

THE COMMUNICATOR

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Deaf & Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at the Lincoln Children's Zoo!

The first Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at the Lincoln Children's Zoo was on Sunday, April 24th! It was a wonderful event with nearly 200 people in attendance for fun activities and learning experiences at the zoo. We partnered with organizations including Nebraska Association of the Deaf, Nebraska Hands and Voices, Nebraska Regional Program and Nebraska Relay to help put on the event. Families came out to enjoy ASL storytelling by NCDHH Board Member, Vali Hitz, as well as a scavenger hunt throughout the zoo! Winners received door prizes sponsored by Runza restaurant, Husker Athletics, and the Lincoln Children's Museum. The day ended with an animal encounter including a Porcupine and an Armadillo!

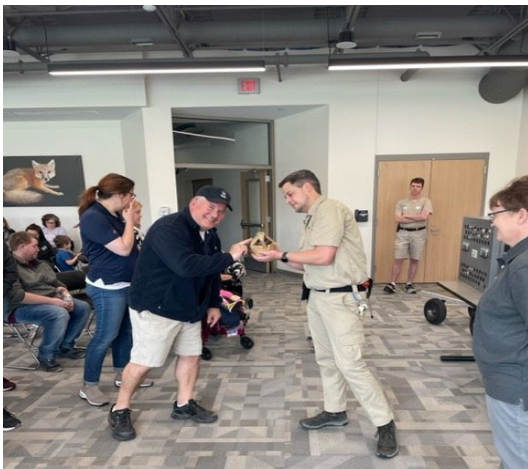
ASL
Storytelling
with Vali Hitz



Booths of
other advocacy
organizations



John Wyvill
petting Eli the
Armadillo!



NCDHH team
and Board
members that
attended the
event



NCDHH's American Rescue Plan Act Request Signed Into Law



Gov. Ricketts at LB1014 Bill Signing Ceremony, interpreted by Sharon Sinkler

Governor Ricketts has signed LB1014 into law. LB1014 is a bill to appropriate federal funds to the State of Nebraska pursuant to the American Rescue Plan Act. Within this federal funding will include money appropriated to the Commission to provide support for in-person interpreters in rural areas and legal communication access. Funds will also be appropriated to the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) to support programs and interpreters who provide services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Sen. Anna Wishart introduced the two legislative bills, LB1161 and LB1162, to advocate for federal funding of the American Rescue Plan Act to be appropriated between the Commission and NDE to better the lives of residents in Nebraska who are deaf or hard of hearing. LB1161 and LB1162 were amended into LB1014.

Letters of support for these requests were sent in by multiple organizations and community leaders across the country including the Nebraska Bar Association, Nebraska Association of the Deaf, Hearing Loss Association of America – Omaha Chapter, National Association of the Deaf, Nebraska Board of Education and Dr. Peter Seiler.

“This funding would not be possible without the tireless advocacy of Senator Wishart, members of the Appropriations Committee, all the Senators that supported this funding and Governor Ricketts all working together to make a positive difference in the lives of fellow Nebraskans,” NCDHH Executive Director, John Wyvill, said. “This funding will make a positive difference in the lives of many for years to come. Words cannot adequately convey the depth of gratitude for our elected officials that have worked together to make investments for the future of our children and Nebraskans who are deaf and hard of hearing.”

A copy of LB1161 can be found [here](#), and a copy of LB1162 can be found [here](#).

Access to Political Ads and Voting Matters

John Wyvill, Executive Director



Nebraskans who are deaf and hard of hearing continue to encounter significant barriers with communication access during the election process. Sadly, it is still rare to have equal access to stories, debates and news about candidates running for political office. In Nebraska, it just got a little bit easier with the passage of LB928.

The bill requests that all state level political campaigns either include closed captioning on their video advertisements or provide transcripts of those advertisements on their website. This law will apply to the races for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, State Treasurer, Attorney General, Auditor of Public Accounts, member of the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska, members of the State Board of Education, Public Service commissioners and members of the Legislature.

Passage of this legislation would not be possible without the support of the NCDHH Full Board, leaders in the broader deaf community, the Nebraska Secretary of State and the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission.

As we enter this next election cycle, I would encourage all of you to register to vote and be involved in the political process as your vote helps decide who will lead us. Remember: “Nothing about us, without us!”

The [National Association of the Deaf – NAD](#) has a great FAQ vlog about voting that is still relevant.

Remember: Don't forget to vote!

Upcoming Events at the Commission!

