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Director



DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES DIVISION
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Dena Schmidt
Administrator

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

RESCHEDULED MEETING NOTICE

Date and Time of Meeting: Wednesday, May 28, 2025
9:00 AM

Place of Meeting: TEAMS:

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Roll Call and Opening Statement:

Eric Wilcox, Chair

Members Present: Catherine Nielsen, Eli Schwartz, Eric Wilcox, Jaime Vitale,
Laura Fussell, Kimberly Baur-Schaub

Members Excused Absent: Susan Becket

Members Unexcused Absent: Dolores Parrish

Guests: Adrienne Navarro, Andy Firth, Cameron Papazis, David Johnson,
Ehren Dei, Jennifer Montoya, Kim Johnson, Lori Lutu, Uvette Francis, Cecilia
Alonso, Caroline Bass, Stacey Shinn, Shelly

Staff: Autumn Blattman, Wendy Thornley

2. Public Comment: (No action may be taken upon a matter raised under the public comment period unless the matter itself has been specifically included on an agenda as an action item. To provide public comment telephonically, dial 1 775-321-6111. When prompted to provide the meeting ID, enter 282 665 102 700 3 Passcode HE7iu9bT. Comments will be limited to five minutes per person. People making comments will be asked to begin by stating their name for the record and to spell their last name and provide the secretary with written comments.)

Catherine Nielsen: The Hike and Bike Camp is taking place in Reno, June 16th to the 20th and there are still spots for riders and volunteers. This camp will teach anyone age eight plus how to ride a bike, particularly those with various disabilities and several people on this call have been part of our camps in the past and we would love to have you.

There are scholarships for riders if cost is a factor for anyone.

You can find that on the website or send us an email.

3. For Possible Action: Approval of Minutes of the February 12, 2025, meeting.

Eric Wilcox, Chair

Laura Fussell motioned to approve the minutes. Jaime Vitale seconded. Members voted and the motion carried.

4. For Information ONLY: Mr. Lance Ledet has resigned from the NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) as of Wednesday, April 23, 2025. We would like to take a moment to recognize Mr. Ledet in appreciation and thanks for his long-standing commitment and dedication to the vision and mission of this Commission and the needs and services of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.

Eric Wilcox, Chair

Obioma Officer, Executive Director

5. For Discussion and Possible Action: Review, discuss, and approve drafted letter to Nevada Congressional delegation on federal layoffs and budget cut impacts to Early Hearing Detection and Intervention program and other services in Nevada.

Eric Wilcox, Chair

EHDI has presented to the Commission before. Newborns are typically screened for hearing issues shortly after birth, either in hospitals or at home for home births. If there are concerns from the initial screening, infants are referred to an audiologist for a proper diagnosis. This screening is part of a federally mandated program funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to the State of Nevada's Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program, managed by Perry Smith. The funding supports data collection, program tracking, and statistics on hearing loss and diagnosis rates among infants in Nevada.

The main goal of EHDI is to enroll newborns in Early Intervention Services as soon as possible, as early intervention leads to better language and educational outcomes. A draft letter in the meeting minutes seeks approval to be sent to the Nevada congressional delegation. The letter references a Time Magazine article about layoffs at HHS, which have disrupted federal support for EHDI programs. Although there have been no funding cuts in Nevada yet, the letter will be edited to reflect this. The letter also addresses potential threats to EHDI and other programs due to proposed budget cuts by the president.

Eli Schwartz motioned for Eric Wilcox to edit the letter to remove references to budget cuts to the Nevada EHDI program and submit the letter to Jaime Vitale seconded. The members voted and the motion carried.

6. For Information ONLY: Communication Access Services Program (CASP) Funding to Community Partners.

Adrienne Navarro, Social Service Chief II
Jennifer Montoya, SSPS III
Jennifer Montoya: For the next grant cycle, ...

Jennifer Montoya, the director of the communication access program, announced that for the next grant cycle, communication services for the Deaf will be provided statewide in three locations: Elko, Las Vegas, and Reno. The services will focus on four programs: family support (By Your Side), educational support (Astra), Deaf and hard of hearing leaders (Deaf adults supporting families), and a new Deaf and hard of hearing hero program (Deaf adults or teenagers as role models).

The Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD) will provide language acquisition and Deaf mentoring, both one-on-one and in groups, and will continue offering language acquisition and instruction in person and online. The equipment distribution program will also be transferred to CSD, providing statewide equipment distribution.

The transition of services to Hands & Voices and CSD will start on July 1. CSD, a well-known organization providing services across the country, has been awarded several line items, including ASL instruction, and will have physical locations in Elko, Reno, and Las Vegas. They have met all qualifications and will ensure staff are skilled in ASL and Deaf culture.

