



Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

2012 ANNUAL REPORT

To ensure that the variety of life's choices and equal opportunities are available to all deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing people.



Wisconsin Department of Health Services
Division of Long Term Care

1 West Wilson Street, Room 558
Madison, WI 53707-7851

P-00468 (02/2013)

2012 ANNUAL REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Greetings from the Director</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Information and Referral</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Service Fund Update</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Wisconsin Interpreting and Transliterating Assessment (WITA)</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Central Office Updates</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Regional Updates</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Deaf Benefit Specialist</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>Mental Health Summit</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP)</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Wisconsin Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>What to Expect in 2013</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>Contact Us</u>	<u>20</u>

Greetings from the Director

It is my honor to present and highlight the accomplishments of the Wisconsin Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) for the year of 2012 (January 1 – December 31, 2012). This report provides valuable information about the work that ODHH does on a daily basis to reach out to the key stakeholders of the community that serves deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind citizens of Wisconsin. The question often arises “What does ODHH do?”, thus I present this report.

First and foremost, the biggest news pertaining to ODHH is the significant addition to staff. In 2012, we welcome the following; Nancy Harbison, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist for the Northeastern Region in January; Melani Kaplan, Human Services Program Coordinator in March; Tom Benziger, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist for the Southeastern Region in August; and Shawnee Thomas, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist for the Northern Region in October. With these additions, ODHH is functioning with a full staff for the first time in several years.

The last year saw additional transitions as ODHH, while continuing to work on employment issues, has begun to address improvements to access to mental health services. We also have maintained a busy schedule with multiple trainings on issues such as: the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Introduction to Deaf and Hard of Hearing issues, Hearing Loss in Later Years, and other issues targeted to the unique service provider needs across the state. Staff has provided free in-service trainings and served in a multitude of other capacities. Whether it is by providing information and referral services, consultation, or serving on committees, the mission of ODHH is being carried forward.

As many people are aware, the Wisconsin Interpreting and Transliterating Assessment (WITA) was briefly suspended this year to give the WITA Advisory Board time to improve the quality of the assessment process to better serve the community and the process for state interpreter licensure. A more “in-depth” look into WITA is covered in this report.

ODHH continues to help pay for interpreting or captioning services for qualifying entities through the Service Fund. ODHH recognizes the financial impact of securing an interpreter or a captionist, and in qualifying circumstances is able to pay the fee for these services via the Service Fund.

We hope you will share in our excitement and pride as we look back at all that has transpired the last year.

Sincerely,

Linda Huffer

Linda Huffer, Director
Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Information and Referral

One of the foremost tasks of the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) is information dissemination. ODHH fields inquiries on a daily basis regarding issues such as: the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), equal communication access, hearing loss, appropriate accommodations and telecommunications. As the primary contact for many entities across the state ODHH provides the information and referral services to assist on issues that pertain to deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind issues. ODHH seeks to stay abreast with the current trends in the community and to provide the community with the most up-to-date and accurate information.

Service Fund Update

ODHH understands the occasional monetary hardship of providing communication access for deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind persons in situations not covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. As a way of supporting members of the community, ODHH continues to provide funds for sign language interpreting services or real-time captioning needs through the Service Fund.

ODHH fielded requests from many community members and others. For those entities that are required under the law to provide communication access, our Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialists supplied the appropriate technical assistance and information for both the deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing community member, as well as for the entities required to provide the service.

Wisconsin Interpreting and Transliterating Assessment (WITA) Update

The Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has administered the Wisconsin Interpreting and Transliterating Assessment (WITA) for the past few decades and will be offering an improved assessment in the near future. Wisconsin is among many states to adopt a licensure requirement for sign language interpreters within the past few years, and with this requirement comes greater accountability. In Wisconsin one of the requirements for a “restricted license” is a current and valid WITA verification level of I2/T2 or above. The difference between a restricted license, also referred to as a provisional license by some, and a renewable license is that the restricted license does not require national certification and can only be renewed twice. The understanding is that by the time one’s restricted license expires and is no longer able to be renewed the

interpreter will have achieved national certification through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). We are pleased to announce that many exciting improvements have been made to ensure that candidates participating in the assessment receive the feedback needed to aid in achieving national certification through RID and in turn state licensure through the Department of Safety Professional Services (DSPS).