Outreach events and community partnerships are one of the most effective ways for our agency to get the word out about our services, information and referral to help Nebraskans who are deaf or hard of hearing. It is also a wonderful way to work with other advocacy organizations to partner in our unified mission to improve the lives of people who are deaf or hard of hearing! Here are some upcoming events we have this spring and fall in Nebraska:

June 8: Deaf & Hard of Hearing Awareness Night at the Stormchasers Baseball game – Omaha, NE

June 17: Deaf & Hard of Hearing Awareness Night at the Pioneers Baseball game – Scottsbluff, NE

July 20: Deaf & Hard of Hearing Awareness Night at the Saltdogs Baseball game – Lincoln, NE

August 2: National Night Out – Scottsbluff, NE

August 27: Deaf & Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at the Riverside Discovery Center – Scottsbluff, NE

August 29: NCDHH Booth at Nebraska State Fair – Grand Island, NE

September 13-15: NCDHH Booth at Husker Harvest Days – Wood River, NE

September 25: Deaf & Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at Henry Doorly Zoo – Omaha, NE

New Behavioral Health Coordinator

Sharon Price



My name is Sharon Price and I am the new Behavioral Health Coordinator working from the Omaha office. I am a native of Colorado Springs and moved to Mitchell, Nebraska in 1994 as a high school sophomore. I later transferred to Nebraska School for the Deaf and graduated from there in 1997. Upon graduation, I resided in Lincoln for a year before returning to Western Nebraska. I received my BA in Social Work from Chadron State College located in northwestern Nebraska in 2005 and then got my MSW from Gallaudet University in 2008. Upon getting my MSW, I worked with both deaf and hearing adults with developmental disabilities and mental health for a year in Louisville, Kentucky.

In August 2009, I started working as a community case manager for deaf and hard of hearing adults with severe and persistent mental illness in the Cincinnati, Ohio area and continued there for more than 12 years.

I am excited to be back in Nebraska to bring my rich experiences and work to improve services and access for deaf and hard of hearing Nebraskans statewide in a variety of mental health settings.

If you need access to in or outpatient treatment, assistance with communication, collaboration and/or struggling to meet your needs due to mental health issues, feel free to contact me via VP at (402) 682-7129 or email me at sharon.price@nebraska.gov.

New Administrative Assistant

Jamie Petersen



My name is Jamie Petersen and I recently started at NCDHH as a Staff Assistant in the Lincoln office in February 2022. My father is Deaf and my mother works as a deaf educator in the public school system. I have a bachelor's degree in Speech-Language Pathology from UNO and have completed half (2 years) of the Audiology doctoral program at UNL. I took a leave-of-absence from my doctoral program at UNL starting the Summer of 2021, following some life changes. Since then, I have been exploring

My favorite part of working for NCDHH would have to be being able to speak with such a diverse population of people daily. I get calls from a variety of individuals (Deaf, HoH, hearing) and professionals in the field all seeking information or presenting questions that I am learning to assist with. Even in a few short months of working, my knowledge and awareness has increased exponentially. I also enjoy managing the Hearing Aid Bank program in conjunction with the UNL Barkley Center, which allows me to be involved in advocacy for adults who are in financial need and are seeking access to hearing aids.

If you have any questions regarding NCDHH services or about hearing aids/hearing aid banks, you may reach me at jamie.Petersen@nebraska.gov.

Aaron Rothenberger's Interview with Dr. Nikki Plummer

ENT Physicians - Kearney



For my spring newsletter I had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Nikki Plummer of ENT Physicians of Kearney. I was able to ask some questions regarding hearing protection and tinnitus.

Why is protecting your hearing important?

Protecting your hearing at a young age can help reduce the chances of hearing loss as you get older. Some hearing loss is genetic and cannot be 100% prevented, but if we protect our ears around loud sounds when we are younger, we can reduce the amount of hearing loss we have as we get older.

If we do not protect our ears from loud sounds over extended periods of time, we increase the chances of having high frequency hearing loss that can cause tinnitus or ringing in your ears. People as young as 14 years old have been seen at our clinic and diagnosed with "noise-notch" hearing losses because they did not wear hearing protection while shooting guns or operating loud machinery. These people often report tinnitus associated with their noticeable change in hearing. Hearing loss caused by noise exposure can be gradual or sudden if the exposure level is at a high enough decibel.

What sort of everyday things can you do for protection?

You can protect your hearing by wearing any kind of hearing protection when you are around loud sounds. Examples of when you should wear hearing protection include but are not limited to, mowing the lawn, shooting guns, going to concerts, and working around or operating loud machinery. The longer you are around loud sounds, the more damage you can do to your ears. Foam plugs or muffs are not going to be as beneficial as custom hearing protection that you can get from an Audiologist, but they will be better than going without protection. If you are interested in custom hearing protection, an Audiologist can give you more information on the different types that are offered. Custom hearing protection is more expensive than foam plugs or muffs, but are worth every penny to protect your hearing. Protect your hearing now or pay the price later on!

