

Commission for
Persons who are
Deaf and Hard of
Hearing

Access for All

STATE FISCAL YEAR 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Nevada Commission for Persons who are
Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Obioma Officer, MA, Executive Director
Obioma@adsd.nv.gov

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Introduction

The Commission, over the course of 2023, has diligently worked to become an immersive commission of action, advocates, and allies of the community. The Commission envisioned a stronger collaboration between the community and Commission by education and responding to the needs strongly shared in townhalls and listening sessions conducted in 2022. The Commission's Engagement Conference of 2023 is a testament to those objectives. The Commission has made strides in learning more about the needs of the community, following through with providing the resources of knowledge of policies and procedures as it pertains to service provision to needs of the community. Making full effort through their Executive Director to reflect and/or network recommended efforts of their State Plan, and individually, as Commissioners, advocate for increased support of legislators to help improve the laws that affect the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.

Executive Summary

The Commission is looking forward to continuing to create innovative ways to reach the community through collaborative workshops, webinars, and partnering with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Pillar Organizations, community partners, and stakeholders in efforts to provide a more inclusive approach to statewide accessibility. The Commission's efforts in education advocacy extended beyond gaining personal knowledge of Nevada's legislative structure, but also held its first ever statewide in-person conference with nationally recognized Deaf and Hard of Hearing presenters, local nonprofit advocates, and allying legislative knowledgeable community advocates and state resource providers.

Although the Commission has faced fiscal limitations and vacant seats, they were able to accomplish big wins for the betterment of the community by providing a platform for national recognition through ongoing collaborations and D/HH community partner support. Specifically, advocating for empowerment of our community to know they are not alone, and change can come through unity as modeled by states throughout the US. The Commission is finding its voice and footing but is clear that none of it can happen without the greater community at the helm.

As outlined in NRS 427A.750, the Commission's authority includes making recommendations to any state agency, including, without limitation, the Aging and Disability Services Division of the Department of Health and Human Services, concerning the establishment and operation of programs for persons who are Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired to ensure equal access to state programs and activities. This obligation has become the leading force behind the need for unity. It is imperative that the Commission and Community become a united force and work together to better prepare for the 83rd legislative session in 2025 and to see lasting legislative change. Committing to aligning efforts through community shared needs and the outlined data found here as it aligns with the Commission's State Plan 2022-27, it is believed advancements for our state's D/HH constituents' quality of life will improve in the state of Nevada.

The report that follows provides an overview of the Commission's efforts in 2023, its progress, findings, and Executive Director recommendations relative to 2023 Townhall Qualitative Data Analysis Outcomes in relation to the Commission's current Strategic Plan.

Commission Background

The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, was created through SB 481 in the 79th Legislative Session. As a result of the 80th Legislative Session, the Commission was granted a full-time paid Executive Director position to be paid from the Telecommunications Device Surcharge (TDD). The Executive Director position was originally recruited offer made in 2020. The current Executive Director, Obioma Officer started on February 21, 2022. The Commission currently has 5 vacancies and is awaiting appointment of applicants on vacant seats. The Chair and Vice Chair were re-elected in 2023 for an additional term unopposed and are seeing great advancements in allying with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community and Community Partners to advance state plan initiatives and state – community allyship.

The Commission efforts in state fiscal year 2022/23 focused on active listening, particularly regarding deaf service provision needs, communication accessibility, and aligning legislative efforts through resourcing and providing knowledge on the state of Nevada's legislative structure.

Commission Infrastructure

Though the Commission now meets on a quarterly basis, the Commission has expanded their infrastructure through their subcommittee efforts, previously known as their workgroups. This expansion was agreed to in efforts to increase dialogue and align with the needs outlined in 2022's Qualitative Data Analysis of Townhall Outcomes and their current Stat Plan ([CDHH State Plan FY2022 to 2027 \(nv.gov\)](#)). The current subcommittees and organized efforts are as follows:

- Accessibility Subcommittee – aids in access as it pertains to Inclusion, Government, Emergency Response and Management, and Healthcare Access. This includes ADA Compliance for communication accessibility.
- Education Subcommittee – aids access as it pertains to K-12, post-secondary education transition, language development, and the continuing efforts to advocate for students in Nevada's public school system.
- Employment Subcommittee – aids in access as it pertains to Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act Partnerships. Ensuring that throughout these various programs, efforts to include the rights and needs of D/HH constituents are made. Increasing policies and practices, including encouraging employer outreach to reduce stigmas and helping employers increase awareness of D/HH employees.

- **NEW:** Interpreter Subcommittee – aids in access as it pertains to interpreter and CART service provisions in Government Accessibility and Quality Interpreters. Ensuring service providers have a place at the table of advancing and equipping their skills and knowledge to better service Nevada’s constituents.
- Legislative Subcommittee – aids in Advocacy as it pertains to policy making/development and change, evaluation of program designs, legislative awareness, and amplifying community advocacy efforts through coordination/networking. This includes reviewing and prioritizing legislative recommendations in preparation for our biennial legislative sessions.

As seen above, a recent addition to the Commission’s subcommittees is the Interpreter Subcommittee. In 2022 the Commission voted to include an Interpreter Subcommittee to respond to the ongoing concerns with communication access in relation to the needs for quality interpreters. Nevada interpreters were seeking additional resources, problem solving tools for professional development, and support for the ongoing expressed need for interpreter accessibility. With no one on the Commission with this qualifying skillset, it became evident that a workgroup was needed. The Interpreter Subcommittee now consists of potentially eight (8) seats:

1. NVRID or Registry Body for Interpreters for the Deaf (Non-Voting)
2. K-12 Interpreter
3. Community Based Interpreter – Freelance Interpreter
4. VRS/VRI Representative
5. NVBDA or Diverse D/HH Consumer (BIPOC and/or LBGTQIA+)
6. ASL Interpreter Educator (Optional - ED Advised)
7. D/HH Consumer (Optional)
8. Add additional seat for CDI/Training CDI (once applicable in the state of Nevada) (Optional)

Each Subcommittee meets quarterly in efforts to continue the inclusion of the D/HH community and the ongoing dialogue around language access and communication needs throughout Nevada.

