

North Carolina Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Quarterly Meeting Minutes
May 3rd, 2024
9:00 am – 3:00 pm
Joint Forces Headquarters, Raleigh, NC

Members Present:

Christina Armfield
Linda Amato
Antwan Campbell
Kevin Earp
Michael Evola
Rebecca Freeman
Frank Griffin
Pattie Griffin
Betty Kelly
Greta Knigga-Daugherty
Stephen Latus
Mike Lupo
Randall Pope
Laurie Ann Rook
David Rosenthal
Donald Tinsley Sr
Rep. Diane Wheatley
Jennifer Woodard

Ex Officio:

Jan Withers (Present)

Liaison:

Kim Harrell (Absent)

Members Absent:

Kathy Dowd
Megan Pender
Neil Robinette
Daphne Peacock
Rep. Ya Liu
Dr. Claudio Pagliaro
Senator Bill Rabon
Dr. Robert C Nutt
Saarah Waleed

Current Vacant Council Seat(s)

Senate Appointees (2)- President Pro Tempore

Governor Appointees

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by David Rosenthal, Chair.

Welcome; Introductions; Ethics Reminder; Approve Minutes from February 2nd, 2024.

Motion #1: Donald Tinsley (Michael Evola) moved to approve the minutes from the February 2nd, 2024, Council meeting. **Motion Passed.**

None of the members acknowledged having a conflict of interest or appearance on matters listed on this agenda.

David Rosenthal, Chair, welcomed everyone and mentioned that today's meeting won't be streamed live. Instead, it is being recorded and will be shared on the NCCDHH website later.

**Report Updates:
David Rosenthal, Chair**

The report on the updates is the agenda portion we added recently to keep everyone aware of what's happening.

- **Session law 2013-19:** This is related to House Bill 317(testing children for language development, et cetera). The council asked DHHS and DPI to come together and establish a Common Grounds Group to review House Bill 317 to identify areas it can be improved and to ensure it is doing what it is supposed to do. DPI and DHHS have met several times and identified people to participate in the Common Grounds Group. We are currently inviting them to accept membership in that group. Due to the time pressures, we can only convene the group after the current legislative session ends, so we plan to have things ready for the next session, which begins around January or February next year. The Common Grounds Group will start meeting soon, around May or June.
- **Session Law 2023-10:** This is a transition update about DPI relinquishing control of the two state schools for the deaf and the state school for the blind to their independent board of trustees. We do not have an update directly from the involved people, but we have the report to the general assembly which can be found online. Much of the work that has been done was related to making sure that all the policies are updated to reflect the change. Three hundred seventy policies have been updated so far. Now, they are focusing on school administration transition, which entails many different areas such as:
 - Infrastructure of the school
 - Facility management
 - Insurance
 - Human resource
 - Legal
 - Policy
 - Business of school, including budget

They will get free training, advice, and consultations on many topics from the North Carolina School Board Association. Each school will be assigned a specific email address domain, and instead of DPI covering that, the schools are responsible for paying for their software within their budget. We will find more updates on what the Board of Trustees has been up to when the next meeting happens.

- **Council Members Terms:** the following Council member's terms expire June 30th, 2024.
 - Mike Lupo and Neil Robinette have accepted reappointment, and we are waiting for the governor to complete that process.
 - Pattie Griffin will be rotating off the council. She has been here since 2017. Thank you for your involvement and help over the years. You will be missed!

Ice Breaker Activity

David Rosenthal, Chair

It is a fun social and team-building exercise designed to facilitate introductions and communication among individuals who may be unfamiliar and help participants get to know each other and feel more comfortable in the group setting. Implementation of this activity will help break down perception barriers and create a positive atmosphere. I will state the questions (some might be personal, so if you don't want to respond, feel free to skip them). If you answer yes, please stand up and look around the room to find out who responds yes. There will be 50 questions.

