

Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Director and Chair Report 2026

February 11, 2026

General Update(s)

Eric Wilcox, Chair

Budget

- Budget Update (FY26 Starting funds of \$34,282)
 - Total Spent/Obligated (through 1/16/2026): \$17,213.02
 - Balance (as of 1/16/2026): \$17,068.98 (reoccurring payments not included)

Membership Update(s)

Eric Wilcox, Chair

Catherine Nielsen, Vice Chair

Recently Filled Positions

- Updates or appointments to report: **ALL VACANCIES FILLED** outside of the restrictive seat appointment reserved for the Executive Director of the Nevada Telecommunications Association, Seat (d).

- (b) One member who is a member of the Nevada Association of the Deaf, or, if it ceases to exist, one member who represents an organization which has a membership of persons who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired

Lee Bullock – APPOINTED 1/1/2026

- (g) One member who represents educators in this State and has knowledge concerning the provision of communication services to persons who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools and the laws concerning the provision of those services

David Kelsey – APPOINTED 1/1/2026

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- (h) One member who represents an advocacy organization whose membership consists of persons who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired

Paula Koerwitz – APPOINTED 1/1/2026

- (j) One member who specializes in issues relating to the employment of persons with disabilities

Lora Turner – APPOINTED 1/1/2026

- (l) One member who: (1) Is registered with the Division pursuant to [NRS 656A.100](#) to engage in the practice of sign language interpreting; and (2) To the extent practicable, has experience with and knowledge of interpreting in a primary or secondary educational setting and a post-secondary educational setting and freelance interpreting

Carol Helou – APPOINTED 1/1/2026

- If interested in Vacant Seats outlined below, please be sure to apply online https://hal.nv.gov/form/Governor/Boards_and_Commissions_Application.
 - For additional support in the process, please reach out to O. Officer, D/HH Commission Executive Director, to support your efforts and appointment initiative.
 - **Please Note: Decisions are made by the Governor, at their pleasure and discretion.** O. Officer is only available for further directional assistance in navigating the online submission process and can support if further clarification is needed in the waiting period. Boards should be contact directly for further assistance: Boards <boards@gov.nv.gov>.
- Interested in joining a Subcommittee, please contact Obioma Officer through our General Commission email NVDeafCommission@adsd.nv.gov with further interest.

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Current Open Position(s) Report from Boards (Dated: 1/1/2026):

Our records show the following vacancies for the Commission for Persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Speech Impaired:

(d) One nonvoting member who is the Executive Director of the Nevada Telecommunications Association or, in the event of its dissolution, who represents the telecommunications industry. – **Inactive/VACANT**

Commission Elections (FOR POSSIBLE ACTION)

DHHSI Bylaws Approved: 12/17/2025

4. Election of a Commission Chair and Vice Chair

a. Election of a Commission Chair and a Vice Chair shall occur at the regularly scheduled Commission meeting immediately prior to July 1st of each year;

b. All voting members attending this meeting are permitted to nominate and vote for a Chair and Vice-Chair; and

c. The Commission Chair and Vice-Chair shall be elected by a majority of voting member present.

d. The Vice-Chair shall act in the stead of the Chair when the Chair is not available to fulfill his/her duties.

MOTION TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS UNTIL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RETURNS FROM MATERNITY LEAVE. ELECTIONS TO BE HELD AT COMMISSION GENERAL MEETING, AUGUST 12, 2026. – In response to bylaws section 4a.

