

THE COMMUNICATOR

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Deaf & Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at the Lincoln Saltdogs & Omaha Storm Chasers!

Every year for the last eight years, folks are always asking when the next Lincoln Saltdogs game is for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Night. In addition to the Lincoln Saltdogs game, we also brought deaf and hard of hearing awareness to Omaha for a night at the Omaha Storm Chasers. It was a wonderful success to be able to provide awareness and information while enjoying baseball in both Lincoln and Omaha.

Both events featured a Silent Inning, where no announcements or sound was displayed, signing of the national anthem, and at the Omaha Storm Chasers game, community member and advocate, Linsay Darnall Jr., was featured on the big screen signing each batter's name and information for an inning!



John Wyvill & Saltdogs GM, Charlie Meyer



NeAD reps, Vicki Steinhauer Campbell & Colleen Richart with Cody McEvoy



Linsay Darnall Jr. signing batter's information



Renca Dunn with some of the NCDHH team before performing the National Anthem



NCDHH Lincoln teammates: Abby, Sharon, Kelsey, Kim & John



Omaha Storm Chasers booth with Omaha teammates: Briana, Ashley & Sharon

Legal & Rural Communication Access Funding Program Launches



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

These two programs can provide monetary support for:

- 1) The reimbursement of expenses incurred to obtain an on-site, in-person licensed sign language interpreter for an eligible appointment in any approved rural (outside of Lincoln or Omaha metro areas) area in Nebraska, and;
- 2) The reimbursement of expenses incurred to provide a qualified licensed sign language interpreter (on-site or remote) or other auxiliary aid service, such as real-time captioning or CART, during a legal appointment or meeting outside of a courtroom setting ANYWHERE in the state of Nebraska.

"COVID-19 hit all of us hard by reducing effective communication access in rural communities and limited access to justice," NCDHH Executive Director John Wyvill said. "Allocated funds will go a long way in restoring and rebuilding effective communication access in many areas. We are grateful to Gov. Ricketts, Sen. Wishart and all of the Nebraska senators who ensured barriers imposed by COVID-19 are being addressed with this funding."

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

Why is Advocacy Important?

John Wyvill, Executive Director



A definition of an advocate that I have seen describing our work is any activity by an individual or a group that influences the actions of others. Advocating can be done on a daily basis that brings about change. Why is this important? Our Government impacts and regulates services such as law enforcement, electricity, health care, and the ability to drive, just to name a few.

The Government also has the power to tax us to provide for these services. We all elected officials on the local, state, and federal level to do this, and we must be involved to ensure that our voices are heard. If we are engaged in the political progress of knowing our elected officials and telling them what matters to us, we can make substantial changes in our community. If we are active participants, it is harder to ignore. You can do this by register to vote and voting. You have the right to vote and the right to choose your leaders based on what they promised they will do. Get involved by letting those that are in office or running for office know where you stand on issues, get to know your elected officials, let them know who you are. The more active you are the more likely you will be effective as an advocate.

We cannot make changes for the better in communication access to health care, education for our children, hiring individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing without advocating. We must 1) understand the process 2) work together through collaboration and 3) cooperate with each other and our allies.

As a fellow advocate I leave you with this to think about

- If not now? When
- If not you? Who

We need all of you advocate for what matters to you. You have to advocate for yourself!

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:

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

Town Hall Meetings for Communication Access in Medical Settings

A large part of carrying out the NCDHH mission is advocating for full and effective communication access. An area in need of improvement (nationwide) is communication access in the medical setting. It is our job to continue to work with the community, stakeholders, and hospital officials and representatives to bridge the gap to ensure Nebraskans who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing receive appropriate and equal access in hospitals, doctor's offices, etc.

Our advocacy team worked with hospital and medical officials in both the Lincoln and Omaha area to organize a Town Hall Meeting where community members were able to come and share their experiences, frustrations, feedback and suggestions to promote better access for all.

On May 24, representative for Nebraska Health and Human Services, Kevin Bagley, attended a Town Hall Meeting at OAD Hall in Omaha to listen to feedback from Omaha area residents.



John Wyvill & Kevin Bagley



Behavioral Health Coordinator, Sharon Price

On August 9, representatives David Slattery with the Nebraska Hospital Association, Leslie Bonelli and Kari Watson with Bryan Health Hospital, and Shavon Rosenthal with the Bryan Physician Network.

