



Idaho Council *for the* Deaf and Hard of Hearing

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Quarterly Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 19, 2023, at 1pm

State Department of Education Building, Lewis & Clark Room

Transcripts available upon request

ATTENDEES

Council Members	Steven Birkby, Joelynn Ball, Gretchen Fors, Valerie Player, Matthew McGraw; <i>Absent: Emilie Banasiak, Sonny Cabbage, Jacob Robison, (Audiologist Vacant)</i>
Ex-officio Members	Brian Shakespeare (ISB), Jane Donnellan (DVR), Mikkel Nelson (IESDB), Steven Snow (CDHH), Kelli Toohill (Idaho TRS), Erin Olsen (ICG), Randi Cole (SDE); <i>Absent: Brett T. DeLange (AG), Katie Stuart (DOPL), Terry Gammel (DOL)</i>
Other Attendees	Jahaira Faber, Leah McElwee, Jess Raschke, Dawn Wells, Jill Radford, Emma Wood, LaVona Andrew (interpreter), Andrea Cronrath (interpreting student), Becky Martin (captioner)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Council Chair, Joelynn Ball called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Introductions and representations were made along with any brief news to share.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – November 17, 2022

Meeting minutes were reviewed. There were some typographical and grammatical errors which needed amended.

MOTION Valerie moved to approve the November 17, 2022, Meeting Minutes with edits; Gretchen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

PERFECTING THE AGENDA

Joelynn Ball looked at changes to the agenda. She was not in attendance at the Meet and Greet but she will lead the discussion, asking for input and feedback. Mikkel Nelson will give his report, representing IESDB. Randi Cole stepped in for Julie Mead. Kate Stuart was not in attendance but provided some numbers for her Ex-Officio report. Terry Gammel was not here for the Idaho Department of Labor report. Jane Donnellan pointed out that she needs to leave by 3p. Joelynn moved Jane to the first Ex Officio report.

MOTION Gretchen moved to approve the agenda as changed. Valerie seconded the motion. The motion passes without opposition.

DEBRIEF MEET AND GREET

Discussion over low turnout which may have been impacted by the snowstorm that morning. Steve noted the 2019 cancelation due to weather. Legislative sessions look different each year creating a different experience. Preferences between 1st and 4th floor had a mixed response.

- 4th level has better lighting and feels like more foot traffic, 1st floor felt empty
- 4th floor feels more open but there was an issue with interpreters. They could see a need across the room but had to walk all the way around to get there.
- 1st floor allowed use of the center space and ability to cross the room
- Historically the Meet and Greet has been on the 4th floor with varied turnout.
- Steve was open to trying the 4th floor next year and compare the experience.

- Preference is to be closer to Legislative meeting rooms. It is rare for Legislators to go up the 4th floor, but they might look down from the gallery and see the 1st floor.
 - Chambers on the 3rd floor of each wing
 - Committees on the Garden Level (basement)
- Legislators typically convene at 11a so part of the reason for the timing was to be open for when they go to their meetings. At noon it is usually dead within the building because they are in committee, hence the reason for a morning time slot. 1st or 4th floor, there is no magic way to draw that crowd.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT, Steve Snow

- Steve introduced CDHH's new brochure to show a concise, updated format with QR code.
- Steve gave board members the new Legislative Directory. This session has 47 new legislators, almost half, so he asked the board to look through the book.

Bill H.R.33. Presented on January 9, 2023, by Representative Doggett from Texas. This would amend the Medicare bill making it possible for Medicare to cover hearing aids and audiological services. The bill is currently referred to committee. Each of you are encouraged to contact your state representative so they can support that bill. If passed, it would be monumental for our community who use Medicare.

Point of clarification, the presented bill will remove the section that excludes coverage on hearing aids, creating the ability to cover hearing aids. Then, within the current bill, it would also reclassify hearing aids as durable medical equipment. So this is a big deal but with a divided government at the federal level, we really can't predict what will happen on the hill.

Federal Bill S.5121. The 21st Century Communications Video and Technology Accessibility Act (CVTAA). This is based on an older law passed in 2010, written by Senator Markey from Massachusetts, called Communication Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) which is similar. This new amendment, also from Senator Markey, would include technology because what we had in 2010 looks very different compared to now. There were many hidden barriers that went unrecognized until suddenly everyone was dependent on technology during COVID. There are two points of data they're using to justify the law.

