

NEVADA COMMISSION FOR PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

(DRAFT) Position on Deaf Resources Centers for People who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Deaf Resources Centers, also known as deaf centers, have long played a critical role in providing essential resources, services, and advocacy for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Historically, access to communication, education, and employment support was limited for the deaf community, leading to the establishment of dedicated centers to bridge these gaps. Deaf centers serve as community hubs, offering interpreting services, job training, social opportunities, and educational programs tailored to the unique needs of the deaf and hard-of-hearing population.

Over the years, advancements in policy, technology, and public awareness have improved accessibility. However, many individuals still face barriers in accessing equitable services and support. Deaf centers remain vital in ensuring community engagement, cultural preservation, and the empowerment of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing firmly believes that every individual, regardless of their hearing ability, has the right to full participation in society. We advocate for equal access to communication, education, employment, and community resources. Deaf centers play a vital role in ensuring that people who are deaf or hard of hearing have the support and services they need to lead independent and fulfilling lives. The Commission is dedicated to fostering an inclusive and accessible Nevada where all individuals can thrive.

History of Deaf Centers

Deaf centers have long played a critical role in providing essential resources, services, and advocacy for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Historically, access to communication, education, and employment support was limited for the deaf community, leading to the establishment of dedicated centers to bridge these gaps. Deaf centers serve as community hubs, offering interpreting services, job training, social opportunities, and educational programs tailored to the unique needs of the deaf and hard-of-hearing population.

Over the years, advancements in policy, technology, and public awareness have improved accessibility. However, many individuals still face barriers in accessing equitable services and support. Deaf centers remain vital in ensuring community engagement, cultural preservation, and the empowerment of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The Need for Deaf Centers in Nevada

Nevada currently lacks adequate infrastructure and resources to fully support the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. The Commission recognizes the necessity of establishing and expanding deaf centers across the state to:

- Provide direct services, including American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting, captioning, and communication access.
- Offer job training, career development, and employment placement programs.

- Facilitate social and mental health services specifically tailored to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Serve as a centralized hub for information on legal rights, education, and accessibility advocacy.
- Promote deaf culture and foster a sense of community among individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Policy Recommendations:

To establish and sustain effective deaf centers in Nevada, the Commission recommends:

1. **State Funding Allocation:** Secure state funding to establish and maintain deaf centers across Nevada, ensuring they provide comprehensive services.
2. **Legislative Support:** Advocate for policies that recognize deaf centers as essential community resources and integrate them into state-funded programs.
3. **Partnerships with Local Agencies:** Collaborate with healthcare providers, educational institutions, and employers to expand services offered through deaf centers.
4. **Workforce Development Programs:** Provide training and employment opportunities within deaf centers for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
5. **Technology and Accessibility Enhancements:** Invest in modern technology to improve service delivery, including video relay services (VRS), video remote interpreting (VRI), and assistive listening devices.
6. **Public Awareness and Outreach:** Educate the broader community on the importance of deaf centers and their role in fostering accessibility and inclusion.

Proposed Next Steps (Call to Action): To advance the establishment and expansion of deaf centers in Nevada, the Commission urges:

- **Legislative Action:** Work with policymakers to secure funding and legal recognition for deaf centers.
- **Community Engagement:** Conduct needs assessments and gather input from the deaf and hard-of-hearing community to inform service priorities.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Collaborate with public and private entities to enhance service offerings and accessibility.
- **Funding Advocacy:** Advocate for federal, state, and local funding to support the development and sustainability of deaf centers.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implement tracking mechanisms to assess the impact of deaf centers and address service gaps effectively.

Conclusion: Deaf centers are essential to ensuring that people who are deaf or hard of hearing have access to the resources, services, and support they need to thrive. The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing is committed to advocating for the establishment and expansion of deaf centers statewide. Policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders must take action to create inclusive spaces that empower and uplift the deaf and hard-of-hearing community in Nevada.