Outreach Efforts/Events/Announcements

Obioma Officer, ED
Eric Wilcox, Chair

Outreach Open for Discussion

- **2026 TENTATIVE Statewide Townhall Tour(s) – All Meetings held in person.**

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- **HIGHLIGHTED TOPIC(S):** *TENTATIVE* – Discuss lessons learned and how to prepare for the Legislative session in 2027, Explore upcoming Legislative Advocacy and help shape future initiatives that promote autonomy, equity, and access. Provide feedback on D/HH Bill recommendations, contribute to the Commission’s annual report, and share outcomes of 2025 Engagement Conference in preparation and finalized plans for November 2026 Engagement Conference.
- **2026 Spring Townhall Tour – April 2026 – CONFIRMED/REMINDER**
 - **CANCELLED** due to ED oversight on Maternity Leave, April – June 2026.
- **2026 Fall Townhall Tour – October 2026 – TENTATIVE**
 - **Townhall (North) RENO, NV** – Thursday, Oct. 8, 2026, | **Time:** 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: University of Nevada, Reno – **Room TBD**, 1664 N. Virginia St., Reno, NV 89557
 - **Community Networking Event (DNO North)** – Tuesday, October 9th | **Time:** **TBD** – **Collab (North):** UNR ASL Program – World Languages and Literature Department, *Nevada Black Deaf Advocates (NVBDA)*, and *Sammy's D.E.N.* in Collaboration with Deaf Commission
Location: **TBD**
 - **Townhall (Rural) TBD, NV** – Monday, Oct. 19, 2026, | **Time:** 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: **TBD**
 - **Community Networking Event (DNO South)** – Tuesday, October 20th | **Time:** 5 PM – 9 PM – **Collab (South):** **HOST TBD** in Collaboration with Deaf Commission
Location: **TBD**
 - **Townhall (South) LAS VEGAS, NV** – Wednesday, Oct. 21, 2026, | **Time:** 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: **TBD**

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- **D/HH Empowerment Weekend OUTCOMES:**

- **Friday, December 12th, 2025**– Community Winter Gala; Hosted by: Sammy's DEN – Highlighted D/HH Commission's "Community Gratitude Ceremony"/Networking Event and Community Collab Silent Auction Hosted by NVBDA as Leads & LVDS funds oversight
(Note: proceeds benefit Nevada's Deaf Day at the Legislator 2027).
 - Attendance: 97
 - Gratitude Nominees:
 - Darrin Brown - Nominated by LVDS
 - David Comer - Nominated by LVDS
 - Paula Koerwitz - Nominated by LVDS
 - Lorraine Belt-Dolan - Nominated by NVBDA
 - Maria Hall - Nominated by NVBDA
 - Obioma Officer - Nominated by NVBDA
 - Hailey Cisneros - Nominated by NVRID
 - Beth Jones - Nominated by NVHV
 - Deborah Rodriguez - Nominated by NVHV
 - Reanna Stroup - Nominated by NVHV
 - Sara Sain-Jergens - Nominated by Sammy's D.E.N.
 - Catherine Nielsen - Nominated by Sammy's D.E.N.
 - Chanel Cassanello - Nominated by Sammy's D.E.N.
 - Plaque Recipients:
 - Catherine Nielsen
 - Chanell Cassanello
 - Lorraine Belt-Dolan
 - Obioma Officer
 - Sara Sain-Jergens
 - **Silent Auction proceeds for Deaf Day at the Legislator 2027 (as reported by 3rd Party LVDS):**
 - \$1,975.00 Zelle
 - \$324.00 Cash
 - **Total:** \$2,299.00

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- Current Deaf Day at the Legislature Account Bal.:
 - **Total: \$12,404.89**
- **Saturday, December 13th – Sunday, December 14th, 2025 –**
Conference Day 1 & 2 Outcomes:
 - Registrants: 271
 - Attendance: 201
 - Survey Outcomes/Feedback: See Meeting Materials spreadsheet “2025 DHH Commission Engagement Conference Survey (Responses)_2.11.2026” for survey feedback.
- **Saturday, December 13th, 2025 –** Community Networking Event Outcomes: DeafBlind/Deaf/Hard of Hearing Night Out; Hosted by: Deaf Night Out (DNO) and Sammy’s D.E.N.; following Day 1 Engagement Conference.
 - Attendance: 45
- **FY 2026 Deaf and Hard of Hearing Conferences and/or Nevada Conferences with D/HH components REMINDER:**
 - **March 2026**
 - [EHDI Conference](#): March 15–17 in Jacksonville, FL. Focuses on Early Hearing Detection and Intervention programs.
 - **April 2026**
 - [DHHBA Conference](#): April 22–23 in Washington, D.C. Focuses on DHH legal professionals.
 - [2axend Deaf In Healthcare Summit](#): April 17–19, virtual. For interpreters in healthcare.
 - [Language First Conference](#): April 14–15. Focuses on ASL-English bilingual education.
 - **May 2026**
 - [ADARA Conference](#): May 26–30 in Salt Lake City, Utah. It covers vocational rehabilitation, behavioral health, education, and more.
 - **June 2026**

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- **[HLAA 2026 Convention](#)**: June 10–12 in Louisville, KY. A general hearing health and community convention.
- **[Moog Center Biennial Conference](#)**: June 12–13. A biennial conference for professionals who serve children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- **[NAD - National Association of the Deaf](#)**: June 20–July 5 in San Francisco, CA. The 58th Biennial NAD Conference at the Hilton San Francisco Union Square for an unforgettable week of connection, learning, and celebration.
- **November 2026**
 - **[Coalition for Global Hearing Health](#)**: November 20–22 in Chennai, India. Focuses on ear and hearing health in low-resource communities.