- In 2020, 38% of the Blind and Visually Impaired community said one or more online platforms were inaccessible.
- In 2020, 70% of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students said technology, whether it was zoom or other video platforms, was not accessible.

The bill has 5 key points.

- Captioning. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has created unreliable captioning and can't be utilized for education. We need to improve the quality of AI captioning both online streaming as well as live meetings and add audio descriptions.
- Visual Features. A variety of web platforms like Zoom or Webex have different features where the user can decide what their visual layout is but there are a lot of restrictions on that. This point will require some features to be equally available across devices like laptops and tablets, as they are for people who can hear.
- Screen Visibility for Signing. There is no standard right now in terms of picture in picture about what size that screen should be for the person who is signing. The visibility of people who are signing on videos needs increased. It became evident during press conferences with various governors and various approaches during COVID.
- Enforcement. The fourth part of that bill authorizes the Federal Communications Commission to enforce the rule, the law, ensure everyone is following, including AI. That also includes Virtual Reality which deaf people have a right to VR technology as well.
- Telehealth. All these points are to apply to telehealth appointments too. Popularity of telehealth has skyrocketed, and deaf people have found that to be another barrier. Any platform or technology used for medical accessibility must also be accessible, whether they're visually impaired or deaf.

This bill has a lot of bipartisan support. The original bill passed with a huge majority, we anticipate the same but regardless, we encourage you to reach out to your federal representatives to let them know of your support.

Over the Counter Hearing Aid Updates. Local stores are beginning to sell them without audiologist prescriptions and the price has come down significantly. We are monitoring for issues but have not been made aware of any. It is something we are staying mindful of. This is recommended only for those who have mild to moderate hearing loss. It is not approved for severe hearing loss. That will need an audiologist and a prescription. Also not approved for under the age of 18, although we suspect that is happening. We will continue to monitor.

Deaf Education. A Deaf Education Policy and Advocacy Summit will be hosted February 22-25th by Consortium of Educational Administrators at Schools for the Deaf (CEASD) and Gallaudet University for no cost. Attendance is in person or virtual, if interested, Steve Snow will send the link to sign up. You're not required to attend all of it, you can pick and choose parts to attend.

Budget. The board approved proposal from April was submitted. The Governor recommended the following:

- Approve cost of the lease
- Approve cost of interpreters (additional deaf staff means more interpreting needs)
- Not support replacing a vehicle
- Not support American Sign Language classes to the community

Jane Donnellan will present Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and CDHH's budgets at the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee (JFAC) at 8:30am February 6, 2023. It will be live streamed, let Steve Snow know if you have any specific questions.

CDHH Legislative Action. No proposals, we will continue to monitor a variety of other bills to see what impact there is and ensure there won't be any harm to the Deaf or Hard of Hearing community.

- Interpreter License Law rule change. Specifically for Deaf Interpreters (DIs).
 - One licensed interpreter sponsor instead of two
 - Annual renewal now required
- Testifying. You can testify to JFAC or any committee personally but not in your role as board member. Under the umbrella of CDHH, you need to go through Steve Snow so he can contact the governor's office for approval.

CDHH Office News. Dawn Wells is our new Administrative Assistant and Jess Raschke became ADA Coordinator Certified.

Free Rapid COVID Tests. State Independent Living Council (SILC) distributed 4,000 Rapid COVID tests of which we received 800 (200 boxes). These are available for free to anyone in the community.

Promoting Equity in Healthcare Project. Project funded by the Rehabilitation Services Act. Idaho State University (ISU) in Meridian is running the program which focuses on training working interpreters to improve their competency in the medical field. There are few resources nationwide within that specialized field. We believe this is the first type of training like this.

- First cohort involves Kansas, Virginia, and Arizona. A deaf doctor in Nevada is partnering with the program and is working with an intern.
- Second cohort should begin this summer with Texas, Michigan, and North Carolina.

Community Needs Assessment. We are asking deaf people, parents of deaf children, any person who works within the deaf community to take the survey. We hope to collect over 200 responses so we can prioritize the coming fiscal year.