What are your suggestions to help alleviate hearing loss/tinnitus?

Hearing loss and tinnitus are very complex. When a person is diagnosed with hearing loss or tinnitus by an Audiologist, hearing aids are usually recommended. Tinnitus is often caused by high frequency hearing loss. High frequency hearing loss can be caused by environmental factors such as working in an environment with a high noise exposure for an extended period of time. Genetics can also play a role in hearing loss, so if you have a family history of hearing loss, make sure to have your hearing/ears checked yearly.

There are instances where tinnitus is independent of hearing loss. In these cases, we recommend masking noise, such as listening to white noise at night. Some providers will recommend reducing caffeine intake and encouraging patients with tinnitus to reduce stress as much as possible. Stress can often exacerbate tinnitus and make it seem worse. There are Audiologists who specialize in Tinnitus Retraining Therapy. (TRT) teaches people how to cope with their tinnitus through extensive therapy and training sessions.

Aaron Rothenberger's Interview with Dr. Nikki Plummer *continued*

Should you trust information that claims to be a simple trick to solving hearing loss/tinnitus?

There is not a quick fix to treating hearing loss or tinnitus. No over the counter remedies have been proven successful in treating hearing loss or tinnitus. There are currently no supplements, ear drops, or medications that have been approved for the treatment or curing of tinnitus/hearing loss. If you struggle with either of these issues, we recommend scheduling an appointment with a licensed Audiologist. The sooner hearing loss and tinnitus are identified/diagnosed, the better outcome and success with management.

Dr. Plummer was born and raised in North Platte, Nebraska, where she graduated from North Platte High School in 2012. She attended the University of Central Arkansas for undergraduate school and received her Bachelor of Science degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders in 2016. Dr. Plummer moved back to Nebraska for graduate school, where she earned her Masters of Hearing Science degree in 2018 and her Doctor of Audiology degree in 2020 from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Dr. Plummer holds a Certificate of Clinical Competence in Audiology (CCC-A) from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Audiology (F-AAA).

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



Panhandle Happenings

Susan Whitaker, Education Advocate/Advocacy Specialist - Scottsbluff



Summer/Fall 2022 in the panhandle will be a busy one. We will have the annual events plus add a new one this year. Mark your calendars and join us in beautiful Western Nebraska! Below are our event dates. All Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nebraska residents are encouraged to join us!

June 17, 2022 – Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Night at the Pioneer’s Ballpark (Gering)
Join us for a fun evening at the ballpark. Our Western Nebraska Pioneers are always fun to watch. We will play a few games in between innings that are related to hearing loss. The National Anthem, America the Beautiful and Take Me Out to the Ballgame will all be signed by one of NCDHH staff members. During the game the announcer will give out facts about hearing loss and deafness. There will be booths from local agencies as well as our own booth. This promises to be a night of education and fun!

August 2, 2022 – National Night Out (Scottsbluff)
Our National Night Out is always well attended. Each year we have over 1,000 people attending with around 100 booths from local agencies including law enforcement and fire departments. We will have a booth set up with a carnival game for the kids to play. This is always a great event for mass exposure of our agency.

August 27, 2022 – Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at the Riverside Discovery Center (Scottsbluff)
This zoo event is always a favorite. Not only can you visit the Zoo, Splash Pad, Dino Dig and Playground but there will also be fun games related to ASL and hearing loss. Each exhibit will have the ASL sign for that animal. There will be a scavenger hunt to match the signs with the animal. A local member of our Deaf community will sign a story. Several of our panhandle agencies will have a booth set up. Come out for a fun day at the Zoo!

October 6, 2022 – Disability Disaster Preparedness Workshop (Scottsbluff)
Disaster preparedness is an important topic for all of us. But people with disabilities have special needs when it comes to being prepared for a disaster. This workshop is designed for people with any disability to join. Registration is free and we will have breakfast snacks available. Speakers will address what you need to do to be prepared in case of an emergency. You will learn how to put together a preparedness kit and what all needs to be included in this kit. There will be first responders there so that we can all be on the same page on what to do in specific emergency events. This is a very important workshop, and we encourage all hard of hearing and Deaf community members to attend. The workshop will be broadcast via Zoom so you can attend from your home or a local gathering place throughout the Panhandle. An interpreter will be provided.

If you have any questions on these Western Nebraska events call the Scottsbluff office and talk to Susan. You can call 308.633.3751 or email susan.whitaker@nebraska.gov.