The services will include ASL instruction, equipment distribution, Deaf mentoring, and group mentoring. Nevada Hands & Voices will focus on younger children and family support, while CSD will focus on older youth and transition services from high school to graduation, partnering with other agencies for further support. The exact addresses of the new locations will be provided once they are finalized.

The two organizations, Nevada Hands & Voices and Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD) are not limited by age but by the services needed. Deaf mentoring, funded separately, will be provided by CSD in collaboration with Nevada Hands & Voices for youth and families.

Youth services cover ages 0 to 20. CSD will offer access to services for both youth and adults at three physical locations (Elko, Las Vegas, and Reno), aiming to assist with various needs, including food access and Medicaid applications, in addition to Deaf and hard of hearing services.

Nevada Hands & Voices will focus on four specific programs: Guide by Your Side, Astra, Deaf Heroes, and another program for youth and families. CSD will provide multiple services, including access to services, language acquisition, Deaf mentoring, equipment distribution, and ASL classes, both in person and online.

The goal is to ensure comprehensive access to services for the Deaf and hard of hearing community in Nevada.

7. For Discussion and Possible Action: Updates on Status of SB78, AB247, AB395, and SB192. To include brief discussion and clarification of the conflicting language used for "Qualified Interpreter" in AB247 and SB192 as it pertains to our current NRS 656A.

[SB78 Overview](#) – **Summary:** Revises provisions relating to boards, commissions, councils and similar bodies. (BDR 18-301) – relating to governmental administration; revising in skeleton form the powers and duties of the Office of Nevada Boards, Commissions and Councils Standards of the Department of Business and Industry; Sponsor(s): Senate Committee on Revenue and Economic Development.

SB78 is a significant bill from the governor's agenda aimed at revising boards and commissions in the state. Initially, it proposed eliminating this commission. However, a major amendment refocused the bill on boards and commissions with regulatory, oversight, or licensing responsibilities, excluding advisory boards like this commission.

Currently, it appears that this commission will not be eliminated if SB78 passes. Stacey Shinn clarified that a new bill was drafted to replace SB78 due to substantial opposition, and SB78 is likely to be abandoned. The new bill's number is not recalled, but it seems the commission is safe for now.

The process has been confusing, with the Chair of the initial committee believing the bill was developed transparently, though many were unaware of its origins or the amendment details.

[AB247 Overview](#) – **Summary:** Revises provisions relating to persons with disabilities. (BDR 19-574) – “Big Deaf Bill” related to person with disabilities; Sponsor(s): Assemblymember Tracy Brown-May.

Eli Schwartz noted that AB 247 was initially a standalone bill but was merged with two other bills in the assembly, complicating its passage due to fiscal notes. Stacey confirmed that while some fiscal notes were incorrect, many were legitimate, and the state lacks funds. Eli requested the fiscal notes for review. Eric mentioned that AB 247 might not fully capture the intended goals, particularly regarding closed captioning, and suggested discussing this further in a future meeting. Catherine offered the DD Council's support for the Deaf school study portion of the bill during the interim period.

[AB395 Overview](#) – **Summary:** Revises provisions relating to services to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. (BDR 40-841) – relating to health care; requiring certain health facilities and providers of health care to provide qualified sign language interpreters to certain persons who are deaf or hard of hearing; Sponsor(s): Assemblymember Erica Roth and Assemblymember Tracy Brown-May.

AB 395, led by Shelly and the Las Vegas Deaf Seniors, aims to improve accessibility in healthcare settings like doctor's offices and hospitals. This vital bill is currently stalled in the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, but the fiscal notes have been removed, potentially allowing it to move forward. Advocates have written to the bill sponsors and the committee chair to urge its progression, as it must move out of the committee today to meet a legislative deadline.

Assembly Bill 247, introduced by Tracy Brown May, aimed to address several priorities, including captioning in public meetings and a study for a state school for the Deaf. However, the bill is expected to fail due to numerous fiscal notes indicating high costs for

providing captioning, despite arguments that these costs are already covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Shelly Freed noted the importance of reviewing fiscal notes early in the process for accuracy. Eli mentioned that the bill was merged with others, complicating its passage, and suggested focusing on single bills in the future. Stacey Shinn confirmed that while some fiscal notes were incorrect, others were legitimate, and the state's lack of funds is a significant issue.

Catherine offered support from the DD Council for the Deaf school study during the interim period. The commission plans to revisit these priorities in two years.

[SB192 Overview](#) – **Summary:** Revises provisions relating to public health. (BDR 40-86) – related to public health; imposing requirements relating to birth in a hospital or freestanding birthing center; Sponsor(s): Senator Dina Neal.

