

# Annual Report

## 2023



**For State Fiscal Year July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023**

**West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
100 Dee Drive  
Charleston, West Virginia 25311**

Website: [dhhr.wv.gov/cdhh](http://dhhr.wv.gov/cdhh) Phone: 304-558-1675 VP: 304-400-6959 Fax: 304-558-0937

*WVCDHH is an office within the West Virginia Department of Health.*

The 2023 Annual Report for the West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WVCDHH) details the performance of WVCDHH between June 30, 2022, and June 31, 2023. WVCDHH focuses on issues of significance for deaf and hard of hearing West Virginians, with WVCDHH staff and board members working diligently to attain goals set by the strategic plan. Additionally, the staff strives to provide outreach, information, assistance, and training to anyone in West Virginia affected by concerns related to varying degrees of deafness.

## **Overview**

*The mission of the West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WVCDHH) is to advocate for, develop, and coordinate public policies, regulations, and programs to assure full and equal opportunity for persons who are deaf and hard of hearing in West Virginia.*

### **Background**

WVCDHH was established in 1989 and is committed to carrying out its mission, working statewide to provide opportunities through which the deaf and hard of hearing can participate fully as active, responsible, productive, and independent citizens.

### **Obligations**

Information: Collect and maintain information regarding education, communication, independent living, recreation, employment, health and mental services, substance abuse, and the services necessary to support the ability of deaf and hard of hearing individuals to function in society.

Interpreters: Provide services related to interpreters, mainly by establishing and maintaining a registry of qualified interpreters throughout West Virginia.

Outreach: Familiarize the public with the rights, needs, and services of deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Investigate: Investigate the condition of deaf and hard of hearing West Virginians to access currently offered programs and to recognize the need for the establishment of new programs.

Training: WVCDHH may establish workshops for teaching interpretive skills, in-service training, and counseling for the deaf and hard of hearing.

### **Staff**

Executive Director – Erik Essington – February 2022 to Present

Project Director – Sarah Lowther – April 2015 to Present

## Board Members

### Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community Representatives:

**Paul See** – Chairperson – term expires June 30, 2026

**John Burdette** – WV Association of the Deaf (WVAD) Recommended – term expires June 30, 2026

**Gloria Hollen** – WVAD Recommended – term expires June 30, 2026

**Roy Forman** – WVAD Recommended – term expires June 30, 2026

**Julie Shoeman** – term expires June 30, 2025

### Parent of a Deaf/Hard of Hearing Child:

**Gwen Bryant** – term expires June 30, 2025

### Professionals Working Within the Community:

**Dr. Nancy Gillispie** – Audiologist – term expires June 30, 2025

**Currently Vacant** – Otolaryngologist – term expired June 30, 2020

**Cyndi Shaver** – Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing – term expires June 30, 2024

### Ex-Officio Members:

**Angela Wilson** – West Virginia Division of Labor

*Designee for Mitchell E. Woodrum, Commissioner*

**Mary Anne Clendenin** – West Virginia Department of Education

*Designee for David L. Roach, State Superintendent of Schools*

**Rae Bates** – West Virginia Department of Health

*Designee for Sherri A. Young, Cabinet Secretary*

**Rachel Gill** – West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services

*Designee for Pisnu Bua-lam, Director*

**Mekell Golden** – Bureau for Public Health

*Designee for Dr. Matthew Christiansen, Commissioner*

**Regina Woodcock** – WV Birth to Three Program

**W. Clayton Burch** – West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Blind

**Dawn Embrey King** – West Virginia Advisory Council for the Education of Exceptional Children

## Meeting Schedule

| Date             | Location       | Members Present | Ex-Officio Present |
|------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| August 5, 2022   | Canceled*      | -               | -                  |
| November 4, 2022 | Virtual        | 7               | 4                  |
| March 8, 2023    | Nitro, WV      | 6               | 6                  |
| May 19, 2023     | Charleston, WV | 6               | 6                  |

*\*The August 2022 meeting was canceled due to lack of interpreters available for the meeting. W. Va. Code § 192-2-3.4.a states that meetings and activities held by the commission are attended by at least*

*two qualified interpreters who are hired at the commission's expense or provided free of charge by agencies, organizations or individuals willing to volunteer qualified interpreters.*

## **Strategies, Activities and Programs**

W.Va. Code §5-14-9 states that WVCDHH shall make an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature which shall include its recommendations and programs. Currently, WVCDHH has the following areas of responsibility:

### **Information**

*Goal: Maintain accessible information relevant to the deaf and hard of hearing communities.*

*Strategy: Provide educational information to the deaf and hard of hearing, their families, and the public. Develop an information clearinghouse.*

- WVCDHH staff distributes informational brochures to interpreters, hiring entities of interpreters and deaf and hard of hearing individuals regarding standard practice in the state of West Virginia, as well as the rights of individuals with hearing loss.
- WVCDHH provides information on social media and at events and exhibits to inform the public on Commission activities and programs.