Self-Advocacy

Ashley Wulf, Advocacy Specialist - Omaha



I have been learning a lot about the term of “self-advocacy” through my position and personal life and realized that I have been doing a lot of self-advocacy in my daily life. I wanted to take the time to write this brief article to explain to the community about self-advocacy since there are a lot of people who may not know what self-advocacy is.

Self-Advocacy is when you can stand up for yourself and fight for your rights. It can provide a positive result in your workplace or out in communities. It is where you can make the decisions for yourself and show them the best interests for yourself. For example, say you were denied an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter at your workplace - you can speak up by asking them if they are aware about Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and explain it to them if they aren't aware of it. From there, you can explain why you want an ASL interpreter and explain how it provides you more effective communication.

I want you guys to keep in mind that self-advocacy looks different for everyone since they have their own preferences, and it is different for different situations. It is best to start teaching young adults and it will help them learn the ability to speak up for themselves and request an accommodation when they need it. It is important to teach young adults about self-advocacy because there are a lot of places like medical facilities, the workplace, and more that still don't understand on how to provide accommodations or isn't aware of ADA law.

With a self-advocacy approach, figure out what you value and why. You may also want to find which accommodation is most effective for you in certain situations. This will help with your communication by being prepared.

Self-Advocacy is where you can empower yourself and stand up for your own rights. It may not be comfortable at first, but the more you continue self-advocacy the more comfortable and confident you will become. It will be a learning process for everyone, including myself.

If you or someone you know is looking for support in your self-advocacy journey, please contact me at ashley.wulf@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*

2022 Deaf in Healthcare Summit

Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator



I attended the virtual 2nd Annual Deaf in Healthcare Summit and Pre-Conference for Interpreters, hosted by Corey Axelrod of 2axend over the weekend of April 7th to the 10th. If you have never attended this summit, I highly recommend it! This conference was attended by over 500 deaf and hearing interpreters and all the presenters and healthcare professionals are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

The summit offered 1.5 CEUs and the pre-conference offered an additional 0.6 CEUs. Sessions and presenters focused on providing interpreters with insight, solutions, and best practices to position Deaf and Hard of Hearing clients for success in healthcare settings. The pre-conference partnered with the Association of Medical Professionals with Hearing Losses and provided interpreters with the skills, knowledge, and resources to support Deaf and Hard of Hearing medical professionals in clinical settings.

One of the sessions I attended during the pre-conference was regarding HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act) which was presented by Shawn Norris. He suggested that freelance interpreters working in medical settings make sure that they have professional liability insurance and a Business Associate Agreement (BAA) in place when interpreting for any medical service provider. These are required by law and can protect you and your possible access to protected health information (PHI) and personally identifiable information (PII). BAA templates can be found online. Some other important information Mr. Norris shared are:

- When an interpreter arrives at a medical appointment and says to the receptionist, “I am here to interpret for a deaf patient,” this is a violation of HIPAA and the patient’s PHI. It is better to say, “I’m here to interpret for (name of patient)” in a normal volume.
- Interpreters should use an email account which is protected by HIPAA.
- Zoom is now HIPAA compliant (make sure you turn on the encryption in your account settings); however, the auto-captions are not HIPAA compliant. A third-party caption provider must have a BAA.

I attended two sessions with Nigel Howard, “Conceptually Accurate Interpreting via Video Interpreting” and “Co-Interpreting in Healthcare Settings.” This presenter emphasized the need for video interpreters to have the proper equipment, background, and attire to provide effective communication services:

- A full-size monitor (not an iPad or laptop);
- Use of an ethernet connection (hard-wired) not wi-fi;
- An adjustable table/standing desk to interpret while standing to make the best use of unimpeded space and movement; and
- Based on an informal survey of users, he has found that a grey background is the preferred color, especially for the DeafBlind).

He also suggested some resources for interpreters to become familiar with medical terminology and visual representations of the human anatomy.

- The use of apps such Visible Body a 3D Human Anatomy Atlas and Complete Anatomy can be used to guide an interpreter’s incorporation of classifiers to describe medical procedures and surgeries.
- Preparation resources can come from places such as the CDC, WHO, USDHHS and state/national government websites.

2022 Deaf in Healthcare Summit *continued*

Crom Saunders presented a workshop on interpreting material with medical terminology. He emphasized the importance of the use of analogy and making your interpretation visual. If a patient does not understand a procedure, what can an interpreter use to compare that procedure to? For example, bypass surgery is like a freeway where an accident has stopped traffic. You take a detour to go around the accident and keep traffic moving. The detour is like bypass surgery. The bypass will go around the blockage to get blood flowing again. Some resources he shared are:

<https://healthcareinterpreting.org/resources/>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eirlz172dDg>
<https://cdeaf.kings.uwo.ca/index.cfm/knowledge-base/asl-mental-health-signs/>

These are just a sampling of the wonderful, informational workshops that were offered during the summit. Keep an eye out for the 3rd Annual Deaf in Healthcare Summit next year. If you have any questions based off of the information in this article, please contact me at sharon.sinkler@nebraska.gov.