Eric Wilcox, Chair

Stacey Shinn, Director of State Innovation Exchange (SiX)

Shelly Freed, LVDS Secretary

SB 192 addresses accessibility and other provisions related to childbirth in hospitals or freestanding birthing centers. The commission has previously supported this bill, which is scheduled for a hearing at 1:00 PM today. The goal is to move it out of the Assembly Committee and keep it alive for further consideration.

8. For Discussion Only: Briefly discuss and clarify the conflicting language used for “Qualified Interpreter” in AB247 and SB192 as it pertains to our current NRS 656A.

Adrienne Navarro, Social Service Chief II

Jennifer Montoya, SSPS III

Kim Johnson, SSPS II

Adrienne Navarro: Adrienne Navarro discussed the definition of a qualified sign language interpreter, noting that three bills this legislative session (AB 247, AB 395, and SB 192) introduced different definitions. AB 247 and AB 395 referenced federal definitions, which focus on the interpreter's performance ability without specific state requirements. In Nevada, the interpreter registry managed by the CAS program outlines credentials, ethical standards, and qualifications under NRS 656A.

SB 192 included the state requirements from the start, while AB 395 was amended to include them after collaboration with stakeholders. AB 247 did not include state requirements and is expected to fail. Adrienne emphasized the importance of consistent definitions across statutes to avoid confusion and ensure clarity for interpreters and consumers.

Eric agreed, highlighting the need for the Legislative Subcommittee to ensure bill sponsors reference the existing Nevada statute in future legislative sessions.

9. Presentation, Discussion, and For Possible Action: Las Vegas Deaf Seniors (LVDS) Taskforce Presentation, request for letter of support, and Commissioner representative to join the Taskforce in ongoing education of hospitals' communication access and hospitality approach for Deaf and Hard of Hearing patients.

Shelly Freed, LVDS Secretary

Shelly Freed: Shelly Freed, secretary for the Las Vegas Deaf Seniors, shared that they have formed a taskforce to educate hospitals about access for Deaf and hard of hearing patients. They have started with Strow Hospital and all Dignity hospitals. Shelly requested support from the commissioners, including speaking at events and participating in hospital-hosted activities. The taskforce is small, with only seven members, and would appreciate additional involvement.

Uvette Francis from the American College of Healthcare Executives expressed excitement about the taskforce and shared her efforts to engage with hospitals on behalf of the Deaf and hard of hearing community. She mentioned potential interviews and articles to raise awareness.

Shelly and Obioma discussed the idea of a healthcare summit to educate hospital staff in a friendly environment. They suggested having a commissioner join the taskforce to provide support and maintain communication. Kimberly Bauer Schaub volunteered, citing her background in the medical community and willingness to help.

Eli Schwartz motioned to approve Dr. Kimberly Bauer Schaub as a member of the healthcare taskforce. Eli made the motion, and Catherine Nielsen seconded it. The motion passed unanimously. Dr. Kimberly Bauer Schaub is now the liaison to the taskforce, and she will provide valuable insight despite being new to the commission. Any additional support needed by the taskforce, such as letters of support, can be communicated through Kimberly to Obioma for commission approval.

10. For Information and Discussion Only: 2025 Legislative Session Monitoring

Executive Director Obioma Officer will provide a brief update and reminder regarding the 83rd (2025) Session of the Nevada Legislature, which began on February 3, 2025. Board members will be encouraged to continue to independently monitor legislative developments and utilize the Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System (NELIS) for real-time updates. No specific legislative issues are identified for discussion or board action.

Here is the Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System (NELIS), link for the 2025, 83rd session of the Nevada Legislature:

- [83rd \(2025\) Session \(state.nv.us\)](https://state.nv.us)
- [view upcoming legislative meetings](#)

Obioma Officer, Executive Director

Obioma reminded commissioners about the importance of tracking bills and following the legislative cycle and agenda. Commissioners should not rely on external updates but take responsibility for monitoring sessions and showing up for the community. They should educate the community about the Deaf community's needs. For more information on bills, commissioners can refer to NELIS, with the link provided on the agenda.

- 11. 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.

Eric Wilcox, Chair
Catherine Nielsen, Vice Chair
Obioma Officer, Executive Director

The Director and Chairs Reports were included in the meeting materials. Lance has resigned, leaving a vacant seat for a member with experience or knowledge of services for people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired. Two new appointments were made: Dolores Parrish for a member registered to practice sign language interpreting, and Dr. Kimberly Bauer Schaub for a parent of a child under six who is Deaf or hard of hearing. There are still a few vacant seats, with applications under review for two of them. Eric plans to reapply for his seat and hopes to hold chair and vice chair elections at the next meeting.