Commission State Plan 2021-2027

The State Plan, as the results of a 2021 community survey conducted by the Commission, has become the driving force behind the Commission’s core initiatives/priorities of Access, Engagement, and Advocacy. These priorities are in response to the five (5) identified critical issues/needs of:

1. Effective communication including but not limited to appropriate accommodations through government agencies, healthcare services, and employment services.
2. Limited access to equal employment opportunities for the target population.
3. Collaboration among community stakeholders to increase awareness of the target populations including marginalized communities within the target populations.

4. Increased partnerships to create a more inclusive system of services within Nevada for the target populations.
5. Support and expertise to support the language development and education of children in the target population.

In meeting the above critical issues/needs, eight (8) recommendations have been implemented to support the Commissions three strategic priorities: Access, Engagement, and Advocacy (see pg. 5-6, [CDHH State Plan FY2022 to 2027 \(nv.gov\)](#)).

State Plan Recommendations

The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing monitor the following recommendations to ensure inclusive, effective services and supports are available to Nevadans within the target population:

1. Inclusion of the Community
2. Government Accessibility
3. Quality Interpreters
4. Emergency Response and Management
5. Healthcare Access
6. Language Development
7. Post-Secondary Education Transition
8. WIOA Partnerships

The Commission is tasked with identifying from the above eight (8) recommendations what will be priority for each year of their plan.

2023 Prioritized Recommendation Process

The priorities for 2023 were identified through the “August 2022 Townhall Qualitative Data Analysis.” The Qualitative Data revealed 5 themes consistently shared statewide:

- Theme 1. Interpreter Shortage
- Theme 2. ASL & Caption Accessibility
- Theme 3. D/HH Services
- Theme 4. D/HH Education
- Theme 5. Safety Provisionary Support

August 2022 Townhall Qualitative Data Analysis Outcomes Overview

The Commissioner’s gathered information at each Townhall, revealed the following needs and recommendations statewide:

2022 Las Vegas (LV) Townhall Outcomes

Tuesday, August 2nd, 2022, a Hybrid Session was held at the Palace Station Grand Ballroom. The following findings and recommendations are the outcomes of that session’s data analysis.

Findings:

Data reveals a dominant need for ASL & Caption Accessibility (Theme 2) needs in the Southern Region with a 40% reported impact on D/HH community Inclusion, Government Access, Quality Interpreters, Emergency Response and Management, and Healthcare Access.

Data also reveals a secondary immediate need in D/HH Education (Theme 4) with a 21% reported overall impact on D/HH Quality Interpreters, Language Development, and Post-Secondary Education Transition.

Combined these areas cover 61% of the Southern regions reported concerns within the State Plan's Strategic Priorities.

ED Recommendations:

1. Immediate action be taken in the Southern region as it pertains to Accessibility in American Sign Language and Closed Captions in all facilities and law mandate enforcement.
2. Immediate intervention in D/HH Education in Language Development should be addressed with Southern region school districts. Seek LAP updates and/or check-ins for resource support and education needs of instructors/staff.
3. D/HH Specialist should be mandatory within our districts to address IEP LAP compliance of D/HH Student's needs.

2022 Elko (E) Townhall Outcomes

Tuesday, August 23rd, 2022, a Hybrid Session was held at the NEIS Elko Office. The following findings and recommendations are the outcomes of the session's engagement and data analysis.

Findings:

Data reveals a dominant need for Interpreter Shortage (Theme 1) needs in the Rural Region with a 41% reported impact due to Quality Interpreters.

Data also reveals a secondary immediate need in D/HH Education (Theme 4) with a 21% reported overall impact due to Quality Interpreters.

Combined these areas cover 62% of the Rural region – Elko's reported concerns within the State Plan's Strategic Priorities. Both themes highlight the ongoing issue with Quality Interpreters.

ED Recommendations:

1. Immediate action be taken in the Rural regions as it pertains to Interpreter Shortage through accessibility to training centers/programs and mentor programs. Additional long-term recommendation is early exposure to American Sign Language in K-12 school system as an elective or foreign language as modeled by surrounding states, aid in pipeline issues.
2. Additional resource provisions advised in D/HH Education in Quality Interpreters through accountability training as practiced through CAS's Mentor program. School

districts are advised to seek additional resource-supports for staff development. The state's increase in registry standards will aid in this concern.

3. D/HH Specialist should be mandatory within our districts.

2022 Reno (R) Townhall Outcomes

Thursday, August 25th, 2022, a Hybrid Session was held at the ADSD Reno Office. The following findings and recommendations are the outcomes of that session's community engagement and data analysis.

Findings:

Data reveals a dominate Interpreter Shortage (Theme 1) needs in the Northern Region with a 43% relevance reported impact due to Quality Interpreters.

Data also reveals a secondary immediate need in D/HH Services (Theme 3) with a 28.5% reported overall impact on Inclusion of the Community, Healthcare Access, and Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Partnerships/Employment Issues due to Interpreter access (ESR2).

Combined these areas cover 71.5% of the Northern regions reported concerns within the State Plan's Strategic Priorities.