*Recommendations: WVCDHH recommends purchasing new and current resources with the focus on improving interpreter skills and communication access for families with deaf or hard of hearing children to be added to the resources housed at the West Virginia Library Commission.*

### **Interpreters**

*Goals: Develop and maintain programs that support the interpreting needs of the deaf and hard of hearing in West Virginia.*

*Strategy: Maintain an interpreter registry with appropriate fees; continue interpreter task force meetings to solicit input and understand needs.*

- WVCDHH maintains the West Virginia Registry of Interpreters (WVRI). The Commission ensures that working interpreters within West Virginia meet a minimum qualification in order to provide the most appropriate and effective services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals who use American Sign Language.
- WVCDHH staff continues to revise and publish an interpreter directory containing all publicly listed qualified interpreters throughout the state. The directory includes information for hiring entities on standard practices for utilizing an interpreter when working with individuals with hearing loss. The directory is updated as needed to reflect the addition of newly qualified interpreters, as well

as the removal of expired credentials. The information in the directory is also updated to provide current and relevant information.

- WVCDHH is a Local Test Administrator for the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA). These tests are administered by WVCDHH at no cost to the interpreter, except for fees paid to Boys Town National Research Hospital for the assessment.
- WVCDHH regularly fields inquiries regarding the process of hiring qualified interpreters for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

A list of qualifications held by professional interpreters in West Virginia may be found below. Please note that some interpreters have multiple qualifications and are counted in multiple categories.

| <b>Certification</b>                                        | <b>SFY 2023</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Total Interpreters Listed                                   | 135             |
| In-state Interpreters                                       | 45              |
| Out-of-state Interpreters                                   | 90              |
| EIPA total                                                  | 37              |
| NAD certified, RID certified, and VQAS/State screened total | 118             |
| Interpreter Agencies                                        | 12              |
| <i>NAD Level</i>                                            |                 |
| Level V                                                     | 4               |
| Level IV                                                    | 6               |
| Level III                                                   | 3               |
| <i>RID Level</i>                                            |                 |
| NIC Advanced                                                | 6               |
| NIC Master                                                  | 4               |
| NIC                                                         | 31              |
| CI                                                          | 0               |
| CT                                                          | 0               |
| CI/CT                                                       | 24              |
| CDI                                                         | 0               |
| SC:L                                                        | 5               |
| <i>VQAS Level (transliterating)</i>                         |                 |
| Level IV                                                    | 0               |
| Level III                                                   | 19              |
| Level II                                                    | 7               |
| Level I                                                     | 0               |
| <i>VQAS Level (Interpreting)</i>                            |                 |
| Level IV                                                    | 0               |
| Level III                                                   | 11              |
| Level II                                                    | 10              |

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| Level I | 0 |
|---------|---|

*Recommendations: WVCDHH recommends the ability to outline repercussions for entities that hire an unqualified interpreter, as well as for interpreters continuing to work without meeting the qualifications outlined in W.Va. Code §5-14A. WVCDHH recommends the development of training to be offered to state agencies to ensure an understanding and familiarity with utilizing the directory, along with hiring and working with interpreters and individuals with hearing loss. WVCDHH also recommends funding opportunities to assist West Virginia interpreters in becoming qualified and able to register.*

## **Outreach**

*Goal: Attain high levels of citizen and stakeholder engagement and community problem-solving for the deaf and hard of hearing to familiarize the public with their rights, needs, and services.*

*Strategy: Utilize social marketing to promote the rights, needs and services of the deaf and hard of hearing through a Facebook page and other social media as needed; implement and maintain projects/activities that support the rights, needs, and services of the deaf and hard of hearing communities; assure the availability of accessible smoke alarms; maintain relationships with emergency responders to improve services to the deaf and hard of hearing; and identify, monitor and make recommendations regarding relevant governmental policies affecting the deaf and hard of hearing.*

- WVCDHH staff maintain a Facebook page to communicate with community members. This page is used to disseminate important and time sensitive information that may not have been accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing communities if not translated into American Sign Language.
- WVCDHH holds an annual Deaf Awareness Day in the Upper Rotunda of the State Capitol during the legislative session. Deaf Awareness Day was created to promote awareness of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. The event also allows for networking opportunities with exhibitors from various agencies, Deaf associations, and other community resources focusing on services for people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Late Deafened and Deafblind.
- WVCDHH hosts other events during the year as planning and budget permit.
- WVCDHH continues to distribute informational visor cards to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, along with all law enforcement offices within the state. The visor cards assist with communication when an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing is stopped by law enforcement. Since the project began, over 4,000 visor cards have been distributed to individuals and organizations, which includes law enforcement offices and WV Division of Motor Vehicle offices throughout the state.
- WVCDHH continues to manage the Accessible Smoke Alarm Project, for which ADA-compliant smoke alarms are distributed to deaf and hard of hearing homeowners. Information for recipients may be found below.

