



COLORADO

Office of Enterprise Partnerships

Boards & Commissions

Commission for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing
1575 Sherman St, Garden Level
Denver, CO 80203

COLORADO COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

8100 E. Lowry Blvd.

Denver, CO 80230

June 5, 2014

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the Regular Meeting to order at 4:08 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Commissioners Debbie Mohny (Chair), Kirk Neuroth (Vice Chair), Leslie Ralph (Secretary), Liz Konkel, Mary Pat Graham-Kelly, Lisa Weiss, and Amy Beckett

MEMBERS ABSENT:

(none)

CCDHH STAFF PRESENT:

Cliff Moers, Administrator; Cheri Davis, Legal Auxiliary Services Manager; Timothy Chevalier, Outreach Consultant; JoAnne Hirsch, Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Coordinator; Mandy Turner, Auxiliary Services Coordinator; Candice Alder, Outreach Consultant

INTERPRETERS/CART REPORTER:

Interpreters: Darlene Ensenat, Terri Tupps, Becky Johnson
CART Reporter: Claudette Mondragon

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was approved.

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The December 5, 2013 and March 6, 2014 minutes were approved.

5. REPORTS

Commission Chair's Report, Chair Mohny

- Chair Mohny thanked the interpreters and the CART reporter for their services, and also thanked the Colorado Department of Human Services and the Commission staff

- for their cooperation and work. She noted that FM units were available for attendees with telecoils in their hearing aids.
- Chair Mohney announced that after the regular meeting, there would be a community forum. If time does not allow for community comments, attendees are encouraged to submit their comments in writing or by contacting the staff.
 - The commission's purpose is to improve the quality of life for deaf and hard of hearing citizens. The board consists of seven members representing deaf, late-deafened and hard of hearing persons, interpreters, parents of deaf individuals, professionals and the public. Chair Mohney thanked the commissioners for volunteering their time. The commissioners bring the voices of their constituency to the table to help ensure that their needs are being addressed. Terms for the deaf, Hard of hearing and interpreter representatives expire on June 30, 2014. The late-deafened, parent, professional and public representative terms will expire on June 30, 2016. Positions expiring at the end of this month are expected to be filled by Governor Hickenlooper in the near future.
 - This meeting marks Chair Mohney's last meeting as commissioner and commission chair. She expressed confidence that the needs of the community are in good hands with the commission and commission staff. The commission was formed in 2000 and was first chaired by Susan Elliot, followed by Deacon Joe Benedetto. Since then, the commission has grown from an organization in which the commissioner roles included developing five-year strategic plans, establishing a telephone equipment distribution program, and creating a comprehensive board manual. Commissioners were aware that citizens were not getting needed access to state and local government agencies, and that quality standards for educational interpreters were lacking. The commission has made huge strides in these areas, and now includes a staff that administers these programs, providing telecommunication access to those who cannot afford it, and accessibility to legal proceedings and mental health services. The commission is currently working to improve public education services to deaf and hard of hearing students.
 - Chair Mohney shared an email she received from a woman whose mother recently obtained an amplified phone. This woman had worked with Cheri Davis and Joanne Hirsch, and was very pleased with the equipment her mother had been provided. She praised the staff for their personal attention and the way that they followed up on the application.
 - Everyone is encouraged to contact the staff and board members with their comments and concerns to make sure that the needs of all deaf and hard of hearing persons are being met.

Commission Administrator's Report, Administrator Moers

- Administrator Moers introduced the staff members present, including the newly hired Outreach Consultant for the Hard of Hearing Community, Candice Alder. Before joining the CCDHH staff, Ms. Alder worked for the Rocky Mountain ADA Center in Colorado Springs, covering six states in the Rocky Mountain region. She also served as interim director for the Center.
- Administrator Moers announced that Joyce Brubaker, the media specialist who was working on the website, developing vlogs, online trainings and webinars, recently left that position to care for her mother in Texas, so the commission will need to fill the



position, which is 0.3 FTE. The staff hopes to make this a full time position in the future.