- Survey will run February through spring.
- Written English but people can contact us and do the survey live through zoom or virtual platform
- From the collected data, we will see what programs or policies we need to develop and monitor

Town Hall Meetings. Still working on details.

- Treasure Valley (Boise) sometime in February or March
- Magic Valley (Twin Falls) sometime in April
- East Idaho (Pocatello)
- North Idaho (Coeur d'Alene/Hayden) sometime in May

NASADHH. Steve Snow is also vice chair of the National Association of State Agencies for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NASADHH) and they put forward his name to chair the Employment Committee of another national organization, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network (DHHCAN). That will look at trends in employment and resolutions whether it is practical application, policies, or laws.

Boise Art Museum (BAM). BAM invited Steve Snow to work on their Idaho Disabilities Access Group (IDAG Committee). They are looking at how they can provide additional access to the museum and their resources through a large grant from the National Arts Foundation and possibly another grant that specifically looks at Deaf and Hard of Hearing people's experience in a museum. BAM asked Steve to host meetings to develop strategies for accessibility during the 2-year plan.

- Need a committee of 4 people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- 1st year will focus on ideas and review prototypes that have been created like videos incorporating sign language. and how to implement them.
- 2nd year is piloting, so in 2024 we anticipate piloting and review how to make it permanent.

It seems only Federal institutions have focused on the needs of deaf and hard of hearing people in their space, so great work to BAM for receiving this grant and the trailblazing work they are doing.

Christmas Families. CDHH was unsure with inflation if people would be willing to donate but people were generous. Four families were sponsored.

Pilot ASL Classes. CDHH is hopeful their budget can cover the cost for a pilot ASL Class since funding was not recommended by the Governor. If that is successful, it would give CDHH anecdotes to use next year when submitting a new request. With only one class, it is anticipated to fill immediately. More information is to come in June.

- No cost for those taking classes.
- Internal costs anticipated at \$600 for teacher(s)
- 12-weeks of lessons
- Curriculum undetermined

Awards of Excellence. Annually the CDHH Board recognizes an individual and organization for their work in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. Nominations requests will be sent in the next few weeks.

April Board Meeting. Friday, April 21, 2023 board meeting will likely be in the conference room at Vocational Rehabilitation building across the street from our office. Considering alternative days for April board meeting. We have a full agenda planned; time is not set but likely all morning.

- Vote on priorities
- Vote on budget
- Vote on executive committee
- Vote on awards
- Determine any pursuit of legislative action

EX-OFFICIO MEMBER REPORTS

Jane Donnellan, Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR).

After COVID, VR programs had significant drops in participation and congress is looking at why money is not being spent. VR wants to show on a national and state level the value of programs for individuals with disabilities. VR is one of the oldest programs in the country.

- The Council for State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) has 3 initiatives this year.
 - Efficiencies. Number one complaint is how long it takes to get through to VR. As a national program, looking at how to accelerate the process so people stay engaged.
 - Recruitment and Retention of Staff. Fiscal Year 2022 saw about a 31% turnover in staff, impacting the capacity of VR to collaborate with other agencies and directly affecting customers. The planning and evaluation manager is reaching out to regions and staff about how to lighten their work so they can focus on the core of their service.
 - National Visibility: People are not familiar with Vocational Rehabilitation. VR is working on how to articulate and describe the program so the value of the program is understood.
- VR also has a business services team that educates businesses on disability-related issues like disability etiquette, reasonable accommodation, and the value of hiring individuals with disabilities.
- VR has a line-item budget request for three additional positions for Business Relations Coordinators.
- VR is a sub-awardee of a grant through the Department of Labor for Disability Equity Inclusion and Accessibility around apprenticeships.
- This year VR's General Fund, the Idaho dollars that legislators approve, was capped at a 3% increase but there was some allowance, particularly with interpreter services.

Mikkel Nelson, Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and Blind (IESDB). (filling in for Brian Darcy)

Mikkel is a program coordinator and mentor for the Deaf Mentor program at IESDB. The program is funded by Idaho Sound Beginnings in partnership with Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind. The mentors and IESDB consultants collaborate to provide services to families with deaf children. The journey may take families through a variety of tools and options, and we want them to have all those choices. The foundation of everything we do is language.