## ***Accessible Smoke Alarm Project Summary SFY 2023***

***During SFY 2023, WVCDHH provided the following smoke alarms to qualified West Virginia residents:***

| Type of Device                           | Number Distributed |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Standard Smoke Alarm - First Alert SA320 | 6                  |
| Strobe Alarm - Gentex 7139LS             | 6                  |
| Bedshaker Alarm - Lifetone HLAC150       | 6                  |

- WVCDHH manages a Telephonic Communication Device Loan Program (TCDLP) in which TTY, amplified telephone, and captioned telephone equipment is distributed to qualifying applicants. Loan recipient information may be found below.

***Telephonic Communication Device Loan Program Summary***

***During SFY 2023, WVCDHH provided the following telecommunication devices to qualified West Virginia residents:***

| Type of Device    | Number Distributed |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| TTYs              | 0                  |
| Amplified Phones  | 1                  |
| Captioned Phones* | 0                  |

*\*CapTel service in West Virginia ended after March 28, 2023. Captioned phones provided by WVCDHH will no longer function unless the applicant has high speed internet access.*

- WVCDHH fields inquiries from community members as well as the public on a daily basis. A listing of the nature of those inquiries may be found below.

| Type of Inquiry                                        | FY 2023 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Assistance Finding an Interpreter                      | 9       |
| Interpreter Registration                               | 20      |
| Equipment Requests                                     | 10      |
| Laws/State Code                                        | 4       |
| Training or Seminars (including interpreter workshops) | 15      |
| Visitors to WVCDHH                                     | 4       |
| General Information Requests                           | 17      |

- WVCDHH maintains a presence in the following workgroups, allowing the establishment and continuation of relationships with organizations supporting the need of deaf and hard of hearing individuals:

- WV Hands and Voices Board
- Newborn Hearing Screening Advisory Committee
- Access Functional Needs – Center for Threat Preparedness
- Pierpont Community and Technical College American Sign Language/Interpreter Education Program Advisory Board
- Disability Rights of West Virginia

**Recommendations:** WVCDHH recommends revitalizing the TCDLP to distribute more current technology to provide persons with hearing loss equal communication access. WVCDHH would also like to revitalize the terms of the loan program to ensure loan applicants are accountable for the equipment distributed.

## Investigate

**Goal:** Investigate the condition of the deaf and hard of hearing, prioritizing the aged, homeless, needy, victims of rubella, victims of abuse and neglect, group homes, and services for the multi-disabled deaf and hard of hearing.

**Strategy:** Every two years, conduct a meeting at the WVAD conference to gather information about the condition and availability of services; work with WVAD to schedule and hold town hall meetings; conduct a needs assessment to determine the needs and gaps of the deaf and hard of hearing communities; establish a workgroup to develop the needs assessment tool; disseminate needs assessment through a variety of channels; analyze data; and write and publish a report. Attend local deaf and hard of hearing events: each member of the WVCDHH staff/board must attend at least two deaf or hard of hearing events per year.

- WVCDHH staff attend various community events throughout the state.
- WVCDHH staff fielded complaints from community members. A general listing of the nature of those complaints may be found below.

### **Total Complaints for SFY 2023**

| Reason for Complaint                         | Count |
|----------------------------------------------|-------|
| Hiring unregistered/unqualified interpreters | 6     |
| Refusal to provide interpreter services      | 4     |
| Refusal to provide reasonable accommodations | 2     |

**Recommendations:** WVCDHH would like to establish a system to follow up with violating entities to provide guidance and education throughout the event of a complaint. WVCDHH will continue to create workshops to educate private and public organizations of necessary steps to comply with the ADA and W. Va. Code concerning the rights of deaf and hard of hearing citizens to allow prevention of future complaints.

## Training

**Goal:** Provide opportunities for continuing education and learning in the areas of interpretive skills, in-service training, and counseling.