Every year students of Interpreter Training Programs (ITPs) graduate with the hopes of securing opportunities within the field to practice their newly developed interpreting skills. Recent graduates need an opportunity to work in a limited capacity with supervision and guidance from an experienced interpreter mentor in order to hone in their skills to prepare for national certification, in addition to taking a skill assessment such as the WITA.

With either of the two licenses one is able to work as an interpreter in a variety of community-based settings without the requirement of added supervision. RID offers a diagnostically sound assessment of an interpreter's ability to render interpreting services and can verify a minimum standard of competency, whereas the WITA was never designed to provide this type of assurance.

Through the licensure process, ODHH must verify whether or not interpreters who have not attained national certification possess the minimum skill set to work as an interpreter. Prior to revising the assessment process, the WITA could not provide the level of assurance required to determine whether an interpreter was qualified for a variety of assignments. The WITA was outdated and, at times, an invalid assessment of an individual's interpreting skills. Thus, it was no longer able to compete with the validity of a national assessment. The WITA assessment process was revamped to assure that an interpreter is qualified.

The WITA Advisory Board has diligently worked to develop a rating system that follows national standards and provides candidates with an overall assessment of Interpreting and Transliterating skill sets along with an improved feedback process from trained evaluators for continued growth of an interpreter's skills. Training for evaluators is an essential component of this process and will be completed by January of 2013.

The assessment price was increased to account for the components of this improved process. Candidates interested in the WITA assessment will now submit a money order or cashier's check for the amount of \$225 made payable to the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing with their application. Information regarding the WITA, the WITA scholarship and the application is available online at: dhs.wisconsin.gov/sensory/WITA/wita.htm.

Central Office Updates

While much of the work of ODHH is done throughout the state by our Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialists in their various regions, there is also work happening at the Department of Health Services (DHS) building located in Madison, WI. Housed within the Central Office are the positions of: Office Director (Linda Huffer), Human Services Programs/Council (Melani Kaplan), Staff Interpreter (Amber Mullett) and another Staff Interpreter (Chantel Young) whose time is divided amongst several offices. Provided below are some of the programs that these ODHH staff have been involved in as well as a yearly update on the achievements.

Office Director: Linda Huffer

The various programs and services that are housed within ODHH require the oversight provided by our Office Director, Linda Huffer. Linda constantly pushes staff to “think outside the box” and to be as creative as possible when considering new possibilities to serve the deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind citizens of Wisconsin. Linda continues to support the work that staff does, as well as pursuing funding or grant possibilities to improve or expand the services provided by ODHH. The pilot program of Deaf Disability Benefit Specialist is an example of this work. It has now become sustained as an on-going service for the State of Wisconsin and Deaf Unity became a separate entity, achieving non-profit status independent of ODHH.

Human Services Program Coordinator: Melani Kaplan

Melani Kaplan joined the Central Office staff in March, 2012. Her responsibilities include supporting Regional staff with major projects and serving as a liaison between ODHH and community organizations, the Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the community in general. Melani’s program efforts are focused at a state level regarding topics such as: Mental Health and improving communication to the public. Below is a summary of the accomplishments within these programs.

Mental Health:

- Attended Mental Health Summit in Pewaukee.
- Served and continues to serve on the Funding Workgroup and the Telehealth & Licensing Workgroup under the Mental Health Steering Committee.
- Co-Presented with other Mental Health Steering Committee members to the Wisconsin Mental Health Committee and the Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force about the Summit, the work of the Mental Health Steering

Committee and issues in providing services to people who are deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind.

- Created and distributed via electronic media a newsletter updating readers on the progress of the Mental Health Steering Committee.

Community Liaison:

- Participated in the planning and implementation of Deaf Awareness Fest in Oak Creek with the Wisconsin Association of the Deaf.
- Collaborated with ODHH staff in the creation of a new brochure for the agency.
- Composed monthly articles for the Department of Health's employee newsletter, Focus, about deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind issues.
- Began redesign of ODHH website to include American Sign Language videos (V-Logs) of pertinent information and for ease of use.

