

# STATE OF COLORADO



**Colorado Department of Human Services**

*people who help people*

**OFFICE OF ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIPS  
BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS DIVISION  
COLORADO COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**

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**COLORADO COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING  
COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
Connections for Independent Living  
1331 8<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Greeley, CO 80631  
March 6, 2014**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the Regular Meeting to order at 4:13 pm.

**2. ROLL CALL**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Commissioners Debbie Mohny (Chair), Kirk Neuroth (Vice Chair), Leslie Ralphe (Secretary), Liz Konkell, Mary Pat Graham-Kelly, Lisa Weiss.

Amy Beckett participated remotely.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

(none)

**CCDHH STAFF PRESENT:**

Cheri Davis, Legal Auxiliary Services Manager; Timothy Chevalier, Outreach Consultant for the Deaf Community; JoAnne Hirsch, Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Coordinator.

**INTERPRETERS/CART REPORTER:**

Interpreters: Darlene Ensenat, Terri Tupps, Kelly Turner, Wendy Hill, Janelle Butler.

CART Reporter: Claudette Mondragon

**3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

The agenda was approved.

**4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Approval of the December 5, 2013 minutes was postponed until the June meeting.

## 5. REPORTS

### Commission Chair Report, Chair Mohney

- Chair Mohney thanked the interpreters and the CART reporter for their services and expressed appreciation to the Colorado Department of Human Services and the Commission staff for their work, and to all those attending for their participation.
- Chair Mohney explained that the commissioners are appointed by the governor to represent the needs of their respective constituencies. The terms for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Interpreter positions will expire on June 30, 2014. The terms for the Late-Deafened, Parent, Professional and Public representatives will continue to the end of June, 2016. Vacancy announcements for the expiring terms will be publicized soon.
- Hearing loss has become more visible in the media. As increased exposure to personal technological devices takes its toll, more adults and adolescents have become affected. Hearing loss and tinnitus are the most prevalent service-related disability for veterans receiving federal compensation. It is estimated that close to a million people in Colorado suffer from hearing loss.
- The commission's purpose is to ensure that the state of Colorado accommodates people with hearing loss. Because of the wide range in hearing loss types and communication needs, the programs must remain flexible, evolving with available technologies. The two outreach consultant staff positions are designed to focus separately on the Deaf and the hard of hearing populations, whose needs are often different. The grant programs provide another way to reach out into the community and respond to diverse needs.
- In the years since the commission was formed in 2000, it has established several programs administered by the staff. Telecommunications equipment is provided to those who cannot afford it, and there are programs designed to provide communication access in legal settings and mental health services. Citizens are encouraged to participate in meetings and contact the staff and board with their input.

### Commission Administrator's Report, Cheri Davis and Staff

- Cheri Davis provided the report as Administrator Moers was absent due to a death in the family.
- Ms. Davis reported that the community forum following the meeting would provide an update on a collaborative project involving Hands and Voices, Colorado Association of the Deaf, and Rocky Mountain Deaf School, recipients of the previous year's grant for improving educational services for deaf and hard of hearing students in Colorado.
- The staff has recently convened a deaf-blind task force to determine the needs of the deaf-blind community and develop action plans. A relationship with this constituent community developed as a natural result of the commission receiving a grant for the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program under TEDP. The task force has provided a tremendous amount of useful guidance so far.
- Ms. Davis also reported on the Legal Auxiliary Service program, which provides sign language interpreters and CART providers to the state court system, for probation, and for court-ordered treatment. The office was recently contacted by the MARIE Center, a regional center in Colorado serving eleven states that is charged with increasing the

quality of legal interpreters in the region. The commission is now working with the MARIE Center to train interpreters who are legally qualified but not yet legally certified with RID (the national Registry of Interpreters). RID awards an SC:L (Specialist Certificate: Legal) a national certification. While each state has its individual qualification requirements, the RID certification is recognized anywhere in the nation. The MARIE Center has received a grant to increase the number of interpreters in the region with SC:L certification and has asked the commission to collaborate with them on the project.