Program goals:

- Focus on infants that are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and parents unsure how to communicate with them.
- Home visit model, going into the family home and becoming a role model.
- The family can see a successful Deaf adult and envision a future for their child.
- Effective communication model incorporating a bilingual and bicultural approach
- Parents can see how a Deaf adult is interacting with this Deaf child and get ideas for effective communication strategies.

Mentors:

- 9 mentors throughout the state, at least 1 mentor in each region
- Serve about 25 families from birth to 5-years-old
- Receive intensive training from SKI-HI Deaf Mentor Program
- Learn early communication visuals to teach families
- Learn and incorporate the SKI-HI curriculum as part of mentoring sessions

The Mentor Program is continuing to grow with hopes of providing additional training for more Deaf Mentors and extending the program to children over the age of 5. Currently Mikkel serves an additional 25 families with children over the age of 5.

Snapshots is a separate program where families can meet with various Deaf or Hard of Hearing adults with different backgrounds and ask them questions about their lived experiences.

Randi Cole, State Department of Education (filling in for Julie Mead)

A couple weeks ago the new superintendent, Debbie Critchfield, started and the transition has been smooth. She has split her time in the office and visiting districts and programs outside of Boise.

Superintendent Critchfield's Priorities

- Literacy and dyslexia, creating guidance documents and training for teachers
- Building relationships with the Career Technical Education (CTE) department, to increase the number of students involved in CTE at both high school and college level and increase accessibility for students with disabilities.

Julie Mead is the interim Special Education Director. Previously the Director of SESTA, the Special Education Technical Assistance group here in Idaho, She has already worked very closely with our department, which has made for a seamless transition. Julie will continue as interim until after legislative session when she will apply for the position, fingers crossed that she continues. She will be amazing.

Brian Shakespeare, Idaho Sound Beginnings Infant Toddler Program

(not present at time of reports)

Erin Olsen, Idaho Commission on Aging.

Idaho Commission on Aging addresses needs of people generally over the age of 60 but also any person over the age of 18 with a disability. Making technology accessible is not simply about blindness or deafness, it is something shared that bring communities together.

Erin's focus for 2023

- Continue providing free education for disease prevention and health promotion, including chronic pain, diabetes, Incontinence, self-management techniques, and how to advocate for yourself.
- Establishing Fall Prevention Coalition as Idaho is 1 of 5 states without one. Falls are the number one cause of accidental death and injury in people over age of 60, and having a disability triples the likelihood of having a fall.
- Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) should be a one stop shop, one call to get the services that are needed. All other agencies and organizations should be included to create a big enough resource. ADRC, also called No Wrong Door, as in there is no wrong door to knock on if you need help. You can go to any of these places, and it will be the right door to get access.

Katie Stuart, Idaho Division of Occupational and Professional Licenses

Provided report read by chair, Joelynn Ball. Active licenses as of January 12, 2023:

163	Audiologists
120	Hearing Aid Dealers/Fitters
327	Sign Language Interpreters
13	Provisional Sign language Interpreters
58	Speech Language Pathologists Aids
10	Speech Language Pathology Assistant
10,264	Speech Language Pathologist

Note that the 327 Sign Language Interpreters do not all live and reside In Idaho. A lot of video remote Interpreting (VRI) or Video Relay Service (VRS) Interpreters that work In Idaho have to be licensed but do not have to reside here. There are many different out of state VRI/VRS companies that have employees licensed in Idaho.

Kelli Toohill, Idaho TRS Public Utilities Commission (Hamilton Relay)

Hamilton has a Community Leadership Award that is now open to organizations as well as individuals. The award is for those that volunteer or have community involvement with the Deaf, hard of hearing, or speech disabled. At the end of the year, there is a virtual event with all the state recipients and an award to a national recipient.

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) started an Affordable Connectivity Program. Eligibility is figured at 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

- Up to \$30 off a month for internet service
- Up to \$75 off a month for internet service on tribal lands
- One-time credit, up to \$100 for a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet purchased through participating providers
- <https://affordableconnectivity.gov/>

ADJOURNED

Minutes recorded by Dawn Wells

NEXT MEETING: Friday, April 21, 2023 (pending changes)