



Deaf and Hard of Hearing Town Hall Meetings Summary Report

This summary report was prepared for the Strategic Planning Subcommittee of the Nevada Subcommittee on Communications Services for Persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, or Hard of Hearing and Persons with Speech Disabilities (SOCS). It summarizes the results of the four town hall meetings that were held in Nevada to gather input from deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing and persons with speech disabilities, providers, advocates, and caregivers.

Meetings took place at the following locations:

Location:	Reno	Elko	Las Vegas	
Date:	July 25, 2016	July 27, 2016	August 4, 2016 at 12:00 pm	August 4, 2016 at 5:30 pm

Methods

Town hall meetings were held with providers, consumers, advocates, and caregivers at three locations across the state; Las Vegas, Reno, and Elko. The purpose of the town hall meetings was to gather feedback regarding the critical issues identified as most significant to be addressed in the SOCS Strategic Plan.

Town hall meetings lasted approximately two hours at each site. Each convening began with a description of the planning process including research and outreach to consumers, caregivers, and providers through surveys, and an explanation of how the town hall meeting was relevant to planning efforts. Participants were provided with an opportunity to make their perspectives heard, especially around validating whether the issue was an accurate account of the current situation and identification of issues that should be prioritized for action through the Strategic Plan. To do this, participants were split into two self-identifying groups: a consumer group, and a caregiver, advocate, and provider group so that the unique perspectives each group has related to the critical issues could be heard. The groups provided both their specific concerns within each critical issue area, and potential solutions.

Interpreters were provided at all sites, and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) was also provided in Las Vegas.



Participants

LAS VEGAS (12:00 PM)					
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	Consumer	Advocate	Provider	Caregiver / Family	Multiple Designations
28	16	5	2	1	4
LAS VEGAS (5:00 PM)					
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	Consumer	Advocate	Provider	Caregiver / Family	Multiple Designations
15	10	-	-	2	3
RENO					
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	Consumer	Advocate	Provider	Caregiver / Family	Multiple Designations
15	9	-	2	2	2
ELKO					
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	Consumer	Advocate	Provider	Caregiver / Family	Multiple Designations
1	-	1	-	-	-
TOTALS					
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	Consumer	Advocate	Provider	Caregiver / Family	Multiple Designations
59	35	6	4	5	9

Summary of Town Hall Meeting Feedback

Participants were asked to respond to each of the following critical issues:

1. Enhanced service spectrum - people in Nevada need and don't always have access to:
 - Adequate detection and accurate identification of consumers throughout the lifespan.
 - Provision of evidence-based levels of care.
 - Home-based services in rural and frontier areas of the state.
 - Assistive technology.
 - Sufficient American Sign Language (ASL) classes.
2. Additional school-based supports - people in Nevada need and don't always have access to:
 - Connection to care prior to the age of three.
 - A school system that coordinates its services with other service providers.
 - Transition activities between school systems and trajectory beyond high school.
3. High quality and adequately numbered workforce to serve those who are deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing and persons with a speech disability - people in Nevada need and don't always have access to:



- High quality interpreters, teachers, and others who provide direct services.
 - The system in Nevada needs but doesn't have college level programs for interpreters and teachers that serve consumers, and interpreter certification standards.
4. Increased awareness about the target population, their rights, and the services available:
- Consumers and providers in Nevada need and don't always have access to information about their rights, available services, and how to access care.
 - The general population in Nevada need and don't always have access to information about the target population, their needs, and experiences.
5. Services to support the entire family – families in Nevada need and don't always have access to:
- The appropriate knowledge and skills to assist family members.
 - A peer mentor who can provide the emotional and educational support in navigating the service system.
 - Information about how to advocate on behalf of their family members' rights and access to care.

