about communication access in distance learning. We have also been sharing resources and working very closely with the leadership of the Nebraska Department of Education. Jessica may be reached at Jessica.Larrison@nebraska.gov.
- Assisting a number of contacts for individuals who have lost jobs and we will continue to work with the Nebraska Department of Labor leadership on these issues
- Zoom Meetings with the Council of Organizations who provide Services to Deaf and Hard of Hearing (COSDHH), a large group of stakeholders, to share information
- NCDHH hosted our very first Facebook Live meeting to share information and provide updates
- As a reminder, we are under a hiring freeze due to COVID-19. Once lifted, we will be advertising for a new advocacy specialist in Scottsbluff. We also anticipate adding an additional Advocacy Specialist in the Lincoln office. Until then, our North Platte area Advocacy Specialist, Kathy Scusa, is currently providing coverage for the Scottsbluff area

Times may be changing, but our mission still remains. We may be delivering our services in a different way, but still have the same commitment to carrying out the NCDHH Full Boards goals and objectives. Please reach out to us if we can provide you with support. Working together, we will overcome the temporary hurdles imposed by COVID-19.

My Farewell to NCDHH

Brittney Isom, Former NCDHH Advocacy Specialist

As you could guess by now, I will be stepping down from my position at NCDHH. My husband and I will be moving to Colorado to be closer to family. My time at NCDHH has been so rewarding. I will take what I have learned throughout my career and personal life.

I started at the Commission fresh out of college in July 2015. I thought that my background in special education would help me navigate this new position. While the education background did help in some instances, I did not understand everything I was about to learn until I hit the ground running in the Panhandle. My first few years at NCDHH were filled with new clients, establishing presentations and booths, and covering the vast region of the Panhandle.

The one thing that I am most proud of in my time here was in September of 2018, we had our first Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at the Riverside Discovery Center/Zoo in Scottsbluff. With over 60 people in attendance, the event was a huge success and set for another year. In 2019 we had just over 70 people attend. That event was such an incredible opportunity to bring some family fun out to Western Nebraska. My hope is that it continues to be a successful event.

I also had the opportunity to learn ASL and about the Deaf Culture, and will continue to do so. I am so grateful for the opportunity to have served in this position for almost five years, and cannot thank each one of you enough for helping me make my way out here in the Panhandle. I wish NCDHH and all of you the best. Nebraska truly is "The Good Life".

Editorial note: During the Nebraska state employee hiring freeze, North Platte Advocacy Specialist, Kathy Scusa, will be the point of contact for the Panhandle. You may reach her at Kathy.scusa@nebraska.gov



Remote & Online Communication Tips

Jessica Larrison, Education Advocate



Online Tips for Zoom meetings

Establish turn-taking and participation protocol, such as using the raise hand feature, the chat box, or identifying your name before commenting.

Ask students to only turn on their video to ask a question, since limiting the number of participants on screen at the same time can increase video quality and size.

Same goes for sound: tell students to stay in mute mode until they have something to say, to reduce background noise.

Depending on the length of the online course, provide 'eye-breaks' after 30 minutes of online discussion for all students. Offer them a 5-minute step away from the screen to stretch.

During live lectures, be sure to include natural pauses in between important points to allow the lag time from interpreters to finish translating all of the spoken content shared.

For presentations, deaf students often split their attention on the interpreter or captions and content on slides. Doing this simultaneously is not possible! Provide all students a chance to review the slide before discussing lecture points.

Encourage faculty to use plain language with visual formatting (such as bullets, screenshots, or graphs) rather than complex, technical language when describing assignments.

Use the chat feature to highlight important information that could be missed

If you utilize an interpreter make sure you pin them on zoom so they are on the screen at all times.

Record the session to view at later date and to view multiple times.

Captioning Help

Get a captioner to caption your meetings. You can add them as a participant. (CART)

Zoom is now offering caption and transcription within web conferencing, which can be used for lectures or sessions with students

Otter app on your phone. It will caption what it hears

innocaption+ app- free captioning service. It provides real-time captioning on your phone

TextHear app- Converts natural speech to text in large, easy to read letter display on your mobile device

Captioning Tips cont.