In both meetings, there was great feedback, suggestions and responses to increase effective communication access in medical settings for Nebraskans who are deaf or hard of hearing.



Advocacy Specialists Kim Davis & Abby Giambattista



NCDHH Board Member, Vali Hitz

Deaf & Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at Henry Doorly Zoo

The Commission is back at the zoo for the annual Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha. NCDHH is partnering with Nebraska Association of the Deaf and Nebraska Hands & Voices to ensure this is another family fun-filled event.

The event will be on Sunday, September 25th at 10:00am at the Omaha zoo. Free tickets will be available on a first come, first serve basis. Stay tuned to our social media channels for more information, updates and VLOGs about this awesome day!



SAVE THE DATE

Deaf & Hard of Hearing Awareness Day

OMAHA HENRY DOORLY ZOO

Sunday, September 25



NEBRASKA
HANDS & VOICES™

Preparing Your Child's IEP

Susan Whitaker, Education Advocate/Advocacy Specialist - Scottsbluff



It's hard to believe but school will be starting in a matter of weeks! I wanted to share an article I found with some good tips on preparing for your child's IEP. Soon you will be having that first IEP meeting for the year, if you haven't already. Hopefully these tips will help you get ready for that meeting. Remember, YOU are the expert on your child! Don't be intimidated by the professionals sitting at the table with you.

You are the only one who knows your child's needs intimately. Stand up for them and make sure their educational needs are going to be met within the IEP. Here are the tips that might help you feel prepared for your child's IEP:

- **Set a meeting time that works for you.**

The law states that you have the right to hold the IEP meeting at a time that is mutually convenient. This means that if the time the school sets up is not a good time for you, you have the right to refuse that time and find a time that works for your schedule too.

- **Know who is coming to the IEP meeting.**

The Notice of Planning and Placement Team Meeting will list those who will be at the meeting. Knowing who will be there will help in planning your agenda and what you want to discuss. If there are team members who are NOT listed on this notice, you may request that they be added. This can include paraprofessionals, advocates and others. Those people who are listed MUST be in attendance at the meeting unless you agree to excuse them from being present.

- **Prepare your agenda in advance.**

Include common questions like, what is the purpose for the meeting, who requested the meeting, what are your goals for the meeting, what actions do you want the school to make and what is preventing the school from providing you with what your child needs. Having an agenda will help you stay focused on the issues you want to discuss.

- **Review your child's records.**

Be familiar with your child's educational program. Read notes from teachers for each goal and objective on the most recent IEP. Determine if there has been any progress made related to each goal and objective. Make sure the school's evaluation accurately reflects your child's educational needs.

- **Know what your child needs for related services.**

Related services are things such as transportation, speech and language, audiology, psychological, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, and counseling. Also know why your child needs specific supports and services, and the different ways your child can be supported.

- **Know your child's current levels of performance.**

Know how your child performs in reading, math, spelling, physical education, and socialization. This information can be found by reviewing testing and/or assessments that have been conducted in the IEP.

- **Maintain professionalism at the IEP meeting.**

If the meeting isn't going how you want it to DO NOT engage in any conduct that causes you to be viewed as adversarial, angry, or rude. Remember you are an equal part of the IEP meeting. Keep your anger in check and keep calm. Work to build a positive relationship with the team members. Acknowledge the good work people are doing. Keep the meeting focused on your child.

Preparing Your Child's IEP *continued*

Susan Whitaker, Education Advocate/Advocacy Specialist - Scottsbluff

- Do not feel the need to rush. You can ask to reschedule an IEP meeting if there was not enough time allotted to complete the IEP, address all your concerns or answer any of your important questions.
- Do not consent to the IEP on the day of the meeting.

Ask to have copies of all documents (evaluations, progress reports, draft IEP, data and other documents that will be reviewed at the IEP meeting) before going to the IEP. The school team should give you these documents at least 3 days before the meeting but you have to request this in writing. Let the team know that you want to review the finalized IEP and that you will make a decision regarding implementation of the IEP after you have time to review it. Go ahead and review the final IEP and reflect on what was discussed at the meeting. The school will give you the finalized IEP 5 days after the meeting. After 10 days the school will go ahead and implement the IEP.