Key Findings

Feedback from the town hall meetings supported the critical issues that were identified in the research, interviews, and survey findings. Each group (consumer and the caregiver, advocate, provider groups) provided additional information about their concerns within each issue area. These concerns centered on:

- Respect and access to services and employment opportunities for the deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH).
- Societal understanding of the D/HH culture and their needs.
- Lack of D/HH role models and community leaders.
- Lack of transportation.
- Nevada's education system, including lack of support for D/HH students especially during times of transition or in the Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Need for high quality, culturally competent service providers to serve the D/HH population, including interpreters.
- Awareness in the legal community of the American Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Awareness of where to obtain information for both D/HH individuals, and D/HH caregivers.
- Empowerment of the D/HH community, including parents and caregivers to advocate for the needs of their D/HH family member.

The two groups also discussed potential solutions to address their concerns. Some of these solutions included:

- Creation of a one-stop deaf resource center that would provide in-house services such as trainings, workshops, advocacy, and communication technology, as well as operating as an information and referral (I&R) source.
- Creation of a deaf school for D/HH children in Nevada.
- Conducting a public awareness campaign to educate the hearing community on the D/HH community.



- Providing access to 24/7, live, and on-call interpreters, especially in times of medical emergencies.
- Creating a shared ride mode of transportation, such as a van, specifically for the deaf community.
- Collaborate with the school education system, including higher education, to provide ASL classes, training, early intervention, and other supports.
- Implement interpreter certification standards.

[Aging and Disability Services Division Town Hall Meeting Comparison](#)

In addition to the town hall meetings conducted through the SOCS Strategic Planning Process, a similar town hall meeting process was conducted by Nevada’s Aging and Disabilities Service Division (ADSD) in March 2016. The questions at the March town hall meetings focused on identifying needed D/HH empowerment, trainings, and community activities, existing D/HH organizations and service providers, and identifying potential funding streams for services. However, despite the difference in questions, the responses solicited from the D/HH community during the town hall meetings were similar, confirming the information that was first gathered in the research and outreach report for the strategic planning process.

Comparisons were drawn across from the results of the town hall meetings conducted in March 2016 and summer of 2016. Similarities include expanded services and trainings for:

- Economic development and employment opportunities
- Language development (ASL literacy)
- Interpreting and access to interpreters
- Understanding the system and how to navigate it
- Services specifically for youth and children
- Legal services

While the March 2016 town hall meeting seemed to focus on identifying what is missing in terms of trainings, services, and activities for the D/HH community and identifying D/HH organizations that currently exist, the summer 2016 series of meetings discussed not only identifying gaps, barriers and other concerns but also solutions to the issues faced by the D/HH community.





Detailed Participant Feedback

The following table presents the specific concerns and potential solutions identified by both consumers, and caregivers, advocates, and providers during the town hall meetings conducted in the summer of 2016. Consumers were identified as D/HH individuals, while caregivers, advocates, and providers were either family members of D/HH individuals, caregivers, or a provider of D/HH services. Their responses are categorized by critical issue area.

Critical Issue		Consumer Feedback	Caregiver/Advocate/Provider Feedback
Critical Issue #1: Need for an enhanced service spectrum	<p>People in Nevada need and don't always have access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate detection and accurate identification of consumers throughout the lifespan • Provision of evidence-based levels of care • Home-based services in rural and frontier areas of the state • Assistive technology • Sufficient ASL classes 	<p><u>Concern:</u> Respect and equal access to services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) individuals are not treated with the same respect as hearing individuals and should have access to the same services as the hearing community. • There are specific concerns about the use of video remote interpreter (VRI) in medical settings, including limited time with the VRI and poor technology (older equipment and poor connectivity). 	<p><u>Concern:</u> Hospitals do not understand the needs of D/HH community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospitals don't serve clients appropriately and don't support interpreters. • Hospitals tend to use VRI exclusively. This is not always appropriate or what the D/HH need.
		<p><u>Solution:</u> Provider education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospitals and other providers need to be educated and sensitive to the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH). • 24 hour, on call live interpreters are needed as they provide a better service, especially in the time of a medical emergency. • Agencies such as the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) need to have lines for those with disabilities. Additionally, licenses or special ID cards need to be issued for those who are D/HH that identify them as such. 	<p><u>Solution:</u> Provider Education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospitals and other providers need to be educated and sensitive to the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH). • Prefer interpreters, and the D/HH should have the right to select the interpreter of their choice. • Coordinate events with other service providers to education them and develop shared understanding



