

Joe Lombardo  
Governor

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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

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

### APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

**Date and Time of Meeting:** Wednesday, May 8, 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, Laura Fussell, Ryan Feldman, Catherine Nielsen, Lance Ledet.

Guests: Paula Koerwitz, Beth Jones, Laura "LT" Thompson, Nathanael Officer, Tabitha Mueller, Jeff Duncan, Dolores Hauck, Belz & Case Government Affairs, Meg Cassinelli, Sabrina Schnur, Shannon Ivy, Tennille, Shelly Freed, Heike Ruedenauer-Plummer, Jeff Jaech, Jennifer Montoya, Katie Pfister, Kim Johnson, Lori Lutu, Samantha D'Ambrosio-Garcia, Kim Le, Andrea Juillerat-Olvera, Autumn Blattman, Connie Martinez, Anonymous, Betty Hammond.

Accommodations: Becky Van Auken, Captioner; Jamie Jaramillo, Interpreter; Stephanie Gardner, Interpreter.

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

2. **Public Comment:**

- Shelly Freed, I would like to make a public comment about the agenda item pertaining to the meeting regarding Language Access Plan, LAP. I reviewed the components, but I do have some questions regarding it. My first question is, how do we come to the number of ASL users? The reason being is it shows 1% and that's not accurate. I want to know how that number came to be. Second question I have is I would like to make a comment that all the surveys, the websites that were used regarding the LAP that were sent to a Deaf or hard of hearing person should have been given in language options, there wasn't any option for ASL or other

that we could type in, to give me the option. So, we had to type it in English, and I don't think that's appropriate for the community either. We need to add ASL in the language drop-down box, so that every county in the state and the survey and data that is collected from that would have that option so we could get that information. In addition, when I was reading through, I came across the state plan, and I just wanted to make a comment regarding that state plan. When it comes to the pool of interpreters and the pool for teachers for the Deaf or teacher of the Deaf, working in an educational setting, we know we have an extreme shortage in the state of Nevada. I would propose what was done in the past is not working and we should use what California does to recruit and to retain the teachers in the educational system. Regarding retirement and a pension, having funds available, monies, that don't apply to retirement or a pension with the State of California. So, the idea that they use that system in California would be something I would want to propose in Nevada.

3. **For Possible Action:** Approval of Minutes of the March 27, 2024, meeting.

- Laura Fussell motioned to approve the minutes, Eli Schwarz seconded, motion carried.

4. **For Possible Action:** Updates and Feedback from the commission on the Language Access Plan for Aging and Disability Services.

- Shannon Ivy gave the presentation which can be found here: [Language Access Plan Presentation \(nv.gov\)](#)
- The question was asked where would a person that uses ASL go to have a document interpreted for understanding, the answer is that if it is an agency related document the agency responsible for that document would be responsible for providing an interpreter and you can contact the program that you are working with directly. However should you have an issue with that contact Shannon at [Shannoni@adsd.nv.gov](mailto:Shannoni@adsd.nv.gov) for any ADSD related information, however if it is say a DMV or DETR document you would need to contact their language access coordinator.

5. **For Possible Action:** Election of the Chair and Vice Chair.

- Eric Wilcox was voted in to remain as chair and Catherine Nielsen was voted to become Vice Chair.

6. **For Possible Action:** Review Annual Report and Executive Director proposed State plan priorities.

- Laura Fussell made a motion to accept the recommendations made by the Executive Director at this time for the Deaf Commission, Eli Schwartz seconded, motion carried.

7. **For Possible Action:** Discuss and decide on the content and approval of position statements intended for use by the Commission during legislative session.
- Laura Fussell made a motion to accept the position statements and have the legislative subcommittee pursue filling in the details, Susan Beckett seconded the motion, motion carried.
8. **For Possible Action:** Based on the public's request at the Southern Region Town Hall Meeting, a discussion and possible recommendation for the Deaf Commission to look into a civil lawsuit on behalf of the public against the medical community and/or Nevada hospitals for their alleged failure to provide Deaf and Hearing interpreters for their patients.
- Obioma did some research and found that we as the commission and the community could do the following: contact equal rights commission with a formal grievance, reach out to the state licensing board for those agencies and hospitals and make a formal grievance and present them with the education of what we have found with all the data. We can also reach out to the Nevada Hospital Association, again, educate them, give them all the resources that they need and let them know what the community is saying, all the grievances. The fourth thing is U.S. federal government office of civil rights, file a formal grievance, educate the community on how to do the same and present them with that data. We must educate them and let them know this is what's happening in the state of Nevada.
  - We can make a video on how to address these organizations, how to make a formal grievance so it's not just the commission that's acting but the community getting together and just flood these entities with information and feedback.
  - We do have healthcare quality and compliance, which is HCQC. They have responsibility for investigating medical facilities. You file a complaint; they review the complaint, and this is their role to ensure their following compliance.
  - Another possibility is to reach out to the Nevada Disability Advocacy and Law Center and make mention of specific facilities, let them know what occurred and ask them if they're able to go in and investigate situations of compliance, neglect or abuse.
  - Laura Fussell made a motion to accept the recommendations from the Executive Director, (listed in the Directors-Chair report in the meeting materials), Eli Schwartz seconded the motion. The motion carried.
9. **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.
- Please see the meeting materials which can be found here for details: [Commission for Persons Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing General Meetings \(nv.gov\)](https://www.nv.gov/deaf-and-hard-of-hearing)

10. **For Possible Action:** Report, Discussion and Approval of Recommendations brought forth by each Subcommittee gathered in their respective meetings and listed in their reports found in the meeting materials.