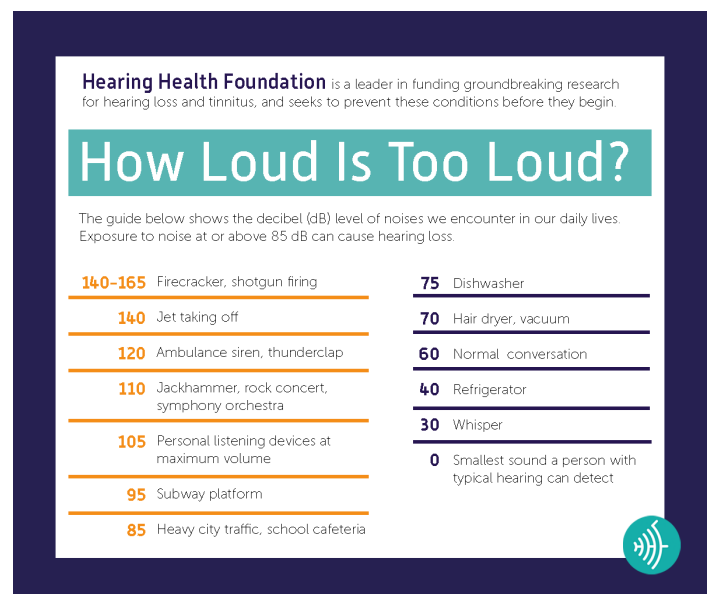
Protecting our Ears – At a Glance

Abby Giambattista, Advocacy Specialist / Staff Interpreter



Now that the world is starting to find its way to a new normal, there are more kinds of precautions to think about than ever. One protection measure that has always been important (proceeding masks) however, is hearing protection. I know we talk about that a lot here at the commission, but now that shows, concerts, travel, and all kinds of different events are starting back up, I want to dive into some basic information on when to use hearing protection and why.

Even without loud amps or plane engines, there are still everyday environmental noises that can affect one's hearing. The human ear was not designed to deal with all the machinery and everyday noise our world has created. This phenomenon is called Noise Pollution and one of its possible effects is Noise Induced Hearing Loss or in some case physical/mental health issues. Granted noise pollution that causes issues like that typically come in the form of living near loud streets, airports, working in a noise heavy environment, etc. The human ear is sensitive regardless of environment, much less, one that is doused in high decibel levels.



No matter what one's perceived tolerance of volume is, most exposures to noise without protection should be kept at below 85 decibels (dB). However, this often feels unreasonable given that the sound of traffic often hits at 85 dB. Who wants to wear ear plugs when they are driving. You can see the chart by the Hearing Health Foundation to illustrate certain decibel levels and their effects.

Protecting our Ears – At a Glance *continued*

The areas where most of us start wearing hearing protection doesn't start until beyond the point of damage. Luckily this article is intended to encourage you and not frighten you. Please know it is never too late to start healthy habits; including some of the options listed below –

- Avoid using maximum volume when wearing earbuds/headphones
- Wearing earplugs for concerts, yard work, hunting, airplane rides, machinery operation, arena events, areas with frequent alarms/ loud speakers, etc.
- Checking with an audiologist if you start to have any concerns about your ears
- Pay attention to when you feel ear pain or sensing that an environment is becoming too noisy
- Do your research via accredited sources (not just using Dr. Google)

If this all seems like great information but you don't know where to start, please check out our [website](#). There are several links to other organizations that offer great support as well! If you have questions about this article please feel free to contact me at abby.giambattista@nebraska.gov.