Live Caption app- put it up to the speaker and it will convert speech to text real time

Subtitles Viewers app- this synchronizes with what you are watching and add subtitles in various languages

Auditory

Swivl- a microphone that the teacher wears to enhance audio

Get speakers for your laptop to enhance the audio

FM system

Speech and language development

Splingos language universe. A bouncy orange alien who has other alien friends in a highly interactive game. They give spoken instructions that are also visible on the screen.

Hear Coach listening games developed by Starkey Hearing Technologies and feature games designed to improve the ability of the user to understand speech in noisy environments. The app will also track progress.

ASL for children

Baby signing times- series that you watch on your TV or mobile device where they teach signs in an easy way for young ages.

Baby sign and learn is an animated character that teach sign language through the aid of videos, interactive quiz and colorful flashcards.

Smart Hands baby sign language dictionary is where parents and children can learn more than 300 ASL signs together with an instructional apps

Baby sign and sing, where your toddler will enjoy singing and signing 10 popular nursery rhymes along with animated characters.

Best way to find a Deaf role model and set up a meeting Via zoom or FaceTime to chat.

***Follow NCDHH on Social Media for COVID-19 Updates,
Information & Resources at the Local, State & Federal Level***



Q & A – Financial Concerns amid COVID-19 Pandemic

Dillon Curren, Advocacy Specialist



Our Congress passed a historic 2 trillion dollar stimulus package called The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) signed into law on March 27th, 2020. It is the largest economic stimulus package in U.S. history and the law is meant to help many different industries, business, states, and the citizens within the bill. The stimulus package included money for Americans to get to help with the shutdowns and economic losses.

The checks will be handled by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). They will disperse checks up to 1,200 dollars to Americans and will be determined by their tax bracket and earnings reported. Treasury Secretary, Steven Mnuchin, has stated that most people should have payment by April 17th, including:

- Individuals making less than \$75,000- Will receive \$1,200
- Single Individuals who is head of household can earn \$1,200 plus \$500 per child under age of 17
- Couples who making less than \$150,000 combines- Will receive \$2,400 and \$500 per child.
- Decreases as it goes above \$75,000. People who make above \$99,000 will earn nothing and couples who earn over 198,000 will earn nothing.

IRS will use your tax return from 2019 first to determine how to deposit the money. If you used direct deposit for your 2019 tax returns, you will receive the money in that method. If you have not filed your 2019 tax documents, the IRS will use your 2018 tax forms but they are encouraging people to file 2019 as soon as possible so they can get the most updated information possible for banking information and salary information. If you filled out a paper copy of tax forms and mailed it, the IRS will send a check in the mail but the government has warned, it may take months to do so.

The IRS has been directed to create a website to serve as a portal for Americans to enter their banking information and address so you can receive the money in your account. Keep an eye on announcements from IRS regarding that. If you have not filed your 2019 tax returns or your banking/address situation has changed since filing; remember to submit a change of address form on the IRS website. If you are already in government program such as Social Security; you will automatically receive the money and have nothing to worry about.

Unemployment

If you have lost your job, hours, or been furloughed; you are eligible to apply for unemployment. Nebraska has expanded their program for unemployment. The only requirements you must meet is you must have worked in Nebraska in the past 12-18 months, and must have made at least 4,324 dollars in the timeframe. You can go to Nebraska Department of Labor and filing a claim online. They will ask for proof of income, social security number, and other documents. They will determine your weekly unemployment checks based on your income and within the CARES Act, the federal government has authorized an additional 600 dollars on top of your state unemployment. Please consider this if you have experienced a loss of hours, jobs, and income to keep yourself financially stable. The program has been expanded for self-employed and part time workers. They have also included situations such as quarantine, lay-offs, staying home due to child care, and loss of income in family due to death.

If you are a borrower from the federal government such as student loans, the federal government has waived interests on loans for 2 months and suspended any student loan payments until September 30th to help borrowers.