Staff Interpreters: Amber Mullett and Chantel Young

Amber Mullett and Chantel Young serve as interpreters for the staff of ODHH and provide office support. They work on staff projects that are being conducted on an as needed basis and interpret for other state agencies as scheduling allows. In addition to interpreting, Amber and Chantel provided assistance to the Wisconsin Interpreting and Transliterating Assessment (WITA) Advisory Board and ODHH staff as the assessment process was revamped.

TAP Coordinator: Meta Cucinotta

Meta Cucinotta serves as the coordinator of the Telecommunications Assistance Program (TAP). TAP provides assistance with the \$100 co-pay required by the Telecommunications Equipment Purchase Program (TEPP). TEPP helps individuals with disabilities purchase the specialized equipment they need in order to utilize basic telephone services. TAP is made available for persons who are Deaf, Deaf-blind or Hard of Hearing and who live in a low-income household.

Regional Updates:

Southern Region: Bette Mentz-Powell

The Southern Regional Coordinator, Bette Mentz-Powell, serves: Columbia, Dane, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Richland, Rock, Sauk, and Walworth counties. This year, Bette has worked to form collaborative relationships with other state agencies for the purpose of improving equal communication access for inmates in the state prison system and providing more training opportunities and education in the realm of HIV/AIDS and sexuality for members of the deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind communities. Regional accomplishments are:

Outreach Events Attended:

- Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources Conference, Wisconsin Dells. As a result of this conference, Bette has begun a partnership with Claire Culbertson to establish a Share the Care station in the Deaf Community.
- Educational Interpreter Summit, Eau Claire.
- WESP-DHH Statewide Professional and Family Conference, Appleton.

Accomplishments:

- Served as a panelist discussing issues facing people who are deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind when in need of mental health services at the Mental Health Summit, Pewaukee.
- Collaborated with the Wisconsin Interpreting and Transliterating Assessment (WITA) Board and ODHH Staff Interpreters, Amber Mullett and Chantel Young, to improve the WITA assessment system.
- Conducted eight (8) Wisconsin Interpreting and Transliterating Assessment (WITA) sessions.
- Presented to a variety of agencies including:
 - Department of Administration;
 - HealthCare students at UW-Madison (resident medical students, nurses, physical therapists, public health);
 - Division of Long Term Care (DLTC) Family Care Team;
 - Forrest Products Lab; and
 - US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

- . Conducted two (2) webcasts for the Aging and Disability Resource Centers related to working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing People and Hearing Loss in Later Years.
- . Met with deaf and hard of hearing inmates around the state, along with wardens, ADA Coordinators and Department of Corrections (DOC) administration regarding equal communication access and needs.
- . Provided the following training to Department of Corrections facilities:
 - o Green Bay Correctional Institution (2 trainings);
 - o Chippewa Valley Correctional Treatment Facility (2 trainings);
 - o Racine Correctional Institution (2 trainings);
 - o Oakhill Correctional Institution ;
 - o Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution (2 trainings);
 - o Redgranite Correctional Institution (2 trainings); and
 - o Stanley Correctional Institution (4 trainings).

** The second group of trainings will begin in January, 2013 and will include six additional facilities.
- . Met with DOC administration and legal staff to discuss the issue of telephone access for deaf inmates. As a result of this meeting, a pilot will be initiated in 2013 to establish video phones at the Racine Correctional Institution. This facility was chosen because they have the highest number of deaf and hard of hearing inmates. The hope is that once this system proves successful, other correctional facilities will also provide video phones.
- . Presented with Heidi Nass (featured expert speaker) at the Wisconsin School for the Deaf's (WSD) Girls Lock-in about HIV issues. (Presentation funded by the Division of Health.)

Western Region: Carolyn Small

The Western Regional Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist, Carolyn Small, serves: Barron, Bayfield, Buffalo, Burnett, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Douglas, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, Rusk, Sawyer, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Vernon, and Washburn counties, and has been assisting in the Northern Region until the arrival of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist for that area in October. Carolyn has spent much of her time training employers and also informing interested persons of the resources that ODHH has to offer. As our Hard of Hearing Liaison, Carolyn has maintained a collaborative working relationship with Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), as well as other hard of hearing organizations throughout the state. Some of the accomplishments for the Western Region for 2012 are listed below.

Outreach Events Attended:

- Integrated Employment workshop, Wisconsin Dells.
- Educational Interpreter Summit, Eau Claire.
- Independent Living Council meeting, Eau Claire.
- Several Resource/Health-Wellness/Technology Fairs for seniors, high school youth in transition, ex-offenders and Native Americans.

Accomplishments:

- In the process of updating the Wisconsin Rights & Resources Handbook (expect completion by end of January 2013).
- Provided consultation and/or training to consumers/consumer groups (such as Low Vision Support Group, HLAA), service providers, employers (such as Walmart, Kwik Trip and other corporate entities) and agencies (such as the Aging and Disability Resource Center) about the following:
 - Communication Access and applicable laws;
 - Consumer Rights;
 - ODHH services and resources;
 - Auxiliary Aids & Services; and
 - Interpreter Services and use.
- Represented ODHH on County-Community on Transition Councils (formerly called Transition Action Councils or TAC's) in Chippewa, Eau Claire, Pierce, Dunn/Pepin, La Crosse, and St. Croix counties.
- Participated in network coalitions that include Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) representatives, benefits specialists, county service providers, employment support, and others who met (formed under a Pathways to Independence project, now operating independently) in Eau Claire and La Crosse counties.

Northern Region: Shawnee Thomas

The Northern Region, serving the following counties: Adams, Ashland, Florence, Forest, Iron, Juneau, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Marquette, Oneida, Portage, Price, Taylor, Vilas, Waushara, and Wood, has been without a Regional Coordinator for a large part of 2012, but not without service provision. Other ODHH staff stepped in to assist with the service provision aspect in this area until the arrival of Shawnee Thomas in October 2012. In the short time that Shawnee has been on staff, she has established her office in Wausau. Shawnee has been diligently working on introducing herself to the community and informing them of the supports and services she can provide.

Outreach Events Attended:

- Taylor County Commission on Aging Health Fair, Medford.

Accomplishments:

- Presented to Ashland County Health and Human Services about ODHH services and resources.
- Outreached to Central Wisconsin Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), Marathon County Social Services and the Northern Regional Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN).
- Represented ODHH during the Northcentral Technical College Advisory Board meeting.

Northeastern Region: Nancy Harbison

The Northeastern Regional Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist, Nancy Harbison, serves the following counties: Brown, Calumet, Dodge, Door, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Menominee, Oconto, Outagamie, Ozaukee, Shawano, Sheboygan, Washington, Waupaca, and Winnebago. Nancy joined the ODHH team in January and quickly became a source of information and resources on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), equal communication access, employment and much more. Below is a summary of the accomplishments that have occurred within the Northeastern Region in the past year.

Outreach Events Attended:

- WESP-DHH Statewide Professional and Family Conference, Appleton.
- Brown County Transition Resource Fair, Green Bay.
- Kewaunee Senior Resource Fair, Luxemborg.
- Deaf Awareness Fest, Oak Creek.
- OBVI Low-Vision Fair, Appleton.

Accomplishments:

- Presented to DVR Area 5 (Brown, Door, Florence, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Menominee, Oconto, Shawano and Sheboygan Counties) about ODHH services and resources to DVR counselors and job service center providers.

- Presented to Family Service, AIDS Resource Centers, group homes, nursing homes, nursing staff and Senior assisting living homes about ODHH services and resources.
- Consulted with the Assistant Director and staff at Options for Independent Living service for Northeastern and Fox Valley areas.
- Collaborated with DVR Area Directors and Counselors in Brown, Fond du Lac, Marinette, Ozaukee and Winnebago counties and with Pewaukee Work Force Development in Ozaukee.
- Represented ODHH during the Kewaunee County Department of Human Service/Aging and Disability Resource monthly meeting.
- Represented ODHH during the Fox River Valley Association of the Deaf picnic in Appleton.
- Presented to Appleton Outagamie Administrators about TTY Equipment, etiquette regarding TTY calls and Relay service calls.
- Consulted with Fox Valley Disability Workforce Development about employment issues for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.
- Advised Marinette DVR on lack of VideoPhone (VP) access issue due to scarcity of cable access.
- Presented to the Department of Health Services and to the Aging and Disability Resource Center in Marinette County.
- Represented ODHH during a town hall meeting held by the Fox River Valley Association for the Deaf.
- Consulted with a Driving Education program in Green Bay and the Department of Transportation on sign language interpreter accommodation needs for student drivers who are deaf.
- Presented to the Disability Advocate Network in Sheboygan County about ODHH services and resources.
- Presented to the Adult Family Home in Green Bay about ODHH services and resources.
- Presented to the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Green Bay about ODHH services and resources.
- Presented to nursing staff in Calumet County about ODHH services and resources.
- Represented ODHH during a Deaf Unity "In Your Living Room" event in the Fox River Valley area.
- Presented to DVR Area 4 (Menasha) Counselors and Job Service Center providers about ODHH programs and employment issues for people who are Deaf and Hard of hearing.

Southeastern Region: Thomas Benziger

The Southeastern Regional Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist, Tom Benziger, joined the ranks of ODHH staff in August 2012. He serves Kenosha, Milwaukee, Racine and Waukesha counties. Since his arrival on the ODHH team, Tom has been industriously working to inform the community of his presence and has quickly begun providing consultation, training and informational services.

Outreach Events Attended:

- . Deaf Awareness Fest, Oak Creek.

Accomplishments:

- . Presented to the Lions Club Organization (Waterford, Union Grove and New Berlin chapters) about ODHH services and resources.
- . Presented to the Legal Action of Wisconsin in Pewaukee.
- . Developed Winter Preparedness checklist for posting on ODHH website.
- . Provided training to Mercy Hospital in Lake Geneva.
- . Represents ODHH during monthly meetings with the Functional Assistance Services Team (FAST) regarding appropriate accommodations in emergency shelters during potential disasters.
- . Represented ODHH at the Division of Vocation Rehabilitation (DVR) Southwestern Regional Directors Meeting in Waukesha.
- . Collaborated with the Wisconsin Association of the Deaf (WAD), IndependenceFirst and Society's Assets about communicating to individuals with disabilities about Emergency Preparedness at a statewide level.
- . Outreached to public entities such as Police Departments, Fire Departments, Emergency Preparedness Agencies, Health Departments and Court Houses in Waukesha, Milwaukee, Racine and Kenosha Counties about ODHH services and resources.

Deaf Disability Benefit Specialist: Jennifer Koehn

The ODHH Deaf Disability Benefit Specialist provides information, support, assistance and advocacy regarding public and private benefit programs to members of the deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind communities across the State of Wisconsin who communicate using American Sign Language. Members of the community between the ages of 18-59 years of age who need assistance with benefit related information are able to receive assistance from a member of their own community in their native language.

Jennifer is able to provide assistance regarding eligibility for benefit programs and provide, the application and/or appeal procedures for these benefits. Jennifer collaborates with other Disability Benefit Specialists within the Division of Long Term Care to provide information and technical assistance regarding the following topics:

- Social Security Income (SSI);
- Social Security Disability Income (SSDI);
- Food Share;
- Housing and Utility Issues;
- Medicaid (Medical Assistance);
- Medicare (including Part D);
- Low-Income Tax Credit;
- Insurance Issues;
- Prescription Drug Assistance; and
- Housing and Utility Issues.

Outreach Events Attended:

- Deaf Culture Day at Gateway Technical College, Elkhorn.
- DEAF Day at UW-Milwaukee.
- Fox River Valley Association of the Deaf picnic, Appleton.
- Deaf Awareness Fest, Elkhorn.
- Brown County Transition Fair, Green Bay.

- 2012 College and Transition Fair, Delavan.