*Strategy:* Provide at least two annual workshops or videos each year on topics identified in meetings or needs assessment. Conduct a minimum of two workshops annually for various public groups (hospitals, state agencies, etc.); work with Disability Rights of West Virginia and others to develop a plan for training the medical community; and provide annual professional development opportunities for interpreters.

- WVCDHH is a Certification Maintenance Program (CMP) sponsored through RID, which allows Continuing Education Units (CEUs) to be offered.
- WVCDHH sponsored CEUs for a workshop on January 14, 2023. The workshop was titled, "Defining Wellness in Older Adulthood." 0.1 CEUs were awarded for the workshop.
- WVCDHH sponsored CEUs for a workshop on March 28 - May 15, 2023. The workshop was titled, "Stepping Stones - Reflected Self-Assessment." 1.0 CEUs were awarded for the workshop.
- WVCDHH sponsored CEUs for the 7th Annual WV Interpreter Retreat on April 29, 2023. 0.6 CEUs were awarded.
- WVCDHH organized and sponsored CEUs for a two-part workshop held on April 15, 2023, and June 10, 2023. The workshop was titled, "ASL Interpreter Development" and was provided by Allisun Kale. 0.3 CEUs were awarded for each part of the workshop for a total of 0.6 CEUs.
- WVCDHH organized a workshop held on June 5, 2023. The workshop was titled, "ASL/English Key Concepts and Processes" and was provided by Christine Mitchell.

*Recommendations:* The WVCDHH recommends the allocation of additional funds for the WVCDHH budget to increase its ability to provide training/facilitation for various private/public entities.

## **WVCDHH Financial Report**

### **SFY 2023**

**Total Appropriated for SFY 2023:**

|                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| General Revenue | \$228,560.00 |
| Special Revenue | \$17,819.00  |
| Total           | \$246,379.00 |

**Expenditures:**

|                                      |              |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| Personnel                            | \$108,310.50 |
| Employee Benefits                    | \$34,231.24  |
| Employee & Board Travel              | \$4,735.45   |
| Reimbursement                        | \$6,340.26   |
| Professional Services / Interpreters | \$6,624.59   |
| Office Rent                          | \$10,728.80  |
| Office Equipment / Expenses          | \$1,632.82   |
| Rental Machines (Copier)             | \$1,978.36   |
| Association Dues                     | \$870.00     |
| Training/Development                 | \$875.00     |

|                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Total Expenditures | <u>\$176,403.14</u> |
|--------------------|---------------------|

|                                        |                     |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Uncommitted/Unexpended Balance:</b> | <b>\$69,975.86*</b> |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------|

*\*Due to vacancies in office staff throughout FY 2023, along with restrictions related to COVID-19, uncommitted/unexpended balance is higher than previous years.*

## **Acronyms**

|        |                                                                  |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AA/AAS | <i>Associate Degree</i>                                          |
| ADA    | <i>Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990</i>                   |
| ASL    | <i>American Sign Language</i>                                    |
| BA/BS  | <i>Bachelor's Degree</i>                                         |
| CDI    | <i>Certified Deaf Interpreter</i>                                |
| CED    | <i>Center for Excellence in Disabilities</i>                     |
| CEU    | <i>Continuing Education Units</i>                                |
| CI     | <i>Certified Interpreter</i>                                     |
| CI     | <i>Cochlear Implant</i>                                          |
| CMP    | <i>Certificate Maintenance Program</i>                           |
| CT     | <i>Certified Transliterator</i>                                  |
| DOP    | <i>Division of Personnel</i>                                     |
| DRS    | <i>Division of Rehabilitation Services</i>                       |
| EIPA   | <i>Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment</i>            |
| FY     | <i>Fiscal Year</i>                                               |
| LTA    | <i>Local Test Administrator</i>                                  |
| MUGC   | <i>Marshall University Graduate College</i>                      |
| NA     | <i>No Answer/Not Applicable</i>                                  |
| NAD    | <i>National Association of the Deaf</i>                          |
| OHRD   | <i>Organization and Human Resource Development</i>               |
| PERD   | <i>Performance Evaluation and Research Division</i>              |
| Ph.D.  | <i>Doctoral Degree</i>                                           |
| RID    | <i>Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf</i>                     |
| TDD    | <i>Telecommunications Device for the Deaf</i>                    |
| TTY    | <i>Teletypewriter</i>                                            |
| VP     | <i>Video Phone</i>                                               |
| WVAD   | <i>West Virginia Association of the Deaf</i>                     |
| WVCDHH | <i>West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing</i> |
| WVDE   | <i>West Virginia Department of Education</i>                     |
| WVDHHR | <i>West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources</i>    |
| WVSDB  | <i>West Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind</i>               |