ED Recommendations:

1. Due to the lack of Interpreter Program access in the North, an evident impact on the Quality of Interpreters has resulted in an Interpreter Shortage. The current recommendation is to establish a program or access through remote means be implemented through collaborations with colleges statewide that DO have Interpreter Training Programs.
2. Immediate intervention in D/HH Services through stronger advocacy is needed and access to direct services for Mental Healthcare providers that sign. A center or Deaf/Hard of Hearing staff placed throughout our provisional programs can aid in a greater relevance to D/HH centered service provisions statewide.

2022 Statewide Townhalls Overall Outcomes – Overview

In focusing on the Commission's State Plan and relevance of the objectives of this Commission, it is imperative to address the areas within the Commission State Plan that need additional attention within the state. The following is a summary of the overall outcomes of the North, South, and Rural regions together to aid in prioritizing the Commissions focus on recommendation deficits and global community need.

Findings:

Data reveals a dominant lack of Quality Interpreters (Recommendation #3) as outlined within our State Plan by 37% relevance statewide in Interpreter Shortage (Theme 1) and D/HH Education (Theme 4).

Data also reveals a secondary immediate need in Healthcare Access (Recommendation #5) as outlined with our State Plan by 17% relevance statewide in the areas of ASL & Caption Accessibility (Theme 2) and D/HH Services (Theme 3).

The final area of greatest need is Inclusion of the Community (Recommendation #1) as outlined in our State Plan by 14% relevance statewide in the areas of ASL & Caption Accessibility and D/HH Services.

Combined these areas cover 68% of statewide reported concerns within the State Plan's Strategic Priorities.

ED Recommendations:

1. Current Recommendation is to start with these top 3 needs within our Subcommittees to begin advocating for changes as outlined in each region per ED Recommendations.
2. Additional recommendations, collaborations, and networking are necessary for the success of change.
3. Community has spoken, it's time to act, advocate, and show we are listening.

2023 Statewide Prioritized Recommendation Outcomes

Below are the outcomes and efforts of the Commission and Executive Director in fulfillment of the 2023 Prioritized Recommendations:

- Recommendation #1 Inclusion of the Community
- Recommendation #3 Quality Interpreters
- Recommendation #5 Healthcare Access

Recommendation #1: Inclusion of the Community

Benchmarks: number of townhall events, number of participants in townhalls, surveys, and diversity of Commission involvement. Including the number of people in the target population represented in state entities.

January 24th – Deaf Camp Roundtable

In collaboration with DETR and Historians of Camp SignShine, the Commission ED co-hosted a roundtable discussion to highlight bringing back D/HH Nevadan Heritage and an all-Deaf Camp/Transition Day for D/HH Nevada students. This engagement was a success and later led to a one-week D/HH Camp highlighting an inclusive communication approach.

April 10th, 2023 – Deaf Day at the Legislature and Townhall in Carson City

The Commission's Legislative Subcommittee hosted their biennial Deaf Day at the Legislature with highlighted community partner Nevada Hands and Voices. This event was held in Carson City at the Legislature. 76 Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) constituents, Parents of D/HH students, students, and allies were bused to Carson City from Las Vegas to join additional Northern community members for this event. The total attendees were believed to have been roughly 100 guests. This left a lasting impression on our legislative representatives and has aided in our ongoing efforts for legislative initiative development and projected change.

June 26th-30th, 2023 – Deaf Camp and Transition Day at UNLV

The Commission participated in an engagement resolution approach for Inclusion in the Community with an emphasis on our education and transitional pipeline issues for our K-12 and post-secondary education needs. This collaboration included Camp CRAVE and Camp SignShine Historians (i.e. Las Vegas Deaf Seniors, Nevada Association of the Deaf, previous Camp Counselors, etc.) in hosting Nevada’s all Deaf and Hard of Hearing Camp and D/HH Transition Day. These efforts were also to bring back the heritage and culture of Nevada with an emphasis on total communication and access.

There was a total of 18 students that identified as Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals with various modes of communication. The accommodations team included 2 Certified Deaf Interpreters, 6 Certified Hearing Interpreters and CART services. The students also had a team of 10 camp counselors to support and mentor the students of whom also identify as Deaf, Hard of Hearing and/or fluent in ASL.

October 10th, 13th, and 24th, 2023 – D/HH Commission Townhall Tour in Pahrump, Reno, and Las Vegas

Three townhalls were held statewide to take note of the current needs and state plan conflicts/challenges experienced by our state’s Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. See sections: “October 2023 Qualitative Data Analysis Overview” and “2024 Executive Director Recommendations” for further information.

December 17th, 2023 – D/HH Commission Engagement Conference in Las Vegas

The commission ended the year with its first Engagement Conference, Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing Engagement Conference 2023: Empowering Advocacy in Policy Making and Legislative Change. With registration of over 150 people, an unforeseen venue change, the Engagement Conference sustained an attendance of 113 attendees, 20 vendor booths, 8 presenters, 2 panel presentations from our D/HH community partner leaders and youth, over 20 volunteers, and catered breakfast, lunch, and sponsored snacks. This has been noted as a great success for our Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.

The conference was to provide Legislative Advocacy training to stakeholders and Community partners through a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Lens. The conference included presentations from nationwide leadership advocates in policy change that are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and/or Speech Impaired and state employees/allies. This included a recap of the efforts and recognition of Legislative and Community engagement through the Commission’s ongoing efforts to fulfill the state plan initiatives of Access, Engagement, and Advocacy.

The Nevada Commission for Person who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing or Speech Impaired is sought to educate and empower individuals who are Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing on Policymaking and Change. This initiative was to impact the potential of a stronger presence in the legislative process for the 83rd session in 2025.

This approach truly highlighted our whole state coming together as a community, making a choice, to take a chance so things can and will change.