- If things go awry, bring an advocate with you.

The important thing is don't go alone. If you are going to discuss a request or goals and objectives that you feel the school will deny or disagree with, or if you disagree with what the school is proposing, bring an advocate with you to the meeting. The presence of an advocate can change the attitudes of the school team. The advocate can bring in aspects of the laws related to special education. Also, the advocate is there to support you and the needs of your child.

I hope these tips were helpful. Remember if you feel you need an advocate or just need someone to talk to about your child's IEP you can call me as NCDHH's Education Advocate. I can be reached by calling me at 308.633.3751 (V) or 308.225.4697 (VP) or email me at susan.whitaker@nebraska.gov

Works Cited

Ten Quick Tips and Advice to Prepare for the IEP Meeting. (n.d.). Retrieved from Forte Law Group LLC: <https://www.fortelawgroup.com/ten-quick-tips-advice-prepare-iep-meeting/>

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



Returning to Normal: Building Your Coping Toolbox

Sharon Price, Behavioral Health Coordinator



Have you become accustomed to zoom chats? Online webinars or connecting with peers, classmates on chats? Meeting with friends and family via zoom? We may have gotten used to saving time and travel expenses. You are not alone! Many have forgotten what it is like to meet with others in person. For some, social anxiety is a new symptom they have not had before the pandemic.

What is social anxiety? According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), social anxiety is more than shyness. It's a fear that does not go away and affects everyday activities, self-confidence, relationships and work or school life.

Many people occasionally worry about social situations, but someone with social anxiety feels overly worried before, during and after them. The feelings may be more profound for a person who is Deaf or hard of hearing as they often rely on visual senses and realize others are looking at them in person, can view the whole body, observe signing instead of faces and signed communication from a distance behind a filtered lens. How can we cope with the rapid changes, fears of being seen in public, returning in close physical quarters with our family, friends and co-workers? We can build our toolbox of coping strategies. How, you may ask?

Here are some tips to manage with the return to normalcy:

1. Go at your own pace. We may have gotten accustomed to going at our own pace during the pandemic whether it be technical issues, getting laid off, not meeting with others. Pay attention to your body and mind, you know what is best for you. You may notice others scrambling to take long awaited vacations, meeting with families again. You do not need to do what others are doing, you can do things at your own pace, do what is best for you. Consider what you have been missing the most, it could be doing a simple outdoor activity, meeting with a best friend, a long-abandoned hobby or taking a new class.
2. Take care of yourself. You may have noticed the different time frame for places to reopen, rapidly changing policies about whether to wear a mask. When to have the vaccine and whether it is needed. This may feel overwhelming and confusing for many people including yourself. You may feel the need to do things your own way, at your own pace and you are right. There is no road map or set of defined rules on how to go about your own way. You do what you feel is right for yourself.
3. Allow yourself to grieve. During the pandemic, many have lost loved ones from covid or other health issues. Many lost their jobs and homes. More lost their familiar structures and sense of normalcy. It was a very sad time all around the globe. Talk with a family member or a friend or someone you trust. If you have a deaf club in your area that has resumed in person activities, go if you can. Attend local deaf events or workshops or make plans with friends to meet at a local diner.

You have learned to cope with the pandemic, you may not feel like it, but it has made you emotionally stronger and you can handle returning to normalcy better than you realize. Remember the times you were forced to deal with people wearing masks, unable to lip-read, and to keep your distance from others? You have become stronger with the coping tools you learned to use during the pandemic.

Continue to attend your counseling sessions and engage with your mental health providers if you currently are and be consistent with your medication. One benefits the most from taking their medication consistently in conjunction with professional mental health care. Talk about your feelings about returning to normalcy after the pandemic and allow yourself to grieve at your own pace. Maintain positive support systems, continue to talk about your feelings and engage in healthy activities that work for you. Remember to always wear your belt of coping tools.

If you or a loved one is deaf or hard of hearing and need mental health care advocacy, resources and connections, please do not hesitate to contact me at Sharon.price@nebraska.gov.

Meet Briana: Advocacy & Technology Specialist

Briana Stradinger, Omaha



Wondering who is the new Advocacy/Technology Specialist at Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing? I am! My name is Briana Stradinger, and I was born in York, Nebraska, moved to Olathe, Kansas for a short while and then moved to Papillion. My identified was found as Deaf and female. I graduated at Gallaudet University in Washington DC and received a bachelor's in social work.