Critical Issue	Consumer Feedback	Caregiver/Advocate/Provider Feedback
	<p>Police need to be educated so they have a basic knowledge about sign language so that if a D/HH individual is pulled over, they are able to communicate or know that an interpreter is needed.</p> <p><u>Concern:</u> Nevada lacks services for the D/HH population.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nevada does not have enough services to support the D/HH community. <p><u>Solution:</u> Create a one-stop deaf resource center.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nevada needs a one-stop deaf center for D/HH to access for all needed services and events. The center would house multiple agencies to provide services for D/HH individuals, including events and camps for both the young and old so there is an opportunity for socialization. This would also increase the number of services available for the deaf within each community. The center would also act as an advocate on behalf of the D/HH community. The center would need to sustain funding to maintain consistent services. 	<p><u>Concern:</u> Nevada lacks services for the D/HH population.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nevada does not have enough services to support the D/HH community. <p><u>Solution:</u> Create a one-stop deaf resource center.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nevada needs an extensive service spectrum that could be housed in a one-stop deaf center for D/HH. The service spectrum should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy Interpreters Workshops (emergency planning, telephone services, medical needs, legal) Personal Care Assistant (PCA) that is proficient in ASL Support individuals to help provide access to recreation, independent living activities Mental health – need deaf psychologists Outreach to educate people about services. Resource guide for D/HH. Multiple ways to access to information and education to assist D/HH



Critical Issue	Consumer Feedback	Caregiver/Advocate/Provider Feedback
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Revised rates.
	<p><u>Concern:</u> Care for D/HH senior citizens.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior citizens who are D/HH have specialized concerns, especially those who require care and may be isolated from the rest of the community. <p><u>Solution:</u> Expand services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services should be expanded to include long term care, social events, and transportation for D/HH senior citizens. • Activities, workshops, and information could be provided through the one-stop deaf resource center • Services need to include advocacy on behalf of the D/HH senior citizen community. • Recruit medical providers who are deaf or can sign to care for D/HH senior citizens. • Determine the feasibility of a group home exclusively for senior citizens who are D/HH, with staff who are proficient in ASL. 	<p><u>Concern:</u> Employed D/HH individuals lack empowerment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The D/HH who are in the workforce need to be empowered to raise issues as they occur without fear of losing their job. <p><u>Solution:</u> Improve employer and public awareness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a culturally competent workforce. • Conduct a public awareness campaign on the D/HH. • Include a deaf sensitivity component to the education system.
	<p><u>Concern:</u> Lack of transportation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation continues to be a barrier for the D/HH community: some D/HH don't have cars, and the current transportation options are cost or time prohibitive. <p><u>Solution:</u> Create a shared ride transportation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This could be a van specifically for the deaf community. 	<p><u>Concern:</u> Lack of D/HH role models.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are not enough D/HH role models for children. <p><u>Solution:</u> Develop infrastructure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a youth leadership infrastructure throughout state.



