

Joe Lombardo
Governor

Richard
Whitley, MS
Director



DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES DIVISION
Helping people. It's who we are and what we do.



Dena Schmidt
Administrator

NEVADA COMMISSION FOR PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING – GENERAL MEETING

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Date and Time of Meeting: Wednesday, August 21, 2024
9:00 AM

Location of Meeting: ZOOM

REVISED AGENDA

1. **Roll Call and Opening Statement:**

Members: Eli Schwartz, Eric Wilcox, Jaime Vitale, Susan Beckett, Catherine Nielsen, Lance Ledet, Laura Fussell

Guests: Andrea Juillerat-Olvera, Autumn Blattman, Beth Jones, Concepcion, Dolores Hauck, James Wilcox, Jeff Jaech, Joseph Baggs, Kim Johnson, Lori Lutu, Mechelle Merrill, Molly Rose Lewis, Megan Johnson, Michelle Montelongo, Nathaniel Officer, Paula Watkins-Baker, Sam D'Ambrosio-Garcia, Shannon Council, Shauna Brennan, Shelly Freed, Wendy Thornley, Jennifer Montoya, Sean Mulholland, Cheyenne Pasquale, Andy Firth, Caroline Bass, Lora Lee Turner, Dena Schmidt, Paula Koerwitz, Lee Bullock, Drazen Elez, Betty Hammond.

Accommodations: Becky Van Auken, Captioner; Sonya Stark, Interpreter; Jenny, Interpreter.

Staff: Obioma Officer, Executive Director; Lorraine Belt-Dolan, Administrative Assistant III.

2. **Public Comment:**

- Catherine Nielsen the DD Council is currently working on collecting information from the community on various needs. So, we can add it to our next five-year state plan. We did have a few Deaf and hard of hearing individuals show up on Monday so we're excited to see support from the community. We have another one on Thursday, August 22nd in Carson City at 5:30 if you're available. And then in a few weeks we'll be in the southern

half of the state. You guys should have received it from Lorraine but if not, we'll resend it to you.

- Lance Ledet – Eli and I as well as Shelly Freed are working on a draft to provide to Catherine to propose a bill for legislation for the closed caption for televisions and they're working together and emailing back and forth and once it's ready we'll be forwarding it to Catherine to revise it and just wanted to let everybody know we're working on that.

3. **For Possible Action:** Approval of Minutes of the May 8, 2024, meeting.

- Eli Schwartz made a motion to approve the minutes, Catherine Nielsen seconded, motion carried.
- **Presentation and Discussion:** An overview of what Senator Jacky Rosen's office can provide for constituents in terms of federal assistance and other services.
 - Molly Rose Lewis, Regional Representative & Healthcare Manager for U.S. Senator Jacky Rosen's office walked us through how to navigate the website.
 - There are several ways the office can assist Nevadans.
 - They can help with federal grants and letters of support. You can sign up for their newsletter, they also do community project funding requests, those can only go through Jacky Rosen or Senator Cortez Masto's office. You can also request a meeting with Molly Rose, her counterpart in the South or directly with the Senator. There is also an email form for putting in your opinion and they tally what people are talking about for Nevada. You can also ask the Senator to come to your events if she's able or she will record a video for you, and they also do certificates of congressional commendation.
 - Under constituent services there are things like internships, military academy, senate page if you're in DC and want tours of the capitol and White House they help with that, flag flown over the capitol. Those are the fun things.
 - The help with the federal agency is mainly what we wanted to go over. So, if you or anyone you know are having an issue with anything from getting a passport in time for a trip, Social Security Disability issues, Medicare, IRS, immigration, they do anything that's a federal agency and they can help. On the website there is a form to fill out and send in and then someone from the office will contact you and help.
- **Presentation and Discussion:** Aging and Disability Services Division (ADSD) Policy 2.1 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II Presentation and Solicitation of Feedback.
 - Lori Lutu and Autumn Blattman gave a presentation that can be found in the meeting materials here: [ADSD Policy 2.1 ADA Title II PP \(nv.gov\)](#)

