

Joe Lombardo
Governor



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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, November 8, 2023
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 Fink, Ryan Feldman, Catherine Nielson

Guests: Adrienne Navarro, Amanda Blood, Autumn Blattman, Caroline Bass, Chelsea Pearsall, Jenny Sartin, Jennifer Cunningham, Andy firth, Julie Gwin, Kim Johnson, Linda Anderson, Lora Turner, Teresea, Jennifer Montoya, Michelle Albrecht, Shelly Freed, Lori Lutu

Accommodations: Becky Van Auken, Captioner; Jeff Jaech, Interpreter; Megan Johnson, Interpreter; Michelle Montelongo, Interpreter

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

2. **Public Comment:**

- Eric Wilcox – wanted to say thank you to all who attended the townhall meetings, we got a huge amount of feedback. What I wanted to reiterate that one of our goals besides just providing a forum for feedback from the community is to go to the 2025 legislative session in Carson City with a more ambitious legislative agenda than we have in the past, and moreover to go with the legislative agenda that is understood amongst all of our partner organizations, the public, all the nonprofits, and community

organizers within our communities so we all go to Carson City with a more common set of goals that we are trying to achieve. So, the townhalls were important that we solicited not only general feedback from the community, but we also solicited specific ideas for new laws or changes to the law that we would like to see or laws that we know of that are on the books in others states that we don't have on the books here that we want to try to pursue. We'll continue to take that kind of feedback and can do so via public comment at meetings or email Obioma or myself by email and that request can be read anonymously if you'd like. Lastly, we are having an open forum on legislative action in December and that is an agenda item we will be going into more detail on later.

- Eric Wilcox read an anonymous public comment, received via email on October 5th. I'm a sign language interpreter who works and resides in the Northern Nevada region, I am receiving several recent complaints withing the community here in Northern Nevada specifically the Reno, Carson City area in which Deaf and hard of hearing people are being repeatedly denied access to public services through sign language interpreting. Earlier this year I had to say goodbye to a good friend who decided to move back to California, a state that is infamous for its unaffordability because the chances of her receiving basic services were higher there. Here in Nevada, she was repeatedly refused an interpreter, and this ultimately led to her unemployment. This is one story of many in the region. I was also notified this week that someone is being denied an interpreter at the DMV, a state level government organization that everyone should have access to. These are direct violations of ADA law as well as state law and I am under the impression that laws meant to protect Deaf and hard of hearing people are simply not enforced nor enforceable in this state. Deaf individuals in this area are often denied interpreters simply because they don't know where or how to find them., agencies, institutions, and businesses in this region of Nevada are know for telling Deaf individuals to, quote, bring their own interpreter. This is inappropriate and again, illegal. A direct violation of ADA law and state statutes. In some instances, people will place a staff member with the sing language equivalency of a toddler in charge of interpretation that's too wildly inappropriate, unprofessional, and oftentimes potentially dangerous and again violates a Deaf person's rights to free and appropriate access to basic things in our society that hearing individuals are granted without thought or resistance. This is a problem. A big one and Nevada community members are not confident that it will be addressed. I appreciate your time and consideration for this public comment.

- Shelly Freed said I just want to reiterate that there are many ADA violations and many civil rights violations in this state when a Deaf person goes, when their civil rights are violated where do Deaf people go to let someone know about that to get some sort of remediation?
- Catherine Nielsen made a public comment that there are resources available to the community to make these types of complaints. It depends on where the violation is taking place. The first step would always be to speak with the agency themselves or try to resolve it there. But there are other agencies like the Nevada Disability Advocacy and Law Center, they're going through some transition right now but they are available for some resources my office the governor's council on developmental disabilities can also assist in trying to resolve if there's any sort of ADA violations happening in the community we can try to help resolve some of those but it depends where it's happening. If you ever have a situation like that please reach out to our office and we can direct, you in the right manner.

3. **For Possible Action:** Approval of Minutes of the August 16, 2023, meeting.

- Eli Schwartz motioned to approve the minutes as typed, Laura Fink seconded, and motion carried.

5. **Presentation and Discussion:** Update on the Aging and Disability Services Divisions: (ADSD) State Olmstead Plan.

- Eli Schwartz updated us on the ADSD Olmstead Plan, ADSD has drafted a plan to expand opportunities for people with disabilities to live, work, and play in the community of their choice. Before they finalize the plan, they want to offer the public a chance to offer input.
- The Olmstead plans are intended to establish actionable strategies that would support community integration efforts on behalf of the disabled population.
- The link to the survey was put in the chart and the deadline was stated as November 9th and the last meeting of the Olmstead committee to finalize the plan will be November 17th.
- It was requested that Eli meet in person with the Deaf community as written English is often hard for those whose first language is American Sign Language (ASL).

6. **Presentation and Discussion:** Engagement Conference, December 16, 2023:

- The commission is hosting an Engagement Conference on Saturday, December 16, 2023, at UNLV in the student union area. We will have breakfast and lunch provided and vendor booths. This event is free to all Nevadans but will cost if you want to come from out of state. There is a web page for the conference that is hosted by the Nevada Governor's Council for Developmental Disabilities, (NGCDD). We are

asking that people register for the event so that we have a head count for seating and food, currently we have a budget for 150 people to attend but are still looking for sponsors to hopefully add an additional 50 people bringing the total to 200 attendees. The goal of the conference is to come to learn about our state system and how we can affect legislative changes.

