

2024 ENGAGEMENT CONFERENCE

A Commission of Aging and
Disability Services Division (ADSD)

Commission for
Persons who are
Deaf and Hard of
Hearing

Access for All



**FRI » December 13th -
SAT » December 14th**



**Santa Fe Station Casino & Resort
LAS VEGAS, NV**

►►► **"Putting Unity in CommUNITY
based Advocacy for Legislative
Change."**



American Sign Language
Communication



Conference Webpage

<https://tinyurl.com/https://dhh-2024-engagement-conference.my.canva.site/>





Photography Consent

Please be advised that the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing will photograph and/or record video and/or audio at the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Engagement Conference 2024. Speakers, attendees, guests, and all others present may be photographed by the conference photographers. By registering for and attending this conference, you acknowledge that you have been informed that you may be photographed, video recorded, and/or filmed. You grant the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the NGCDD, and the State of Nevada permission, without further notification, to publish photographs and video taken of you and containing your image/likeness for publicity, general information purposes, social media platforms, press releases, etc. If you do not wish to be photographed or videotaped at the conference, please notify the photographers or videographers if they approach you.

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NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

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**DIGITAL
PROGRAM
AVAILABLE
HERE**



NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing



ADSD WELCOME

Welcome!

We welcome you to the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing 2024 Engagement Conference. It is our hope that today will provide insights into the Nevada Legislative process and the importance of your role in this process as a citizen of Nevada. Thank you for taking the time to be here today!

To all of the organizations who have joined with the Commission to bring this conference to the community... we appreciate your partnership! It is through these shared events and collaborations that we can help ensure the needs of all Nevada citizens are heard, understood, and addressed.

Together we can support increase in access to education, employment barriers, improvement in healthcare communication, and reducing social isolation. There is a need for the Deaf community to come together to promote positive change. The collective voice of the Deaf community along with allies, is essential to advocate for equal rights, break down barriers, and ensure that Deaf individuals have the same opportunities as hearing individuals.

The Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division (ADSD) has long been a supporter of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community in Nevada. We know that ADSD is not able to meet all the needs that exist in our state and that improving the lives, and the experience of this community requires collaboration among various agencies, organizations, and the legislature. We look forward to the opportunities ahead!

This conference will create a chance for us to work together as a community and make lasting changes in Nevada. We will continue to support the Deaf community and look forward to working with you to make our efforts even stronger.

We hope you enjoy today and once again...we thank you for being here!

Sincerely,

Dena Schmidt, Administrator
Nevada Department of Health and Human Services
Aging and Disability Services Division





NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

COMMISSION WELCOME



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Hello and Welcome D/HH Engagement Conference Attendees!

On behalf of the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, we welcome each of you to our second annual Engagement Conference! At recent town hall events we hosted across the state, the message delivered by our community was loud and clear. Deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Nevada are struggling. As a community we are still fighting for the rights of Deaf and Hard of Hearing constituents to access the services they need. Change needs to come to Nevada and that change starts with us all stepping forward by putting Unity in CommUNITY.

At this Engagement Conference we seek to unite, empower, and magnify the Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing message for legislative change. Becoming one voice by uniting our message of Access, Engagement, and Advocacy. To better empower you to carry this message of change to the 83rd Nevada legislative session in 2025. During this time together, we aim to bring all our community stakeholders together to educate, empower, and identify our common cause and find our common voice.

We thank all of the many community partners who worked to make this conference happen. We thank our allies who are joining us from across the US to help our cause. Most of all we thank you for committing to working with us at this year's conference and on to the next legislative session and beyond.

We hope you all have an engaging, empowering, and productive weekend with us here in our wonderful state of Nevada!



Warmest regards,
Eric Wilcox, Ph.D., Commission Chair &
Obioma Officer, MA, Executive Director

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

Engagement Conference 2024

The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) are “Putting Unity in CommUNITY” through advocacy for legislative and policy change on behalf of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. Our Deaf and Hard of Hearing allies including community members, state agencies, providers, local governments, and advocates are showing an increase in advocacy and desire to unite their efforts collaboratively to improve accessibility for D/HH Nevada residents across our state. We’ve extended this welcome to you as an attendee to be an ally in this effort or Putting Unity in CommUNITY! Your participation today will better equip you with the knowledge necessary to unite as a community and ignite a stronger presence in the legislative process for the 83rd session in 2025.

“Putting Unity in CommUNITY based Advocacy for Legislative Change.”

This conference provides Legislative Advocacy training to stakeholders and Community partners through a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Lens. The Nevada Commission for Person who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing or Speech Impaired are seeking to unite, empower, and magnify the Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing message for legislative change as it pertains access to Education, Medical Services (i.e. Mental Health), and D/HH Service Policies. This Community Engagement is in support of the Commission’s ongoing efforts to fulfill their state plan initiatives of Access, Engagement, and Advocacy.

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

Additional Things to Know

Need Information or Assistance?

The NVCDHH Planning Team will be wearing neon pink ribbons on their name badges and Volunteers will be wearing orange. Please ask one of them or come to the Help Desk if you need assistance.

Conference Evaluations

Please help us improve our events by completing an evaluation which will be available after each session, or a hard copy can be retrieved at the Help Desk throughout the day. Please note this will be available following sessions and through QR Codes posted throughout the venue.

Audio-Visual Equipment

If you are a presenter who needs assistance with the audio-visual equipment, a member of the NVCDHH Planning Team will be happy to assist you.

Navigating the Meeting Space

Please see the maps page to identify the location of the meeting spaces, restrooms, and exits.

Do you need anything?

Come to our check-in table or visit a volunteer for assistance!

Accommodations

CART transcription or AI transcription and ASL translation will be available during all sessions, breakout sessions, and panels. For any accommodations not requested in advance of the conference, please see NVCDHH Planning Team or a conference volunteer at the Help Desk to assist in an on-site request. Conference materials and PowerPoint presentations will be available on the conference webpage after this event.

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CONFERENCE INFORMATION

2024 Planning Team

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Obioma Officer, MA, Executive Director
Nevada Commission for Persons who are
Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NVCDHH)

Jaime Vitale, Commissioner
Nevada Commission for Persons who are
Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NVCDHH)

Catherine Nielsen, Executive Director
Nevada Governor's Council on
Developmental Disabilities & NVCDHH Vice Chair



ADARA

Laura Fussell, MRC, CRC, CPM
ADARA Board Member-at-Large,
Employment Specialist, & NVCDHH Commissioner



NEVADA
ADSD
Aging & Disability Services Division

Lora Turner, Vocational Rehabilitation
Supervisor - Transition
Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR)



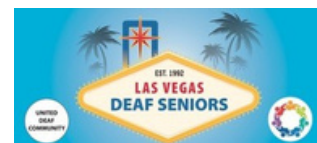
Lorraine Belt-Dolan, Admin Assistant III
Aging and Disability Services Division (ADSD)

Nathanael J. Officer Sr., MA, UNR Associate Project Coordinator
Nevada Special Education
Technology Assistance Project (NSETAP)

NSETAP

N Nevada Center for
Excellence in Disabilities

Shelly Freed, Secretary
Las Vegas Deaf Seniors (LVDS)



NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

Breakout Sessions 3-Track System

Our conference experience includes a 3-track system approach over both days of Interactive breakout sessions on Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Speech Impaired Access in: Education, Medical Settings, and D/HH Service Policy. Throughout our conference we offer Continuing Education Units (CEUs) outlined on page subtitled “Available CEUs”.

The 3-Track System general topics are outlined below:

TRACK A - EDUCATION

- 1 UNR/NSETAP Disabilities Assistive Technology Program (K-12)
- 2 Early Intervention Resources, Deaf Mentor Support, & Advocacy
- 3 D/HH Education Needs & National Standard Practices
- 4 Education BDR Concepts Workshop - Uniting the Message

TRACK B - MEDICAL

- 1 Mental Health Advocacy & Self Care
- 2 Medical Hospitality & Advocacy
- 3 Health and Wellness in Advocacy
- 4 Medical BDR Concepts Workshop - Uniting the Message

TRACK C - POLICY

- 1 Nevada Electronic Legislative Information Systems (NELIS) - What is NELIS?
- 2 Effective Communication Explained & Understanding/Applying ADA
- 3 Bill Draft Request & Legislative Advocacy *Special Legislative Guest(s)
- 4 D/HH Services & Accessibility BDR Concepts Workshop - Q & A

Please note: Tracks are interchangeable. Feel free to attend sessions that best spark your interest.