- The document with the policy is in the meeting materials here: [ADA Title II \(nv.gov\)](#)
- **For Discussion Only:** Review recent Commission letters to partner agencies and outcomes. Prioritize consideration of language, tone, and approach with sister agencies and/or community partners/allies. Letters in question: letter to Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR), and Nevada Early Intervention Services (NEIS).
 - We recently sent out two letters to DETR and NEIS that were voted on and approved by the full commission. The letter to DETR was not received positively, and it was determined by ADSD that we did not do enough advanced work in partnership with our colleagues in these departments before these letters were sent. While it was our intention with these letters to be constructive and seek dialog, that was not how they were perceived by some.
 - As we move forward, we need to respect the current policies of ADSD and part of that is using their letterhead not our own. We can use our logo in conjunction with the ADSD letterhead. It's imperative that moving forward we respect each other overall as agencies and the respect the Deaf and hard of hearing community.
 - I have already proceeded to make apologies to both agencies for our letters and I think they understand that the intention was not negative, but it was still perceived negatively that we were making big asks in both of these letters.
 - Eric Wilcox made a statement which can be found in the meeting materials here: [Deaf Commission Chairs comment \(nv.gov\)](#)
 - Eli Schwartz stated that according to the NRS it says we're allowed to do what we need to do without limitation. Which means we don't need anyone to oversee what we're doing. Yes, we could have smoothed out some of the wording and so forth but all 6 of the commissioners read it and saw nothing wrong with the letter. I agree with Eric they should have come to us rather than crying to mommy, being professional and saying this is how I read it. I just want to make sure that we all understand the NRS says we're allowed to do what we need to do without limitation so there should be no babysitting.
 - There was discussion on the use of ADSD's letterhead versus the commissions letterhead and having to have all future correspondence approved by the Administrator of ADSD.
 - Laura Fussell read a statement that she wrote for the record. This statement can be found in the meeting materials here: [Laura Fussell Statement](#)
 - The idea that maybe it's time to seek legislation to move the commission under another agency was discussed.
 - Dena Schmidt the ADSD administrator clarified that the putting of letters on ADSD letterhead is meant to show ADSD support for the issues and complaints and she likes to review the letters, so she is aware of the concerns of the communities we represent. She would like to work more closely with Obioma and the commission to be aware of the needs of the commission and the community and see if it's something that can be addressed within ADSD or something that she can help us present to the legislature.

- We keep getting the same complaints from the community at Townhalls that they keep bringing the same complaints to us and nothing is changing, and we feel that the agency heads should be aware of that and the impatience the community has for the changes, while we know that change takes time it feels like change is not coming. At a recent townhall the community was holding signs that said "Stop Oppressing Us" they feel the State of Nevada is oppressing them, this needs to be addressed.
- Betty Hammond made a statement; I've been trying to work with some auxiliary people with an issue. I'm retired from the State. I always saw the Deaf programs as the stop gap from where agencies weren't able to meet the needs of the Deaf community, which are fairly specialized. It provided advocacy, and I know that there's 211, but that advocacy is not accessible to people who have been language deprived. So, from zero to Deaf in the state of Nevada, people are being oppressed, discriminated against, and deprived of their basic rights. We have 17 counties for education. They're all messed up. Deaf people are being deprived from zero to, you know, NEIS, people don't know, you don't have experts. What the Deaf center did was provide expertise. It provided people who are Deaf or hard of hearing themselves being social workers and going in and advocating for people. We don't have that now. And that means that the State is even worse. And they need to take accountability for what they're doing. I'm currently working with a person who is a dreamer brought here against her will, who does not understand English. If I asked her to spell the word advocacy, she couldn't. So don't tell me 211 is good enough. It is not. She's in a medical-legal situation and different situation in the community where the providers don't know what to do. Am I supposed to as an independent contractor, go around and educate people and try to fight for people's rights? I have to now. There's no Deaf center, there are no advocates. One thing that could really help agencies is to hire professionals that know what they are doing, treat them with respect, and learn from them. That has not been my personal experience, and I think when you hire someone who does not have a degree in social work to manage a bunch of social workers who doesn't have the bigger picture, you're going to continue to have the same problems. Thank you for listening. I'm really worried about the life of this person. They have a kidney condition, they're out of Medicaid, they don't know why. I've reached out to the State and we're communicating, but I'm being a personal social worker when I shouldn't have to be. I'm doing it because this is a wonderful person, she's a citizen as far as I'm now concerned of the United States and the State of Nevada. She was born disabled that's not her fault, she didn't get a good education, she can't read functionally. Come on, you guys, there was a purpose for the Deaf center. And now all these systemic, larger rules and regulations and everything, they are working against the community. We don't have to provide a center. Well, the whole state is in default then because that was the only stop gap that was helping anything. So be aware of what is really going on. Thanks for listening, I appreciate it.
- This is the same thing we hear from Las Vegas Deaf Seniors they are often stepping into that role because there's nobody else doing it on behalf of the

state. So, they're stepping in and filling that role as volunteers. Shelly Freed made a comment in the chat. Including NVCC they did nothing, very minimal for our community. No one is overseeing them. Communication Access Services states that it's not their responsibility to. Shelly is wondering if it's somebody else. Where is the human service for us?

