

Nebraska Sign Language Interpreter Review Board Meeting

Thursday, August 17th, 2023

Omaha Association of the Deaf Hall

4050 Hillsdale Ave

Omaha, NE

A. Welcome

The meeting of the Nebraska Interpreter Review Board was called to order at 1:01 PM by Chairperson Ms. Meghann Cassidy.

B. Notice of Open Meetings Act

Chairperson Meghann Cassidy announced the notice of the meeting was duly given, posted, published, and tendered in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, and all board members received notice simultaneously by email. The agenda has been kept current and available at the Commission's office and on their website. The materials generally used by the board for this meeting are on the table in a public folder that is available to the general public for this meeting in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, {Neb. Rev. Stat. 84-1412 (8)}. A copy of the Open Meetings Act is available with the public folder for the duration of the meeting in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

C. Roll Call

For the record, Chairperson Meghann Cassidy, Vice Chairperson Tami Richardson-Nelson, Margie Propp, Vicki Steinhauer-Campbell, Briana Stradinger and Arlene Gunderson, NCDHH Executive Director were present. Sharon Sinkler, NCDHH Interpreter Program Coordinator and Gina Petersen, NCDHH Administrative Technician were also in attendance.

Interpreters: Ben Sparks and Amber Tucker

Minutes: Gina Petersen

D. Review of Agenda

Chairperson Meghann Cassidy reviewed the agenda with the Board Members.

E. Acceptance of Agenda

Ms. Briana Stradinger moved to accept the agenda as written, seconded by Ms. Margie Propp. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting ayes.

F. Acceptance of Minutes

There were no changes suggested. Vice Chairperson, Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson made the motion to approve, seconded by Ms. Margie Propp. With no further

discussion, the motion carried with all voting ayes.

G. Mentoring Discussion – Meghann Cassidy, Chairperson

Chairperson Cassidy stated that she sent out an email to board members regarding a mentoring program and asked if anyone had any comments, questions or concerns on what she wrote. At Ms. Propp’s request, members took a few minutes to review the document before discussion.

Ms. Propp asked where the surplus funds would come from, to which Ms. Cassidy answered NCDHH. For further clarification, Ms. Gunderson explained that licensure renewal money is put into a fund, which is considered the surplus that could be used for mentoring.

Ms. Sinkler pointed out that the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) also has funding that they are investing into training mentors and it was never stated specifically that these funds were for Educational interpreters only. Ms. Gunderson added that this information was found out about so recently because the point of contact for the funding did not share this information with NCDHH.

Mrs. Richardson-Nelson asked how effective their existing mentor program has been since it has been around. Ms. Sinkler responded, stating that it is very effective and NDE/Nebraska Regional Programs has statistics and data to attest to the program’s effectiveness. However, many of the program’s mentors are located out of state, and they are looking to train their own mentors.

Ms. Steinhauer-Campbell stated that Vocational Rehab (VR) is under NDE and they have heard nothing about this new program from anyone. What should happen is more collaboration with NCDHH. Mrs. Richardson-Nelson agreed, stating that a conversation between NDE and NCDHH seems critical, and through that maybe NCDHH can support the mentor program.

Discussion on NDE and NCDHH collaboration

Mrs. Richardson-Nelson suggested making an official statement to the commission staff and board, recommending that they pursue the idea and discussion of establishing a mentor program in Nebraska.

Mrs. Richardson-Nelson proposed a vote to accept the official statement, seconded by Ms. Gunderson. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting ayes.

H. NCDHH Executive Director Report – Arlene Gunderson

a. Agency Updates

- Ms. Sharon Sinkler, NCDHH Interpreting Program Coordinator, announced her official retirement, tentative January 1st, 2024.
- Ms. Gunderson attended the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) conference and shared that RID recognized the disruption it has caused for the interpreting field. She presented a chart that reviewed what has led to such disruption, including leadership instability, lawsuits, and internal structure issues.
- Ms. Gunderson shared that RID is working to get back on track by getting in touch with state directors and shared another PowerPoint slide that detailed the strategic priorities that were developed, including organizational transformation, effectiveness/relevance, and focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).
- Ms. Cassidy asked Ms. Gunderson if RID has a plan to increase the numbers of interpreters, to which Ms. Gunderson responded that RID is relying on states to figure that out individually, so they do not have much to offer for help. Therefore, Ms. Gunderson is developing an idea to begin outreach in high schools through ASL classes and hiring interns from Gallaudet. Mrs. Richardson-Nelson mentioned that this might require working with NDE, which the board discussed previously. Ms. Gunderson agreed that yes, this is to be a topic of discussion in a future meeting.
- Ms. Steinhauer-Campbell raised the question – are there any other states that have an apprentice program already set up? Ms. Gunderson answered yes, Vermont as well as Kansas should be looked at. Ms. Cassidy stated that it is important to look at what works, so that those practices can be brought to Nebraska instead of trying to reinvent the wheel. Ms. Gunderson then expressed her desire to set up a meeting with University of Nebraska at Omaha to see what they are doing locally with their interpreting program.