Critical Issue		Consumer Feedback	Caregiver/Advocate/Provider Feedback
Critical Issue #2: Need for additional school-based supports	<p>People in Nevada need and don't always have access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to care prior to the age of 3 • A school system that coordinates its services with other service providers • Transition activities between school systems and trajectory beyond high school 	<p><u>Concern:</u> Nevada's education system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The educational system, including early learning, does not support D/HH students or their interpreters. <p><u>Solution:</u> Deaf school or recruitment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a school for the deaf and/or create a hiring system to recruit teachers who are proficient in ASL. • Change Nevada's policy on reciprocity so that it does not continue to be a barrier for those teachers coming out of state. • Children who are D/HH need to attend school at an earlier age, in a signing environment. Similarly, children of deaf adults (CODAs) need to be exposed both to a signing and speaking environment for socialization. 	<p><u>Concern:</u> Nevada's educational system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nevada's schools, school districts, and universities do not support D/HH students, nor understand value the importance of the interpreter, and as a result, do not know how to support them. • Many universities and colleges in Nevada are cutting the ASL class due to a lack of participation, funding, and value of the learning. • There is a lack of trained teachers for the D/HH. Teachers will allow interpreters to take on a teaching role. In addition, aides act as interpreters when they should not be. <p><u>Solution:</u> Create a deaf support system or deaf school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Particularly in in schools in which staff are trained on the needs of D/HH students. Alternatively, create a school for the deaf or a shared space for D/HH students. • There needs to be high level standards for classroom interpreter.



Critical Issue	Consumer Feedback	Caregiver/Advocate/Provider Feedback
	<p><u>Concern:</u> Transitions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The transition between from school to college or employment are difficult for D/HH students. <p><u>Solution:</u> Provide support to D/HH students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide access to vocational classes for D/HH students, and a specialized office or center for employment that would provide on-site trainings. Explore opportunities to teach graduating deaf students how to be teachers 	<p><u>Concern:</u> Transitions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitions between school years, or from school to employment are difficult for D/HH students. <p><u>Solution:</u> Provide support to D/HH students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpreters should stay with the D/HH student throughout their school career, rather than the class level. Prefer that deaf students stay with a deaf teacher for a couple of years before transitioning. Increase collaboration and communication between Nevada Early Intervention Services (NEIS) and schools. Create more options or a better continuum of care within the school district. Provide supports for D/HH youth in schools to prepare them for independent living. Expand deaf role models in schools to support kids in/preparing for transition.
	<p><u>Concern:</u> Stigma.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers don't know how to work with deaf students, and there is a stigma against deaf students. <p><u>Solution:</u> Advocacy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide better D/HH advocacy in the schools, include ASL classes as a language option, 	<p><u>Concern:</u> Advocacy for D/HH students with Individualized Education Program (IEP) plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents need to be advocate for their children in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) to ensure their D/HH student has the services they need, even after their goals are met on the plan.



	Critical Issue	Consumer Feedback	Caregiver/Advocate/Provider Feedback
		<p>and provide teacher training opportunities.</p>	<p><u>Solution:</u> Information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide parents with more information on the IEP process so that they feel empowered to advocate for their child.
<p>Critical Issue #3: Need for a high quality and adequately numbered workforce to serve those who are deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing and persons with a speech disability</p>	<p>People in Nevada need and don't always have access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality interpreters, teachers, and others that provide direct services <p>The system in Nevada needs but doesn't have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College level programs for interpreters and teachers that serve consumers • Interpreter certification standards 	<p><u>Concern:</u> Lack of high quality, culturally competent providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nevada lacks high quality and culturally competent service providers (including interpreters) to serve the D/HH population. <p><u>Solution:</u> Training, incentives, and proficiency standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training services and incentives, such as financial or continuing education units (CEUs). Additionally, implement an ASL proficiency interview to ensure interpreters are held to a high standard. • Create a local network interpreting agency to provide services for the D/HH. • Ensure the American Disabilities Act (ADA) training is provided to all Nevada providers, hospitals, schools, restaurants, etc. so that they know how to get an interpreter, and are able to provide services the D/HH community needs. 	<p><u>Concern:</u> Lack of licensed interpreters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nevada does not have the number of licensed interpreters needed to serve the D/HH population in a timely and respectful manner. In addition, the current pay structure for interpreters doesn't support a living wage. <p><u>Solution:</u> Training and certification standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure providers have access to training to adequately service and support the D/HH community. In addition, develop state-specific certification standards for interpreters and teachers and develop the infrastructure to support certification acquisition.
			<p><u>Concern:</u> Lack of ADA knowledge in the legal community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The legal community doesn't have an adequate understanding of ADA.