- **For Possible Action:** Discuss and approve Bylaw updates. See supporting materials.
 - Laura Fussell made a motion to approve the bylaw changes with the change of verbiage to read 3 business days instead of 72 business hours, Jaime Vitale seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- **For Possible Action:** Review, Discuss and Approval of Recommendations Director & Chair Reports: Budget updates, seat details, community requests, Communication Access Services Report, partner engagements and upcoming outreach.
 - The CAS report is available in the meeting materials here: [CAS Report 8.21.24 \(nv.gov\)](#)
 - The Director – Chair report is available in the meeting materials here: [Director-Chair Report 8.21.2024 \(nv.gov\)](#)
 - Eric Wilcox shared the public comment he would like to make on Monday, August 26, 2024, at the legislative committee on senior citizens, veterans and adults with special needs will be meeting, and the community will be having a rally both in the North and South. This public comment can be found here: [Proposed Public Comment for 8.26 Legislative Hearing \(nv.gov\)](#)
 - Eli Schwartz made a motion to approve the public comment to be read by Eric at the legislative committee meeting with an amendment to add the Deaf and disability communities to the wording. Catherine Nielsen seconded the motion, the motion carried.
 - Catherine Nielsen made a motion to have the Executive Director with the help of the chair and vice chair to respond to the media about the Samoa pageant. Susan Beckett seconded the motion, motion carried.
- **For Possible Action:** To review, discuss, and approve recommendations presented by each subcommittee as detailed in their respective reports, and update on outcomes from Agenda Item #6 concerning the Employment Subcommittee. All reports are accessible in the meeting materials.
 - Eli Schwartz brought forward a request for approval on the BDR's for a Deaf school, ASL to be counted as school credits and the closed captioning. Also to approve continuing work on the position statements for the commission.
 - Jaime Vitale made a motion to approve those four items, Laura Fussell seconded, motion carried.
- **For Possible Action:** Approval of Tentative Agenda Items for Next meeting November 13, 2024.

- There were no items added at this time, please email Eric Wilcox or Obioma Officer with your tentative agenda items.

- **Public Comment:**

- Beth Jones shared that Nevada Hands & Voices will be having an in-person event coming up in September. Once we have the registration open hopefully next week, I will share it with the commission. But it will be Saturday, September 7th in Henderson, and Saturday, September 14th in Reno. Again, this is for our Deaf and Hard of Hearing youth to get together and do a story walk and have some fun, but we would love all community members to come and join us and have fun with us. So, we will share that information, and we hope to see some of our faces there. Thank you.
- Susan Beckett, this is Susan Beckett for the record. I am speaking on behalf of myself, Susan Beckett, person. I am very frustrated as a person of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities. I attend these meetings and I on a consistent basis see we have – they are having to be limited due to interpreters and we’re having to rush through things. I have been on this commission for several years now and feel that our work is very limited due to the interpreters, due to the restraints of budgets, due to several issues, and I am a Deaf, hard of hearing person and a person who is out there in the communities, our hands are tied. And we are unable to continue to do what we need to do in order to move forward.
- Lance Ledet -I wanted to state that the HLAA, if you go to their website, I urge everyone who is a member of the commission or has any interest in either Deaf or Hard of hearing issues, please consider joining the HLAA. Apparently, they have dropped their membership price from \$45 to as low as \$5 for anyone who join. I’m not sure how long that will last, but I urge anyone interested in anything that deals with bills or legislative topics, please go to the HLAA website, its hearing loss, Deaf or hard of hearing, and I’ll put in the chat, the next HLAA meeting we’ll be sending out an invitation next Monday.

- **Adjournment: 12:19 PM**

Accommodation Requests and Meeting Materials:

NOTE:

- Supporting documents referenced above in the “for possible action” items may be requested from Lorraine Belt-Dolan, Commission Administrative Support, ADSD at Lorrainebelt@adsd.nv.gov and is/will be available at the meeting locations and ADSD website at [Nevada Commission for Persons Who Are Deaf Hard of Hearing or Speech Impaired \(nv.gov\)](http://NevadaCommissionforPersonsWhoAreDeafHardofHearingorSpeechImpaired.nv.gov)

AGENDA POSTED AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS:

Notice of this meeting was posted at the following Aging and Disability Services Office at 3208 Goni Road, Building I, Suite 181, Carson City, NV. 89706. Notice of this meeting was posted on the Internet through the Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division website at [ADSD \(nv.gov\)](http://ADSD.nv.gov) and Nevada Public Notices website at <https://notice.nv.gov>

DRAFT