Recommendation #3: Quality Interpreters

Benchmarks: number of interpreters and CART providers added to the Nevada Interpreter Registry each year, % increase in enrollment in American Sign Language Interpreter programs, and interpreter outcomes measured through the Interpreter Mentoring program.

AB206

In 2023, during the 82nd Legislative Session, a seat was established for a registered certified Hearing or Deaf Interpreter able to better address the needs of our service providers and users statewide. Assembly Bill 206 was sponsored by Assemblywoman Tracy Brown-May and was Approved by the Governor on May 25, 2023. NRS 427A.750 is amended to read 12 members with the addition of (l) One member who: (1) Is registered with the Division pursuant to NRS 656A.100 to engage in the practice of sign language interpreting; and (2) To the extent practicable, has experience with and knowledge of interpreting in a primary or secondary educational setting and a post-secondary educational setting and freelance interpreting. The bill became effective on July 1, 2023, and currently holds an application awaiting approval.

In the interim a subcommittee was established to better aid in ongoing dialogue on subject matters of quality interpreters. The Interpreter Subcommittee consists of educators, freelance interpreters, educational interpreters, and consumers aid in resolutions for ongoing professional development deficits and networking advancement for interpreter programs statewide.

Recommendation #5: Healthcare Access

Benchmarks: number of partnerships with healthcare providers, state workforce development strategies include the target population, number of healthcare rights brochures disseminated, number of communication cards disseminated.

Mental Healthcare Needs

Early 2023, Executive Director Obioma Officer, began meeting with local Mental Healthcare providers that sign to address the ongoing needs and vision for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing access needs to Mental Healthcare. This engagement was seen to be proactive, however premature due to no Deaf and Hard of Hearing providers residing in the state of Nevada. Dialogue continued as resources were being developed as an interim approach until further action could be made.

Healthcare Resource Development

In additional efforts toward resourcing the state of Nevada and the Commission better with healthcare access, O. Officer attended the virtual summit: 2023 Deaf and Hard of hearing Experiences in Healthcare Summit – Driving Equitable and Accessible Patient Experiences on October 20th, 2023. Along with networking directly with experts like CEO of 2axend, Corey Axelrod, O. Officer has made it an ongoing effort to network statewide to bring awareness of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) leadership nationwide. These connections have aided in

Emergency Management, Diversity Equity Inclusion initiatives, nonprofit organizations, community partners begin to adjust approach to improve Nevada’s D/HH access, healthcare awareness, and healthcare hospitality for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nevada constituents.

Legislative Efforts

In addition to prioritized recommendation of 2023, the Commission considered, monitored, followed, resourced the following legislative bills with knowledge, feedback, letters of support, community engagement, and/or endorsement:

- **AB206**
 - **Summary:** Revises provisions governing the Nevada Commission for Persons Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. (BDR 38-563)
 - **Sponsor:** Assemblywoman Tracy Brown-May
 - **Last Work Session:** Assembly Health and Human Services - Friday, March 31, 2023, 1:30 PM
 - **Actions:** Do pass
 - **Link:** [AB206 Overview \(state.nv.us\)](https://legis.nv.gov/bills/200-299/AB206)
- **AB133**
 - **Summary:** Revises provisions relating to drivers' licenses. (BDR 43-165)
 - **Sponsor:** Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod and Assemblywoman Venicia Considine
 - **Last Work Session:** Assembly Growth and Infrastructure - Thursday, February 23, 2023, 1:30 PM – **Bill History:** Final Decision on April 15, 2023
 - **Actions:** Pursuant to Joint Standing Rule No. 14.3.1, no further action allowed.
 - **Link:** [AB133 Overview \(state.nv.us\)](https://legis.nv.gov/bills/40-49/AB133)
- **AB161**
 - **Summary:** Revises provisions governing the identification of persons. (BDR 43-635)
 - **Sponsor:** Assemblyman Cameron Miller and Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod
 - **Last Work Session:** Assembly Growth and Infrastructure - Thursday, March 16, 2023, 1:30 PM
 - **Actions:** Amend, and do pass as amended
 - **Link:** [AB161 Overview \(state.nv.us\)](https://legis.nv.gov/bills/40-49/AB161)
- **SB43**
 - **Summary:** Makes various changes relating to services for aging persons and persons with disabilities. (BDR 38-219)
 - **Sponsor:** Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
 - **Last Work Session:** Senate Health and Human Services - Thursday, March 9, 2023, 3:30 PM
 - **Bill History:**
 - **April 24th, 2023**, Taken from Secretary's desk. Placed on General File. Read third time. Passed. Title approved. (Yeas: 21, Nays: None.) To Assembly.

- **April 25th, 2023**, In Assembly. Read first time. Referred to Committee on Health and Human Services. To committee.
 - **Actions:** Do pass
 - **Link:** [SB43 Overview \(state.nv.us\)](https://legis.nv.gov/legislation/assembly/bills/2023/0000-0049/SB43/Overview)
- **AB331 (Amend. BDR186)**
 - **Summary:** Revises provisions governing court interpreters. (BDR 1-186)
 - **Sponsor:** Assemblywoman Bea Duran
 - **Last Work Session:** No Assembly or Senate Session to date.
 - **Actions:** Pursuant to Joint Standing Rule No. 14.3.1, no further action allowed.
 - **Link:** [AB331 Overview \(state.nv.us\)](https://legis.nv.gov/legislation/assembly/bills/2023/0000-0049/AB331/Overview)
- **SB373**
 - **Summary:** Revises provisions relating to language access. (BDR 18-1034)
 - **Sponsor:** Senator Edgar Flores, Senator Fabian Doñate, Senator Rochelle Nguyen, Senator Dina Neal, Assemblywoman Cecelia González, Assemblyman Reuben D'Silva, and Assemblywoman Selena Torres
 - **Last Work Session:** Senate Government Affairs - Friday, April 14, 2023
 - **Actions:** Amend, and do pass as amended
 - **Link:** [SB373 Overview \(state.nv.us\)](https://legis.nv.gov/legislation/senate/bills/2023/0000-0049/SB373/Overview)
- **SB431**
 - **Summary:** Revises provisions relating to governmental administration. (BDR 18-1089)
 - **Sponsor:** Senate Committee on Government Affairs
 - **Last Session – Introduction:** Senate Government Affairs - Wednesday, April 26, 2023, 3:30 PM
 - **Actions:** Heard, No Action
 - **Link:** [SB431 Overview \(state.nv.us\)](https://legis.nv.gov/legislation/senate/bills/2023/0000-0049/SB431/Overview)
- **Budget 1006 – HHS- ADSD – Commission for Persons Who Are Deaf**
 - **Summary:** The Nevada Commission for Persons Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing is authorized to: 1) review services and practices of all state and local governmental entities relating to persons who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired and advise those entities directly; and 2) provide persons who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired with information concerning services and resources that promote equality of opportunity for such persons. Statutory Authority: NRS 427A.750.
 - **Department** 40 Department of Health and Human Services
 - **Agency** 402 DHHS - Aging and Disability Services Division
 - **Function** 035 Health and Human Services
 - **Sub-Function** 402 Aging and Disability Services
 - **Budget Number** HHS-ADSD - Commission for Persons Who Are Deaf
 - **Fund Number** 101
 - **Budget Number** 1006
 - **Volume** 101
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- **Sponsor:** N/A
- **Last Work Session:** Senate Finance - Friday, April 28, 2023, 8:00 AM
- **Actions:** None
- **Link:** [1006 - HHS-ADSD - Commission For Persons Who Are Deaf Overview \(state.nv.us\)](https://www.state.nv.us/leg/committees/committees.asp?committee=1006)
- **Additional Bills to be considered under ED Recommendation:**
 - **AB35** for communication access for inmates
 - **Commission possible actions:** assure ADA Compliance and specific App access for communication facilitation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing inmates.
 - **Link:** [AB35 Overview \(state.nv.us\)](https://www.state.nv.us/leg/bills/2023/AB35)
 - **AB202**
 - **Ongoing concern through a D/HH lens:** VP access and communication device access in our medical facilities in general.
 - **Need:** A law that permits two-way communication via video communication. The DHH/SI community could benefit by decreasing the communication breakdowns and isolation. This isolation occurs with visitation options being mandated according to immune sensitivities within our nursing/medical facilities.
 - **Commission possible actions/support:** Advocate to assure device accessibility with visual access for apps like ASL Anywhere for on demand communication and safety of consumer needs and rights to express said needs through us and access to devices that allow consumers to stay in contact with loved ones using preferred and effective communication modalities of choice. This would be provisions allowable to patients with rights left to the patient not the facility if the commission could assist in properly protecting rights of the consumer with verbiage recommendations that highlight the need of the D/HH/SI consumer.
 - **Link:** [AB202 Overview \(state.nv.us\)](https://www.state.nv.us/leg/bills/2023/AB202)

October 2023 Qualitative Data Analysis Summary

Qualitative Analysis Process

The 2023 Qualitative Analysis process was conducted by Obioma Officer, Executive Director of the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. All data reviewed was submitted in writing electronically through email by Commissioner's who attended reported townhall listening sessions. And all details were reported as direct accounts of community engagement and townhall participants with the understanding that personal identities would remain confidential for this report unless otherwise stated/requested.

All notes shared within this analysis are Commissioner's individual accounts of voluntarily shared testimonies of Nevada constituents' experiences as Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) community members, professionals, service providers, parents, and/or allies of the D/HH

community. All notes provided are a compilation of 5 Commissioners, 123 attendees statewide, and 258 identified aspects of expressed concerns/needs across the northern, southern, and rural constituents representatives in attendance.

Coding

Mapping of the data was consistent with a coding system that included the Commissioners initials, the location in brackets, and the sequential number of the statement, comment, or note shared. No coding reveals a constituents' personal identity directly in efforts to remain anonymous and supportive of freedom of speech without retaliation.

Qualitative Data Themes

The October 2023 Townhall Qualitative Data analyzed revealed 5 themes consistently shared statewide [October 2023 Townhall Qualitative Data Analysis Reporter O. Officer \(nv.gov\)](#):

- Theme 1. Interpreter Access
- Theme 2. ADA Compliance
- Theme 3. D/HH Education, Services, & Advocacy
- Theme 4. D/HH Equipment & VRI Reliability
- Theme 5. D/HH Cultural Competency & Sensitivity Training

October 2023 Townhall Outcome Overviews by Region

The Commissioner's gathered information at each Townhall, revealing the following needs and recommendations by region:

Pahrump (P) Townhall Outcomes

Tuesday, October 10th, 2023, an In Person Session was held at the Nye Communities Coalition Activity Center. With an attendance of 4 community participants representing the Southern Rural region of Nevada. The following findings and recommendations are the outcomes of that session's data analysis.

Findings:

Data reveals a dominant need for ADA Compliance (Theme 2) needs in the Southern Rural region – Pahrump with a 28% reported impression and potential impact on all D/HH Commission Recommendations with an emphasis on Language Development at 25% impact or focus on our student's needs.

Data also reveals a secondary immediate need in D/HH Education, Services, and Advocacy (Theme 3) with a 25% reported overall impression and potential impact on D/HH Inclusion in the Community, Healthcare Access, and Language Development.

Combined these areas cover 53% of the Southern Rural region – Pahrump reported concerns within the D/HH Commission's State Plan Priorities.

ED Recommendations:

1. Immediate action be taken in the Rural regions as it pertains to ADA Compliance in all aspects of D/HH access needs and platforms. [Nevada Equal Rights Commission](#)

nv.gov) should be informed of all findings to aid in law mandate enforcement recommendations and guidance for further enforcement protocols currently in practice for other disabilities to ensure training and ongoing compliance for D/HH ADA Compliance needs are maintained.

2. As a repeated concern from 2022, the community has spoken in the Southern Region, now including the Southern Rural region of Pahrump, as shown in past Northern Rural regions. Immediate intervention in D/HH Education, Services, and Advocacy in Language Development should be addressed with Southern region school districts. Seek LAP enforcements and qualified audits/check-ins for resource support, I.E.P. compliance, and education needs of instructors/staff.

D/HH Specialist should be mandatory within our districts to address IEP LAP compliance of D/HH Student's needs.

Constituents' Legislative Needs/Advocacy/Suggestions:

- Something that better ensures enforcement and accountability vis-a-vis federal laws (ADA and IDEA)
- All hospitals required to have interpreters on staff.
- All school districts required to provide live interpreting.
- Subsidies or incentives for student to attend interpreter training programs, training for teacher of the deaf certification, speech/lang. pathology with focus on language acquisition among deaf children.
- Enforcement of ensuring communication access is provided.
 - Suggestion: Hospital should have on-staff ASL interpreter because VRI is unreliable or insufficient depending on the nature of medical attention needed
 - Hospitals have lots of equipment and IT power; there should be no reason VRI bandwidth or high-speed internet is unavailable.
 - Suggestion: School should have on-staff ASL interpreter because internet connectivity is unreliable
- Educational incentives for training in field of ASL interpreting

Reno (R) Townhall Outcomes

Friday, October 13th, 2023, an In Person Session was held at the Aging and Disability Service Division Reno Office. With an attendance of 10 community participants representing the Northern region of Nevada. The following findings and recommendations are the outcomes of that session's engagement and data analysis.

Findings:

Data reveals a dominant need for D/HH Education, Services, and Advocacy (Theme 3) needs in the Northern region – Reno with a 56% reported impression and potential impact on all D/HH Commission Recommendations with an emphasis on Inclusion of the Community at 45% impact or focus on needs for a Deaf language development model with experts found in Deaf Schools, direct D/HH services, D/HH resources, and D/HH

advocacy provided through a Deaf Center model with full communication access (D/HH staff and/or ASL user friendly environment).

Data also reveals a secondary need in D/HH Cultural Competency and Sensitivity Training (Theme 5) with a 20% reported overall impression and potential impact on D/HH Inclusion in the Community.

Combined these areas cover 76% of the Northern region – Reno reported concerns within the D/HH Commission’s State Plan Priorities. Both themes highlight the ongoing issues with Inclusion of the Community and our state’s lack of proactive response to D/HH Cultural needs and Sensitivity Trained approach to engagements.

ED Recommendations:

1. Immediate action be taken in the Northern region as it pertains to Inclusion of the Community through a Deaf language development model with experts found in Deaf Schools, direct D/HH services, D/HH resources, and D/HH advocacy provided through a Deaf Center model with full communication access (D/HH staff and/or ASL user friendly environment) per ongoing request of D/HH Nevadans. As long-term goals, a Deaf School of Nevada and Deaf Center for Nevadans are highly recommended to improve access, resources, and advocacy in the Northern Region.
2. Additional needs emphasized in Inclusion of the Community align with recommendations for the Commission to demand ADA Compliance in all areas of D/HH access to fundamental resources in Nevada. A legislative mandate for D/HH Sensitivity Training, along with a unified legislative guided practice of D/HH culturally competent providers under funding sources and services allocated to the D/HH constituents of Nevada would be prudent. Commission is encouraged to seek additional resources and advise from the [Nevada Equal Rights Commission \(nv.gov\)](https://www.nv.gov/equal-rights)
3. Additional recommendations include audits of language development facilities (i.e. schools, government funded programs, state run organizations, medical facilities, etc.) by qualified professionals to ensure compliance with LAP.

Per 2022 analysis, the ED insists the Commission’s consideration, for the sake of our students, to advocate for a D/HH Specialist be made mandatory within our districts to address the immediate needs of our D/HH Education needs.

Constituents’ Legislative Needs/Advocacy/Suggestions:

- The law should be changed to say that there is a need for a critical mass of deaf kids so that if there are communities with a few deaf kids who are not receiving any services, the state should pay for those kids to have an opportunity to go where there are other deaf kids and deaf services are being provided.
- We need an active process for enforcing the ADA law.

Las Vegas (LV) Townhall Outcomes

Tuesday, October 24th, 2023, an In Person Session was held at the Aging and Disability Service Division Las Vegas Office. With an attendance of 109 community participants

representing the Southern region of Nevada. The following findings and recommendations are the outcomes of that session’s discussions and data analysis.

Findings:

Data reveals a dominant need for D/HH Education, Services, and Advocacy (Theme 3) needs in the Southern region – Las Vegas with a 36% reported impression and potential impact on all D/HH Commission Recommendations aside from Government Accessibility, with an emphasis on Healthcare Access at 29% impact or focus across all themes.

Data also reveals a secondary prominent need in Interpreter Access (Theme 1) with a 20% reported overall impression and potential impact on Quality of Interpreters, Emergency Response and Management, and Healthcare Access.

Combined these areas cover 49% of the Southern region – Las Vegas reported concerns within the D/HH Commission’s State Plan Priorities.

ED Recommendations:

1. As revealed in the Summary Outcomes, a 29% impact on Healthcare Access across all themes and 26% impact on Inclusion of the Community reveals the ongoing need for Advocacy. Meaning, a centralized Advocate approach that focuses on educating, empowering, mediating, and holding our state providers and constituents accountable for optimal outcomes for the D/HH community. This includes supporting navigation of resources through a side-by-side approach of mentoring. Approaches as outlined above are commonly practiced in Deaf Schools and Deaf Centers with direct D/HH services, D/HH resources, and D/HH advocacy provided through a Deaf centered model with full communication access (D/HH staff and/or ASL user friendly environment). This has been a repeated request of the community and is reflected here in the raw data through statements by attendees at the Las Vegas Townhall. The ED recommends, as long-term goals, that a Deaf School of Nevada and Deaf Center for Nevadans be instated to improve access, resources, and advocacy in the Southern Region.
2. Due to the Interpreter Access impacted by quality of interpreters along with Interpreter Access prominently impacting the lack of Healthcare Access, the request for advocacy in a D/HH supported nursing facility (i.e. an established nursing home with a wing dedicated to the D/HH community with experts on staff), expanding D/HH mental health insurance coverage, and hiring on staff interpreter access is not unreasonable. These approaches have been shared to be effective in other states and increase proactive personal health awareness.
3. There is a lack of Cultural Competency and Sensitivity Training impacting the willingness to address the needed and requested changes. The Commission is encouraged to be proactive in supporting initiatives seeking legislative changes to assure greater access for all health-related needs from birth detection, throughout audiological health/needs, including mental healthcare supports, into senior hospice and/or final stages of life.

In all areas of D/HH Services a stronger advocacy intentionality is needed. A center or Deaf/ Hard of Hearing staff placed throughout our provisional programs can aid in a greater relevance to D/HH centered service provisions in the Southern Regions and statewide.

Constituents’ Legislative Needs/Advocacy/Suggestions:

- We should seek to establish a nursing home the specifically serves deaf people.
- Bars and restaurants that have TVs should have requirements to have captions on.
- Need open caption (i.e. on screen) films in all theaters and a requirement for open captioning in public spaces.
- Suggested that the commission could bring the directors of hospitals together to inform them about the need for live interpreting.
- We should seek a collaborative solution to this problem.
- Should have visual flashing lights at each intersection to aid in notification of approaching emergency vehicles.
 - In Washington DC there are visual indicators at intersections to alert drivers to an oncoming emergency vehicle. In NV there is only the siren and no visual indicator.
- Recommendation to update TTY/TDD to using VP access instead to ADA Law
- Suggestion to have Deaf Awareness recognition day – highlight Deaf role models

October 2023 Statewide Qualitative Data Analysis Conclusion

In focusing on the Commission’s State Plan and relevance of the objectives of this Commission, it is imperative to attend to all recommendations with a closer look at the more prominent deficits revealed in these outcomes. The following is a summary of the overall accumulative findings of the North, South, and Rural regions to aid in prioritizing the Commissions focus and prioritizing of recommendation deficits and global community need.

2023 Statewide Cumulative Findings

Data reveals a dominant lack of Inclusion of the Community (Recommendation #1) as outlined within our State Plan by 41% relevance statewide in ADA Compliance (Theme 2), D/HH Education, Services, and Advocacy (Theme 3), D/HH Equipment and VRI Reliability (Theme 4), and D/HH Cultural Competency and Sensitivity Training (Theme 5).

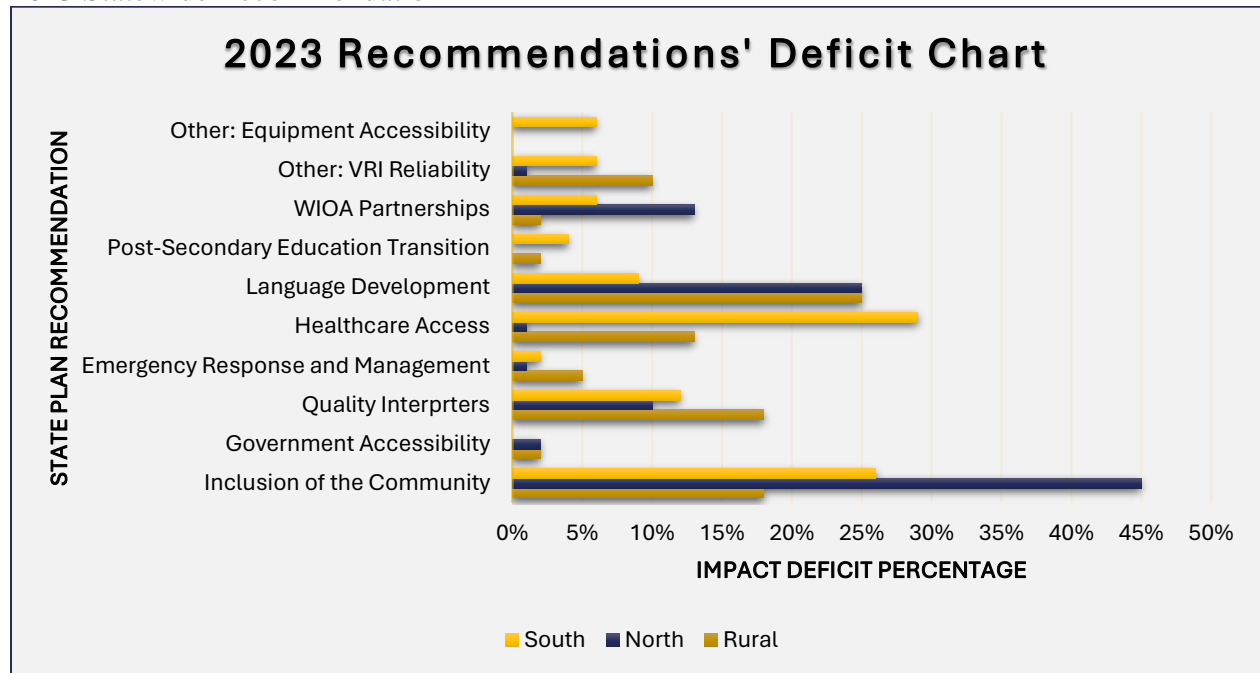
Data also reveals a secondary immediate need in Language Development (Recommendation #6) as outlined within our State Plan by 18% relevance statewide in the areas of ASL Access (Theme 1), ADA Compliance (Theme 2), D/HH Education, Services, and Advocacy (Theme 3), D/HH Equipment and VRI Reliability (Theme 4), and D/HH Cultural Competency and Sensitivity Training (Them 5).