Critical Issue		Consumer Feedback	Caregiver/Advocate/Provider Feedback
			<p><u>Solution:</u> Education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide specific training for the legal profession so that they can serve, represent, and advocate on behalf of ADA adherence.
Critical Issue #4: Need for increased awareness about the target population, their rights, and the services available	<p>Consumers and Providers in Nevada need and don't always have access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about their rights, available services and how to access care <p>The general population in Nevada need and don't always have access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about the target population, their needs and experiences 	<p><u>Concern:</u> Access to information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The D/HH community in Nevada doesn't know where to get information, specifically about ADA and their rights. <p><u>Solution:</u> Establish a one-stop deaf resource center.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create support for the D/HH community to access information through a one-stop deaf center that would act as an umbrella organization. Additionally, other forms of communication such as the internet, social media, word of mouth, and meetings could be used to convey information and spread awareness. • The center would also serve as a point of ASL literacy for the deaf community, such as poetry, storytelling, comedy, specifics of grammar, how ASL works as a language. It is important to have for the D/HH community to have a rich understanding of their language. 	<p><u>Concern:</u> Awareness of D/HH rights.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The D/HH community, hearing community, and providers do not understand the rights of the D/HH. There is a lack of cohesion between the D/HH and hearing communities, and a disconnect between systems. <p><u>Solution:</u> Public and provider education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a deaf awareness week to raise awareness • Develop advocacy platform (similar to the Autism Spectrum Disorder population) • Develop an understanding between hearing and D/HH community • Educate providers about ADA rights and cultural considerations



Critical Issue		Consumer Feedback	Caregiver/Advocate/Provider Feedback
		<p><u>Concern:</u> Recruitment of D/HH employees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic development in Nevada does not recruit D/HH, nor provide services for those who move from out of state in order to work in state. <p><u>Solution:</u> Expand services and supports for the D/HH.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a better support system for the D/HH in Nevada by re-evaluating where and how funds are used for services. Educate the Legislature on the D/HH community and their specific needs. Utilize events, such as the Deaf Expo, to recruit D/HH employees. 	
Critical Issue #5: Need for services to support the entire family	<p>Families in Nevada need and don't always have access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The appropriate knowledge and skills to assist family members A peer mentor who can provide the emotional and education support in navigating the service system Information about how to 	<p><u>Concern:</u> Access to information and services for parents and caregivers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents of D/HH children do not have access to education, services, supports, and ASL classes to support their child. <p><u>Solution:</u> Deaf mentorship and education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide ASL classes, and pair a family with a deaf mentor to help navigate the system. 	<p><u>Concern:</u> D/HH advocacy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The D/HH community needs help to advocate for themselves. <p><u>Solution:</u> Identify advocates within the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find advocates, such as deaf mentors, who can assess needs, help navigate the world, provide assistance in-house, help get services, be a "wing man," act as a system navigator and create independence for the D/HH.
			<p><u>Concern:</u> Support for D/HH families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families of the D/HH lack the education, services and supports, and do not feel empowered to advocate.



Critical Issue		Consumer Feedback	Caregiver/Advocate/Provider Feedback
	advocate on behalf of their family members rights and access to care		<p><u>Solution:</u> Parent education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide parent education about deaf culture and how to support kids. This can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Getting family members involved in learning ASL. ○ Workshops to learn information and activities ○ Opportunities to attend best practice conferences (in state or out) ○ Connection to deaf community ○ Medical providers need to be more informed and give parents a full range of options

One-Stop Deaf Resource Center

D/HH consumers from several town hall meetings agreed that a one-stop deaf resource center in each community would alleviate many of the issues they face. They proposed the following structure for how the center should operate. The Center would act as a hub, bringing together the community, employment opportunities and education into one central location:

