



# Idaho Council *for the* Deaf and Hard of Hearing

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## Quarterly Board Meeting Minutes

Friday, April 19, 2024, from 9am – 12pm

Vocational Rehabilitation, Treasure Valley East, Conference Room 8

1755 North Westgate Drive, Suite 140, Boise, ID 83704

*Transcripts available upon request*

### ATTENDEES

Council Members	Steven Birkby, Sonny Cabbage, Abe Vore, Emilie Banasiak, Matthew McGraw, Valerie Player <i>Absent: Joelynn Ball, Jacob Robison, Gretchen Fors (quorum = 5)</i>
Ex-officio Members	Steven Snow (CDHH), Jan Arrasmith (DOPL) Erin Olsen (ICG) <i>Absent: Brett T. DeLange (AG), Terry Gammel (DOL), Brian Shakespeare (ISB), Jane Donnellan (DVR), Brian Darcy (IESDB), Kelli Toohill (Idaho TRS), Randi Cole (SDE)</i>
Other Attendees	Jahaira Faber, Leah McElwee, Dawn Wells, Lauren Seale (interpreter), Jake Wright (student), Zoey Lambert (student), Trinity Johnson (student), Lisa Doyon (captioner), Ray Lockary

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Council Vice-Chair, Steven Birkby called the meeting to order at 9:09 AM and welcomed everyone. Introductions and representations were made.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 19, 2023

January 19, 2024 board meeting was canceled due to weather. Minutes as drafted were reviewed and accepted from the previous meeting November 17, 2023.

**MOTION** Emilie Banasiak moved to approve the November 17, 2023, minutes; Valerie Player seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### PERFECTING THE AGENDA

Steven Birkby looked at changes to the agenda. Some ex-officio are not present and will not give reports as indicated on the agenda.

**MOTION** Valerie Player moved to approve the agenda as changed. Sonny Cabbage seconded the motion. The motion passes without opposition.

### OATH OF OFFICE

Steven Birkby administered the oath of office to Dr. Abe Vore, our new audiologist board member. He is originally from Iowa and attended Gallaudet University for graduate school. In 2014 Dr. Vore began an audiology practice in Eagle, ID.

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT, Steve Snow

#### At the National Level

1. Federal Communications Commissions (FCC)
  - a. As of January 2024, any facility under the Department of Corrections must provide VRS, captioned phones, and video phone services to inmates.
    - i. That means prisons, jails, mental institutions, juvenile detention centers, as well as immigration detention centers.

- ii. Free of charge. Often inmates are billed per minute on the phone, however SEC announced it would be illegal to charge individuals with disabilities, including deaf and hard of hearing.
  - iii. A facility failing to comply will be fined by FCC
- b. Bluetooth study on compatibility indicated 80% of the devices on the market are pairable with hearing technology. Proposed rule will require 100% of products being released now must pair with that hearing technology.
- c. The Connectivity Program ended this month. That program helped individuals with financial needs have access to internet and Wi-Fi.
  - i. Those individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing that cannot afford internet will have less access to their videophones and the communication technology they utilize.
  - ii. CDHH will monitor impacts to the deaf and hard of hearing community
  - iii. FCC discount for those who cannot afford internet connectivity is called Lifeline but it is specific for mobile devices.
- d. Nagish AI was recently certified by FCC. They are an artificial intelligence company that provides relay services from text-to-speech and speech-to-text.
  - i. Completely run by AI
  - ii. First company certified to provide that service without a human involved
  - iii. Historically telecommunication relay services have had AI in use but used a human interface to make sure everything was appropriately translated.
  - iv. Safe AI has been working with RIH and NTID as well as Telecommunications for the Deaf (TDI) to look at ethics of utilizing AI for interpreting services. Currently seeing avatars used to provide services that are extremely concerning and ineffective.
- e. Video Relay Service changes in rules. When COVID struck, in an attempt to meet the needs of consumers and workers, the FCC began allowing interpreters to work from home.
  - i. Increase in At-Home Work: The portion of VRS provider minutes that can be handled by at-home Communication Assistants (CAs) has been increased from 50% to 80%. This change is aimed at improving service continuity and addressing interpreter shortages.
  - ii. Experience Requirement Reduction: The prior requirement of three years of interpreting experience for CAs working from home has been reduced to one year. This adjustment is intended to expand the pool of qualified interpreters more quickly while still maintaining quality standards.
  - iii. Contracting Flexibility: VRS providers are now permitted to contract up to 30% of their monthly minutes for interpretation services, allowing more flexibility in meeting demand for VRS calls.
  - iv. These new rules came into effect on April 22, 2024, with full compliance required by October 17, 2024.

#### **At the State Level**

1. CDHH budget request was partially approved by legislature. There was an increase cap of 3% which means \$14,200 and a one-time maintenance increase to replace equipment. CDHH will run on a maintenance budget, unable to move forward on initiatives without the requested funding.
2. Monitoring SB 1273 about voter guides. Secretary of State, Phil McCain would like to revamp the voter guide to encompass more information. The bill passed through the senate but it seems time has run out so it will not make its way through the house this legislative session.
  - a. Steve would like to meet with Phil and ensure the voter guide is accessible in ASL.
  - b. The bill died on the floor and will likely go through the process again
3. Luma is the state platform used run all agencies. Still working out the kinks but Vocational Rehabilitation and their staff have been working through all the bumps for CDHH.

#### **At the Community Level**

1. Idaho Council on Domestic Violence and Victim Assistance (ICDVVA) and CDHH have partnered in a new program to support Deaf victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Historically there are many barriers for them, and they don't receive adequate access those supports and services.
  - a. Nine Deaf advocates culturally aware and have received training on how to support Deaf victims

- b. Seventeen interpreters throughout the state that specialize in domestic violence and sexual assault interpreting.
  - c. Shelters across the state will receive a list of those interpreters and deaf advocates so shelters know exactly who to contact when a deaf victim enters that facility.
  - d. ICDVVA was able to fund that program, so it has become streamlined and will provide funding for the advocates and interpreters.
2. FEMA Region-10 (Alaska, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho) has a new person at headquarters. Danielle Bailey was the Disability Integration Coordinator but now has gone to work at FEMA headquarters. CDHH would like to work with her on possible funding for emergency equipment systems distributed to the community through emergency services like fire departments and police departments.
3. Department of Health and Welfare, Maria Gamet is the new Language Access Coordinator for DHW. CDHH has been in discussions with Maria about improving access to the deaf and hard of hearing communities.
  - a. Use an agency familiar with the needs of the deaf community
  - b. Better approach to using VRI services
  - c. Trainings for DHW staff, however with a high turn over there will be multiple trainings and policies in place for new employees to refer to.
  - d. Improved policies
4. Boise Art Museum (BAM) has implemented a one of a kind QR code to every painting with a signed video of who the author is, and a description of the work. The grand opening last week had 75 people in attendance. This project is a shining light across the nation and other states will be able to emulate this.
5. An Interpreter Focus Group began a couple of months ago to help address the challenges with lack of interpreters across medical settings, educational settings and within the community. Meetings are ongoing and currently focused on 2 documents.
  - a. Medicaid reimbursement for interpreters
  - b. Medical interpreting skills and qualifications divided into levels. Medical interpreting can range from physical therapy to surgery so a 3-tier system can differentiate settings.
6. National Deaf Center (NDC) working with Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and Blind (IESDB) on their transition program. NDC has recognized the program as one of the best in the nation. The new transition coordinator happens to be Davina Snow, Steve's wife. Davina has traveled throughout the state to meet with parents and students.
7. The Early Hearing Detection Intervention (EHDI) Program is in every state and federally funded for children from birth to 3-years-old who are diagnosed with a hearing loss. The federal government awards a grant which has gone to the same organization for the last 25 years.
  - a. The grant is on a 5-year contract cycle.
  - b. The grant has now been split into three different resource centers providing \$3.75 million each.
    - i. Gallaudet University
    - ii. National Hands and Voices
    - iii. American Academy of Pediatrics
  - c. Shift of 3 resource centers will provide more access on language acquisition for deaf and hard of hearing children.
  - d. About 70% of deaf and hard of hearing children experience language deprivation and delays. Gallaudet is focused on early language acquisition.
8. NAD Conference and NASADHH Policy Conference are in Chicago this July. Steve will attend and present on research with Idaho State University that was published in JAMA a few years ago. COVID postponed the presentation from 2020.
9. Jess Raschke has left CDHH because her husband received a job offer out of state. Her position was posted and just closed April 12, 2024. CDHH will begin the interview process in May.

## NEW BUSINESS

### Election of Council Officers

- Council Chair (currently Joelynn Ball)

**MOTION** Valerie Player nominated Steve Birkby for Council Chair. Sonny Cabbage seconded the motion. The motion passes without opposition.

- Council Vice Chair (currently Steve Birkby)

**MOTION** Emilie Banasiak nominated Joelynn Ball for Council Vice Chair. Sonny Cabbage seconded the motion. The motion passes without opposition.

- Executive Committee (currently Valerie Player)

**MOTION** Sonny Cabbage nominated Valerie Player for Executive Committee. Emilie Banasiak seconded the motion. The motion passes without opposition.

