

North Carolina Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Quarterly Meeting Minutes

May 5, 2023

9:00 am – 12:30 pm

Virtual Meeting

Members Present:

Christina Armfield
Antwan Campbell
Rep. Carla Cunningham
Greta Knigga-Daugherty
Meredith DeNaples
Michael Evola
Rebecca Freeman
Randal Lee Hartline
Betty Kelly
Rep. Ya Liu
Mike Lupo
Dr. Robert Nutt
Daphne Peacock
Laurie Ann Rook
David Rosenthal
Elizabeth Strachan
Donald Tinsley Sr.
Hope Turpin
Saarah Waleed

Ex Officio:

Jan Withers (Present)

Liaison:

Kimberly Harrell (Present)

Members Absent:

Linda Amato
Dr. Kathy Dowd
Kevin Earp
Dr. Erika Gagnon
Pattie Griffin
Dr. Claudia Pagliaro
Megan Pender
Senator Bill Rabon
Rep. Diane Wheatley

Current Vacant Council Seat(s)

Senate Appointees (2)- President Pro Tempore

Governor Appointees -Parent of a Deaf or HOH Pre-school
child

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 3, 2023

Motion #1: Donald Tinsley (Michael Evola) moved to approve the minutes from February 3, 2023, Council meeting. **Motion passed.**

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

David Rosenthal, Chair

Welcomed everyone and introduced new Council member, Representative Ya Liu from Wake County. Greta Knigga-Daugherty, Laurie Ann Rook, and Donald Tinsley’s terms are up for re-appointment. Dr. Erika Gagnon reached her two-term limit, her replacement will be named and appointed by the Governor. Elizabeth Strachan decided not to be reappointed and we have a replacement for her. Randal Lee Hartline also elected not to be reappointed and we are awaiting recommendation for his replacement.

Update on Telehealth Accessibility

Tony Davis, Accessibility Resources Program Manager, of Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSDHH)

What is Telehealth Accessibility Guidance?

- Guidance/resources for virtual healthcare appointments to assist Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Deafblind patients
- “Learn More” on the [NCSDSDHH Webpage](#) Telehealth Banner
 - [NCSDSDHH Telehealth Accessibility Guidance Landing Page](#)

What Types of Guidance are There?

- Guidance
 - For Patients who identify as being Deaf/Hard of Hearing or DeafBlind



- For Healthcare Providers



- For American Sign Language Interpreters



- Resources (to name a few)
 - Your Rights to Communication Access during a Telehealth Video call
 - Setting up a successful Telehealth video call
 - What can you do help make your virtual health visit go well

- Resources for healthcare providers
- Communications Accommodations request letter - fillable letters to send to your healthcare provider -works with IOS, Android and PC's
 - Requesting ASL, close vision, tactile interpreters, CART, and ALDs
 - Can also be used for in-person healthcare appointments
 - Letter can be used along with a Deaf Advocacy letter created by the National Association for the Deaf – it explains to provider their obligation to provide accommodations
- Information on the Affordable Connectivity Program: it is a federal program that assists consumers to get a \$30 credit per month on their broadband data (internet or phone plan)
- Checklists/Factsheets (to name a few)
 - Pre-appointment, during and after appointment checklists for using telehealth
 - Amplification for telehealth, video conferencing and phone call - ways to improve
 - Tips for setting up a Webcam with little or no vision
 - American Sign Language Interpreters in Telehealth appointments: Interpreting on-site

How it All Started: DSDHH as a Pioneer?

DSDHH participated in the DHHS Technical Education Resources Workgroup focusing on telehealth in April 2020. This workgroup was led by the Office of Rural Health.

During these workgroup meetings there was a lot of discussion about health equity as it pertains to telehealth. At that time DSDHH started using the term, communication equity, in the workgroups. The term was new to the group but was a good way to draw attention to the communication needs of Deaf/Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind patients. DSDHH wanted to drive home the point that Deaf/Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind patients were not able to access telehealth in the same way the general population could.

It was recognized that very little guidance existed for the Deaf, HOH and Deafblind patients with a need to use telehealth.

Due to the large informational gaps, DSDHH met with the Office of Rural Health and their team. DSDHH learned Queens University in Charlotte was working on developing digital literacy curriculums for marginalized populations, and DSDHH wanted to partner with them. It was also recognized that great resources were being developed for COVID-19 for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind populations, but hardly anything was being developed for telehealth except for some guidance that was created by partnership between the National Association for the Deaf, Hearing Loss Association of America, other organizations along with notable individuals that included DSDHH Director Jan Withers and Dr. Robert Nutt. We recognized the gap in information for the populations we serve and their providers pertaining to telehealth accessibility. DSDHH had to start from scratch. Workgroups were developed, seven groups in total with twenty-four DSDHH staff members.

DSDHH staff was devoted to this project and worked many long hours. They collaborated with other healthcare professionals, the Office of Rural Health, and the National Telehealth Resource Center. The National Telehealth Resource Center had an instrumental role in the development

of the curriculum. They put together workgroups for reviewing all the materials to ensure that all the guidance materials produced were accurate as it pertained to telehealth.

Workgroups Focus

- Produce guidance that ensures the Deaf/Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind patients can use telehealth technology, and strategies to have successful appointments
- Educate healthcare providers to understand that patients who have hearing loss have the same rights to attend telehealth appointments as the general population
- Educate patients on their rights to telehealth communication access
- Develop a telehealth glossary for healthcare providers and patients to have common definitions related to telehealth, hearing loss, and accommodations

Challenges Encountered

- Limited Research
- Surveys - ensuring that surveys were accessible required time and expertise
 - Limited number of survey response produced limited results
- Limited materials previously produced
- Accessing Telehealth platforms and Patient Portals for testing
- COVID-19 priorities - DSDHH was focused on multiple projects to assist populations with hearing loss during the pandemic
- Staffing vacancies

On March 16, 2023, the Telehealth Guidance Resource website was released

Mid-Atlantic Telehealth Resource Center 2023 Summit

- Held in Norfolk, Virginia on March 16, 2023
- Tony attended as panel speaker
- Great reception to telehealth guidance and materials
- Several connections made, paving the way to potential partnerships

Next Phases

- Phase two (Ongoing)
 - Continue to improve, research, update and promote telehealth accessibility
 - Use the guidance to raise awareness and create modification of telehealth policy
- Phase three (Ongoing)
 - Develop video series to be added to guidance webpage
 - Collaborate with John Hopkins University to do nationally focused telehealth surveys

DSDHH recruits you to help us get this guidance material out. We need you to let us know what works and what does not work. This is one-of-a-kind guidance and has the potential to have a huge impact on providing accessibility for telehealth appointments for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind patients.

Update on Emergency Communications Access in North Carolina
Donna Platt- Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSDHH)

Next Generation 911 Vision: Anytime, Anywhere, Any Device

Communication technologies are rapidly changing and are often incompatible or outdated when it comes to 911. The use of the analog telephone system is slowly being phased out and transitioned to wireline/wireless Internet Protocols (IP). The transition from analog to digital technology is the reason for the term, Next Generation 911 (NG911).

Access Services to 911

- Direct
 - Voice
 - TTY
 - Voice Carry Over (VCO) - people with hearing loss who prefer to speak for themselves
 - Hearing Carry Over (HCO) people with speech disabilities who need to type their message to 911
 - Short Message Service (SMS)
 - Real Time Text (RTT)
- Non-Direct
 - Relay Services – registration is required with a preferred relay service provider (the caller's phone number and address are saved in the caller's profile) for the purposes of accessing 911
 - The call from a registered address will go through a national database that has 10-digit phone numbers for 911 centers to be routed to the appropriate Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP)
 - If the relay caller is not at a registered address, his/her relay call will be connected to a national database live then be manually routed to the appropriate 911 Center. The call will go to the administrative line
 - The caller will need to provide the location of the emergency to the relay Communication Assistant (CA). The CA will verbally pass on the location information

Different Types of Text Technology



TTY	Native SMS Text-to-911	Native Real-Time Text
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analog Voice Network • Baudot = slow • Requires turn taking • Limited Character Set • TTY not compatible with digital line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goes through TCC • Store and Forward • Delay or out of order possible • No location • Full Character Set 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IP Voice Network • Voice call with media (text, video) • Real Time = character by character • Provides cellphone location • Full Character Set + Emoji

- Real Time Text is considered a digital TTY. It is not recommended to use emojis when calling 911 and avoid abbreviations to avoid any miscommunication
- Steps for 911 to receive RTT
 - PSAPs must upgrade to NG911 network and call handling equipment technology
 - Native RTT must have solution in place before they can send a request letter to cellular providers to enable native RTT calls to function
 - Wireless carriers have up to six months to comply with the request to deliver native RTT to PSAPs

What is Happening in North Carolina?

- How Many Public Safety Answering Points are in NC?
 - 125 PSAPs funded by state 911 surcharge in your phone bill
- All PSAPs are available to accept text-to-911
- NC upgraded their Next Generation 911 system **except for one: Anson County**

Next Steps

- The 911 Board will be looking at ways to maximize the statewide Emergency Services IP Network (ESInet) to leverage NC911 capabilities
- The NC911 Board is reviewing requirements for requesting RTT to assist the PSAPs

National Emergency Number Association (NENA)

- Nonprofit organization that makes the 911 system work better
- NENA has 15 committees to develop guidelines and standards. They make recommendations and provide solutions and best practices for PSAPs
- Donna Platt is Co-Chair of the Accessibility Committee

Resources

- NENA Standing Development Committees
<https://www.nena.org/page/DevelopmentGroup>
- Communications Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council (CSRIC)
www.fcc.gov/about-fcc/advisory-committees/communications-security-reliability-and-interoperability-council-0
- NG 9-1-1 Institute
<https://www.ng911institute.org/>
- Congressional NextGen 9-1-1 Caucus
<https://www.ng911institute.org/nextgen-911-caucus>
- Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
 - [FCC RTT](#)
 - [Text to 911: What You Need to Know](#)

- [PSAPs and Text-to-911 Registry](#)
- [FCC Consumer Complaint](#)
- [FCC ASL Consumer Support Line](#)
844-4-FCC-ASL (844-432-2275)

How Can You Advocate

- Educate and assist consumers with transition from analog devices to wireless/wireline devices
- Refer them to Affordable Connectivity Program
- Educate consumers about RTT and SMS
- Letter to Government Officials & local 9-1-1 Authority on your communication preference
- Contact the State Office of Digital Equity and Literacy the need to add or increase high speed internet (broadband, cellular)
- Volunteers to help test TTY, SMS, and RTT

Where can you get emergency alerts and information?

- [County Emergency Management Agencies](#) (alert service, social media, phone number, website)

North Carolina is ahead of the game as far as comparison to other states. There are very few states that provide Text to 911 in every county.

Current or Pending NC Legislation Impacting Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing David Rosenthal, Council Chair

There are over 25 bills pending in NC Legislation with the potential to impact Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing North Carolinians. You can access any current bill in the state legislature by visiting www.NC.Leg



2023 - 2024 NC
Legislative Bills Imap

How many experts on Deafness do we have who are represented in our legislation? This is why it is important we be aware of and monitor what's going on in the NC state legislature. We can provide accurate information about how these bills impact persons who are Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened before they become law, so they do not adversely impact the Deaf/Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind community.

I will touch on a few bills I think are important for us to monitor. There are others I did not list, but you can find them on the legislature website. From the list I put together, a couple of the bills touch on parental rights to determine the upbringing and education of their children among other areas such as healthcare and mental health. We need to keep an eye on them and determine how they impact families with children who have hearing loss, including those with both hearing and vision loss. How does they impact the schools for the Deaf? This could be a topic for a future Council meeting.

Bills affecting education, healthcare, and mental health services are the ones we want to monitor. They have the potential to impact families who have Deaf/Hard of Hearing or DeafBlind children.

Some of the recommendations contained the *Issues in Education of Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf Plus Students in North Carolina: A Report to the Governor and State Legislature of North Carolina* the Council approved appear to be included in HB 224 and SB 227 relative to teacher license reciprocity across state lines.

HB 138, Failure to Yield to Blind Pedestrians/Penalty, impacts persons who are DeafBlind, and we should monitor the progress of this bill and make the DeafBlind population in North Carolina aware of it.

HB 142, Protect Our Students Act, is for your information. Unfortunately, we hear lots of stories about sexual abuse in residential schools. This bill updates the current statute for certain sex offenses against students and increases the penalties for failure of school administrators to report them to the State Board of Education. It also requires students in grades 6-12 In public schools to view age-appropriate video information about sexual abuse as recommended by DPI. This may be something the Council would want to investigate for recommendations as to accessibility standards such as closed captioning/signing videos for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students.

HB 361/SB 305, Require Report from Protection & Advocacy Agency, is another bill we as a Council should take an interest in. The General Assembly wants the agency to report on their activities, outcomes, and measures identified by the Agency for determination of successes, etc. The purpose of this bill is for the General Assembly to examine the activities of the Agency to determine the impact on current and future State Budgets.

HB 366, 369 and SB 184 and 202, Restores Master's Pay for Teachers and Instructional Support Personnel, Again, this is another one of the recommendations made in our *Report to the Legislature*. We are gratified to see this bill introduced and hope it becomes law by the end of the session.

SB 236, Modernize Audiology Practice Laws, was introduced by three Senators, there have been discussions in the Audiology committee on this topic. I think it is good that we as a Council are on top of these issues. This bill updates the general statutes governing the practice of Audiology to better reflect the changes in education, experience, and practice of the profession. The Audiology/Health committee will probably look at this and report back to the Council on what their take is, including what action we as a Council should pursue, if any.

HB 405, SB 694, Funds for Ready for School, Ready for Life, this is a non-profit organization that develops and provides a system of care for children prenatally to 5 years of age to improve outcomes and school readiness. Is anyone familiar with this group? If passed, they will receive \$4.8 million dollars in nonrecurring funds to support the building, testing, and improving of an integrated data system technology to enable care coordination, service monitoring, and outcomes tracking for young children and families and the government agencies and nonprofits

that serve them. They will also provide empirical outcomes data to facilitate decision making by policyholders. Do they include a category of children with hearing loss or disabilities?

HB 478, Support Students with Disabilities Act, if enacted into law, this Act establishes a program for local school administrative units to apply to DPI for ongoing extraordinary costs of children with disabilities. Again, this is one area covered in our *Report to the Legislature*. How can this program assist in improving outcomes of Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf Plus children in early childhood programs?

HB 556, Transliterators Licensing Board Modifications, we had two presentations on this topic in the past year. Hopefully they will be heard and passed out of committees soon.

HB 581, SB 652, Investing in North Carolina Act, this bill, if it becomes law, raises the salaries for teachers, state employees, etc. This was one of the recommendations in our *Report to the Legislature*.

HB 742, Requires Implementation of Text/SMS 911 for PSAPs, this is a bill we should follow closely as it is in the interests of public safety, especially with those of us who have a hearing loss. Donna Platt works closely with Emergency Access personnel at the state level, and we have a wonderful resource in her.

HB 825, Teaching Fellows Expansion, Again, related to a recommendation made in our *Report to the Legislature*. This expands resources and services available for teachers and students who are Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf Plus.

SB 493, Go Big for Early Childhood Education, this bill will appropriate funds for NC Pre-K programs and NC Partnership for Children, Inc. Pre-K education is another recommendation in our *Report to the Legislature*.

SB 558, Broadband Affordability Program/Digital Equity, this bill establishes a Broadband Assistance Program, and low-income NC citizens who are Deaf or DeafBlind could benefit by having high speed broadband services which is necessary for distance communication by video.

HB 833, Increase Minority Male Teachers/Program Study, Again, another of a recommendation made in our *Report to the Legislature*. The Education committee and the Disability/Diversity committee have had discussions on how we could increase the number of teachers of color who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in State and local schools serving Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing and Deaf Plus students.

HB 846, Funds for NC Pre-K and Smart Start, like SB 493, this bill provides funds for Pre-K programs. Could we advocate for tapping into the funds for Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing and Deaf Plus Pre-K children? Again, another recommendation from the *Report to the Legislature*.

HB 885, Sound Basic Education for Every Child, Touches on several recommendations in the *Report to the Legislature*.

It is gratifying to see that subjects of our discussions are in the legislature pipeline. What should we do, as individuals, to help advocate for them and ensure that teachers and students with hearing loss can benefit from these bills passing?

We need to pay attention when bills could potentially impact Deaf and Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind communities. As people who represent these groups, or those of us who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, or those of us who are professionals who support services in these communities or their family members, it is our duty to inform the legislators.

Feedback/Suggestions

From Council Member Michael Evola: add legislative tracking to our committee structure to review on going legislation or current laws that affect Deaf/Hard of Hearing of DeafBlind individuals.

From Council Member Christina Armfield – in agreement with adding this to committee structure and possibly have it as a running item on Council agenda

Discussion on SL 2023-10

This law creates boards of trustees with similar powers and duties to local boards of education, under supervision of the State Board of Education. The schools for the deaf and blind are not considered local school administrative units and are considered State agencies. The transition to the board of trustees will be effective July 1, 2024. In the meantime, DPI oversees development of a transition plan for the change of administration of the schools of the deaf and blind. They are to consult with the personnel and boards of trustees from the three schools on developing this plan and will provide interim reports to the State Board of Education and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by May 15, 2023, and December 15, 2023, with a final report by March 15, 2024. After reading this law, I have some concerns regarding the change in administration of the state schools for the Deaf and Governor Morehead School for the Blind. First, I want to hear from you on your thoughts on this new law, and what we should do going forward.

Discussion on SL 2012-119

We heard from professionals in our recent meetings regarding testing requirements, process, materials, data, and guidelines for state/public schools for students who have a hearing (and vision) loss. We also heard from DPI regarding state laws governing test data collection from Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing children across the state and what the data is used for. Some of you have approached me with your concerns about the tests themselves, test biases, how they are administered, who administers them, and the accuracy of the tests results. This seems to be a good time now to discuss them and come up with ways we can recommend updates of the law.

Motion #2: Dr. Robert Nutt (Michael Evola)

I propose a letter be drafted by the Council addressed to both DHHS Secretary and DPI Superintendent. This letter will recognize the presentation to the Council last February, applauding the effort to highlight the processes of data collection and utilization by LEAs, as well as the programs and resources that have been utilized to support Deaf and hard of hearing students. Review of the Law, as written, and considering the challenges of

utilizing the data collected (e.g., DPI cited heterogeneity in evaluation tools and incompleteness of data) that is meant to ensure monitoring of the education of deaf and hard of hearing students. This creates an opportunity to further strengthen the law based on lessons learned in the past decade.

This letter should recommend that the two departments (DHHS, DPI) take this opportunity to review and develop recommendations to further strengthen it, with the goal of having a bill introduced during the 2024 short legislative session. Through collaborative efforts to ensure integrity, thoroughness, and transparency, the two departments shall gather a cross section of stakeholders to review and develop recommendations and to present to the Council these recommendations at the November 2023 Council meeting. **Motion passed.**

Motion #3: Dr. Robert Nutt (Donald Tinsley)

Related to SL 2023-10 - Proposes the Council take action to work towards advocating for representation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing with lived experience member with voting position on the Board of Trustees for the two schools. **Motion Passed.**

Review and Feedback on NCCDHH Annual Report

David Rosenthal, Council Chair

Motion #4: Michael Evola (Donald Tinsley)

Council approves this document and shares with all necessary parties. **Motion Passed.**

Meeting Adjourned at 12:05

2023 Meetings: August 4, November 3

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/dsdhh/councils-commissions>