After graduating at Gallaudet University, I moved to Omaha and have had experience working at: Prime Home Development Disabilities as Direct Support Professional, Saint Francis Ministries as Case Manager and Medical Social Work at Methodist Hospital. As of right now, I am a grad student at Dordt University to pursue my master's in clinical social work. My dream job is to work at a hospital as a social worker and as a therapist for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.

Some fun facts about myself is that I am married to my best friend and have known him since middle school, a proud Deaf mother to my three months old son and recently found out that he is currently identified as Hard of Hearing. My hobbies are hunting and fishing.

I am extremely thrilled to work Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) with awesome teammates. The fact is that our greatest successes in life often come through helping others to succeed, and without question, when you focus on helping others succeed your eventual payoff will always be far greater than your investment. You may contact me at briana.stradinger@nebraska.gov

Big Thanks & Farewell

Abby Giambattista, Advocacy Specialist / Staff Interpreter



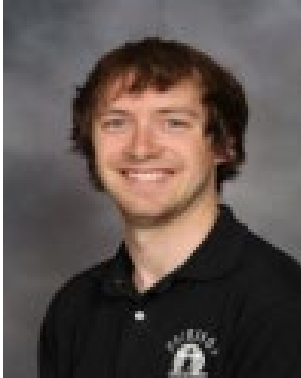
The past two years have been quite the whirlwind. Since working at the commission, I have had countless opportunities to connect and collaborate with our local Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities, as well as work with interpreters all across the state. For this, I am incredibly grateful. Being on the NCDHH team has been an extensively fulfilling portion of my career. This being said, as lovely as the time has been, I am waving goodbye to NCDHH on August 10th and hello to another adventure within our community.

If you are in Lincoln and require an Advocacy Specialist, fear not! Kim Davis will be Lincoln's main Advocacy Specialist until announced otherwise. You will be in great hands.

If I have had the opportunity to work with you or for you in my time here, thank you! It has been my genuine pleasure.

Aaron Rothenberger's Interview with Ryan Little

Petersen Activity Center - Kearney



For my summer newsletter I had the pleasure of interviewing Rylan Little, Program Assistant at the Peterson Senior Activity Center. I was able to ask some questions about social interactions in senior centers.

Could you talk about the benefit of social interaction in seniors?

For a large portion of our patrons having social interactions here at the Senior Center on a daily basis is extremely important. They all have friends they meet here on a daily basis and really look forward to being here each day to talk and catch up with their friends.

A good percentage of people who attend regularly live alone and this gives them a place to go and socialize with friends as well as make new friends. A countless number of friendships have been formed here at the Senior Center from simply socializing and meeting new people. Covid was very hard on a lot of Seniors who depended on us for that social interaction and we found that for some it changed them a lot to be stuck at home without that interaction while we were closed.

How important is it to have effective communication for that social interaction?

A really neat thing about the senior population is that 90% of them still prefer to talk face to face, or simply pick up the phone and call, as opposed to e-mailing or texting. As we all know, there is a lot of non-verbal communication that goes on between people when you are in person. I have found in this position that I have been forced out of my comfort zone (e-mailing and texting) to more effectively communicate with patrons in the senior age group. Speaking clearly, slowly, and with an elevated tone help to clearly communicate. When my wife asks why I am talking so loud at home I have to apologize and tell her I forgot that I am not at the Senior Center.

Do you have any tips to help with social interaction?

If you visit the Senior Center during the lunch hour you will find anywhere from 50-100 senior citizens sitting at tables and socializing. They do not have their faces buried in their phones or computers. We always encourage people to sit with new people and socialize and get to know someone new. Even though it can be uncomfortable to sit with strangers, as the saying goes, strangers are just friends you haven't met yet.

Rylan Little was born and raised in Kearney, and attended UNK pursuing a degree in Recreation Management with a Minor in Sports Administration. He has worked as the Program Assistant at the Peterson Senior Activity Center since it opened in January 2010. His wife Kayla is a 3rd grade teacher at Buffalo Hills Elementary and they have 3 kids, Treyton (7), Talan (4), and Tinslee (just turned 1). When he is not at work he enjoys spending time with his family, hunting, and playing pickleball.