Stress & Frustration: What Sleep Deprivation can do to Your Mind & Body

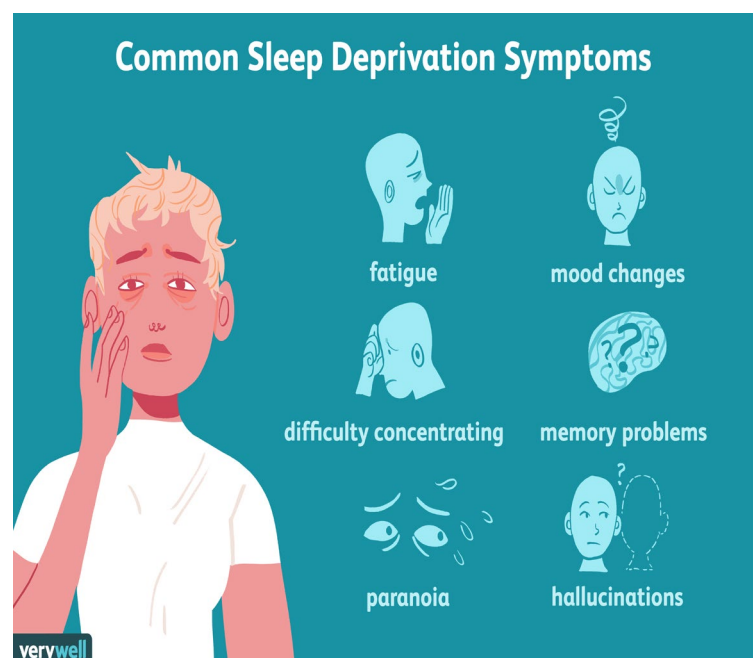
Jeremy Daffern, Advocacy Specialist – Omaha



Every day, people around the world face many situations in which they experience stress and frustration. Both can be caused by sky-rocketing cost of living expenses, higher rent, political chaos, which can then cause you to become restless and unable to sleep. Sleep deprivation can cause fatigue, mood changes, and some other symptoms, which can cause health problems if the problems are not resolved.

According to the Sleep Foundation¹ website, chronic sleep deprivation can cause several health problems such as:

- **Cardiovascular disease:** Studies have found strong associations between sleep deficiency and cardiovascular problems, including high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.
- **Diabetes:** Insufficient sleep appears to affect the body's ability to regulate blood sugar, increasing the risk of metabolic conditions like diabetes.
- **Obesity:** Research has found that people tend to consume more calories and carbohydrates when they don't get enough sleep, which is just one of several ways that poor sleep may be tied to obesity and problems maintaining a healthy weight.



Stress & Frustration: What Sleep Deprivation can do to Your Mind & Body *continued*

- **Immunodeficiency:** Sleep deficiency has been shown to lead to worsened immune function, including a poorer response to vaccines.
- **Hormonal abnormalities:** Sleep helps the body properly produce and regulate levels of various hormones, potentially increasing susceptibility to hormonal problems in people with sleep deprivation.
- **Pain:** Sleep-deprived people are at a higher risk of developing pain or feeling that their pain is getting worse. Pain may cause further sleep interruptions, creating a negative cycle of worsening pain and sleep.
- **Mental health disorders:** Sleep and mental health are closely intertwined, and poor sleep has strong associations with conditions like depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder.

¹(<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-deprivation>)

According to medical professionals, the average number of hours of sleep adults need should be around 7 to 9 hours, and children and teenagers need more than that. The human body needs routine and adequate sleep, good nutrients, exercise, and a healthy balance between a person's work and social life.

Wondering how to solve your sleep deprivation? There are many ways to reduce stress and frustration due to lack of sleep.

- Get some exercise outside. Wake up in morning and go for a walk with your dog or your partner for 30 minutes or so. Fresh air and exercise can be good for both your mind and body.
- Turn off tv's, tablets, and social media that can have negative effects on your mind, and spend time with yourself, or your family or friends. Play cards, go to movies, or engage in activities with them.
- Eat healthy foods, for example fruits and vegetables, as much as you can. Drink a lot of water and tea. Reduce energy drinks and increase your intake of healthy drinks, for instance fruity smoothies or sugar free fruit flavored water drinks.
- Rearrange your work schedules if you have two jobs. You can find a job where you can work after/before your first job. It would be much easier to do that instead of working in middle of your sleep routine. You can talk with your supervisor or manager for ideas in how to arrange this.
- Sleep more, or as much as you can, around your work schedule and social life.

Your body and mind are screaming for you to pay attention to your sleep problems. If you change your sleep patterns and reduce your stress and frustration, your body and mind will appreciate it down the road. If you are still struggling, contact your primary doctor and make an appointment to discuss your sleep problems.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact an Advocacy Specialist in your region or you can contact our Behavior Health Coordinator, Sharon Price. Our contact information can be found on our website: ncdhh.nebraska.gov.

Reasons to Consider Hearing Aids

Kathy Scusa, Advocacy Specialist – North Platte



Hearing loss affects millions of Americans. Among adults aged 20-69, 18% experience hearing loss. If you or someone you know suffers from hearing loss, then you know how difficult it can be to deal with. It's frustrating, isolating, and unmotivating. Everything in your life feels off and it can be hard to get things back to normal. That's where hearing aids come in.

There have been significant advances in hearing aid technology over the last few years, allowing those with hearing loss to get their lives back on track. Of course, the number one reason to obtain hearing aids is for better hearing. Here are nine more reasons you should use hearing aids to improve your everyday life.