Prioritization Survey Results

David Rosenthal, Chair

We have had many issues brought up during different presentations to the council; with COVID and the pandemic, many issues did come up at council meetings. I asked the council members to share their thoughts about the most critical issues in their area to focus on with us. We collected those and added them to our list; you can review the results in the PDF files below:



**NCCDH Prioritized
Issues DSDHH Respon**



**North Carolina
Council for the Deaf**



**NCCDH Prioritized
Issues DPI Respon**

We categorized them into four areas based on the urgency and importance of the issue. This process ensured that all the problems were reviewed, considered, and prioritized for action by the council. Categorized areas are Not Urgent or Important, Urgent but Not Important, Important but Not Urgent, and Important and Urgent. We identified the top six priority issues, most of which are in the Urgent and Important category:

- **Early Intervention** focusing on language development/deprivation for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind children from birth to five years old.
- **Video Remote Interpreter (VRI) Quality** in the hospitals during life and death situations.

- **Preschool Programs** for children between the ages of three and five who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deafblind.
- **Declining Teachers of the Deaf Training Programs** nationwide and in North Carolina.
- **Open Meetings** of local, county, and state government organizations where interpreters should be present, including caption access and CART.
- **Systematic Racism & Social Injustice** within the North Carolina Deaf community.

We will break into two groups for the day. Group one will focus on Early Intervention for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind children from zero to five years old. Group two will focus on VRI issues in hospitals, especially life-and-death situations. This way we can focus our energies on our top two issues for more effective outcomes. Please select one person from each group to report a summary of the group's discussions and outcomes to the full council later today.

[The Council broke into two groups at 10:30 a.m. and reconvened at 2:30 p.m.]

Summary of Group Discussions and Outcomes:

Group One Focused on:

- **Language development/deprivation for Deaf, DeafBlind, & Hard of Hearing children from birth to 5 years of age.**
- **Educational/Preschool programs for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing children from 3 to 5 years old.**
- **Teacher of the Deaf retention/shortage in NC.**

Group One Members: Linda Amato, Christina Armfield, Antwan Campbell, Frank Griffin, Pattie Griffin, Greta Knigga-Daugherty, Betty Kelly, Michael Lupo, Jennifer Woodard, Laurie Rook

Facilitator: Marcia Fort

Reporting: Christina Armfield

We identified a lot of overlap between those three issues, so we combined them all into one and came up with the following problems/needs, solutions, and action items:

List of Concerns and Issues:

- Lack of B-K/Deaf and Hard of Hearing dually certified teachers.
- Birth-3 years old services are not attracting parents.
- Services create more work for parents rather than meeting their needs.
- Parents are looking for guidance.
- Some service providers do not have expertise in the needs of Deaf/Hard of Hearing children and families.
- Services are scattered, and parents cannot easily access the community.
- K-12 students are often socially and linguistically isolated.
- Lack of K-12 Deaf/Hard of Hearing certified teachers.

Steps to Resolve These Concerns and Issues:

- Create a streamlined/straightforward process for Deaf/Hard of Hearing certified teachers to add B-K services.
- Streamline processes and make transitions easy across programs or create a unified program that meets the needs of B-Elementary school.
- Service providers should identify and suggest the goals and needs of young children.
- Provide parent education curriculum.
- Support DPI in creating regional and consolidated programs in public schools to consolidate services, reduce the number of teachers needed, and provide more support for students.
- Allow parents to enroll directly in school for the Deaf.
- Strengthen programs at schools for the Deaf.
- Consider developing a charter or “sister” schools for the Deaf campuses to serve siblings and children with Deaf parents.

Action Items:

- Requesting letter from DPI to get information about birth to kindergarten and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing teacher licensure.
- Request information from DPI as an Early Hearing Detection Intervention about part C enrollment process.
- Request a letter from DPI to get detailed information about the transition from part C to part B.
- Request detailed information from the schools for the Deaf about their preschool programs or the start of those preschool programs.
- Request information from IHE (Institutes of Higher Education) about surrounding education programs from UNCG and Gardner-Webb University.

Group Two Focused on:

- **Quality and Reliability of VRI in Hospitals**
- **All Open Meetings of Municipal, County, & State Governments provide ASL interpreters/real-time captioning and CART services.**
- **Systematic racism and social injustice within the NC Deaf community**

Group Two Members: Kevin Earp, Michael Evola, Rebecca Freeman, Stephen Latus, Randall Pope, Donald Tinsley.