News & Upcoming Happenings

Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator



In the blink of an eye, another summer is soon coming to an end. However, NCDHH has been busy with numerous projects and planning some wonderful continuing education opportunities for this Fall! First, in April of this year, Governor Ricketts signed LB1014 into law. This is a bill which appropriated federal funds to the state of Nebraska, including specific funds appropriated to NCDHH to provide effective communication support in rural areas of the state, as well as access to legal services.

The two programs we created with these federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds are called the “Rural Communication Access Fund (RCAF)” and “Legal Communication Access Fund (LCAF).” This funding will be available for two fiscal years, beginning on July 1, 2022.

The two programs can provide for:

- 1) The reimbursement of expenses incurred to obtain an on-site, in-person licensed sign language interpreter for an eligible appointment in any approved **rural area in Nebraska** (outside of the Lincoln or Omaha metro areas), and;
- 2) The reimbursement of expenses incurred to provide a qualified licensed sign language interpreter (on-site or remote) or other auxiliary aid service, such as real-time captioning or CART, during a legal appointment or meeting outside of a courtroom setting ANYWHERE in the state of Nebraska, including Lincoln or Omaha.

Additional information about these two programs can be found on our website: www.ncdhh.nebraska.gov/arpa. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our office at 402.471.3593 or email ncdhh@nebraska.gov.

Second, I’m thrilled to announce that NCDHH will be hosting an **IN-PERSON** interpreter workshop at UNO on Friday evening, September 30th from 6 to 9 pm and Saturday, October 1st from 9 am to 4 pm. “Interpreting in Mental Health Settings” will be presented in ASL by Steve Hamerdinger, Director of Office of Deaf Services at the Alabama Department of Mental Health. Steve is a Deaf professional and advocate for deaf and hard of hearing people. His work revolves around contexts related to deaf and hard of hearing persons and their mental well-being from childhood to end of life. He is an advocate for Deaf rights and has been a prominent influence in this field since the early 1980s. Steve is also one of the leaders of the Alabama Mental Health Interpreter Training (MHIT) Project which is a comprehensive program that trains interpreters in a practice profession approach to mental health interpreting. Mark your calendars because you don’t want to miss this awesome opportunity!! More information and registration forms will be coming soon.

Last, but not least, NCDHH will be offering two **FREE** webinars through Zoom on Wednesday, October 12th or Monday, October 24th from 6 to 9 pm. “Ethical Application of Demand Control Schema: Today’s Ethics and Evaluation” will be presented in ASL by Jonathan Shive of Shive Solutions. The same webinar will be offered on two different dates to afford participants the best opportunity to obtain 3 hours of continuing education specifically in ethics to meet licensure requirements in Nebraska. During this workshop, Jonathan will discuss the relevant factors that guide ASL interpreters through ethical decision-making processes. The influence of personal ethics, ethical standards and other frameworks will be discussed. Pick one of the dates, mark your calendars for this awesome opportunity, and stay tuned for more information to come!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at Sharon.sinkler@nebraska.gov.

ADA Compliance with Video Remote Interpreters

Ashley Wulf, Advocacy Specialist - Omaha



The last few months I have noticed several numbers of consumers express their concern about using Video Remote Interpreter (VRI) during their doctor, dentist, or any appointments. I want to take this opportunity to help the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities learn about the America with Disabilities Act (ADA)'s compliance for using VRI.

In ADA's effective communication section 36.303(f) there is an explanation on the expectation for using VRI in any settings.

"Video remote interpreting (VRI) services. A public accommodation that chooses to provide qualified interpreters via VRI service shall ensure that it provides –

- (1) Real-time, full-motion video and audio over a dedicated high-speed, wide-bandwidth video connection or wireless connection that delivers high-quality video images that do not produce lags, choppy, blurry, or grainy images, or irregular pauses in communication.**
- (2) A sharply delineated image that is large enough to display the interpreter's face, arms, hands, and fingers, and the participating individual's face, arms, hands, and fingers, regardless of his or her body position.**
- (3) A clear, audible transmission of voices; and**
- (4) Adequate training to users of the technology and other involved individuals so that they may quickly and efficiently set up and operate the VRI." (2017)**

For the first and third compliance they must follow, this mean that VRI must have a clear picture with no blurry or the interpreter isn't frozen occasionally, and the voice must be clear from both interpreter's side and deaf and hard of hearing user's side of screen. If the video isn't clear or the audio isn't clear, it could mean that they don't have a high-speed internet which mean they are more likely to violate the ADA compliance. BUT sometimes it could be from the interpreter's end where they don't have the high-speed internet at their workplace.