Obioma Officer, Interim Chair of Accessibility Subcommittee  
Laura Fussell, Chair of Employment Subcommittee  
Jaime Vitale, Chair of Interpreter Subcommittee  
Eli Schwartz, Chair of Legislative Subcommittee  
Eric Wilcox, Chair of Education Subcommittee  
Obioma Officer, Executive Director

- Due to time constraints Laura Fussell made a motion to vote on all the subcommittee reports via email through Obioma. Eric Wilcox seconded the motion and the motion carried.

11. **For Possible Action:** Approval of Tentative Agenda Items for Next meeting August 21, 2024.

- If you have any items for the next meeting agenda, please email Obioma at either her email or the commission email [NVDeafCommission@adsd.nv.gov](mailto:NVDeafCommission@adsd.nv.gov) .

12. **Public Comment:**

- Betty Hammond – I am an auxiliary member of the Deaf community, and I'm on two subcommittees with your commission. For full disclosure, I ran the program for the Deaf and the Deaf Centers, and while they needed improvement my heart has been broken by the damage that has been done by Aging and Disability Services Division. And I'm not the only employee that feels that way. I've contacted a lawyer to get good names in Nevada for disability lawyers. I think it's time for class action and I'm going to investigate that and pursue that. While I appreciate very much what the language specialist from the state said, that only includes programs with the state. The Deaf Centers used to be a place where Deaf people of any walk of life could go for county, city, personal, all kinds of information that provided them access in ASL. And the State added auxiliary information to help that out through videos and things like that. We don't have that now. And as you said Eric, it is the law. So, the state as a whole is not following the law. It's out there. They've chosen not to follow it. Our stop gap remedy was the Deaf Centers. My experience and observation were that I was not heard as an expert, and a member of the community. I felt pushed out and I left thinking it was me and they pushed out another expert. And the person they put in our place is unaware of a lot of aspects of the job. And she's outnumbered poor thing. And I don't think this is right. So, I do think class action is needed because the State of Nevada as a whole has screwed Deaf people from cradle to grave. Totally screwed them over and ignored

- the laws and I've been part of the community. I've seen it get better although not perfect. And now it's horrible. I see people with problems that the center could help. Here's the thing. They can't – they don't have the language ability that they have been deprived of by the state to contact the state to ask for things in sign language. It's ridiculous. This needs to stop and that's my opinion and I think you for listening. I'm happy to meet up with anybody, a lot of you know my number and I'm getting this going.
- Shelly Freed, I would like to make a public comment regarding CAS program NRS 427A.797. And this is regarding issues related to interpreting and it clearly states here interpreters are made available, when possible, for executive, judicial, and legislative departments and state government departments that provide services. To provide access to the Deaf and hard of hearing in the state of Nevada. And that division will provide money needed that's available for one or more interpreters for undelivered services for purposes of the state. That's what the paragraph says. I am going to be very straightforward. I have been in legislative meetings; I've gone to Deaf Day at the legislature, and we had to do everything in our power to fight to get the CAS interpreters to work. And that is not acceptable. I should not have to fight for the state interpreters to come interpret at Deaf Day at the legislature. Why are they giving contracts to other agencies to provide interpreters for purposes of this meeting, for legislative meetings, for judicial meetings, for anything related to what this paragraph is saying? I don't have the benefit of having these interpreters. What are they doing? This paragraph says that the regulations are this and they will be provided. And I understand that the interpreters have set up these mentoring, okay. But that's not under the law, it's not under the regulation. Why did you set that service up? If there's an interpreter mentoring program let the Department of Education set it up. And I did ask to be clear, I did ask Jenn, I want to know how many minutes the CAS interpreters are provided that we can get back. We don't have that information; we don't have any data. We don't know how many hours were involved. We don't have it. Okay. So, I understand the role that interpreters must be registered on the relay, but CAS interpreters, that program has four interpreters, and they get a huge chunk of money that should be providing services for the Deaf community. That is a huge irritation to me. It's so frustrating and sometimes I request a specific interpreter for the purpose of having the services as I'm doing work in the community that's directly related to the State of Nevada, and I'm not able to get an interpreter. So, I'm asking the commission, please, investigate this. Look into this paragraph. Look into what is the interpretation of this paragraph.

Get the information and find out where this money and funding is going for said interpreters that are supposed to provide this service and how many minutes, they are actually having their hands up to work in accomplishing the services. How many workshops are being given and how many services because that money is being put into the interpreters in the community. That's not what the funding was for CAS, how did they set that up? I want to know answers to all these questions. Thank you very much.

- Betty Hammond – Before I was pushed out of that position, one of the fights I had with my boss was over this. The interpreter pool was originally designed to make up for the lack of interpreting within state agencies like vocational rehab, DMV. If they couldn't find an interpreter, they were going to be charged the same amount so we're not under cutting agencies, the interpreter would come from the pool. There were job descriptions made. As Shelly asked about mentoring that was only supposed to be in extreme down times. I had hired someone to set up a system so the program could generate income and we could track that and hire a certified Deaf interpreter. All of that was squashed very distressing to me, and now what I hear from other people is those interpreters decide they don't want to do this because it's a conflict of interest and they don't want to do that and they are, Shelly is correct, doing the education department's job being overpaid to do it. I was in the legislature fighting for those positions and they weren't to make lesser interpreters and giving workshops all the time, it was to provide access and I'm going to say it out loud the person running the program has no idea, doesn't want to have an idea, and doesn't give a crap. And it needs to end. And I'm done, thank you.

### 13. **Adjournment: 12:07 PM**

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## **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](mailto: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://Nevada Commission for Persons Who Are Deaf Hard of Hearing or Speech Impaired (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>