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CONFERENCE INFORMATION

Available CEUs

**Subject to Guidelines of Each Accrediting Body*

Registry for Interpreters for the Deaf (RID)

Sponsored by ASL Communications, LLC

Total CEUs Possible: 1.175 Professional Study

Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC)

Sponsored by American Deafness and
Rehabilitation Association (ADARA)

Total CEUs Possible: 7.5 General Category

American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE)

ACHE Nevada Chapter Endorsed

**Conference Sessions Eligible for Self-reporting*

Board of Examiners Marriage Family Therapists (MFT) and Clinical Professional Counselors (CPC)

Sponsored by NVCDHH

Total CEUs Possible: 1.5 Cultural Competency

Board of Examiners for Social Work (BESW)

Sponsored by NVCDHH

Total CEUs Possible: 5.5 Cultural Competency & 1.5 Ethics

Onsite Contact for Immediate Support & Questions:

Laura Fussell, MRC, CRC, CPM

ADARA Member-at-Large

& NVCDHH Commissioner

****See our Help Desk/ADARA Booth and Ask for “Wednesday”***



NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

SCHEDULE DAY ONE

12.13.2024 | 11:00am - 5:00pm

11:00am	60 MIN	Registration & Exhibitor Fair *Refreshments available in Centennial A.	ENTRY/HALL
12:00pm	10 MIN	Commission's Welcome, Opening Acknowledgement(s), & Housekeeping	CENTENNIAL A
12:10pm	45 MIN	General Session 1: Kick-off Ceremony - Timeline Check-in & Uniting the Message	CENTENNIAL A
12:55pm	30 MIN	General Session 2: Nevada Legislature 101	CENTENNIAL A
1:25pm	60 MIN	General Session 3: Advocacy Training	CENTENNIAL A
2:25pm	10 MIN	BREAK & TRANSITION	
2:35pm	90 MIN	BREAKOUT SESSIONS BLOCK 1	
		1A. UNR/NSETAP Disabilities Assistive Technology Program (K-12)	CENTENNIAL D
		1B. Mental Health Advocacy & Self Care	CENTENNIAL A
		1C. Nevada Electronic Legislative Information Systems (NELIS) - What is NELIS?	CENTENNIAL E

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

SCHEDULE DAY ONE

12.13.2024 | 11:00am - 5:00pm

4:00pm	15 MIN	BREAK & TRANSITION	
4:15pm	30 MIN	General Session 4: Keynote Speaker Introduce & Access Vine	CONTENNIAL A
4:45pm	15 MIN	Closing Remarks	CONTENNIAL A
5:00pm	END OF DAY 1		

***Please note:** Tracks are interchangeable. Feel free to attend sessions that best spark your interest.

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

SCHEDULE DAY TWO

12.14.2024 | 7:30am - 5:00pm

7:30am	45 MIN	Exhibitor Fair & Registration Available *Breakfast available in Centennial A.	ENTRY/HALL
8:15am	5 MIN	Welcome, Conference Overview, Announcements, & Accommodations	CENTENNIAL A
8:20am	90 MIN	General Session 5: Keynote - Inspirational Speaker [INTERACTIVE]	CENTENNIAL A
9:50am	10 MIN	BREAK & TRANSITION	
10:00am	90 MIN	BREAKOUT SESSIONS BLOCK 2	
		2A. Early Intervention Resources, Deaf Mentor Support, & Advocacy	CENTENNIAL E
		2B. Medical Hospitality & Advocacy	CENTENNIAL A
		2C. Effective Communication Explained & Understanding/Applying ADA	CENTENNIAL D
11:30am	30 MIN	WORKING LUNCH: HOT MEAL & NETWORKING	CENTENNIAL A
12:00pm	60 MIN	WORKING LUNCH: COMMUNITY PARTNER PANEL	CENTENNIAL A

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SCHEDULE DAY TWO

12.14.2024 | 7:30am - 5:00pm

1:00pm 5
MIN **BREAK & TRANSITION**

1:05pm 90
MIN **BREAKOUT SESSIONS BLOCK 3**

3A. D/HH Education Needs & National Standard Practices

**CENTENNIAL
D**

3B. Health and Wellness in Advocacy

**CENTENNIAL
E**

3C. Bill Draft Request & Legislative Advocacy
*Special Legislative Guest(s) in Attendance

**CENTENNIAL
A**

2:35pm 10
MIN **BREAK & TRANSITION**

2:45pm 90
MIN **BREAKOUT SESSIONS BLOCK 4**

4A. Education BDR Concepts Workshop -
Uniting the Message

**CENTENNIAL
E**

4B. Medical BDR Concepts Workshop - Uniting
the Message

**CENTENNIAL
D**

4C. D/HH Services & Accessibility BDR
Concepts Workshop - Q & A

**CENTENNIAL
A**

NV Commission for
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**SCHEDULE
DAY TWO**

12.14.2024 | 7:30am - 5:00pm

4:15pm

10
MIN

BREAK & TRANSITION

4:25pm

30
MIN

General Session 6: Reflection - 2024
CommUNITY Impact

**CENTENNIAL
A**

4:55pm

5
MIN

Closing Remarks: Wrap Up & “Next Steps”

**CENTENNIAL
A**

5:00pm

END OF DAY 2

***Please note:** Tracks are interchangeable. Feel free to attend sessions that best spark your interest.

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

EXHIBITOR FAIR

Day One & Two | Opening - 2:30pm

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NVCDHH)

American Deafness and Rehabilitation
Association (ADARA)

ASL Communications, LLC

Americansignlanguage.eth

College of Southern Nevada Deaf and Hard of
Hearing Services (DHHS)

ADSD - Communication Access Services Program
(CASP)

DETR - Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

Global Technical Communications (GTC) - ASL
Anywhere

Innivee Strategies, Inc.

Las Vegas Deaf Seniors (LVDS)

MyMMX DB

Nevada Black Deaf Advocates (NVBDA)

Nevada Care Connection - JFSA

NV Division of Emergency Management

NV Governor's Council on Developmental
Disabilities (NVGCDD)

NV Hands & Voices

NV Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (NVRID)

Nevada State University (NSU)

NV Statewide Independent Living Council
(NVSILC)

NV Telecommunication Equipment Distribution
Program (NTEDP)

Preston Bass Interpreting Services (PBIS)

Sammy's D.E.N.

State of Nevada Aging and Disability
Services Division (ADSD)