- The Legal Auxiliary Services program also held a Coffee and Conversation Workshop recently. Two police officers came to discuss their jobs from their perspective, which was educational for the interpreters in attendance. Part of that presentation included footage from a DUI stop, which the officers analyzed and discussed with interpreters.
- Ms. Davis is currently visiting courtrooms to determine which settings would be appropriate for video remote interpreting (VRI). Courts are installing video equipment they hope to use for sign and spoken language interpreting as well. A few states, including Minnesota, California and Washington state, have established pilot programs using VRI. Observing what works in various settings will help determine how to proceed with VRI in Colorado.
- Ms. Davis and Timothy Chevalier, Outreach Consultant for the Deaf Community, were recently asked by the Judicial Department to join a conference call meeting to provide information for the self-help centers available in many of the district courthouses, where individuals without attorneys can go for help filling out forms and getting information. Ms. Davis and Mr. Chevalier provided information about the commission in general and about legal auxiliary services specifically. Mr. Chevalier also provided information about cultural and linguistic issues that may affect communication. Legal Auxiliary Services does provide interpreters for people who go to these centers, but the individual may have to make an appointment to come back if an interpreter is not readily available. It's important to make the community aware that those self-help centers are available and that they can arrange for interpreting services ahead of time.
- Mr. Chevalier provided an update on Outreach and Consultative Services. They have been working with police and sheriff departments who have been ordered to receive training as a result of complaints filed by deaf persons. The law enforcement departments have contacted the commission for training. Some of these departments are seeking training as a result of lawsuits; others are proactively asking for guidance. Outreach and Consultative Services has trained or is currently working with police and sheriff's departments in Adams County, Arapahoe County, Carbonale, Colorado Springs, Morgan County, Pitkin County, Weld County and Pueblo. Most of these trainings involve a pre- and post-test to determine effectiveness. The Colorado Springs Police Department was asked to evaluate the training, and a large percentage of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the training was relevant. Pre-tests indicated not all trainees understood civil rights requirements under ADA, but post-tests indicated 100% understanding. Another training exercise demonstrated the difficulties of lip-reading; in the pre-test, most respondents believed that they could lip-read well, but in the post-test, 100% agreed that they could not lip-read well. A critical portion of the training covered the illegal practice of using children to interpret for their parents, and this was a challenging concept, as many police officers use children to interpret for their Spanish-

speaking parents, though that is not permitted under ADA. Unfortunately, the training was not effective in clarifying this issue, so more work must be done to educate law enforcement about that practice.

- Outreach and Consultative Services (OCS) has also been working with the Department of Corrections at the Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility in Canon City. Initially the Canon City officials believed that they had a progressive system because of their emergency strobe lights and staff training, which was not clearly articulated. They provided free hearing aids. They had a TTY (which is not effective for many ASL users), phone amplification, and they claimed they provided interpreting services, but it is not clear whether these services met appropriate standards. However, as a result of their meetings with OCS they are in the process of providing audio induction loops for meeting rooms, and have purchased twelve FM system units to be used by inmates with telecoils in their hearing aids. Inmates had expressed frustration with probationary classes that included interpreters placed at a distance from on-screen projections as well as English language-dependent classes. Officials have responded by changing the classroom configurations, adding adjustable video units and improving how they provide interpreters and teach. They have contracted with two interpreting agencies to provide qualified services and are investigating Video Relay Services. Mr. Chevalier and Administrator Moers plan to visit again in the spring, and hopefully meet with the seven Deaf and hard of hearing inmates currently there.
- In response to a question from Chair Mohney about the availability of Video Relay or captioned telephones, Mr. Chevalier explained that many inmates, sexual predators for example, are forbidden access to the internet, and both of those technologies rely on the internet. These accommodations are still being negotiated. Currently an inmate who wants to use the phone must request TTY equipment from the guard, and there is a time limit, which is a further burden on someone attempting to slowly type words rather than speak or sign them. Officials have been apprised of this, and so they have agreed to allow longer time periods for using the TTY. However, one inmate has been incarcerated for seven years without the ability to communicate with his deaf parents with VRS.
- JoAnne Hirsch, Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Coordinator, gave an update on the program. Ms. Hirsch recently did an update on the program in order to eliminate outdated equipment and provide the most advanced technology available. She has recently added a new signaler, worn on the wrist, which vibrates when there is an incoming call. Another feature that might be helpful (to the elderly, for example) is a button on the signaler that allows the user to open up the phone line before physically picking up the receiver. A user can also program up to three emergency numbers into the device to use in the event of a fall or another emergency. A light signaler and a loud ring signaler are still also available. Two new phones provide features designed for low-vision users, such as large buttons and a larger screen, with fonts up to size 24. As the commission works to expand services to deaf-blind persons, the TEDP will continue to incorporate more technology to address those needs.
- Three new equipment demonstration centers have been established. Grand Junction has closed a center and a new one has been opened at the Independence Center there. Fort Collins and Greeley now have demonstration centers, and Ms. Hirsch is working on adding centers on the Western Slope and Pueblo area.