#### **Action Item – Vote on Budget FY 2026**

- This legislative session will vote on the budget for fiscal year 2026. The CDHH board votes on the budget spring 2024, then July 1, 2024 the new fiscal year 2025 begins, after that CDHH turns the budget request into the government fall 2024 to be approved before FY25 ends on June 30, 2025
- \$685,663 Budget Request

**MOTION** Sonny Cabbage moved to approve the budget request of \$685,663. Emilie Banasiak seconded the motion. The motion passes without opposition.

#### **Action Item – Vote on Priorities FY 2025**

- Priority 1 - Law Enforcement Outreach and Training
- Priority 2 - Improvement of State Services
- Priority 3 – Quality Foster Care Services Continuum for Deaf Children

**MOTION** Emilie Banasiak moved to approve the Council Priorities. Sonny Cabbage seconded the motion. The motion passes without opposition.

#### **Action Item – Vote on Awards**

- 2024 Individual Award of Excellence, Ann Flannery
- 2024 Organization Award of Excellence, Boise Art Museum

**MOTION** Emilie Banasiak moved to approve the Awards of Excellence. Sonny Cabbage seconded the motion. The motion passes without opposition.

#### **Action Item – Vote on FY 2025 Quarterly Meeting Dates**

- September 20, 2024 (3<sup>rd</sup> Friday) Virtual
- November 15, 2024 (3<sup>rd</sup> Friday) Virtual
- January 16, 2025 (always the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday) In-Person
- April 18, 2025 (3<sup>rd</sup> Friday) In-Person

**MOTION** Sonny Cabbage moved to approve the Quarterly Meeting Dates. Matt McGraw seconded the motion. The motion passes without opposition.

### **EX-OFFICIO MEMBER REPORTS**

#### **Erin Olsen, Idaho Commission on Aging**

ICOA does get its funding through the Older Americans Act (OAA) but ICA serves people over the age of 65 and any other adult with a disability. Feels like we are leaving out that part. ICOA does support people with all disabilities over the age of 18 which is part of the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC). ADRC uses the “no wrong door” approach meaning a person should be able to call one place and get referrals to everything they need instead of calling several agencies and getting passed around.

Center for Independent Living (CIL) has three agencies within the state that provide all kind of services for people with disabilities.

- LINC
- LIFE
- DAC

The Director of LIFE was asked when they turned in their federal report, why they were not serving more deaf people. LIFE looked into it and found they were not getting requests. CILs provide all kinds of equipment through the Idaho Assistive Technology Project (IATP), they provide counseling, funding for housing and more.

LINC hired a new individual Meda Thompson, who is a CODA (child of deaf adult) and she signs. This is an opportunity for direct communication with deaf people.

Falls Prevention Conference will be August 22-23, 2024 at the JUMP center. ICOA is working on having interpreters there.

- Person with a disability including hearing loss are 2.5 times more likely to fall than a person without a disability.
- Free to attend
- Four Pillars
  - Nutrition
  - Hydration
  - Physical Health
  - Environment Safety

### **Jan Arrasmith, Idaho Division of Occupational and Professional Licenses**

Jan is new to the position in October. DOPL has become one division from 11 agencies and now licenses over 442 different types of licenses, and over 49 boards. Since all the agencies had different looking websites, DOPL will be streamlined and easier for public use and to find information.

HB 505 was a licensing renewal bill that streamlines renewals on birthdates every 2-years. Not all boards were set up to renew on birthdates. For example, nurses all renew in the same two months creating a burden for staff at that time. Renewal prices will double when renewing two years at a time. Some boards are in the red and will need to increase fees but not the Speech, Hearing, and Communications board.

No expected changes from the governor's zero-based regulation.

Jan is the Executive Director over 7 boards including the Speech, Hearing, and Communications board.

- 434 licensed sign language interpreters
- 170 audiologists
- 130 hearing aid instrument specialists
- 1,365 speech language pathologists
- 87 speech language pathology assistants

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- IESDB Summer Work Readiness Camp will be in June for 5-weeks. It is an annual job coaching program where students spend a week on campus learning the interview process and job skills. 42 students are enrolled, the program is funded by VR
- Sawtooth Deaf Camp is an annual event where deaf and hard of hearing kids meet others and socialize, age 9-12. Always good reports from the kids after they attend those camps.
- Deaf Grayhairs event at CDHH this afternoon at 1:30p. Come enjoy grilled hamburgers and hotdogs.
- Specific theatres have opened captioned movies and they are also beneficial for senior citizens
- Roaring Springs Deaf Day is in the works again after a 2-year pause

### **ADJOURNED**

Minutes recorded by Dawn Wells

**NEXT MEETING:** Friday, September 20, 2024