Governor Pete Ricketts has signed an executive order that mandates landlords to defer eviction notices by May 31st for those who have suffered loss of income such as job loss, loss of hours, or missing work due to relative/child care impacted by COVID-19. Talk with your landlords and mortgage companies to discuss action plans and how they can assist you so you do not lose your homes.

Many companies and organizations who you pay for such as car loans, home loans, insurance companies, landlords, utilities, and other necessities are open to discussing action plans and deferments due to COVID-19. Please initiate the conversation with those companies and lenders to help your situation and discuss action plans with them to get you back on track. Those companies won't know you have been impacted by COVID-19 and your responsibility to call and talk with them.

A lot of these forms and information above is online and are required to do so in order to get benefits. Unfortunately, not everyone has access to internet and wireless. All public libraries have been closed. Ask your friend, neighbor, relatives to use their resources so you can get the help you need and do so in a safe manner as provided by the Center for Disease Control. People reading this newsletter is doing so in email and Facebook, you have access; please check up on your friends, relatives, and neighbors to make sure they are receiving the same information.

Regardless of political views, biases we have, color, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation; COVID-19 does not discriminate. We are all in this together. Please check and help your neighbors, friends, and relatives. Do so from a safe distance. Follow guidelines from local, state, and federal agencies. Wash your hands, sanitize your belongings, stay home, and continue the conversation among your peers, partners, companies, and everyone else. We are in this together and will have to fight this together. Be safe and hope to see you all soon. NCDHH already misses you.

Access to Communication & Technologies During COVID-19

Kim Davis, Advocacy Specialist



Things have been changing rapidly on a daily basis with the world, including our country. Out of all the emergency preparedness lessons learned from manmade and natural disasters, this coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has truly created havoc.

Communication updates are occurring on a daily basis from our national, state and local government officials of all sectors.

It is critical to follow various updates from each official as there may be additional measures or enforcements from each sector, depending on where you live. I hope you had the opportunity to see sign language interpreters provided by our state Governor. Some of the local Mayors and County Health Departments have also provided sign language interpreters. Most should have captioning services provided. These captioning and interpreter services can be seen on various local and/or statewide television stations' TV channels or website. And, special thanks goes to advocacy organizations who have dedicated interpreting services for Live Updates coming from our US President and national governmental officials; however, interpreters can only be viewed through DPAN.tv on their Live Streaming webpage at <https://dpan.tv/>.

INCLUSION IS A GREAT FEELING! Having captioning services and, for the first time in Nebraska, having sign language interpreters on a regular basis is a bonus through television stations! Our thanks go to captionists and interpreters, and their sponsors during this challenging time.

It is critical to continue to feel that inclusion, especially in our community when we seek to obtain services in the education, legal, medical and labor settings. Many temporary waivers have been occurring with federal and state policies and procedures or regulations that relates to how their services are provided. You may have already confronted some of the changes in services due to the necessities of social distancing and other additional measures to decrease the pandemic spread. Our agency has been reminding service providers that they still have the legal obligation to provide effective communication to our Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing population.

To be prepared, together, in case certain regional areas are hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Having a list of alternative communication and technology options are important, especially when communication service providers or technology devices may not be immediately available. Below are some publications and vlogs that provide various alternative options:

- ***“How Do I Communicate with Doctors, Nurses, and Staff at the Hospital During COVID-19?”***
<https://tdiforaccess.org/covid-19/>

***Word of Caution. In this video and publications of interest, one of the optional suggestions was to download the Video Remote Interpreter (VRI) app on your personal smartphone. It is encouraged that you discuss this option with the hospital or medical facility if this may be agreed upon. Medical service providers may already have a contract with a certain VRI service provider and having the right app may be more ideal. Our Nebraska law mandates that VRI service providers who provide services in Nebraska to hold a licensure in our state (N.R.S. §20-156.01). And, using VRI without agreement with the medical facility may cause some billing issues with the VRI provider if it is on your personal smartphone.*

- *“Communication Strategies for People Who Are Deaf-Blind During a Coronavirus Pandemic,”*
www.helenkeller.org/hknc/covid-19-communication-guidelines

Feel free to reach out to us for additional information or if you would like to discuss further at kim.davis@nebraska.gov. Be safe.



NCDHH Podcast: Coffee with Carly and Cody!

Each month, NCDHH teammates Carly Weyers & Cody McEvoy will have a video podcast discussing city and statewide events, happenings, information, resources as well as current events nationally. Have a question or topic you'd like covered? Send either Cody or Carly an email!

Cody.mcevoy@nebraska.gov & carly.Weyers@nebraska.gov

Each episode can be found on our agency YouTube channel: Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing or NCDHH website at www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov

Maintaining Positive Mental Health

Carly Weyers, Behavioral Health Coordinator



Do you feel worried about you and your family's health? Are your sleep and eating patterns messed up? Do you have a hard time sleeping? Fear and anxiety can be very overwhelming and give you mixed emotions during this time with the coronavirus pandemic, which can result in an increase of mental health conditions.

Everyone copes with the stress differently during this time. Some probably would boost their use of alcohol or drugs. Others would binge-watch their shows and eat more than they are used to on a daily basis. Make sure you are taking care of yourself, your family, and the community. That would help others to cope with their stress better. We are adjusting our lifestyles to virtual mode, and this is new to many of us.

Please feel free to reach out to one of the advocate specialists or me to find more resources on how you can best cope with your stress or support your family and friends during this time. If you are feeling overwhelmed with emotions such as sadness, depression and anxiety, reach out for help, and if you feel like you want to harm yourself or someone, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) or the Nebraska Family Helpline, 800-866-8660. You also can text the word DEAF to 741741 and be connected with a Crisis Counselor.

Staying Active in Self-Isolation

Kathy Scusa, Advocacy Specialist



Social Isolation, Social Distancing, Directed Health Measure (DHM), working from home or stay at home orders... They all mean the same thing! We are in our homes a lot during this time! Gyms, YMCA's, recreation centers, local, state and national parks are closed across the country. Lakes, beaches, hiking and biking trails are closed. Many people are finding themselves living more sedentary lifestyles and performing less physical activity than usual.

Regular exercise is essential for preventing weight gain, supporting healthy immune function, improving mood and maintaining overall physical and mental health.

Unfortunately, people all over the world are living under some kind of restriction on their lifestyles and are often limited to leaving the house only for absolute essentials. Depending on your source, up to 97% of Americans are under stay-at-home or restricted movement orders.

The internet is full of videos of suburbanites holding group-exercise sessions with each participant at the foot of their driveway or spaced apart in a cul-de-sac, and city-dwellers exercising on their balconies under the leadership of an exercise professional positioned on a nearby rooftop. As uplifting and inspiring as those videos may be, they probably don't represent a long-term daily exercise solution for most people who will be house bound for the foreseeable future. Most of those videos are not realistic for those of us in Nebraska! So, how can you remain active when most outdoor exercise is off-limits and fitness facilities are closed? This is a time for creativity and adaptability when it comes to exercise programming.

Outdoor exercise—sometimes called green exercise—provides an array of beneficial responses beyond those offered by exercise alone, including boosting vitamin D levels, improving cognitive function and reducing stress. Get whatever outdoor exercise you can without driving to a different location, even if it's simply walking the dog a couple of times a day. This is also a great way to get the rest of the family involved or have some quality one-on-one time with your significant other or child. Just be sure to maintain appropriate social distance from friends and neighbors and otherwise adhere to local ordinances and state and federal guidelines as those evolve.

- If getting outside is not possible, you can still get a well-rounded workout at home; set aside a clutter- and distraction-free zone, if possible.
- Dig out those old 80's leotards and exercise videos for a trip down memory lane!
- For strength training and stretching look for You Tube videos on yoga, Pilates.
- If you have exercise equipment like dumbbells, kettlebells or resistance bands, that's great. If not, you can still perform a body-weight training session that will work the whole body and help to develop or maintain muscular strength and endurance. There are lots of exercises and movements that don't require equipment. Exercises like squats, push-ups, planks and lunges can be performed without equipment, while single-arm rows, dumbbell curls and overhead presses can be performed with household items like milk cartons or laundry detergent. This is where creativity is a must.
- Meditation is a great way for managing stress and mental health. Look for phone apps, Internet videos or on-demand TV programming to provide an endless variety of programming possibilities.

Adequate cardiorespiratory exercise is essential. Decrease your sedentary time as much as possible. Avoid long stretches on the couch, no matter how tempting binge watching may be! Get up to perform household chores or simply move around as frequently as possible. Even standing up during a commercial break on occasion to perform a set of squats or stretches can provide a much-needed interruption to sedentary time. It is recommended that breaks from sitting should be every 60 to 120 minutes, and that breaks in sedentary time, during which you should perform light-intensity activities, lasting an average of 5 to 10 minutes were beneficially associated with decreased metabolic risk.

You should accumulate 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity, 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity or a combination of both **each week**. In addition, you should perform two full-body muscle-strengthening sessions each week. Those recommendations, come from the *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, can be achieved even at home and with no special equipment.

The World Health Organization offers five simple tips to stay active, reduce sedentary behavior and relieve stress while at home in self-quarantine:

- Take short active breaks during the day
- Follow an online exercise class [or exercise with a health coach or exercise professional through virtual training]
- Walk
- Stand up
- Relax

It is essential that we remember to eat healthily and stay hydrated. While circumstances have certainly changed, your physical- and mental-health needs have not. Now, more than ever, we all must be sure to take care of ourselves. In the words of our Governor, "Stay home, stay healthy, stay connected." 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.

Source: <https://www.acefitness.org/education-and-resources/professional/expert-articles/7525/staying-active-while-maintaining-social-distancing/>

It's Time to Talk About Self-Care

Aaron Rothenberger, Advocacy Specialist



With the whole world being besieged by COVID19, I wanted to try to write about something helpful that wasn't talked about as much as self-isolation and quarantines. As someone who overconsumes, both media content and food, I have found times during the past several weeks that I have been overwhelmed by everything going on.

I have to consistently remind myself that it is okay to take a break in the name of self-care. That is the topic that I see lacking in the general coverage of everything else.

Self-care is the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's health. Health is not just physical. It can also include both mental and emotional. Self-care is simply any activity that we do to increase or maintain our level of health. There are a lot of suggestions as to how you can perform self-care. We will go over a few.

Exercise: The act of moving around is always an excellent way to brighten our spirits and increase our mood. There are so many different ways to find some exercise in the comfort of our home. Even just spending some time walking around can shake the cobwebs out. If you feel inspired, you can mimic Elisha Nochomovitz, who ran a marathon on his 7-meter deck during the quarantine in France.

Cleaning: This is one I have made a priority in my home. I am the type of person that likes everything nice and tidy. I have made a rule where if something takes less than 5 minutes total, I just force myself to do it. I also ascribe to the "Eat the Frog" sentiment. Do the hardest thing first, and everything else will be easy.

Reading: Do you have a book that has been sitting on the shelf for months, even years? Now is the perfect time to finish reading the novel that you have been putting off. There are also a large number of places you can get online books to read, including but not limited to your local library.

Cook: Is it time to bake 120 cookies? Well, then bake 120 cookies!

Learn: Pick a skill or a hobby that you have always wanted to learn. Juggling, playing an instrument, learning a game like spades or chess. You can put as little as 5 minutes a day into something, and over time you will get pretty good at it. Internet videos with helpful tips abound.

Talk: Remember that you are not alone on this journey. Call your friends or loved ones and talk for a little while. Now is a great time to catch up with the people that are close to you. Don't be afraid to let the conversations go a little long. Now is the time to just cut loose.

If I had to give any personal advice, remember not to overconsume. This is a hard time for all of us, and absorbing everything you can media-wise will only lead to more stress. It is good to be informed. It is not good to overstress. Set times to take breaks and catch your breath. We will get through this.