Event(s)

- CSD Reach/ CSD Works Nevada
 - In Person: Open House in Las Vegas, NV – **MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 2026** – 96 REGISTERED and GREAT attendance!
 - In Person: Reno Nevada – **JANUARY 2026** – Tech Outreach Fair: Senior Citizens Centers
 - In Person: **APRIL 2026** – Deaf Awareness Day! More details to come!
- Nevada Hands & Voices
 - Virtual (Statewide) – **THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 2026**, 6pm – 7pm, “You’re No Different than Me.” Read by author Cynthia Green and her son, the real Martell!
 - More Details HERE!
<https://www.nvhandsandvoices.org/event/gbbb>
 - In Person: Southern Nevada – **SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 2026**, 11:30am – 2pm. “Secret Pizza Party” book reading, pizza party, crafts, and DHH panel! Each child registered will receive a holiday gift and each family will receive a copy of the “Secret Pizza Party” book.
 - More Details HERE!
<https://www.nvhandsandvoices.org/event/secret-pizza-party>

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- In Person: Southern Nevada – Pickleball Tournament **SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2026** [SAVE THE DATE].
 - More Details HERE!
<https://www.nvhandsandvoices.org/event/pickleball>
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- Sammy's D.E.N.
 - In Person: Boulder City, NV – **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2026**, 2:30pm. Super Bowl Fundraiser.
 - More Details HERE!
 - In Person: **MARCH** – Tacos & Tattoos! More details to come!
 - In Person: **APRIL** – Joining Deaf Awareness Day w/ CSD! See CSD for more details!
 - In Person: Southern Nevada – **SATURDAY, MAY 2, 2026** – Cook Out! More details to come!
- Nevada Black Deaf Advocates (NVBDA)
 - In Person: **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2026**, 10am – 4pm “Black History Month Festival at Sprins Preserve,” Las Vegas, Nevada – NVBDA Booth Event/ Fundraiser
 - More details HERE!
<https://www.springspreserve.org/events/index.cfm?id=2161>

Announcement(s)

- **Holiday:** Presidents Day – Monday, February 16th
- **Executive Director Out of Office:** Maternity Leave – Monday, March 30th – Thursday, June 18th
- **Holiday:** Memorial Day – May 25th
- **Event Collaboration:** Beyond the Deaf Home Camp and Dream BIG Deaf Youth Day – Monday, June 8th – Saturday, June 13th
- **Holiday:** Juneteenth – Friday, June 19th
- **Executive Director Out of Office:** 2026 NAD 58th Biennial Conference – Tuesday, June 30th – Sunday, July 5th

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Community Contact(s) – For Possible Action

Obioma Officer, ED

Eric Wilcox, Chair

This section is being added for the Director/Chairperson to report major issues/concerns reported by the community to the Commission.

Executive Director:

Obioma U. Officer, ED

- **REVISITING For Discussion and Possible Action:** Discussion and Vote to approve membership in the National Council on Independent Living – ADSD received a formal letter addressed to Obioma Officer, ED of the Deaf Commission to Join NCIL. Please see the following links for Membership and the Benefits of this allyship:

- **Webpage** (<https://ncil.org/>)
- **Join NCIL** (<https://ncil.org/member-center/>)
- **View NCIL Member Benefits** (<https://ncil.org/member-center/member-benefits/>)
- **Membership Fees** (<https://ncil.org/member-center/dues/>)

➤ **Organizational Dues Chart**

NCIL Organizational Dues Chart: For Centers for Independent Living, Statewide Independent Living Councils, and other organizations

Operating Budget (minus pass-through funds) = Dues Less than \$100,000 = \$150 – **NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing Level**

Chair and/or Vice Chair:

Eric Wilcox, Chair

Catherine Nielsen, Vice Chair

- All concerns addressed in agenda.