Shelly Freed and Obioma discussed the success of Deaf Day, with 33 registrants on the day and 109 pre-registrants. The event included 32 lobby visits and interactions with four legislators. The budget covered all expenses, with about \$2,000 left for the next legislative Deaf Day. The community and legislators provided positive feedback.

Upcoming events include the Hard of Hearing Day from June 9th to 14th, with a Big Dream Day for families and students. Obioma will present on June 9th, with Catherine volunteering to co-present. The Deaf Nation Expo will be held from July 22nd to 24th, with ADSD and other programs having vendor booths. The Office of Consumer Health Assistance (OCHA) will also participate. Registration for the expo is free.

Adrienne clarified that the Office of Consumer Health Assistance (OCHA) will be part of the Deaf Nation World Expo event. Along with CAS, all four organizations will share a table, rotating and taking turns throughout the week, with interpreter access available. The event is free, and registration is encouraged to avoid long lines.

Jaime, a volunteer interpreter and registration coordinator for the expo, urged early registration to ensure a smooth process. Volunteers are also needed, and Jaime will be present all week to assist.

Eli inquired if the commission would have a table at the event. Obioma confirmed that CAS and the commission will be represented, with Obioma being the fifth person involved.

- 12. For Possible Action:** To review, discuss, and approve recommendations presented by each subcommittee as detailed in their respective reports, all reports are accessible in the meeting materials.

Obioma Officer, Interim Chair of Accessibility Subcommittee

Accessibility Subcommittee: Obioma reported that Lorraine Belt-Dolan has been added as a new member. The taskforce for the Las Vegas Deaf Seniors has selected Dr. Kimberly Bauer Schaub as a representative.

Interpreter Subcommittee: Jaime Vitale mentioned that the last meeting was canceled, and the next meeting is on June 20th, which will be her last as her term ends. However, she will continue her commitment to the subcommittee for another year.

Legislative Subcommittee: Eli Schwartz reported that Shelly Freed has been voted in as a new member. The subcommittee suggested drafting a letter to the governor outlining community needs and emphasizing the lack of services.

Education Subcommittee: Eric Wilcox discussed the implementation plan for a survey targeting students, staff, and families involved in the education of Deaf and hard of hearing children in Nevada. The survey will be deployed in September 2025 through an anonymous web-based platform. The goal is to gather information to support a study for a state school for the Deaf. The subcommittee will seek assistance from students and faculty at colleges with Deaf Ed or ASL programs. Catherine from the DD Council confirmed their support for the survey and related efforts.

Eric Wilcox made a motion to the commission to approve the implementation plan for the survey targeting students, staff, and families involved in the education of Deaf and hard of hearing children in Nevada. Laura Fussell seconded the motion. The members voted and the motion carried.

13. For Possible Action: Approval of Tentative Agenda Items for Next meeting August 13, 2025.

Eric Wilcox, Chair

The next general meeting is scheduled for August 13th. Eli Schwartz requested an update on whether CAS can interpret the commission meetings, which will be addressed at the next meeting. Laura mentioned that the outcomes of the legislative session will be discussed.

Eli suggested inviting NERC to present on how they can support the commission's efforts, which will be considered for the agenda. Eli also requested that the election be included on the agenda.

Catherine proposed two items for future agendas: an update on the elimination of the newborn hearing screening and a brief agenda item to recognize Lexi, Beth Jones's daughter, who starred in a film nominated for six Emmy awards. Catherine will provide an update on the Emmy awards during public comment.

14. Public Comment: (No action may be taken upon a matter raised under the public comment period unless the matter itself has been specifically included on an agenda as an action item. To provide public comment telephonically, dial 1 775-321-6111. When prompted to provide the meeting ID, enter 282 665 102 700 3 Passcode HE7iu9bT. Comments will be limited to five minutes per person. People making comments will be asked to begin by stating their name for the record and to spell their last name and provide the secretary with written comments.)

Catherine Nielsen: Lexi Jones starred in a film with the DD Council called "Our World in Our Words," which highlights the lives of four individuals with various disabilities. Lexi, who is hard of hearing, was featured, and the film was recently nominated for six regional Emmy awards. The awards ceremony will be on June 21st, and Catherine will attend in person.

Laura Fussell: Announced that DETR has an available position for a Rehab Counselor specializing in Deaf and Hard of Hearing clients and encouraged people to apply.

15. Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at: 11:45 am

Accommodation Requests and Meeting Materials:

AGENDA POSTED AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS:

Notice of this meeting was posted at the following Aging and Disability Services Office at 1550 E. College Parkway, Carson City, NV. 89706. Notice of this meeting was posted on the Internet through the Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division website at [ADSD \(nv.gov\)](https://adsd.nv.gov) and Nevada Public Notices website at <https://notice.nv.gov>