Discussion on UNO Interpreting/ASL program

- Ms. Gunderson mentioned the Nebraska Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (neRID), asking why they don't have a representative on the Interpreter Review Board (IRB). Mrs. Richardson-Nelson explained that there are certain roles that exist that are already filled by the current board members.
- A suggestion was made by Ms. Gunderson to meet in Omaha instead of Lincoln at the next IRB meeting and hold a roundtable community forum. Ms. Sinkler pointed out that the IRB still must meet as a board, so the community forum could be after the meeting.
- Ms. Gunderson declared that by the next IRB meeting in November, apprenticeship information should be ready to share and the meeting

with NDE about mentoring will have happened, so hopefully there will be good conversation to develop an action plan.

- Members discussed neRID, UNO and UNO students, Boystown, Interpreter Referral Agencies such as Linguabee, DSU, etc.... as well as Ronda Rankin's UNMC Deaf Centric Hospital group for who to invite to the forum. Mrs. Richardson-Nelson along with Ms. Steinhauer-Campbell volunteered to take the lead on booking OAD, providing food, and reaching out to community members for the community forum.
- Ms. Stradinger motioned to change the location and time of the next IRB meeting from Lincoln, NE from 1:00 to 3:00 PM to Omaha, NE from 3:00 to 5:00 PM. Additionally, including 6:00 to 9:00 PM for the community forum.
 - Discussion: Ms. Gunderson agreed to handle the event's promotion and reach out to Minnesota's state agency to see how they handled their community forum.
- With no further discussion, the motion passed with all voting ayes.

b. SWOT – next steps?

- Ms. Gunderson brought the SWOT analysis before the full board, and it was decided that mentoring should be a priority topic.

I. Public Comments

- a. Ms. Bethany Koubsky, community interpreter, acknowledged that she came to listen to the mentoring discussion, as she used to be a member of the IRB and wants to participate in a mentor program in the future. Additionally, she will be attending the community forum in November.

J. Old Business

a. Notification to other states regarding interpreter license suspension

- Mrs. Richardson-Nelson stated that she wanted to find out if the RID conference had any information about the notification system between states regarding interpreter license suspension. Ms. Gunderson answered, saying that RID is not currently paying attention to the states. This means Nebraska is responsible for its own notification of any license suspensions for now.
- Ms. Cassidy asked Ms. Gunderson if there are any thoughts about changing the licensure requirements for Nebraska. Ms. Gunderson and

Ms. Sinkler answered that the rules and regulations could be changed if deemed necessary, but it would be a hard process to do so, though there has been discussion that the current rules and regulations are restrictive. Additionally, Ms. Gunderson mentioned that she is looking into developing a screening, evaluation and monitoring for accountability and quality of interpreters to make sure that they aren't plateauing. This would be a project for the person who replaces Ms. Sinkler as Interpreter Program Coordinator.

K. New Business

- a. **Next meeting date:** Friday, November 17th, 3:00 to 5:00 PM at Omaha Association of the Deaf hall.
 - **Community Forum:** Tentatively set for Friday, November 17th, 6:00 to 9:00 PM at Omaha Association of the Deaf hall.

L. Announcements

- a. **Deaf interpreter/Hearing interpreter Training**
 - October 6th, 7th, and 8th, Reagan Thibodeau is returning to Omaha for DI/HI training. Location to be determined
- b. **Welcome**
 - Ms. Vicki-Steinhauer-Campbell was officially recognized and welcomed as a new member of the IRB.

M. Adjourn

- a. Chairperson Meghann Cassidy made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:39 PM, and Ms. Steinhauer-Campbell seconded. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting ayes.