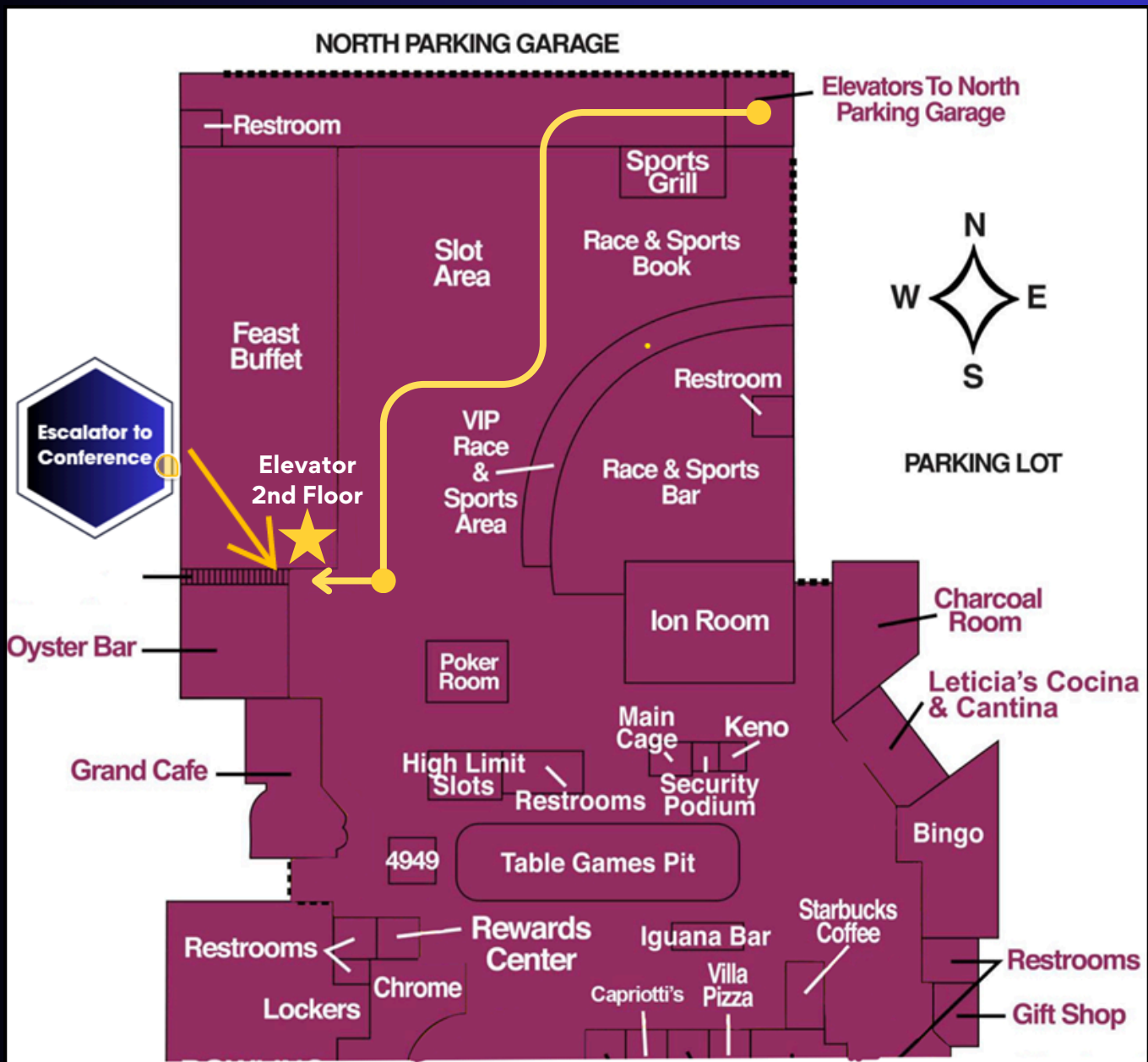
Sorenson Communications VRS

TIVE Technology, LLC

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

SANTA FE STATION CASINO & RESORT

Map



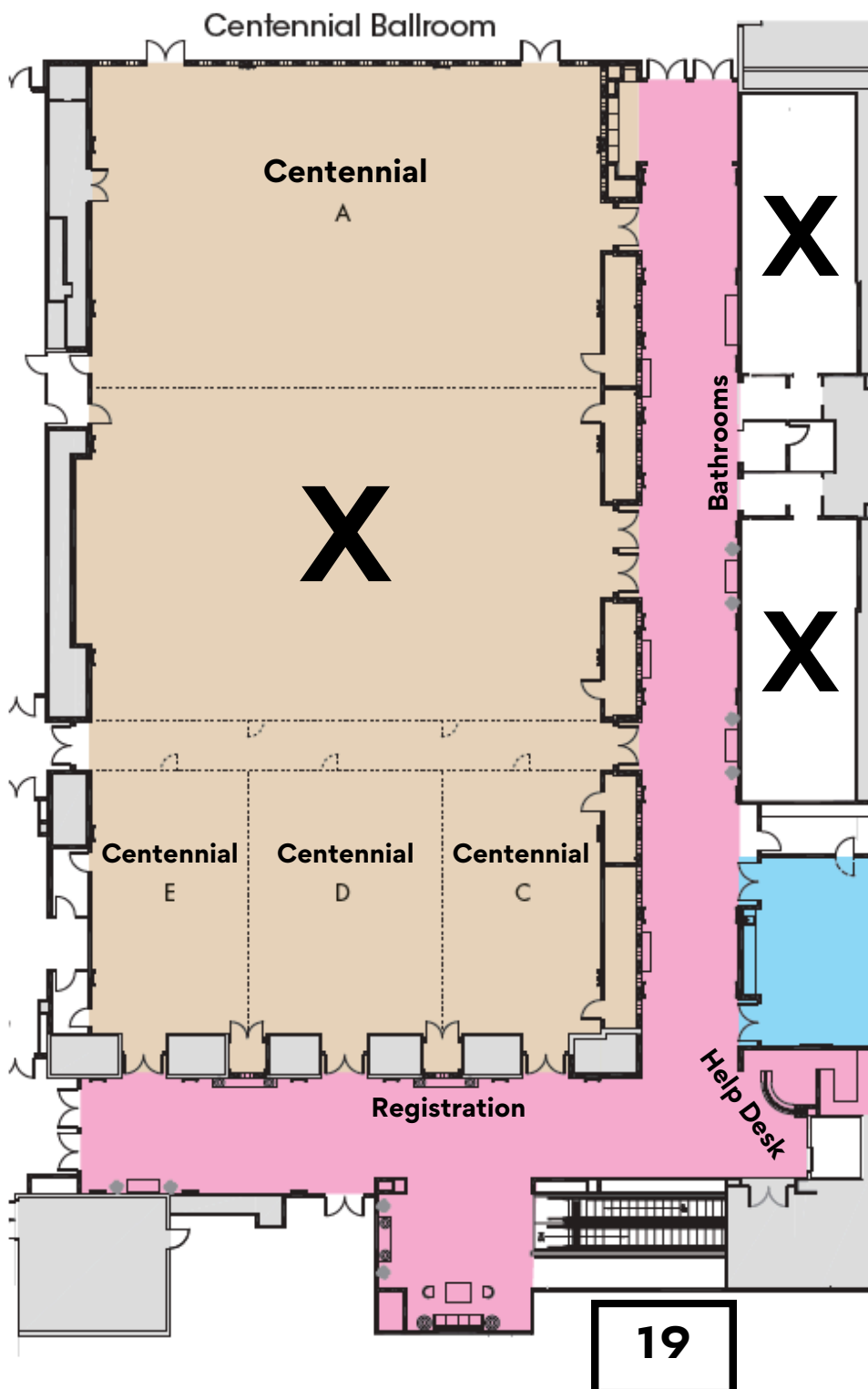
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CONFERENCE SPACE

Meeting Rooms 2nd Floor Map

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MAP KEY

Pink

Registration/ Exhibitor
Fair/ Help Desk

Blue

“Green” Room

Centennial A

General Session(s)/
Breakout Session(s)

Centennial C

Break Room

Centennial D

Breakout Session(s)

Centennial E

Breakout Session(s)

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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



DARRIN R. SMITH, MPA **Master of Ceremony & Accountability/Legislative Mentor**

Greeting, I'm honored to be here at the conference. I want to give you a brief introduction of myself. I'm Darrin R. Smith, a Maryland native born and raised in Baltimore. I am an alumnus of Maryland School for the Deaf, also an alumnus of University of Maryland University College (now known as University of Maryland Global Campus) – with a Bachelor of Art in History. I'm also an alumnus of University of Baltimore where I obtained my Master of Art in Public Administration, now a Doctoral Candidate for the Public Administration program. My abundant years of public policy, political involvement and community engagement has led me to many various opportunities; from serving on the various boards and commissions for the State of Maryland, to being a former political candidate that has developed a stratum of legislative relationships and political advocacy on issues that ranges from housing to employment.

"Education must not simply teach work – it must teach life" – W. E. B. Du Bois

SHANE FELDMAN, CEO OF INNIVEE STRATEGIES **Conference Advocacy Coach & Strategic Consultant**

Shane Feldman is the CEO of Innivee Strategies. He has over twenty years of exceptional and invigorating leadership that has impacted many national and local organizations along with their stakeholders.

As a nonprofit executive, he aligned associations to the expectations of their boards and members. These achievements came through systemic changes to policies, processes, and practices that resulted in significant increases in visibility, efficiency, revenues, accountability, and influence.

Shane received his Master's in Management and Certificate in Nonprofit Financial Management from the University of Maryland University College and was selected to the Diversity Executive Leadership Program in the American Society of Association Executives. He is a Certified Association Executive (CAE).



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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Inspirational Speaker

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AMANDA TUITE, CO-FOUNDER & CEO OF ACCESS VINE **Keynote Inspirational Speaker**

Amanda Tuite is the Co-Founder & CEO of Access Vine, an organization dedicated to promoting diversity and inclusion within the Deaf community. Access Vine aims to challenge existing perceptions and cultivate a more inclusive work environment through interactive workshops and ongoing dialogue. The company holds numerous state contracts, providing services such as Deaf and Hard of Hearing Resource Specialist Program, Deaf Self-Advocacy training, ASL Translation, communication access advising, assistive technology assessments, and advancement of employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Prior to founding Access Vine, Amanda worked as a statewide trainer for the Texas Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, providing technical assistance to agency program staff and stakeholders. She also has experience in the video relay industry and currently serves as the President of the Texas School for the Deaf Foundation. Additionally, Amanda has been involved with Deaf Women United, local deaf women organizations in Houston and Austin, and the Miss Deaf Texas organization. She is also a dedicated Cowboys fan who hopes for a Super Bowl win by 2030, with or without Taylor Swift!

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CONFERENCE PRESENTERS

CHEYENNE PASQUALE, MPA **ADSD Planning Chief I of Office of Community Living (OCL)**



Cheyenne Pasquale is a strategic planner and advocate focused on ensuring individuals have access to information and services that meet their individual goals. Currently, she works for the state of Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division as the Planning Chief. She began her social services career in 2001, working with individuals who had a traumatic brain injury. Shortly after that, she helped to start and run a non-profit organization that supported people in achieving their independent living goals.

Cheyenne began working in state service in 2011 as the No Wrong Door Coordinator. In this role, she was able to work with a variety of state agencies, non-profit organizations, and advocacy groups to strengthen efforts to help individuals navigate long term service and support options. In 2018, she began her role as the Planning Chief. Her team supports agency strategic planning efforts, working with the community and advocacy groups to help develop strategies and pilot innovations to address gaps in services. The work of her team primarily focuses on community engagement, coordination with other programs and agencies, and grant writing to pilot services.

Since 2018, Cheyenne has had the opportunity to participate in the Legislative process both during the session and during the interim session. She has developed an understanding of the cadence of the Legislative cycle, throughout the biennium and has a passion for sharing what she has learned with others.

OBIOMA OFFICER, MA **ADSD Executive Director of the NVCDHH**

Obioma Officer was born and raised in the East Bay Area of California. Growing up in a mainstream setting with hearing loss, diagnosed at the age of 8 with Auditory Processing Disorder, Obioma didn't begin signing until she was a freshman in High School. Graduating in 1999 from James Logan High School in Fremont, CA, Obioma went on to Ohlone College in Fremont, CA to pursue a degree in Deaf Studies. And now has a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in strategic leadership.

As a founder of nonprofit organizations, advocacy movements, and a strong background in executive leadership, Obioma actively utilizes her degrees to open doors in the community for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) community. Prioritizing full access for the D/HH and their families, while bridging hearing organizations to Deaf culture and D/HH community needs.

Currently the Executive Director of the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Obioma continues to strive to see greater attention and acknowledgement of the current needs of those who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Speech Impaired (D/HH/SI) throughout the state of Nevada while supporting and educating providers and community members with statewide resources.

Being a promoter of Deaf advocacy and awareness for over two decades, Obioma's personal mission is to seek equitable treatment and access for all within the D/HH/SI community nationwide.



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BREAKOUT SESSION PRESENTERS

Track A - Education



FELICIA RUTLEDGE, PH.D. **Director of Nevada Special Education** **Technology Assistance Project (NSETAP)**

Dr. Felicia Rutledge is an empowerment advocate for both scholar and adult brilliance. She attended Canisius College of Buffalo receiving a Bachelor of Arts in English and a Master of Science in Deaf Education. In 2017, Dr. Rutledge received a Doctorate in Education emphasizing Special Education Leadership. She began her teaching career with Clark County School District teaching a range of subjects in early childhood, elementary, and middle/high school education. She served as a Multi-Tiered System of Support Project Facilitator and state MTSS Regional Project Coordinator creating and facilitating state and district-level professional learning sessions and supporting school teams with academics and behavioral tiered supports.