Facilitator: Tovah Wax

Reporter: Michael Evola

As a Community Access Committee, we reviewed our topic and identified some issues and concerns that our Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind communities face in different situations. We discussed some solutions and decided on action items to share with the council to address them:

List of Concerns and Issues:

- Telehealth accessibility and communication access in healthcare systems.
- Outdated equipment is being used in hospitals.
- WIFI in hospitals is not strong enough for everyone to use.
- Empower and educate consumers about how to complain and who to contact to make a complaint with a provider. Also, how to request communication access.
- Training in healthcare settings is needed to provide effective communication and quality assurance to deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing consumers.
- Life/death emergencies and how to address or make decisions during the situation. Who will advocate?

Steps to Resolve These Issues and Concerns:

- DSDHH is developing partnerships with several large hospital systems, the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE), and the Association for Medical Colleges.
- DSDHH has established Deaf Deaf World (DDW) activities with a VRI station.
- DSDHH is establishing 8 new positions.
- Recommending a requirement that VRI interpreters be licensed
- DSDHH has developed and implemented strategies to work with healthcare and licensing boards.
- Need to look at the impact of lack of communication access.
- Currently creating a video on when to use VRI.
- Provide guidance on federal ADA rules and laws.
- DSDHH also developed guidance for using telehealth.
- Offer more training for interpreters and ensure they follow the code of conduct.
- Training and workshops in self-advocacy skills to empower consumers.
- Recommending driver's licenses includes communication access preferences.
- Encourage consumers to identify the power of attorney.
- Encourage consumers to document communication access needs and share them with healthcare providers.

Action Items:

- Write a letter requesting an update from the NCITLB to ensure VRI interpreters are licensed in North Carolina for medical situations.
- Review as a council the quality assurance guidelines for VRI set forth by the NAD, HLAA, and the ALDA and recommend that they be adopted.
- Make a recommendation that the driver's license law, which requires the deaf, hard of hearing designation on driver's licenses, be amended to include medical records and provide communication preferences.
- Communicate with our legislative members of the council to implement that legislative process and research medical databases in the state to see how communication preferences are stored.

- We discussed having language access collaborative, a new initiative from the Governor's office, to speak to the council on their work to provide those types of accommodation statewide and how we can support that initiative.
- There was also some discussion about potentially reaching out to the county Commissioners' association to see what avenues there are for developing resources for their members and providing accommodations.
- Broader discussion as a Council in potentially seeing the feasibility of changing the name of the Council and the Division to the North Carolina Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind, including the DeafBlind into the name of the division in the Council to have that representation in the name.

Council Feedback, Updates, and Wrap Up **David Rosenthal, Chair**

Thank you, everyone, for your patience and work. Thank you for addressing the issues and offering suggestions to serve our community better. Council members have the right to implement a working committee in between Quarterly Council meetings to study the issues, develop proper recommendations, and make a motion for specific action to occur.

- **Motion #1:** Michael Evola (Pattie Griffin) moved that the council adopt the action items mentioned by Group One. The Motion was **Carried**.
- **Motion #2:** Kevin Earp (Laurie Ann Rook) moved that the council adopt the action items mentioned by Group Two. The Motion was **Carried**.
- **Motion #3:** Write a letter to the secretary of DHHS (Department of Health and Human Services) to replace retiring Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and/or DeafBlind administrators with qualified candidates with hearing loss experience. The Motion **was Carried**.

Announcements:

- Kevin Earp is retiring in August. Congratulations on your retirement, and thank you for all you have done as a council member. You will be missed greatly.
- Jan Withers will also be retiring sometime this year. Congratulations on your retirement, Jan! Your departure will be a significant loss for us as a council.
- The name of Vocational Rehabilitation has been changed to **Division of Employment and Independence for People with Disability (EIPD)**.
- Michael Evola mentioned that he would send a follow-up email regarding the willingness of council members to travel to Morganton to visit the school for the Deaf and talk to the Board of Trustees about the school. Once we have enough council members interested, we will coordinate with the school for the Deaf to find out the best time to do that.

Meeting Adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

2024 Meetings: August 2nd, November 1st
<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/dsdhh/councils-commissions>