- The commission is focusing on two areas, but not limited to, at this time: education, and services to deaf-blind individuals. Commissioners Lisa Weiss and Mary Pat Graham-Kelly will provide more information in their reports.
- One goal of the commission's five-year strategic plan is to establish a centralized with a one-stop phone number for people to schedule auxiliary service providers in the executive branch, and progress is being made to meet that goal. A complaint was filed by a deaf person against the Department of Labor and Employment for failing to provide interpreting services that were requested. As a result, the Department of Justice ordered the Department of Labor and Employment to set a policy with a plan for a system that provides auxiliary services. The Department of Labor and Employment requested assistance from the CCDHH office to develop this policy. As a result of Cheri Davis's work, the Department of Labor and Employment is in the process of an interagency agreement with the commission to provide auxiliary services for the entire department. This would be the first state department to enter such an agreement with the commission, and hopefully the other departments, such as the Department of Human Services, will follow suit.
- Administrator Moers reported that the commission continues to pursue the establishment of a communication access fund for auxiliary services that would be paid for by a licensing fee for attorneys creating a centralized fund to pay the cost of auxiliary services. This system has been proposed by the executive director of the National Association of the Deaf in response to problems faced by deaf clients who want legal representation but cannot access services because attorneys are unwilling to accept cases if they are required to pay for interpreters or other auxiliary services. The Colorado Bar Association does currently have a limited fund available for the services, but it is limited to \$250 per client, and that is not adequate. An attorney currently on the communication access fund task force has worked with Administrator Moers to compose a letter to the Colorado Supreme Court and the staff will be following up with a meeting request.
- The commission has seen a good response to its survey concerning the option of placing a code on driver's licenses identifying deaf and hard of hearing drivers and their communication preferences. Two hundred twenty-four responses have been received so far, largely in favor of having the option of some sort of identifying code on the license if the driver chooses. Officers would also need training about how to obtain interpreters or other appropriate services.
- The commission has also been working with the Department of Aging Services for several years, as that department has developed a five-year strategic plan that includes goals for deaf and hard of hearing people. One important goal is to establish an accurate count of the number of deaf and hard of hearing persons living in nursing homes, long-term care facilities or assisted living centers across the United States. The Department of Aging Services will have to report outcomes for its strategic plan in 2016. Colorado has 203 nursing homes and 569 assisted living centers, a total of 772 facilities across the state that the commission will have to contact and survey. That process has begun, and a few facilities have already responded with numbers of deaf or hard of hearing residents, the assistive equipment they have on hand, and their degree of understanding about how to obtain interpreting services. Elaine Navratil will be working with the commission to



do the survey, along with the Legal Center for People with Disabilities and Older People, the office of the state ombudsman for nursing homes in Colorado. The Division of Aging and Adult Services has funded the legal center work. It will be important to gather data not only on the numbers of individuals but also about their communication needs. In Colorado, there are only 37,876 beds in these facilities.

- Commissioner Moers is on the Children and Infant Hearing Committee, which now includes three deaf members, per his request. The committee provided some data on the newborn hearing screenings in Colorado. During the 2013 calendar year, 54,212 infants were born in Colorado and 97.5% (52,876) were screened for hearing. The Centers for Disease Control stipulates that 98% of all infants should be screened. Initially, of those infants, 2077 were identified as potentially deaf or hard of hearing. Within three months, only 77.8% of these infants underwent follow-up screening. At that point, 145 infants were identified as deaf or hard of hearing. The committee discussed the legal statute that requires the screenings as well as the brochure that is provided to determine whether the language is appropriate and the information is accurate.
- The commission's next meeting will be held in Pueblo because the office has received word of a number of problems with communication access for citizens in the area.
- Administrator Moers asked Vivienne Belmont from the Department of Regulatory Agencies to report on the findings of the commission's sunset review. Ms. Belmont reported that she had spoken to many of the staff, board and public attendees present to determine whether there are any problems with the statute or the ways that the programs are administered. There was a good deal of positive feedback, but it was also clear that gaps in service remain, and the commission continues to have a great deal of work to do. The final report will come out on October 15th, and all those whose input was sought will receive copies of the report. A few points that Ms. Belmont was able to provide include a recommendation that the commission continue its work. One concern she presented was that if the commission added a deaf blind member, the board would have an even number of members, and an odd number is preferred for voting purposes. It's also important that a board not be too large, so there may be reason to review the board positions. Another concern is that requiring board members to be confirmed by the senate is burdensome and unnecessary. If the commission decides to include deaf-blind members, then the language of the statute will need to change to reflect that. The grant process is another area that may need to be revised so that the grant process rules are aligned with the rules in the statute. Because the commission is working to coordinate auxiliary services in the executive branch, it may also be necessary to create a provision in statute that directs the commission to have that function. A final area of improvement concerns a need for regional advocacy programs for deaf and hard of hearing persons, since the office is located in Denver, and the office does not generally advocate for individuals; other states rely on regional community organizations for individual advocacy, and that may be something to consider in Colorado.