- Ms. Hirsch has broadened program outreach from a mostly senior-focused one to a broader public audience that will still target seniors but will also be a presence at health-related or general expos, reaching out also to family members of people who might need technological assistance or general information about the commission and its programs and services. Ms. Hirsch has contacted dozens of phone and internet service providers, and a majority of them have agreed to include a marketing piece that she has created to inform users about the program and equipment available to them. In March and April, for example, about 4000 consumers in rural areas will receive the information about the TEDP program in their bill. Other companies have agreed to include the information on websites or in newsletters.
- Ms. Hirsch has been meeting with persons in the Department of Education and in Child Welfare to inform them about this technology and its availability. She is also working with libraries, such as the Denver Public Library, which has video phone technology to educate them about this technology.
- The wireless equipment program has been very successful, but is not available to many who could use it because of the consumer's financial obligation for monthly service costs. A potential solution under consideration is to provide a wi-fi enabled device with no financial obligation for service (unless the consumer wished to purchase it separately).
- The Federal Communications Commission has approved a third year of the pilot program for "I Can Connect" (ICC) the National Deaf Blind Equipment Distribution Program. Once this pilot program is fine tuned, it will become a permanent program with continuous FCC funding. The grant for this year has increased to about \$162,000, and currently serves about 50 deaf-blind consumers of all ages across the state. In order to benefit from this program, an individual must submit an application for communication technology (anything used to effectively communicate over the phone or internet); once the application is approved, an assessor who specializes in deaf-blind technology will meet with the individual to determine the appropriate equipment, then a trainer will bring the equipment to the consumer, install any needed programs and train the user if necessary. Consumers are provided more training whenever they request it, as well as sign language interpreters as needed. One of the state assessors requires an SSP, and the program pays for that. In terms of available technology, the program is highly customized. Ms. Hirsch is engaging in outreach for this program, meeting with parents of deaf-blind children across the state to demonstrate the equipment to them.
- Commissioner Neuroth asked for an update on the Deaf-Blind Task Force and plans for recruitment of SSPs from the deaf community. The commission's liaison to the deaf-blind task force, Commissioner Graham-Kelly, reported on the first meeting. She attended with Karen Park, a deaf blind member of the task force who has proactively sought training and ways of maintaining independence. This task force is intended to assess the needs of deaf-blind persons in order to get legislative support for funding. The task force hopes to have its report ready in June, but Commissioner Graham-Kelly listed major concerns presented at the first meeting. One challenge for deaf-blind persons is transportation. Deaf-blind persons need orientation and mobility training, such as accessing public transportation in cities, using the bus system, taxi or airport. Support Service Providers (SSPs) are also needed for many important activities such as shopping, going to a bank to get a loan, or for entertainment activities. Deaf-blind persons also need specialized job assistance (finding employment) and legal assistance. Additionally,

deaf-blind persons often need specially trained interpreters. Commissioner Graham-Kelly recommends that the commission consider adding not one, but two new positions: a deaf-blind member and a hard of hearing-blind commissioner, because those communities are very different. She will give an update on the next task force meeting in June.

### **Committee Chair Reports**

#### **A. Legal Auxiliary Services Advisory Council**

Cheri Davis reported that in April the advisory council will meet and break into work groups to discuss ways of increasing the number of Certified Deaf Interpreters, providing feedback on the jury instruction video, as well as providing signage in the courthouses on available assistive listening devices and where to get them.

#### **B. Bylaws Committee**

Chair Beckett said there was nothing new to report.

#### **C. Nominations Committee**

Chair Weiss reported that three commission positions will be vacant in June. An announcement will go out shortly. The officer positions (chair, vice chair and secretary) will need to be filled as well.

#### **D. Grant Program Subcommittee**

There was no report; the community forum following the meeting will provide progress updates from the current grant recipients.

### **6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Commissioner Weiss asked the commission to consider establishing a standing committee on education. Chair Mohney asked that Commissioner Weiss continue to serve as educational liaison for the time being.

Commissioner Neuroth asked for an update on the Communication Access Fund (CAF) initiative. Mr. Chevalier reported that a Deaf lawyer has moved to Colorado, and he has been referring people to her, since they can communicate directly without an interpreter. This hasn't solved the access problem itself, but the staff are not getting any complaints right now. Additionally, the person within the judicial department with whom they were working has been promoted to another position, so they will have to begin meeting with the newly hired replacement. The task force felt strongly that funding should come directly from attorney licensing fees, and this will be the goal when the staff takes up this project again..

### **7. NEW BUSINESS**

Commissioner Graham-Kelly reported on progress with the proposed new mission statement. As a result of feedback on a survey of the earlier proposed statement, community members were invited to a focus group. The earlier statement read "To be a catalyst for a sustainable statewide

**March 6, 2014**

network of resources, committed to cultural and linguistic equality.” The focus group struggled with the term “catalyst,” and what it means. This word has no specific ASL sign. The group suggested replacing it with the phrase “agent of change.” The statement would be “To be an agent of change for a sustainable statewide network of resources, committed to cultural and linguistic equality.” Support for the draft was unanimous. The board agreed to solicit community input and wait until June to take a final vote.

## **8. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Cheri Davis announced that a new staff person has been hired to work with Timothy Chevalier in the Outreach and Consultative Program. Her name is Candace Alder, and she formerly worked in the Ricky Mountain ADA Center in Colorado Springs. She will join the staff later this month as the consultant serving the hard of hearing community.
- Commissioner Neuroth announced that this year’s Colorado Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf conference is being held in conjunction with ASLTAC, the American Sign Language Teachers of Colorado. It will be held on April 11, 12, 13.
- Chair Mohny announced that the annual Walk4Hearing will be held on Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup> at Clement Park in Littleton. People can sign up to walk at the website [walk4hearing.org](http://walk4hearing.org).

## **9. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Ralphe, Secretary