Applications to Use During Quarantine

Cody McEvoy, Advocacy Specialist



With most of the country being told to stay inside and practice social distancing, this has impacted a lot of our daily lives in the community. Not only does this affect some people with their jobs, but also shopping, exercising, social events, community events, and the list can go on. Some people may not even know the available resources and applications that can help you without even leaving your home. Check these out!

A screenshot of the Netflix Party Chrome extension interface. The interface is red and white. It shows a video player on the left with two cartoon characters. On the right, there's a control panel with the 'NP' logo, the text 'NETFLIX PARTY', and a 'Get the party started' button. Below the button, there are fields for 'My Name' (Theodore Lindsay) and 'Click to copy your special party link & share!' (https://www.netflix.com/watch). There is also a checkbox for 'Only view controls my party' and a link icon at the bottom right.

Setup your Netflix Party with 3 Steps!

Step 1. Install the Netflix Party chrome extension from the Chrome Web Store or our website.

Step 2. Choose any show from Netflix.com, and click on the "NP" Button to get the party started.

Step 3. Copy the party URL and share the link to invite friends to your party.

Netflix Party - Enter Netflix Party, a Google Chrome browser extension originally developed by Airbnb engineer Stephan Boyer in 2015. He told Vox in an email that he built the extension, which lets multiple Netflix users sync and watch movies on the platform together, "as a way to hang out and have fun with friends."

The logo for the United States Census 2020. It features the text 'United States' in a smaller font above 'Census' in a large, bold, white font, with '2020' below it in the same large, bold, white font. The background is dark blue.

United States[®]
Census
2020

Your response matters. Don't forget to fill out your Census 2020. More information can be found at: www.2020census.gov

Interpreting During the Performing Arts

Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator



Even though things are in a holding pattern during these days of stay at home measures and the many cancellations of events, I believe it is still apropos to give a shout out to these hard working individuals.

The curtain is down; you can hear the rustling of the waiting audience in the darkness as the lights slowly dim. With the rise of the curtain, you step into the spotlight, inhale a nervous breath, and proceed to interpret the words expressed by the actors you accompany on stage...
(1)

This picture is something not all people in the field of interpreting experience, so I'd like to recognize and give a hearty hand-wave to our interpreters that are providing communication access in the performing arts arenas. These talented interpreters put in a lot of time and effort creating works of art to make these venues accessible and enjoyable for Deaf and Hard of Hearing audiences. Access is essential for Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities to participate fully in Nebraska's cultural life. In turn, access enables performing arts venues to develop new audiences which increasingly reflects values of diversity and inclusion.

"Text in theatre can be beautiful but it is the actors who brings it alive with their vitality. When providing access to patrons who are D/deaf and HOH (hard-of-hearing), the goal is to welcome them to see the actor's energy. As a theatrical interpreter, my goal is to be seamlessly integrated into each scene so that the audience doesn't miss any of the actor's presentation," said Joanna Bennett who is a theatrical interpreter and professional actor in Canada. ²

Since storytelling is an important aspect of our Deaf and hearing cultures, the interpretation of the written text not only takes time to process, but also needs to have a meaning-based focus instead of a literal production. An interpreter must fully understand the meaning behind what is being said by the actors and take this meaning into their interpretation. Generally, a team of two to three interpreters work together on one performance. Each work to come up with their own interpretation of their lines, share them with their team and receive feedback, working together to finalize the overall interpretation.

Hats off, hearty hand waves, and my sincere respect and admiration to those of you who step foot on these stages, taking this art form and creating something beautiful with it. This is what makes performing arts interpreting more difficult compared to other areas in the interpreting field. However, that's also what makes it special and unique, as well as admirable.

When it is finally the first or only night of a performance, we are now once again back on stage with the curtains open. A lone interpreter has walked into their spotlight, waiting for the musical cue to begin. A satisfied breath can be exhaled knowing that it is time to perform what weeks of practice have formed...(2)

(1) "Theatrical Interpreting: An Explanation of the Process" by Chloe Hansen, an honors thesis submitted at Western Oregon University, June 2014.

(2) Excerpt from the article "Interpreting Evolution in Theatre"