Take charge of your hearing health: Eighty percent of people with hearing loss are hesitant to get hearing aids for a variety of reasons. Some don't like the style, find them uncomfortable, don't think they're old enough to need them, or they don't think their hearing is bad enough to get hearing aids. While those reasons are understandable, there's no need to worry. With how advanced hearing aid technology has become, they are more discreet, stylish and comfortable than ever. Hearing loss also doesn't choose an age, anyone can develop hearing loss at any time and benefit from hearing aids. Instead of getting frustrated and simply dealing with hearing loss every single day, you can take charge of your hearing health and conquer hearing loss with hearing aids. You will improve your day-to-day life and convince your friends to get some of their own, if they need them of course. One of the most obvious benefits to hearing aids is that you actually hear better. You can hear conversations clearly without having to guess what people are saying and visiting friends and family will be a breeze.

Conserve your energy: When you deal with hearing loss every day, your brain is working harder than ever to follow conversations and pick up sounds. You end up becoming more and more drained as the day goes on and you may find that you need a nap every day, stopping you from doing the activities you enjoy. Hearing aids will stop you from overworking your brain and help you conserve energy all day long. They are a comfortable way to maintain your brain health and keep your energy levels high while allowing you to hear your surroundings.

Keep your annual salary from changing: According to a study reported on in *The Hearing Journal*, hearing loss is linked to a higher rate of unemployment and a lower annual salary — earning approximately 25% less per year. It's no secret that hearing loss is an obstacle to overcome for everyone. This study doesn't mean that because you have hearing loss you will earn less and be unemployed, rather, hearing aids will help you counter hearing loss and keep that hurdle from becoming a barrier, completely stopping you from working effectively.

Live life to the fullest: This may be an obvious one, but your quality of life will improve. No more isolation and frustration, no more asking for everyone to repeat themselves. You can go about your day like usual — talk to your friends and family, enjoy music, drink a coffee in a busy place, and, more importantly, live comfortably. Not only is it difficult to guess every conversation you have, but it's also unsettling when you're wrong. You want to visit with friends and family, but you may feel embarrassed because you can't hear what they're saying. You may skip a few family events — slowly but surely isolating yourself. Hearing aids can fix that.

Reasons to Consider Hearing Aids *continued*

Improve your communication: With hearing aids, you will be able to communicate better, faster, and more consistently. A big challenge for someone with hearing loss is busy spaces such as a coffee shop, restaurant, or grocery store — if you have trouble hearing a conversation in a normal environment, add extra noise from these places and you will quickly feel overwhelmed. Hearing aids help with this. You can hear more like before, leading to better communication. Subtle tones are easier to catch, and you can spend less time focusing on every word in a conversation and more on the interaction itself.

Stay safe: You never really know how much you rely on your hearing until you're deprived of it. If you're in a busy space and you can't hear your surroundings, it can be quite dangerous for everyone involved. Hearing aid technology has advanced to the point where you can still hear clearly in busy environments and can save you from having a serious accident. In March 2018, a study was published in the JAMA Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery journal that looked at the rate of accidents in those with varying levels of self-reported hearing health — it ranged from excellent and good hearing to a small, moderate, and high amount of hearing loss. Of the 232.2 million people surveyed from 2007 to 2015, 6.6 million experienced accidental injuries. The study cross referenced those that had accidents with their self-reported hearing health and concluded that those with hearing loss were more likely to have an accident resulting in an injury.

- Excellent hearing: Baseline for the study
- Good hearing: 20% more likely
- A little trouble hearing: 60% more likely
- Moderate trouble: 70% more likely
- A lot of trouble: 90% more likely

Maintain your brain health: Your brain is extremely resourceful. Normally that's great, but it also means that, as your hearing declines, your brain will no longer view it as a necessity to maintain. Over time, the auditory areas of your brain that receive and process sounds and speech will atrophy, becoming less effective. Hearing aids allow your brain to be stimulated by sound again, which helps maintain your brain health as you age. At the first sign of hearing loss, consult a healthcare provider on the next steps to getting hearing aids. Find the proper ones for your situation as soon as possible to keep your brain from atrophying.

Fix your tinnitus: Tinnitus is when you constantly hear sounds that no one else can hear. If you experience tinnitus, it's important to know that hearing aids can be an effective course of treatment. With proper configuration, your hearing aids will create a sound that masks or neutralizes tinnitus. A study conducted in 2007 surveyed 230 hearing care professionals and found that approximately 60% of people suffering from tinnitus experienced minor to major improvements after wearing hearing aids and 22% had significant improvements.