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Networking Efforts: Resources/Collaborations/Potential Partner/Partners

Obioma Officer, ED

Network System

- If you are interested in one of our networking options, please email us at NVDeafCommission@adsd.nv.gov and we will get you started TODAY!
- For more information and to learn more about the Commission's ongoing vision, please check us out 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)).

Recent Resources/Collaborative relationships/efforts

All efforts current 2025 efforts.

- Access, Equity, and Leadership Collective (AELC)
 - **Current Efforts:**
 - Michigan/Nevada Potential Collab Efforts for a Michigan "Engagement Conference"
 - ALEC President to Present at Nevada D/HH 2026 Engagement Conference
 - **Last Meeting:** January 7th, 2026
- All Voting is Local – Chanel Cassanello and Kerry Durmick
 - **Current Efforts:**
 - Ongoing Voting Accessibility and D/HH Feedback on New Bill education on resources available
 - **Last Meeting:** January 23rd, 2026
- Communication Services for the Deaf, Inc. (CSD) Reach/Works Nevada – Chris Soukup
 - **Current Efforts:**
 - Resource brainstorming, systems navigation, and collaborative discussions for future opportunities to work together toward statewide allyship.
 - **Last Meeting:** January 12th, 2026
- DETR Vocational Rehabilitation – Lora Turner
 - **Current Efforts:**
 - 2026 Deaf Camp Collab/Support – Beyond the Deaf Home
 - VR Resources and D/HH DeafBlind Support Service Opportunities
 - **Last Meeting:** January 21st, 2026 (impromptu)
- Hauck Consulting – Dolores Hauck
 - **Current Efforts:**

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- Check-in and continued efforts to expand D/HH Resource opportunities with mainstream Disability resources and collaborations.
 - **Last Meeting:** TBD – Communication continues through Text and Emails
- Hunta Williams – DeafBlind C/DI and Specialist
 - **Current Efforts:**
 - Returning Presenter for 2026/27 Engagement Conference as Inspirational speaker.
 - **Last Meeting:** TBD – Communication continues through Text and Emails
- LVCVA – Jim Michael
 - **Current Efforts:**
 - Upcoming events and check-in for future efforts in 2027
 - **Last Meeting:** TBD – Communication continues through Text and Calls
- Las Vegas Deaf Seniors (LVDS)
 - **Current Efforts:**
 - 2025 Engagement Conference 3rd Party funding support, Planning Team, and Presenters.
 - Budget Resolution.
 - **Last Meeting:** December 18th, 2025
- National Association of Interpreters in Education (NAIE)
 - **Current Efforts:**
 - O. Officer join their NAIE Conference/Summit in 2026 in Las Vegas, NV as a presenter and local support.
 - **Last Meeting:** TBD – Communication continues through Emails
- Nevada ASL Therapist Network
 - **Current Efforts:**
 - Collaborate or develop a co-op network for ASL Accessible Therapist in the state of Nevada. Hopes are to include workshops, resourcing, presentation opportunities, and outreach.
 - **Last meeting:** January 21st, 2026
- Nevada Early Intervention Services (NEIS)
 - **Current Efforts:**
 - Eric Wilcox and Obioma Officer Present for NEIS All Staff (statewide) Meeting on January 22, 2026.
 - **Last Meeting:** January 12th, 2026
- Nevada Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities
 - **Current Efforts:**
 - Ongoing D/HH Support and Resources

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- Connection with Community to better understand the resources and revenue through other Disability resources available to the D/HH Community.
- Silver State Advocacy Conference 2026 Efforts – O. Officer on Accessibility Planning Team.
- **Last Meeting:** February 2nd, 2026
- Sammy's D.E.N. Deaf Center
 - **Current Efforts:**
 - Collab for Gratitude Ceremony
 - Resolution of Collab and Intro to Future Opportunities
 - **Last Meeting:** December 22nd, 2025

2025 Meeting Schedule Reminder

Obioma U. Officer, ED

- **Next General Commission Meeting, Wednesday, May 13th, 2026, 9:00am.**
- **Upcoming Subcommittee Meetings:**
 - Accessibility Subcommittee: Friday, March 13th, 2026, @2:30pm – 3:45pm
 - Interpreter Subcommittee: Friday, March 13th, 2026, @4pm – 5:15pm
 - Legislative Subcommittee: Tuesday, May 5th, 2026, @2:30pm – 3:45pm
 - Education Subcommittee: Tuesday, May 5th, 2026, @4:00pm – 5:15pm