For the second compliance they must have a screen that is big enough to show the interpreter's face, arms, and fingers. For example, if they are using a tablet with screen that only show half of the interpreter's face and body, that is violate the ADA compliance if they cannot fix the screen and continue their appointment.

For fourth and last compliance the person who set up the VRI must be trained in setting it up. If the person set up the VRI and they don't know how to set it up and doesn't get the training in setting it up, they are more likely violating the ADA compliance.

If one or more of those happened to you during your appointment you can reach out to Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and we can assist you with the grievance.

Americans with disabilities act title III regulations. Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in Public Accommodations and Commercial Facilities. (2017, January 17). Retrieved July 29, 2022, from https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/titleIII_2010/titleIII_2010_regulations.htm

Reflections

Kim Davis, Advocacy Specialist – Lincoln



July 26, 2022 marks the 32nd Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This brings me to reflect how far along we have come. And where we are lacking. There are still challenges with obtaining sign language interpreter services in various setting. And accessibility challenges with the ever-changing technologies.

The Rural and Legal Communication Access Funds couldn't have come in a better timing during this great need for access to various community, medical and legal settings. Hopefully this will alleviate some of the concerns that many service providers have on the cost of sign language interpreter services and, most importantly of all, to see the value of using them. Using sign language interpreters are not only beneficial for individuals who rely on sign language for communication, it also benefits service providers to directly interact and do their essential functions with ease.

There are several ever-changing technologies that are either constantly being upgraded or invented. Given the pandemic, many digital video platforms have submerged creating myriad barriers with access to audio and/or visual quality, captions, and interpreters. Many of the digital video platforms also depends on the users' network speed, video camera quality, type of device (such as computer, tablet, smartphone, smart display), and, of course, maneuvering the hardware and software technologies.

Facing these hurdles depends on YOU! Self-advocacy plays an important role in every individual. As well a collaboration effort in group-advocacy. Reach out to me if you and/or your group are interested in learning more about the Americans with Disabilities Act, other relevant federal and state statutes and regulations, and various advocacy tips. NCDHH offers FREE training and presentations.

As a Civil Rights Leader and U.S. Congressman, Representative John Lewis quoted, "There comes a time when you have to say something, when you have to make a little noise, when you have to move your feet. This is the time. When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, say something. Do something."



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*

Accepting Your Hearing Loss

Kathy Scusa, Advocacy Specialist – North Platte



In 1969, Kubler-Ross outlined the five stages of emotions experienced by people dealing with grief. Because hearing loss is a significant change in someone's life, the complex emotions and sensations associated with grief will often follow. If you're dealing with hearing loss, this is a handy guide to let you know what to expect and to reassure you that it's normal to feel this way.

Before we move onto the stages, it's important to keep in mind that individuals are unique. As such, we do not move through these 5 stages in the same order and we do not follow a predictable time frame. People jump from one stage to another and back again. You may be experiencing several stages at the same time. It's your hearing loss journey and is unique to you! There is no right or wrong way or time frame to get to the final stage! If your loved one is going through hearing loss, it's not uncommon that you might also go through these feelings. This is also perfectly natural.

First Stage: Denial

Unlike some problems, hearing loss is invisible. Because of this, it is often easy to ignore. Many suffering from hearing loss will go through denial, blaming the speech of others for their lack of hearing. They might also argue that everyone is over-reacting. "I'm fine, stop worrying!" or "I hear everything I want or need to." are common responses of people who are in denial about their hearing loss. Because individuals are in denial, an initial diagnosis of hearing loss can result in a sense of shock, disbelief, and unreality. This is all normal and is a temporary emotion, another stage will replace it.