Spend quality time with family: Sitting quietly at family events, because you can't keep track or hear all the conversations, should not be your solution. Hearing aids will give you the confidence to be right in the middle of all the activity and spend quality time with your family. If you have a hard time hearing your spouse and find yourself asking "what was that?" quite often, then you can imagine how much they would appreciate it if you started wearing hearing aids. Spending time together will be more enjoyable for both of you, and family events will be more engaging for everyone involved.

Instead of fighting with hearing loss every day, conquer it with hearing aids. If you or someone you know suffers from hearing loss and needs a change, contact a hearing care professional to find the right hearing aids for your lifestyle. If you would like to discuss this 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.

Quest for Fun in the Sun

Kim Davis, Advocacy Specialist – Lincoln



Looking for some fun under the sun? Here are some miscellaneous local and nationwide camping events organized for individuals and/or family members who are Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing. NCDHH does not provide endorsement of these camp activities. You may wish to explore further on the credibility the camp, its host, location, accurate and registration deadline dates.

YOUTH CAMPING

Camp Anderson (Nebraska)

July 17 – 27, 2022

Contact your child's Nebraska Regional Program service provider for additional information.

<https://nrpdhh.esu9.org>

Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults Summer Youth Programs (New York)

1. **Pre-Employment Transition Services**
June 6 – July 15, 2022 (Section I)
July 18 – 26, 2022 (Section II)
2. **My Pursuit of Work, Empowerment & Resources**
July 25 – August 5, 2022
3. **Pre-Employment Services for Transition Age**
May – August 2022

Contact your HKNC Regional Representative for additional information.

www.helenkeller.org/hknc/virtual-summer-youth-programs-2022

Gallaudet University Summer Youth Camps (Washington D.C.)

1. **Summer Youth Camps**
June 20 – 27, 2022 (Session I)
June 29 – July 6, 2022 (Session II)

www.gallaudet.edu/youth-programs/summer-youth-camps

National Technical Institute for the Deaf Youth Programs (New York)

1. **Explore Your Future Program**
July 9 – 14, 2022 or July 16 – 21, 2022
2. **Health Care Careers Exploration Camp**
July 23 – 28, 2022
3. **TechBoyz Camp**
July 23 – 28, 2022
4. **TechGirlyz Camp**
July 23 – 28, 2022

www.rit.edu/ntid/outreach#programs

NAD Youth Leadership Camp (Oregon)

June 29 – July 24, 2022

<https://youth.nad.org/ylc>

ADULT / FAMILY CAMPING

Aspen Camp of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

(Colorado)

July 8 – 11, 2022 for Forest Camp (ages 5-8)

July 14 – 18, 2022 for Creekside Camp (ages 8-12)

For hearing parents & deaf children only

<https://aspencamp.org/programs-summer-2022>

Cochlear Implant Family Camp (Colorado)

June 16 – 19, 2022 (Middle and High School CI Children)

July 28 – 31, 2022 (Elementary School CI Children)

www.listenfoundation.org/camp-what-to-expect

CHILDREN OF DEAF ADULTS CAMPING

KODA Camp – Midwest (Wisconsin)

June 26 – July 8, 2022 (ages 14 – 16)

July 10 – 22, 2022 (ages 10 – 13)

July 24 – 29, 2022 (ages 7 – 9)

www.kodamidwest.org



NCDHH

Nebraska Commission
for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



Personnel Directory

John C. Wyvill
Executive Director
john.wyvill@nebraska.gov

Cindy Woldt
Staff Assistant
cindy.woldt@nebraska.gov

Kelsey Cruz
Public Information Officer
kelsey.cruz@nebraska.gov

Kathy Scusa
Advocacy Specialist - North Platte
kathy.scusa@nebraska.gov

Abigail Giambattista
Advocacy Specialist – Lincoln
Abigail.giambattista@nebraska.gov

Ashley Wulf
Advocacy Specialist – Omaha
Ashley.wulf@nebraska.gov

Sharon Price
Behavioral Health Coordinator – Omaha
Sharon.price@nebraska.gov

Jamie Petersen
Administrative Assistant
Jamie.Petersen@nebraska.gov

Jackie Novak
Budget & Finance Manager
Jacqueline.novak@nebraska.gov

Kim Davis
Advocacy Specialist - Lincoln
kim.davis@nebraska.gov

Sharon Sinkler
Interpreter Program Coordinator
sharon.sinkler@nebraska.gov

Aaron Rothenberger
Advocacy Specialist - Kearney
aaron.rothenberger@nebraska.gov

Susan Whitaker
Advocacy Specialist – Scottsbluff
Susan.whitaker@nebraska.gov

Jeremy Daffern
Advocacy Specialist – Omaha
Jeremy.Daffern@nebraska.gov