The final area of great need is Healthcare Access (Recommendation #5) as outline within our State Plan by 17% relevance statewide in the areas of ASL Access (Theme 1), ADA Compliance

(Theme 2), D/HH Education, Services, and Advocacy (Theme 3), D/HH Equipment and VRI Reliability (Theme 4), and D/HH Cultural Competency and Sensitivity Training (Theme 5).

Combined these areas cover 76% of statewide reported impactful concerns within the State Plan’s Strategic Priorities.

2023 Statewide Recommendations’ Deficit Chart



2023 Executive Director Statewide Recommendations

1. Current Recommendation is to start with the above top 3 needs being supported by our Commission: Recommendation 1, 5, and 6. As for the regional needs, allow our subcommittees to begin advocating for changes as outlined in each region per ED Recommendations.
2. Additional recommendations, collaborations, and networking are necessary for the success or change for our D/HH community. Commission is encouraged to seek additional resources and advise from the [Nevada Equal Rights Commission \(nv.gov\)](https://www.nv.gov/equal-rights).
3. The community has spoken, it’s time to act, advocate, and show we are listening by maintaining our alliances with the community through transparency, education, and empowerment.
4. The Engagement Conference for 2024 should include priorities presented by the community, along with community partner initiatives for legislative change. Efforts made with intentionality, optimism, and tenacity for statewide change will be evident through new D/HH Legislation outcomes in 2025.

All D/HH Commission State Plan recommendations are of priority and should be monitored and addressed by the Commission. A greater use of all Subcommittees can be utilized in ensuring these areas do not go unseen. However, the priorities outlined above need immediate attention

and should be expounded upon during our 2024 Engagement Conference to be considered in the Commission's Advocacy for legislative action in 2025 during the 83rd Legislative Session.

Furthermore, though the current State Plan does not include VRI Reliability and Equipment, it is evident that these resources are being misused and/or represented at the expense of our D/HH constituents of Nevada. During our town halls, 5% of impactful concerns related to VRI Reliability were the Unreliable internet issues, Excessive reliance on VRI instead of live interpreters, and VRI inaccessibility/tech issues.

As for D/HH Equipment Accessibility, there were 4% impactful concerns recorded due to conflicts found in inadequate equipment for communication access (i.e. VRI equipment), VRI equipment not being ready and/or maintenance. Staff lacking knowledge to operate said equipment. This includes an emphasized concern with D/HH alerting systems no longer being distributed, and consumer equipment now considered to be outdated or obsolete.

Current advice is to monitor all D/HH Equipment and VRI Reliance practices and consider including these conflicts as an addendum to the D/HH Commission's State Plan priorities for communication access moving forward.

Next Steps

Going into the year 2024, the Commission is focused on substantial legislative impact in the 83rd Legislative Session in 2025. Though challenged by a number of vacant positions, most of which are pending appointments with the Governor's office, the Commission is energized to continue to build on their momentum. As shared before, the Commission is finding its voice and footing, and intends to remain studious in their efforts of advocacy with the greater community at the helm.

Proposed 2024 Prioritized Recommendations

The proposed data driven 2024 Recommendation Priorities are as follows:

- **Recommendation #1 Inclusion of the Community**
Continue community engagement through town halls, roundtable discussions, and statewide Deaf Awareness events. Increase focus on the Legislative Advocacy needs to readdress D/HH Services with a direct service model that includes cultural competencies found in Deaf Schools and Deaf centered facilities/centers nationwide.
- **Recommendation #5 Healthcare Access**
Increase ADA compliance mandates and accountability statewide to ensure an increase in healthcare hospitality services of communication access, D/HH mental health services, and healthcare network expansions.
- **Recommendation #6 Language Development**
Immediate intervention in D/HH Education, Post-Secondary Student Services, and Early Intervention Advocacy in Language Development in all school districts. Seek more

robust Language Access Plan (LAP) enforcement and qualified audits/check-ins for resource supported programs, I.E.P. compliance, and education needs of instructors and staff.

References

August 2022 Townhall Qualitative Data Analysis_Reporter O.Officer

Available on the [Nevada Commission for Persons Who Are Deaf Hard of Hearing or Speech Impaired \(nv.gov\)](https://www.nvcnv.gov/) website.

October 2023 Townhall Qualitative Data Analysis_Reporter O.Officer

Available on the [Nevada Commission for Persons Who Are Deaf Hard of Hearing or Speech Impaired \(nv.gov\)](https://www.nvcnv.gov/) website.

CDHH State Plan 2021-2027 [CDHH State Plan FY2022 to 2027 \(nv.gov\)](https://www.nvcnv.gov/)

Available on the [Nevada Commission for Persons Who Are Deaf Hard of Hearing or Speech Impaired \(nv.gov\)](https://www.nvcnv.gov/) website.