Second Stage: Anger

Individuals who are suffering from hearing loss have lost a valuable sensory organ. It is understandable that this loss leads to anger and resentment. As with many emotions, this anger can be pushed onto loved ones. A person dealing with hearing loss might resent other people for not immediately understanding and changing their habits to accommodate their hearing loss. For example, they might get angry if they feel left out of a conversation or if they mishear a question and respond inappropriately. There may also be a general type of anger whereby an individual feels that the world is unfair and unjust. Because there is no one to be angry at, the response to this might be to deny the anger. This can be harmful to mental health and people should seek some help from a kind mentor or trained professional.

Third Stage: Bargaining

During the bargaining stage, an individual enters into an arrangement in the hopes of preventing the inevitable. This stage of grief is not easily applied to hearing loss, yet, there are still examples. An individual might make deals with a spiritual entity, exchanging good behavior for a day of hearing. This stage of grief is private and might only be shared with a spiritual advisor. Even so, bargaining should not be ignored because it might lead to guilt, stress or anxiety. It could also lead to more anger.

Fourth Stage: Depression

Hearing loss is a challenge. Suddenly things that were once easy are now difficult. For example, dining in a busy restaurant now requires more concentration than before. Those with hearing loss are also likely to miss out on funny or important conversations. This could leave the person feeling left out and isolated. This isolation and loneliness can contribute towards depression, as can the need to depend on others. Financial worries, such as job uncertainty or the cost of hearing care and hearing aids, can also contribute towards anxiety and depression. Loved ones and professionals can help with this depression by taking steps to ensure that those with hearing loss aren't left out.

Fifth Stage: Acceptance

Most individuals dealing with grief and loss will eventually come to acceptance. At this point, an individual is neither depressed or angry about their hearing loss. Acceptance of any loss takes time and this acceptance might not be permanent; individuals might move in and out of it. When an individual does accept their hearing loss, life gets easier. For example, they will follow recommendations about hearing instruments. They might also use a range of strategies to help make their lives easier. Hearing loss is a challenging experience to accept. Some individuals might find that they go through a series of complex emotions. If this is you or a loved one, know that this is perfectly normal. It is part of processing the loss.

If you suspect that you have hearing loss or if you're seeking a professional to talk through these emotions with you, The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has a Behavioral Health Specialist (Sharon Price) who would be happy to work with you. If needed, she can help you find a counselor experienced in helping people with hearing loss. 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.

Why it is Important to Prepare before Traveling

Jeremy Daffern, Advocacy Specialist – Omaha



Here is an example: Suppose Peter is ready for trip to visit his parents for a weekend travel in a different state. Peter was not prepared because he woke up late and quickly pack all his stuff into his suitcase. After packing his stuff into his suitcase, he took off. Peter does not have a car this time and he requested Uber on his phone and that is another addition time for being late. As Peter got to the airport, he became frustrated, realized that he forgot his airplane ticket, wallet, and jacket.

He became angry and decided return home to grab all his needs. Peter felt like he must start over again to request Uber on his phone, left airport, return home and missed his flight.

It is a lot worse with COVID-19 for traveling. Today, we still experience COVID-19 but not as serious as before. Travelers are thrilled to take a flight and create vacation plans. Many of the airline companies struggled to catch up with scheduling, cancelling, and delaying due to COVID-19, and sadly, retain the employees during that time.

Hopefully this scenario will help you be better prepared for your next travel. These kinds of stories are the most common for traveling and not being prepared ahead of time. Some can lash out during the trip. Now, ask yourself... Is your alarm set up? Are you prepared to travel? Double checking to make sure all of things you need? Forgot something? Here are the great tips to help you to be prepared for travel ahead of time.

1. Set up an alarm night before
2. Pack your clothes and precious items in suitcase night before.
3. Put the suitcase by the door include airplane ticket, wallet, and jacket.
4. Use the checklist to make sure that you have everything ready to go.
5. Download and use your Uber and Airline app and check in.
6. Be at the airport an hour early and go through the security.
7. Plan out your frequent flier status.
8. Check the weather forecast in your destination.
9. Grab food and drink at the airport if you have time.
10. Sit and wait by the gate and keep eye on the updating information,

Hope you enjoyed reading my pre-travel checklist thing to do before a flight. Now, hope that you can prepare yourself before going on a trip. If you have any questions on how to prepare yourself to travel, do not hesitate to contact me at Jeremy.daffern@nebraska.gov. Happy travels!

NCDHH

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