Committee Chair Reports

A. Legal Auxiliary Services



Cheri Davis reported that the Legal Auxiliary Service Advisory Council, which meets twice a year, is working on several projects in subcommittees. One subcommittee is working to expand the number of CDIs (Deaf interpreters) in the state. These interpreters are particularly needed in the judicial system, in the courtroom. The subcommittee is collaborating with The Colorado Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf as well. The judicial department will be holding an orientation and training this coming Friday, June 13, and 6 of the 60 attendees will be deaf. There will be another orientation in September for those who missed the deadline to apply.

B. Bylaws Committee

Chair Beckett said that there have been no changes to the bylaws, but if the composition of the board were to change, the bylaws would need to be updated to reflect any changes to the statute.

C. Nominations Committee

Chair Weiss reported that the nominations committee met to address the three commission terms expiring at the end of the month: the deaf, interpreter and hard of hearing member positions. Commissioners Neuroth and Graham-Kelly have applied for another term. An additional six persons applied for board positions. The committee interviewed all new applicants and forwarded their recommendations to the governor's office.

D. Grant Program Subcommittee

Administrator Moers reported that grant applications for the 2015 fiscal year have recently been made available and publicized. The time period for applications has been extended from one to two months. Each organization is allowed up to \$10,000, and the total grant budget is \$50,000. There will be an update at the September meeting.

E. Deaf Education Liaison

Commissioner Weiss reported that representatives from organizations that received the grants in 2014 to revisit the Blueprint for Change in deaf education will be reporting on their progress at the community forum. The groups involved bring a variety of experiences and perspectives to the discussion and due to the wide continuum of needs and services available, it can be hard for individual districts to meet all those needs, and the task force is discussing ways to ensure that student needs are met.

F. Deaf-blind Task Force Liaison

Commissioner Graham-Kelly reported on progress with the task force that the commission set up in December of 2013 at the request of members of the deaf-blind community about diminishing services when there were rumors that the Helen Keller National Center would shut down. The center is still running, and a deaf-blind staff person has recently been hired for a full-time position. The task force was established, and has met to discuss community concerns, the largest of which is mobility. Deaf-blind persons lack access to public transportation such as bus and light rail service, even those who live in the Denver metro area. Another need is Support Service Providers (SSPs) to assist deaf-blind persons with errands to the grocery store or the bank. Additionally, the state does not have sufficient interpreters qualified to work with deaf-blind individuals. Hard of hearing/blind individuals have specific and different needs and



technology can benefit them. Some other topics that the task force addressed were language needs within these groups, as well as senior citizens whose limited mobility isolates them. Another concern was how to identify individuals and inform them of available services. The task force will continue to meet and updates will be provided at the next meeting.

Administrator Moers added to Commissioner Graham-Kelly's report, saying that the Helen Keller National Center had previously received a CCDHH grant to create the pool of SSPs, but the person coordinating the effort left the position, and the process was suspended for quite a while. With the hiring of a new deaf-blind staff person, that process can now move forward.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Commissioner Graham-Kelly presented the mission statement task force's proposed mission statement: To be an agent of change for a sustainable statewide network of resources committed to cultural and linguistic equality. After a brief discussion, the commission voted to adopt the new mission statement as proposed.

7. NEW BUSINESS

The commission addressed officer elections for the upcoming two-year term. Because the governor has not yet appointed new or returning commissioners, any re-applying commissioners' election to office would be contingent upon re-appointment. The commission elected Commissioner Neuroth as chair, contingent upon re-appointment, Commissioner Graham-Kelly as vice chair, contingent upon reappointment, and Commissioner Beckett as secretary.

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The commission and the staff honored Chair Mohny for her many years of dedicated and diplomatic service to the commission and to the deaf and hard of hearing community throughout Colorado.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Ralphe, Secretary