Dr. Rutledge is passionate about her commitment to education and serving her community. She has written award-winning grants to support teacher collaboration time, provide scholars with community-based learning, and increase language, literacy, and communication skills. Dr. Rutledge looks forward to continuing her commitment to scholarly achievement, supporting families, human talent development, and implementing systems rooted in access, equity, and liberation as the Director of the Nevada Special Education Technology Assistance Project with the University of Nevada, Reno.

NATHANAEL OFFICER SR., MA **Associate Project Coordinator of Nevada Special Education** **Technology Assistance Project (NSETAP)**

Nathanael has been in advocacy since he was young working with his parent in various non-profits. He is an educator and father of special needs children. Much of his time as an educator was in special education classrooms where he gleaned from others with lived experience in the disabilities community. He learned American Sign Language and continues to develop his knowledge of the language and culture.

Most recently, Nathanael joined the Nevada Center for Excellence in Disabilities (NCED) housed in the University of Nevada, Reno as the Associate Project Coordinator for the Nevada Special Education Technology Assistance Project. In this role together with the Project Director, he services the Pre-K-12 schools throughout Nevada, performing assessments for Assistive Technology implementation, coaching educators, holding trainings and consortiums, and consulting those working directly with students who require assistive technology.

He holds a BA in Business Administration and an MA in Strategic Leadership, in addition to certifications in Behavior Intervention and other areas of expertise, along with years of experience. He is an advocate and ally as a member of Nevada Black Deaf Advocates and Las Vegas Deaf Seniors where he holds various roles and responsibilities officially and unofficially in social media, PR, and media production. He is active in the community attending town halls, legislative hearings, in addition to other social gatherings and events, preferring to work behind the scenes in support roles where appropriate.



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BREAKOUT SESSION PRESENTERS

Track A - Education

MELANIE SEAMAN, BA **ASL Professor at College of Southern Nevada (CSN)**



Melanie Seaman, born in Washington, DC, went to the Kendall Green School for the Deaf at the age of 18 months. Her family then moved to Germany; however, she move to London to attend a Deaf School there. Melanie's parents didn't want her to learn the language of Germany.

After 2 1/2 years, she and her family moved back to the US, setting in Arizona. There Melanie attended the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind until she graduated. Following grade school, Melanie attended Gallaudet University, graduating with her bachelor's degree, and currently teaches ASL Courses at the College of Southern Nevada.

Melanie has 4 beautiful children that she loves dearly and three of them are ASL interpreters, while her youngest daughter works for HOA. Melanie is also a proud grandmother of 6 gorgeous grandchildren that she loves very much.

SHELLY FREED, BA **Administration Certified Retired Principal of California School for the Deaf Riverside (CSDR) & Independent Contractual Educator**

Shelly Freed was a passionate educator with 25 years of experience of being principal, curriculum specialist and teacher. She held different positions at California School for the Deaf, Riverside Alumni Association for 14 years. Recognized Educator of the Year and Administrator of the Year with IMPACT and California Educators for Deaf. With being retired, she continues to teach Explore Your Future at National Technical Institute for the Deaf past three summers.

She was a board member of Deaf Centers of Nevada She has the passion working with deaf and hard of hearing children along with the adults in the deaf community to educate on what they need to know. Currently, she is a secretary of Las Vegas Deaf Seniors. She has been an advocate by participating in several community events and projects.



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BREAKOUT SESSION PRESENTERS

Track A - Education

KIMBERLY BAUER-SCHAUB, DrPH, MPH, BSW **Public Health Social Worker**



Dr. Bauer-Schaub began her professional journey as social worker focusing on medical services for children with specific health needs. She is experienced in school advocacy, early childhood development, and navigating healthcare systems. Dr. Bauer-Schaub realized the gaps in how agencies provide services and chose to pursue a Master's and Doctorate degree in Public Health with a focus on community engagement. Dr. Bauer-Schaub enjoys public health education and engagement related to children with disabilities. Dr. Bauer-Schaub is a graduate of Nevada Partners in Policymaking and serves on the Education Subcommittee for the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Dr. Bauer-Schaub lives in Las Vegas, Nevada, with her husband, Alex, and their children, five-year-old Ava and three-year-old William. Ava is identified with Central Auditory Processing Disorder and William has a speech disorder. Both children received Early Intervention services in Nevada and Dr. Bauer-Schaub continues to advocate for rights of all children.

TODD GARDNER

Long Term Substitute Teacher for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Preschoolers & SKI-HI Trained/Experienced Deaf Mentor

Todd Gardner is profoundly Deaf, which occurred at an early age of 1.5 years of age due to Spinal Meningitis. Growing up, his education involved a blend of public school (hearing school) and a Deaf school, California School for the Deaf Riverside (CSDR). As a former employee of Deaf Centers of Nevada (DCN), Todd became certified by Sensory Kids Impaired- Home Intervention (SKi-HI).

During his time there, he built strong relationships with several deaf children and their hearing parents. Throughout Todd's career, he has worked as a long-term Substitute Teacher for Liberty High School (HS), Rancho High School (HS), and currently works with deaf preschoolers, reflecting his never-ending aptitude for learning and knowledge.



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BREAKOUT SESSION PRESENTERS

Track B - Medical

ALANA SOLOMON, LCSW **Licensed Clinical Social Worker**



Alana Solomon, LMSW, CSW-I is a Las Vegas local who graduated from Gallaudet University with a Master of Social Work degree in May 2020. She is hearing and currently offers mental health therapy sessions in ASL and spoken English. Attending Gallaudet helped her understand the DHH community better and hone her ASL skills.

Alana has been a school social worker for 4 years and a therapist for 3 years. During this time, she has worked with Deaf clients from a wide range of ages and backgrounds. As a school social worker and therapist, her primary focus is working with teens and young adults. She loves to partner with her clients to advocate for them and guide them through their own self-advocacy journey. This partnership in self-advocacy helps clients realize that their future is limitless. This belief in themselves can even change a client's trajectory. It is Alana's goal to make sure that her clients gain the skills to actively & effectively advocate for their ongoing needs throughout their lifetime.

GRADY M. GALLAGHER, PH.D. **Psychological Associate**

Dr. Grady Gallagher is a psychological associate dedicated to helping adults navigate depression, anxiety, and trauma. Born Deaf and raised right here in Las Vegas, Nevada, he offers therapy in both American Sign Language and spoken English. Drawing from his own experiences as well as his education, Dr. Gallagher understands the diverse challenges faced by the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) and signing community in accessing mental health care and is committed to bridging that gap.

He earned his PhD in Clinical Psychology from Gallaudet University in 2023, deepening his understanding of psychology within the Deaf cultural framework. His clinical internship at the University of Rochester's Deaf Wellness Center provided valuable experience in offering empathetic and culturally sensitive care to DHH individuals. Now, as a post-doctoral therapist, Dr. Gallagher feels privileged to support clients throughout Nevada on their individual journeys toward healing.

When he's not working with clients, Dr. Gallagher enjoys a little bit of everything, from off-roading in his Jeep to playing Dungeons and Dragons with Deaf groups and immersing himself in fantasy novels. His commitment to mental health comes from a genuine desire to create more opportunities for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and signing individuals to access accessible mental health services.



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BREAKOUT SESSION PRESENTERS

Track B - Medical



SHARON HARRIS, MS, MFT, LADC
**Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Licensed Alcohol and
Drug Counselor, AAMFTV Approved Clinical Supervisor**

Sharon Harris has been a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in Las Vegas for 23 years. She has a private practice in Summerlin where she counsels teens, adults, and families to assist with depression, anxiety, life stress, transitions, and creating balance in their lives. She knows ASL and is happy to be able to offer direct services to the Deaf and hard of hearing community.

She will be discussing the seven pillars of self-care: mental, emotional, physical, environmental, spiritual, recreational, and social. Examples and ideas for how to nurture each type of self-care will be offered.

TIARRA ATKINSON, LCSW, CDP
Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Certified Dementia Practitioner

Tiarra holds a Sign Language Interpreting Certificate (Illinois Central College, 1998), a Bachelor of Arts in Family Life (Lincoln Christian University, 1999), and a Master of Social Work with a Mental Health Concentration (University of Illinois, 2014). She worked as a NAD certified interpreter from 1998-2003, then began working in the mental health field in 2001, first as an Intake Specialist, then as a therapist since 2014.

In the early years of her career, she worked in a mental health office where she performed initial assessments of client needs, verified insurance benefits, and obtained insurance authorizations to ensure services were billed properly. As a result, she learned how to navigate the complex mental health insurance system and is here to provide guidance on how Deaf/Hard of Hearing individuals can best learn and navigate their insurance to access needed mental health care.



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BREAKOUT SESSION PRESENTERS

Track B - Medical

FELICIA L. RUTLEDGE, PH.D. **Social Emotional Wellness Advocate Coach, Consultant, & Founder of Felicia L. Rutledge Consulting**



Dr. Felicia Rutledge is a dedicated advocate for wellness, creativity, and restorative practices, blending her expertise in education with a passion for holistic healing. With a background as a Teacher of the Deaf/Blind and a K-12 Project Facilitator for Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Dr. Rutledge has long recognized the crucial link between education, leadership, advocacy and wellbeing. Her career spans roles in supporting language and literacy development, as well as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), but she realized that wellness was often the missing piece in the landscape that influenced her focus to integrate practices into spaces.

In 2021, Dr. Rutledge embarked on her wellness journey, becoming Restorative Practices and Trauma-Informed Yoga along with a certification as a Youth Mental Health First Aid Facilitator. In 2022, She added her certification in 200-Hour Yoga and Wellness Facilitation. As a result, Dr. Rutledge integrates these wellness practices with education, offering spaces where participants can explore healing through yoga, breathing exercises, meditation, visualization, journaling, and restorative justice. Dr. Rutledge's sessions encourage the use of imagination as a powerful tool for personal liberation and healing, reinforcing the connection between creativity and well-being.

She continues her commitment to learner brilliance, supporting families, human talent development, and implementing systems rooted in humanity, wellness, equity, and liberation.

UVETTE FRANCIS, BS, MHA, MS **ACHE DE&I Committee Chair & Board Member**

Uvette Francis is the chair of the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion committee for ACHE Nevada. Uvette works on fostering DEI through her organization and developing partnerships with community organizations to address healthcare disparities and inform healthcare leaders of community needs. ACHE Nevada is a professional membership society for healthcare leaders in Nevada. This organization cultivates a tradition of education, professional development, ethics, and excellence in leadership among its members. ACHE Nevada and Uvette's role is to ensure patients feel seen, heard, and valued through education and information sharing. She is an active chair and board member with ACHE Nevada and is passionate about advocating for improved accessibility and inclusivity to care.

Mrs. Francis holds a Master's degree in Healthcare Administration (MHA) from Abilene Christian University, a Master's degree in Secondary Education (MS) from Nova Southeastern University, and a BS in Healthcare Administration from the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. She is also exploring opportunities to enroll in a doctorate program to further her education. Uvette enjoys spending time with her husband, adult children, and dogs. In addition to her advocacy work, she has interests in reading, circuit training, anime, and puzzles.



NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

BREAKOUT SESSION PRESENTERS

Track B - Medical

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COREY AXELROD, MBA Founder & CEO of 2axend



Corey Axelrod, MBA, is the founder and CEO of 2axend, a Deaf-owned strategic consulting and training firm working with organizations to provide user-centric experiences to Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Corey is sought after as a consultant, thought leader, and trainer to organizations in the education, healthcare, healthcare education, government and language services industries on issues of communication accessibility, inclusive organizational design, unconscious bias, risk management, and Deaf awareness and cultural humility.

Prior to founding 2axend, Axelrod served in several business development roles for Communication Service for the Deaf, as well as principal and digital marketing consultant for Synergetic Business Solutions, digital marketing coordinator for Purple Communications and director of marketing and business development for Hager Productions. Axelrod earned his Master of Business Administration (MBA) with a concentration in marketing and sales management and his Bachelor of Science in business administration from the Rochester Institute of Technology.

Corey currently serves as a member of the ASTM International F43.06 Subcommittee on Captioning Standards. Corey is a past three-term president of the Illinois Association of the Deaf, Illinois' leading civil rights organization of, by and for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Illinoisans. He has also served as a member of the Northwest Community Hospital's Patient and Family Advisory Council, the Village of Arlington Heights' Commission for Citizens with Disabilities, Illinois School for the Deaf Advisory Council and Chicago Hearing Society Advisory Council. Corey is the proud recipient of several accolades, including the Knights of Flying Fingers Award from the National Association of the Deaf and the J.B. & Beatrice Davis Leadership Award from the Illinois Association of the Deaf.

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Track C - Policy

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CATHERINE NIELSEN, MA **Executive Director of NVGCDD & Vice Chairperson of NVCDHH**

Catherine is a person who is deaf in one ear and hard of hearing in the other, who was born and raised in Northern Nevada. Catherine previously served as a Commissioner in 2018 and has rejoined the Commission as of 2023. She serves as the Vice Chair and a member representing State agencies that serve the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. She is the Executive Director of the Nevada Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities. Ms. Nielsen has her Bachelors in Applied Behavioral Science, a Master's in Public Administration, and has served in the disability community for over a decade. She is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Arizona, pursuing her PhD in Philosophy in Human Services.

Catherine enjoys working with policymakers to ensure the voices of those with I/DD in the State of Nevada are always heard. She is a proud wife of a Nevada Army National Guard Veteran, who has severe Epilepsy. They share 3 daughters, one with disabilities and Type 1 Diabetes, and enjoy spending their time exploring all that Nevada has to offer! If she's not in the Legislature testifying, you'll find her outdoors spending time with her community.

ELIZA KRAGH, MS **Conference Advocacy Coach & Strategic Consultant**

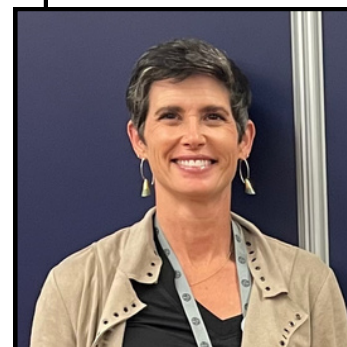
Growing up in Montana's valleys, Eliza Kragh has always been driven to challenge societal norms and promote inclusivity. Her educational journey, which spanned Polson School District and the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind, laid the groundwork for her future advocacy work.

With a BA in Liberal Studies and Psychology from the University of Montana and an MS in Human Resource Development from Rochester Institute of Technology (where she maintained a 4.0 GPA), Kragh has a unique blend of academic and professional expertise. After a successful career in Veterinary Medicine, she transitioned to advocacy work, leveraging her diverse experiences to champion Deaf rights.

Kragh is now pursuing a Deaf Studies and Social Justice certificate through Kansas University and working towards becoming a certified ADA coordinator. She is also studying to become a registered parliamentarian, enhancing her ability to navigate formal decision-making processes.

As the founder of Deaf Gain, LLC, Kragh has established a Deaf-designed statewide hub promoting understanding and inclusivity. Her roles as President of her local Deaf organization and Deaf Mentor demonstrate her unwavering commitment to ensuring the Deaf community is seen, valued, and supported.

"Kragh's vision centers on bridging communication gaps to improve access, inclusivity, and equality for the Deaf community."



NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

BREAKOUT SESSION PRESENTERS

Track C - Policy

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JACOB SALEM, MPA **Senior Policy Manager at Deaf Equality**

Jacob Salem serves as the Senior Policy Manager at Deaf Equality, where he leads the organization's state-level policy efforts for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled, and Late Deafened communities.

Before joining Deaf Equality, Jacob served as the State Legislation Manager at the National Association of the Deaf. His legislative training contributed to significant achievements across the country, including the re-establishment of state commissions for the Deaf and the passage of laws for open-captioned movies and interpreter licensure, among other key successes.

In his current role, Jacob oversees Deaf Equality's state level policy research and advocacy strategy, focusing on creating systemic changes that promote greater accessibility and equity for the communities it serves. He regularly collaborates with advocacy groups, policymakers, and state legislators to influence policy development, particularly in areas such as healthcare access, services for older adults, and mental health resources. Jacob also represents Deaf Equality at conferences, on advisory committees, and through presentations, consulting with stakeholders to advance the organization's mission.

Jacob holds a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Central Florida and an MPA from Gallaudet University.



CHRIS HAULMARK **Region II Representative of National Association of the Deaf (NAD)**

Chris Haulmark is a dedicated advocate for the Deaf community, bringing a wealth of experience from his diverse career path. His journey began in information technology, but a passion for Deaf rights led him to embark on a global expedition in 2015, visiting 50 countries to gain insight into the varied needs of Deaf communities worldwide.

In 2017, Haulmark transitioned into politics, initially aiming for a congressional seat before focusing on the Kansas state legislature. Although his campaign did not win, it showcased his effective advocacy skills.

As the Region II representative for the National Association of the Deaf, Haulmark plays a crucial role in combating discrimination and spearheading educational initiatives. His efforts break down the language, linguistic, and cultural barriers faced by the Deaf community.

For over four years, Haulmark has volunteered at the Museum of Deaf History, Art, and Culture in Olathe, Kansas. His docent tours, offering a profound Deafhood perspective, have become renowned for enhancing visitors' understanding of Deaf culture and history.

Haulmark has also made a significant impact as a vlogger, utilizing American Sign Language to foster connections and drive advocacy efforts. His ASL vlogs and global travels have earned him recognition as an advocate with an international perspective.

His extensive career—spanning technology, advocacy, politics, and community involvement—demonstrates Haulmark's unwavering commitment to promoting inclusion and equality for the Deaf community. This workshop serves as another platform for him to continue his mission of empowering the Deaf community and educating its allies.



NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

LUNCHEON PANEL

Community Partner Panel

Meet this year's Community Partner Panel Reps continuing the statewide discussions on "State and Community Resource Policy Change Needs and Legislative Initiatives."

Join us in this interactive CommUNITY discussion highlighting Deaf School needs of Nevada, Medical Communication Access & Hospitality needs, Statewide Closed Captioning Access in Public Spaces, and transferrable ASL foreign language credits in our schools.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.1 PS; BESW 1.0 CC

MC/HOST



OBIOMA OFFICER, MA
Executive Director of NVCDHH



ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED:

Hearing Loss Association of American Southern Nevada Chapter (HLAASNC)

Las Vegas Deaf Seniors (LVDS)

NV Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program (NTEDP)

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NVCDH)

NV Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (NVGCDD)

Special Guest: CEO of Access256 Productions, LLC & Rep for MyMMX DB

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

LUNCHEON PANEL

Panelists' Bios



BRYEN M. YUNASHKO, SPECIAL GUESTS **CEO/Founder of Access256 Productions, LLC, Northern America Distributor,** **& Operations Manager for myMMX db in Northern America**

Bryen M Yunashko is a DeafBlind business owner specializing in telecommunications accessibility, training services and consulting to organizations that foster communication access. He has served on numerous advisory commissions at the federal, state and local levels, including FCC, FEMA, and the iTRS Fund advisory Council, and is currently distributes the world's only fully accessible videophone for DeafBlind persons. Bryen is thrilled to be joining the Engagement Conference and supporting Nevadans in their goal to make Nevada an empowering experience!

Initiative(s): DeafBlind Telecommunication Access, Training, and Organization Consulting/Support.



CATHERINE NIELSEN, MA **Executive Director of NVGCDD & NVCDHH Vice Chairperson**

Catherine is a person who is deaf in one ear and hard of hearing in the other, who was born and raised in Northern Nevada. Catherine previously served as a Commissioner in 2018 and has rejoined the Commission as of 2023. She serves as the Vice Chair and a member representing State agencies that serve the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. She is the Executive Director of the Nevada Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities. Ms. Nielsen has her Bachelors in Applied Behavioral Science, a Master's in Public Administration, and has served in the disability community for over a decade. She is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Arizona, pursuing her PhD in Philosophy in Human Services.

Catherine enjoys working with policymakers to ensure the voices of those with I/DD in the State of Nevada are always heard. She is a proud wife of a Nevada Army National Guard Veteran, who has severe Epilepsy. They share 3 daughters, one with disabilities and Type 1 Diabetes, and enjoy spending their time exploring all that Nevada has to offer! If she's not in the Legislature testifying, you'll find her outdoors spending time with her community.

Initiative(s): Nevada School for the Deaf Needs Statewide Assessment/Study, State Resources, and Developmental Disabilities.

ERIC WILCOX, PH.D. **NV Commission for Persons who are** **Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NVCDHH) Chairperson**

Eric Wilcox is chair of the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing and occupies the seat reserved for a parent of a child who is deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired.

He is a past president of Nevada Hands & Voices, a support and advocacy group for parents of deaf and hard of hearing children and has been a volunteer in efforts to support families with deaf children since 2013. Eric works as an environmental scientist and lives with his family in Reno, Nevada.

Initiative(s): D/HH Education, D/HH Students and Family Communication Accessibility/Support, and D/HH Community Lead Initiatives of Advocacy for change.



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Panelists' Bios

LANCE LEDET

**HLAASNC Founder and President, NVCDHH Commissioner,
& ADSD NV Assistive Technology Council (NATC) Chairperson**



Lance Ledet is a lifelong advocate dedicated to securing disability rights and expanding equitable health access. As someone who suffers from profound hearing loss, spinal cord injury. Lance is a daily user of assistive technology. His lived experience has provided him with thorough knowledge of assistive technologies, both for his personal use as well as the role these technologies can play in the lives of others. To this end, Lance previously founded the Southern Nevada Chapter for the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAASNC) and serves as the organization's inaugural president, HLAA Team Leader in Nevada.



Lance was re-elected as Chairman of the Nevada Assistive Technology Council for the State of Nevada's Aging and Disability Service Division (ADSD) in August of 2022 to August of 2025. Originally appointed to serve as Nevada AT Council Chairman from 2020-2022. Lance was appointed in February 2024 as a member of the Nevada Commission for Persons Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Lance was Project Coordinator, started NCED's (NATRC) and (NTEDP) programs in Las Vegas Office in November 2020, to September 2023. Lance provided AT services required to more than 800 consumers during that time, held nearly 100 awareness outreaches. Lance recently started a nonprofit to provide Labrador Retriever Service Dogs to the hearing loss community in Southern Nevada. Lance is in the planning stages of creating an additional nonprofit targeting gaps in services.

Initiative(s): Accessibility in Government, Public, and Non-profit Service Providing Buildings.

LEE BULLOCK, BS NVCDHH Accessibility Subcommittee Member

Lee Bullock lives in Las Vegas nowadays. Moved here from Austin, Texas in 2020. Was born deaf, grew up in St. Louis, Missouri where I attended Central Institute for the Deaf. Graduated at Columbia (Mississippi) High School, received 2 B.S. degrees in Mathematics and Computer Science at William Carey College and University of Southern Mississippi. Worked as a senior systems analyst in Information Technology at Texaco and Shell Oil companies in Houston, TX for 27 years. Was selected as the Harris County (Houston) Disabled Employee of the Year in 1989. During these times, I spoke orally and read lips and started using ASL in 1987.

After retirement from Shell in 2003, I was a substitute teacher at TSD (Texas School for the Deaf) in Austin and worked for TASO (Texas Association of Sports Officials) and USAV (USA Volleyball) as a volleyball referee. During my adulthood, I was involved in several organizations, serving as officers in them and now, I'm a member of the board for LVDS (Las Vegas Deaf Seniors).

My hobbies these days are playing pickle ball and golf. I also love to walk and hike at different trails of state/national parks. Now I'm on the subcommittee for Aging and Disability Services Division of Nevada Department of Health and Human Services. My main focus is on accessibility for the deaf and hard of hearing. Since I have experienced great education, encouragement and support from everyone, I want to give something back to the deaf community.

Initiative(s): Airport Accessibility, Voter's Accessibility, and Medical Accessibility.

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LUNCHEON PANEL

Panelists' Bios



SCOTT YOUNGS

Senior Project Manager of Nevada Center for Excellence in Disabilities (NCED), ADA Nevada, Nevada Assistive Technology Resource Center (NATRC), & Nevada Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program (NTEDP)

Scott Youngs has been a trainer, educator, and advocate for individuals with disabilities for more than 30 years. He is a Senior Project Manager with the Nevada Center for Excellence in Disabilities at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Managing several different grants and contracts he provides statewide programs that promote an independent living model regarding accessibility, universal design, assistive technology, and telecommunication related services, to people with disabilities. He has served on several boards and commissions statewide over the years and is a tireless supporter of systems change that improves the quality of life of people with disabilities.

He has been a wheelchair user from an early age and participates in various adaptive recreation opportunities offered in Northern Nevada.

Initiative(s): Telecommunication Access Statewide and Assistive Technology for Deaf and Hard of Hearing



SHELLY FREED, BA

Administration Certified Retired Principal of California School for the Deaf Riverside (CSDR) & Independent Contractual Educator & LVDS Secretary

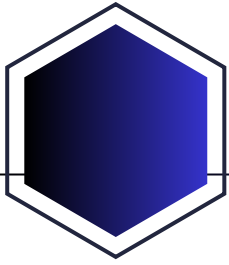
Shelly Freed was a passionate educator with 25 years of experience of being principal, curriculum specialist and teacher. She held different positions at California School for the Deaf, Riverside Alumni Association for 14 years. Recognized Educator of the Year and Administrator of the Year with IMPACT and California Educators for Deaf. With being retired, she continues to teach Explore Your Future at National Technical Institute for the Deaf past three summers.

She was a board member of Deaf Centers of Nevada. She has the passion working with deaf and hard of hearing children along with the adults in the deaf community to educate on what they need to know. Currently, she is a secretary of Las Vegas Deaf Seniors. She has been an advocate by participating in several community events and projects.

Initiative(s): Skilled Nursing Facilities, Deaf Center, Hospital Hospitality/Access, ADA Technology Access, and Public TV CC Access.



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SESSION OVERVIEWS

General Sessions 1 - 3

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GENERAL SESSION 1 KICK-OFF CEREMONY

CHECK-IN & UNITING THE MESSAGE

Presenter: Darrin Smith, MPA

Level of Prior Knowledge: Some

The overall purpose of this session is to help community members check on their overall progress in the legislative process. This session provides interactive activities and tools to ensure that participants can better support other community members that may want to work in front line advocacy or behind the scenes in furthering the goals of the deaf community in Nevada. As participants engage, the presenter will provide feedback with engagement tools that will be beneficial to the greater community for the long-term goals that are feasible and achievable. This workshop will also allow D/HH community members to communicate with the audience on various outcomes and challenges that they are currently experiencing while seeking feedback.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.075 PS

THE NEVADA LEGISLATIVE SESSION - 101

Presenter: Cheyenne Pasquale

Level of Prior Knowledge: Little/None

This session will provide a brief overview of the Nevada Legislative process from a citizen's perspective. This session will review how a bill goes from an idea to law, key milestones in the process, and ways for citizens to be involved.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.05 PS

GENERAL SESSION 2 NV LEGISLATURE 101

GENERAL SESSION 3 ADVOCACY TRAINING

SPARKING OUR COLLECTIVE ADVOCACY AND COLLABORATION

Presenter: Shane Feldman

Level of Prior Knowledge: Little/None

This workshop will empower participants to strengthen their advocacy efforts by fostering collaboration and consensus-building within diverse groups. Using practical examples and proven strategies, we will explore how to organize and align data to support advocacy goals, navigate disagreements constructively, and engage effectively with organizations and sponsors.

Through interactive discussions and case studies, participants will gain tools for fostering collaboration, amplifying individual voices, and achieving impactful results. Whether you're new to advocacy or a seasoned organizer, this workshop will help you sharpen your approach and build stronger, more effective coalitions.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.1 PS; BESW 1.0 CC

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SESSION OVERVIEWS

General Sessions 4 - 5

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GENERAL SESSION 4 KEYNOTE INTRO.

ACCESS VINE

Alone, we can do so little; together we can do so much.

Presenter: Amanda Tuite, CEO & Co-Founder

Level of Prior Knowledge: None

Access Vine is a nationally recognized firm led by Amanda Tuite, a Deaf woman dedicated to enhancing accessibility and inclusion for individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing. The company provides various services, including Resource Specialist programs in Texas, and training and consulting through government contracts. Notably, Access Vine collaborates with Deaf AI to implement innovative ASL translation for boarding announcements in airports and public transit systems. They also offer Deaf culture and hard of hearing awareness training to help businesses improve workplace culture and employee retention. Additionally, Access Vine holds several governmental contracts to do communication access advising to ensure that social services are accessible to Deaf individuals, along with technology advising that educates businesses about the latest assistive technologies for their employees who are deaf and hard of hearing. Through these efforts, Access Vine is committed to fostering an inclusive environment for all.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.05 PS

UNDERSTANDING YOUR “WHY” IN ADVOCACY

Presenter: Amanda Tuite, CEO & Co-Founder of Access Vine

Level of Prior Knowledge: Little/None

The "why" behind advocacy is not just about the issues at hand; it's about the deeper connection to the deaf and hard-of-hearing community and the desire to impact change that is due. When advocates embrace their personal stories and experiences, they inspire those around them to unite in a shared mission. Joining forces as a unified front will propel progress and guarantee that legislators gain a thorough understanding of the varied needs within the deaf community.

Strong relationships with legislators are built on trust, understanding, and consistent communication. Advocates should engage with legislators using tailored messaging that aligns with their priorities while clearly articulating the unique concerns of the deaf community. Your presence is vital in transforming advocacy into a powerful movement. Let's ignite the passion within us and inspire others to join our cause. Together, we can create a more inclusive and accessible world for everyone. Don't miss this opportunity to make history—your words matter!

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.15 PS; CRCC 1.5

GENERAL SESSION 5 INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKER

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

SESSION OVERVIEWS

General Sessions 6

GENERAL SESSION 6 REFLECTION SESSION

2024 CommUNITY IMPACT

Presenter: Obioma U. Officer, MA

Level of Prior Knowledge: None

The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and hard of hearing initiative to Engage the community has led to a revitalization of community and allyship. This session takes a moment to reflect on the year's activities with the Commission and Community Partners. Highlighting milestones that have led to renewed knowledge and awareness from a community perspective that has gained us access to "Unity in CommUNITY" as seen throughout this conference. Join us as we close our conference with a positive look into our future united as a CommUNITY uniting a stronger D/HH message for CommUNITY based Advocacy for Legislative Change.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.05 PS; BESW 0.5 CC

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

BREAKOUT SESSION OVERVIEWS

Track A - Education

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BREAKOUT SESSION 1A UNR DISABILITIES AT PROGRAM

MAXIMUM EFFORT:

WHERE AT, INNOVATION, AND POLICY COLLIDE

Presenter(s): Nathanael Officer, MA, Associate Project Coordinator (NESTAP) and Felicia Rutledge, PhD, Project Director (NSETAP)

Level of Prior Knowledge: None/Little

Join our interactive session and explore Assistive Technology (AT) with the Nevada Special Education Technology Assistance Project! During this engaging session, we will discover the intersection between state and federal policy with assistive technology, experience AT devices, and discuss how these crucial laws support Nevada's learners.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.15 PS; CRCC 1.5 CC; BESW 1.5 CC

DEAF MENTORING AND IMPACT

Presenter(s): Kimberly Bauer-Schaub, DrPH, MPH, BSW and Todd Gardner, Long Term Substitute Teacher for D/HH Preschoolers & SKI-HI Trained/Experienced Deaf Mentor

Level of Prior Knowledge: None/Little

Today's presentation will focus on the vital role of Deaf Mentors and their positive impact on families. We will also share resources for families seeking guidance or support in navigating challenges. Previously, I served as a Deaf Mentor for Deaf Centers of Nevada before its closure, and joining me today is Dr. Kim Schaub, a former Deaf Mentor family of mine. She will share her personal experience with Deaf Mentorship and Early Intervention (EI).

Since the closure of the Deaf Mentor program in Nevada, I've been working as a long-term substitute teacher at several schools, including Liberty High School in Henderson, Rancho High School in Las Vegas, and currently at Roundy Elementary. One key insight from my experience is that children who lack communication with their parents often suffer from language deprivation, which can lead to delays in reaching age-appropriate developmental milestones.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.15 PS; CRCC 1.5 CC; BESW 1.5 CC

BREAKOUT SESSION 2A EARLY INTERVENTION RESOURCES, DEAF MENTOR SUPPORT & ADVOCACY

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

BREAKOUT SESSION OVERVIEWS

Track A - Education

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BREAKOUT SESSION 3A D/HH EDUCATION NEEDS & NATIONAL STANDARD PRACTICES

DEAF STUDENTS' EDUCATION SERVICES AND STANDARDS

Presenter(s): Shelly Freed, BA, Administration Certified Retired Principal of California School for the Deaf Riverside (CSDR) & Independent Contractual Educator and Melanie Seaman, BA, ASL Professor at College of Southern Nevada (CSN)

Level of Prior Knowledge: None/Little

Deaf and Hard of Hearing students have unique needs that require individualized support and services to participate in the general education curriculum. Some national standard practices for them include assistive technology, instructional accommodations, interpreters, curriculum adaptation, environmental conditions, IEPs, Placement and vocational rehabilitation. Presenter will summarize the Understanding of Part B of IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Free Appropriate Public, Least Restrictive Environment, Procedural Safeguards and national standard practices for deaf and hard of hearing education. Panelists share their experiences with deaf education here in Las Vegas and few of them transferred here from other states, sharing their perspectives.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.15 PS; CRCC 1.5 CC; BESW 1.5 ETH

EDUCATION BDR CONCEPTS WORKSHOP

Presenter(s): Education Subcommittee

Level of Prior Knowledge: None/Little

This guided discussion will highlight the importance of community engagement in proposed concepts for Bill Draft Requests (BDR). Throughout out this conference each session has built a narrative of need and resolution for every topic shared. Utilized those narratives and interactive sessions, join the effort to develop a united CommUNITY based concept of need and resolution to the educational accessibility needs of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and Deaf-plus communities and the needs for a Nevada School for the Deaf study and more.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.15 PS; CRCC 1.5

BREAKOUT SESSION 4A EDUCATION BDR CONCEPTS WORKSHOP - UNITING THE MESSAGE



BREAKOUT SESSION OVERVIEWS

Track B - Medical

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BREAKOUT SESSION 1B MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY & SELF CARE

STAND UP!

UNDERSTANDING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING COMMUNITY

Presenter(s): ASL Accessible Therapist - Grady M. Gallagher, Ph.D., Psychological Associate; Sharon Harris, MS, MFT, LADC, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, AAMFT Approved Clinical Supervisor; Tierra Atkinson, LCSW, CDP, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Certified Dementia Practitioner; & Alana Solomon, LCSW, Licensed Clinical Social Worker

Level of Prior Knowledge: None/Little

This presentation will provide an overview of what mental health is, what an individual can expect from therapy, and benefits from participating in mental health therapy. Additionally, attendees will learn necessary skills to navigate the challenges of locating a therapist that will meet an individual's clinical and language access needs, identify strategies to assert and advocate for one's specific needs, and explore pillars of self-care to take an empowered role in one's mental health.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.15 PS; CRCC 1.5 CC; MFT/CPC 1.5; BESW 1.5 CC; ACHE 1.0 (Self-reporting)

DRIVING ADVOCACY AND SYSTEMIC CHANGE IN HEALTHCARE

Presenter(s): Corey Axelrod, MBA and Uvette Francis, BS, MHA, MS

Level of Prior Knowledge: None/Little

This presentation will highlight the importance community engagement in advocating for systemic and healthcare accessibility. We will discuss best practices, how to navigate hospital systems, and participate in decision-making processes. By fostering community involvement, we can work together to achieve meaningful change and improve healthcare access for signing and non-signing Deaf, DeafBlind and hard of hearing individuals.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.15 PS; CRCC 1.5; BESW 1.5 CC; ACHE 1.0 (Self-reporting)

BREAKOUT SESSION 2B MEDICAL HOSPITALITY & ADVOCACY



BREAKOUT SESSION OVERVIEWS

Track B - Medical

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BREAKOUT SESSION 3B HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN ADVOCACY

JUST JOYOUS ADVOCACY: HONORING OUR HUMANITY

Presenter(s): Felicia L. Rutledge, Ph.D., Social Emotional Wellness Advocate
Coach, Consultant, & Founder of Felicia L. Rutledge Consulting

Level of Prior Knowledge: None/Little

Join Dr. Felicia Rutledge, Inclusive Education and Wellness Advocate, for an immersive and interactive session for leaders and advocates. "Just Joyous Advocacy: Honoring Our Humanity" explores the synergy between wellness, justice, and dreaming, equipping participants with joyous wellness practices and blueprints tailored to the unique challenges of advocacy and leadership.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.15 PS; CRCC 1.5 CC; BESW 1.5 CC; ACHE 1.0 (Self-reporting)

MEDICAL BDR CONCEPTS WORKSHOP

Presenter(s): Accessibility Subcommittee

Level of Prior Knowledge: None/Little

This guided discussion will highlight the importance of community engagement in proposed concepts for Bill Draft Requests (BDR). Throughout out this conference each session has built a narrative of need and resolution for every topic shared. Utilized those narratives and interactive sessions, join the effort to develop a united CommUNITY based concept of need and resolution to the medical accessibility needs of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and Deaf-plus communities.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.15 PS; CRCC 1.5; BESW 1.5 CC; ACHE 1.0 (Self-reporting)

BREAKOUT SESSION 4B MEDICAL BDR CONCEPTS WORKSHOP - UNITING THE MESSAGE

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

BREAKOUT SESSION OVERVIEWS

Track C - Policy

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BREAKOUT SESSION 1C NEVADA ELECTRONIC LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION SYSTEMS (NELIS)

NEVADA ELECTRONIC LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION SYSTEMS (NELIS) - WHAT IS NELIS?

Presenter(s): Catherine Nielsen, MA, Executive Director of NVGCDD
& Vice Chairperson of NVCDHH

Level of Prior Knowledge: None

This presentation will take you through the Legislative process from start to finish. This will include information on how to navigate and find potential bills, important information on their history through the Nevada Electronic Legislative, Information Systems (NELIS). This includes how to interact with Legislators and members of Congress on both a State and Federal level. This will also include important information for the 2025 Nevada Legislative Session.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.15 PS; CRCC 1.5 CC

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION EXPLAINED

Presenter(s): Eliza Kragh, MS

Level of Prior Knowledge: Little/None

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires effective communication between individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing and service providers, businesses, and government agencies. Effective communication ensures equal access to information, goods, and services. It involves providing communication methods that are accessible and understandable to the individual, such as American Sign Language (ASL), written notes, or visual displays. The goal is to ensure that individuals can participate fully and independently in all aspects of life. Understanding effective communication under the ADA is crucial for Deaf individuals to navigate everyday situations, including education, employment, healthcare, and civic engagement.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.15 PS; CRCC 1.5 CC; BESW 1.5 CC

BREAKOUT SESSION 2C EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION EXPLAINED & UNDERSTANDING/APPLYING ADA

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

BREAKOUT SESSION OVERVIEWS

Track C - Policy

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BREAKOUT SESSION 3C BILL DRAFT REQUEST & LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

LEGISLATIVE CRASH COURSE: UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS

Presenter(s): Jacob Salem, MPA, Senior Policy Manager, Deaf Equality

Level of Prior Knowledge: Little/None

This interactive workshop provides an introduction to legislative advocacy, focusing on understanding how bills are created, amended, and passed into law. Participants will explore effective communication strategies for engaging lawmakers and learn to leverage their own experiences to influence policy.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.15 PS; CRCC 1.5 CC

D/HH SERVICES & ACCESSIBILITY BDR CONCEPTS WORKSHOP - Q & A

Presenter(s): Chris Haulmark, Region II Representative of
National Association of the Deaf (NAD)

Level of Prior Knowledge: Little/None

This presentation will provide an overview of what mental health is, what an individual can expect from therapy, and benefits from participating in mental health therapy. Additionally, attendees will learn necessary skills to navigate the challenges of locating a therapist that will meet an individual's clinical and language access needs, identify strategies to assert and advocate for one's specific needs, and explore pillars of self-care to take an empowered role in one's mental health.

CEUS AVAILABLE: RID/NIC 0.15 PS; CRCC 1.5 CC

BREAKOUT SESSION 4C D/HH SERVICES & ACCESSIBILITY BDR CONCEPTS WORKSHOP - Q & A

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

ABOUT US

2024 Engagement Conference Host

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Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NVCDHH)

The Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing is established to provide advocacy on behalf of individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Speech-Impaired, Deaf-Blind, and Deaf Plus. The Commission was established in 2017 to make recommendations to the state of Nevada and local governments concerning the services to these communities.

Created within the Office of the Governor, the Commission consists of members appointed by the Governor. The Governor shall consider recommendations made by the Nevada Commission on Services for Persons with Disabilities and appoint to the Nevada Commission for Persons Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Mission Statement

“The mission of the Nevada Commission for Persons Who Are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Speech Impaired: All Nevada citizens will have equal and full access to resources, services and opportunities in all aspects of community life.”

“The Nevada Commission for Persons Who Are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Speech Impaired will advocate for and support the goal that all Nevada citizens have equal and full access to resources, services and opportunities in all aspects of community life.”

Vision Statement

“All Nevada residents who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Persons with speech disabilities along with their families and professionals who support them have timely access to information, effective communication, education, and services that promote choice and independence.”

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

COMMISSION MEMBERS

Commissioners



**Catherine
Nielsen,**
Vice Chairperson
SEAT A



**Lance
Ledet,**
Commissioner
SEAT C



**Eric
Wilcox,**
Chairperson
SEAT F



**Eli
Schwartz,**
Commissioner
SEAT E



**Laura
Fussell,**
Commissioner
SEAT J



**Jaime
Vitale,**
Chairperson
SEAT H



**Susan
Beckett,**
Chairperson
SEAT I

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NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

COMMISSION MEMBERS

Subcommittee Members

ACCESSIBILITY SUBCOMMITTEE

- Betty Hammond, Committee Member
- Laura Fussell, MRC, CRC, CPM, Commissioner & Committee Member
- Lee Bullock, Committee Member
- Paula Koerwitz, Committee Member
- Thom Duva, Committee Member

EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE

- Eric Wilcox, Ph.D., Commission & Subcommittee Chairperson
- Felicia Rutledge, Ph.D., Committee Member
- David Kelsey, Ph.D., Committee Member
- Kimberly Bauer-Schaub, Ph.D., Committee Member

INTERPRETER SUBCOMMITTEE

- Alina Duncan, Committee Member
- David Kelsey, Ph.D., Committee Member
- Ehren Dei, Committee Member
- Jaime Vitale, Commissioner & Committee Chairperson

LEGISLATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE

- Eli Schwartz, Commissioner & Committee Chairperson
- Susan Beckett, Commissioner & Committee Member
- Catherine Nielsen, MA, Commission Vice Chairperson & Committee Member
- Betty Hammond, Committee Member
- Beth Jones, Committee Member
- Julie Gwin, Committee Member

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

COMMISSION STATE PLAN

NVCDHH STATE PLAN 2022 - 2027

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To address the critical issues identified within the NVCDHH State Plan, the Commission focus efforts within three strategic priorities: Access, Engagement, and Advocacy. These strategic priorities help to inform recommendations and serve as a guide for Commission efforts throughout the duration of the plan.

ACCESS

The Commission is committed to working with partners and stakeholders to increase access to services for the target population throughout Nevada. This includes:

- Effective communication access to priority services such as healthcare, education, employment, and other social services.
- Quality workforce of sign language interpreters, including certified-deaf interpreters (CDI), and captioning providers.
- Inclusion of appropriate accommodations during emergency situations and public meetings such as the Legislative session.

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COMMISSION STATE PLAN

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Engagement

The Commission's efforts are most impactful through the development of working relationships with a multitude of partners including state, local, private owned and public businesses to increase diversity and inclusion efforts. This includes:

- Continuous engagement with the target populations to improve efforts.
- Increase awareness of the target population and effective communication strategies among state and local partners, as well as other community providers.
- Building partnerships to increase the access and support of the target population throughout the state.

Advocacy

The Commission is deeply invested in advocating on behalf of the target populations in Nevada. Ensuring that all citizens are treated with equity, dignity, and respect is a top priority for the Commission.

- Evaluate policy decisions and program designs to advocate for the needs of the target populations.
- Increase awareness of the legislative process among the target population, including how to participate as advocates for themselves and the community.
- Coordinating with other advocacy groups to amplify efforts on behalf of the target population.
- Addressing the needs of marginalized communities within the target populations.

NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

THANK YOU

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SPECIAL THANKS

Aging and Disability Services Division (ADSD)

DETR - Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

Dolores Hauck of Hauck Consulting

Sharion Harris, MS, LMFT, LADC

Las Vegas Deaf Seniors (LVDS) Board

NV Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (NVGCDD)

Sorenson Communications, LLC

*Including all Engagement Conference Accommodations Team & Volunteers

"Putting Unity in CommUNITY"

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🌐 WWW.ASLCOMM.COM

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WE ARE ALL ABOUT ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION

Fostering an inclusive environment where deaf and hard of hearing individuals can thrive and fully participate in all aspects of society.



SCAN TO CONNECT:



WE OFFER



Resource Specialist Program is focused on enhancing communication accessibility, providing one-on-one advocacy and technology services as well as resources to navigate life as a deaf or hard-of-hearing individual.



The Employment Consulting Program assists the human resources and accessibility departments in corporations and agencies in becoming more inclusive and accessible for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.



Innovative Technology Solutions promotes accessibility through innovative technology, translating boarding announcements into American Sign Language (ASL) and providing captioning for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals to ensure equal access to information.



281-896-5331



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NV Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

CONTACT INFORMATION

An ADSD Commission

**For further assistance and/or future
engagements with the D/HH Commission,
please use contact information below:**

Eric Wilcox, Commission Chairperson &
Catherine Nielsen, Commission Vice Chairperson

NVCDHH Board of Commissioners

NVDeafCommission@adsd.nv.gov

Obioma Officer, MA, **ADSD Executive Director**

Obioma@adsd.nv.gov

Lorraine Belt-Dolan, **ADSD Admin Assistant**

lorrainebelt@adsd.nv.gov

**Interested in becoming a commissioner or
joining us for a future meeting?
Check out our Webpage for more details!**

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**CONFERENCE
SURVEY**

Please take your end of conference survey using the QR Code below or ask a conference volunteer for a paper copy! This is important for us to continue events like this in the future.

MANY THANKS IN ADVANCE!

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This conference is supported by the Nevada Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities through 75% of grant funds from the Federal Department of Health and Human Services; Administration on Community Living grant #2301NVSCDD and 25% matching funds appropriated by the Nevada State Legislature under NRS 232.320 administered through the State of Nevada Department of Health and Human Services for a total of an estimated \$40,500. The contents are solely the responsibility of the Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing and do not necessarily represent the official views of any other associated or supporting agency.

NGCDD



2024 Engagement Conference

