

# **NEVADA COMMISSION FOR PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**

## **(DRAFT) Position on Services Provided to People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

Services tailored to the needs of individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH) are critical to ensuring equitable access, inclusion, and empowerment. These services must be delivered by qualified professionals with lived experiences and expertise in addressing the unique challenges faced by D/HH individuals.

**The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing advocates for enhancing communication accessibility, ensuring the fair distribution of resources, and prioritizing culturally competent service delivery.**

### **The Need for Qualified Professionals**

- Services for D/HH individuals should be provided by professionals who not only possess technical qualifications but also have lived experiences as D/HH individuals or in-depth knowledge of the D/HH community.
- Such professionals are uniquely positioned to understand the cultural, linguistic, and emotional nuances of being D/HH, allowing them to offer services that are empathetic, effective, and tailored to the needs of the community.

### **Enhancing Communication Accessibility and Services**

- Communication access is a cornerstone of providing equitable services to D/HH individuals. This includes the availability of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, captioning services, and assistive technologies.
- Services must extend to critical areas, including healthcare, education, employment, and community engagement, to ensure comprehensive accessibility.
- Statewide efforts should focus on reducing communication barriers by investing in innovative technologies and training programs for service providers.

### **Ensuring Fair Distribution of Resources**

- Resources must be distributed equitably to address the diverse needs of the D/HH population, including those in rural and underserved areas.
- Funding for programs and services should prioritize accessibility, quality, and inclusivity.
- Policies should ensure transparency and accountability in resource allocation, promoting trust and collaboration between service providers and the D/HH community.

### **Policy Recommendations**

#### **1. Promote Culturally Competent Service Delivery**

- Require service providers to have certifications or training in working with D/HH individuals, with a preference for professionals with lived experiences.

- Develop mentorship programs to support emerging professionals from the D/HH community.

## **2. Expand Communication Accessibility**

- Increase funding for ASL interpreters, captioning services, and assistive technologies.
- Ensure that public services, including healthcare, education, and government programs, meet accessibility standards.

## **3. Equitable Resource Allocation**

- Implement policies to distribute resources based on population needs, ensuring that rural and underserved areas receive adequate support.
- Regularly assess and address gaps in services to ensure comprehensive coverage.

## **4. Foster Public Awareness and Advocacy**

- Launch awareness campaigns to educate the public and policymakers about the unique needs of D/HH individuals.
- Partner with community organizations to advocate for systemic changes that enhance accessibility and inclusion.

**Proposed Next Steps (Call to Action):** Meeting the needs of D/HH individuals requires a collaborative and proactive approach that prioritizes culturally competent services, communication accessibility, and equitable resource distribution. Policymakers, service providers, and community leaders must work together to create a Nevada where all individuals, regardless of hearing ability, can thrive.

**Conclusion:** By investing in qualified professionals, enhancing communication accessibility, and ensuring fair distribution of resources, Nevada can lead the way in providing exemplary services to its D/HH population. These efforts will not only empower individuals but also strengthen the fabric of our communities through greater inclusivity and understanding.