- We have sent out an invitation to all Nevada legislators and have had 3 responses so far.
- On Sunday after the conference Nevada Association of the Deaf (NVAD) will be hosting a Gingerbread Winter Gala for the community, with many activities for the whole family.

7. **For Possible Action:** Discussion and approval of 2024 Calendar:

- Susan Beckett made a motion to approve the calendar subject to changes to the Subcommittee meeting dates, Eli Schwartz seconded the motion, motion carried.

8. **For Possible Action:** Review, Discuss and Approval of Recommendations Director & Chair Reports: Budget updates, seat details, community requests, Community Access Services Report, partner engagements and upcoming outreach.

- At this time we reviewed and discussed the directors and chair report which can be found here: [Director-Chair Report 11.08.2023 \(nv.gov\)](#)
- Also discussed was the Communication Access Services (CAS) report which can be found here: [CAS Report 11.8.23 \(nv.gov\)](#)

9. **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.

Thom Duva, Chair of Accessibility Subcommittee

- Thom was unable to attend the meeting so there was no report from the subcommittee.

Laura Fink, Chair of Employment Subcommittee

- Laura shared that the Employment Subcommittee is working on a letter to DETR, and they are hopeful to have a rough draft by their next meeting to vote on and then bring to the commission.

Jaime Vitale, Chair of Interpreter Subcommittee

- Jaime let us know that the Interpreter Subcommittee had no recommendations at this time.

Eli Schwartz, Chair of Legislative Subcommittee

- Eli stated that while they have no recommendations at this time, they are working on bringing some things to the table at the next meeting.

Eric Wilcox, Chair of Education Subcommittee

- Eric shared that there will be a meeting with the Office of Inclusive Education this month and that the subcommittee is working on

several issues within the education system and will be bringing recommendations to the commission hopefully at our next meeting.

10. **For Possible Action:** Approval of Tentative Agenda Items for Next meeting 2024.
 - Please let Obioma or Eric know if you would like any agenda items added.
 - Obioma let us know we will be adding the budget discussion, and the weather service would like to partner with us.
11. **Public Comment:**
 - Catherine Nielsen commented that the Silver State disability conference put on by the DD Council will be held next year in Reno. And there are funds available to help with travel.
<https://www.nevadaddcouncil.org/silver-state-self-advocacy-conference-2024/> .
 - Shelly Freed sent an email that was read by Eric Wilcox. She said with regards to legislative issues it needs to be shared with the public, for example, AB161 she learned about three weeks before deaf Day, I (Shelly) managed to book an appointment with sponsors and made adjustments of wording to the bill to communication needs. Now the Olmstead plan she found out last week and emailed Eli about it, he stated that he was not allowed to share, however, it is a public plan. It considers the public as a whole community. How can a plan be finalized and not discussed with the public? Withing a short period of time it's harder for me to read and be able to translate them to the Las Vegas Deaf Seniors members whose primary language is ASL and in other words, they are fortunate I'm able to read and generally understand the legalized document. Team should have an ASL and share with the community as if they share with other public in their communities. For any of you who have a role with the state and as a commissioner it's hard for you not to share with the public and as a commissioner you need to share and advocate for us. With Nevada Care Connection, I'm not sure how they count numbers because I emailed them three times and called once do they count that as four times with no services or responses until last week? Need to check their documents on how they count. They told me they are only referring or giving resources but not direct services, that's another ball game. What did NOFO say about scope of work, who is the grant principal, does someone actually oversee their scope of work?
 - Anonymous comment read by Eric; this is regarding Communication Access Services. Jennifere Montoya shared with conferences I feel funding for conference costs for interpreters should not come from the TDD surcharge

because this is for public community. What do the interpreters benefit from conferences for the public community? The funding should come from education. The money can be used for Deaf services as described in the regulations.

- Laura Fink added in chat the VR Townhall meeting information: VR Townhall meeting 11/15 @ 5:30pm Zoom:
meeting ID: 845 3768 3590
Passcode: 532362
- Obioma Officer stated that we currently have 82 people registered to attend the conference with 14 vendors registered and we have 54 seats left unless we can get more sponsors and can add another 50 seats to make it 200 attendees.
- Eli Schwartz agreed with Shelly that the Olmstead plan was not accessible to the community, and he is going to work with the Olmstead people and with the Las Vegas Deaf seniors and try and get the word out.
- Jaime Vitale mentioned that it was very important to get the language correct when translating to ASL because some people aren't as familiar with the language of that caliber.
- Autumn Blattman let us know she is a Regional Coordinator with Aging and Disability services and as such is a liaison between the community and ADSD and has been assigned to this Commission and will be bringing her notes back to ADSD for discussion.

12. **Adjournment:** 12:06 PM

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 www.adsd.nv.gov and Nevada Public Notices website at <https://notice.nv.gov>