Presentations Conducted:

- Waukesha Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) - about Deaf Disability Services, ODHH programs and how to successfully work with people who are deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind .
- Training on interpreting information for Volunteer Lawyers Project, Pewaukee - Co-presented with Tom Benziger, ODHH Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist.
- Mount Mary College - Presented to students majoring in nursing, social work, counseling, education on how to successfully work with people who are deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind.
- UW-Milwaukee - Presented to Interpreter Training Program students about Deaf Disability Services and ODHH programs.

In 2012, Jennifer Koehn attained 68 new deaf and hard of hearing contacts. More information about this program is available on the ODHH website at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/sensory.

Mental Health Summit: March 12, 2012

In partnering with the Mental Health and Steering Committee, ODHH was instrumental in gathering representatives from various agencies and mental health and substance abuse organizations from around the State of Wisconsin to explore issues facing people who are deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind and in need of mental health and substance abuse services.

Highlighted during the event were the barriers to accessing linguistically appropriate and culturally competent mental health and substance abuse services for people with a hearing loss.

When such services are not available, it can create the following types of issues:

Higher Rates of:

- . Victims becoming Offenders;
- . Alcohol & Drug Abuse;
- . Recurring Relapses;
- . Suicides; and
- . Domestic Violence.

Higher Costs such as:

- . Longer Inpatient Hospitalizations;
- . Increased interactions with Law Enforcement;
- . Incarcerations; and
- . Failure to Thrive.

In order to continue the work and enthusiasm evident during the Mental Health Summit, members of the Mental Health Steering Committee identified and divided into workgroups addressing five issue areas. These include:

- . Information;
- . Licensing & Telehealth;
- . Board Linkages;
- . Technology; and
- . Financial Resources.

The Mental Health Steering Committee continues to recruit people to join their efforts in effecting positive change for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind.

National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP)

ODHH collaborated with the Public Service Commission, the Center for Deaf-Blind Persons and the Wisconsin Deaf-Blind Technical Assistance Project (WDBTAP) to apply for and receive a National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Grant.

The program, promoted by **iCanConnect**, provides outreach, assessments, telecommunications technology and training free of charge to those who meet federal eligibility guidelines. The goal of the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP) is to ensure that every person with both hearing and vision loss has access to modern telecommunication tools and the training necessary to use them. Achieving such access grants every qualified individual the opportunity to interact with the world as an involved and contributing member of society.

The funds are available through June 30, 2014. The application is now available online at www.icanconnect.org/Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The Wisconsin Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is charged with providing advisory and consultative services to the Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and to Governor Scott Walker. William Mauldin chaired the Council during 2012. The Council met on June 15th, September 14th and December 14th.

Current Council Members

Gary Ebben

Nicole Everson

Mary Jane Griffin

Tracy Haas

Denise Johnson

Tamara Klink

William Mauldin

Steve Smart

Justin Vollmar

* Member At Large: Alex Slappey

2013 Meeting Dates

*It is recommended to check the Council website for any updates or changes to the schedule.

March 21

May 9

September 19

December 6

<http://dhhcouncil.state.wi.us/Home.htm>

What to Expect in 2013

Moving

The Central Office for ODHH, housed in the Department of Health building at 1 West Wilson Street in Madison has moved from Room 451 to Room 558.

New Website

Look for ODHH to reveal a new website with a new address in the early part of the year. The new design looks to be more user friendly and includes ASL through the use of video and V-logs.

Art Display

Artwork by Wisconsinites who are deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind will be displayed in the Department of Health Services building in Madison in recognition of Deaf Awareness Month, March 13th – April 15th 2013. The opening of the art exhibit will be marked by a celebration and open house in ODHH's Central Office on Wednesday, March 13th 1:30pm – 3:00pm. It is open to the public.

Signs at the Zoo

Taking place at the Henry Vilas Zoo on September 7th, participating agencies led by ODHH will create an event aimed at exposing the general public to sign language in an entertaining environment. The event will include volunteers teaching signs at the various animal displays and concession stands; music and stories performed in sign language; and a scavenger hunt style activity to guide the participants to the various activities.

Contact Us

CENTRAL OFFICE

1 W. Wilson St., Room 558
Madison, WI 53707-7851
Phone: (855) 359-5252
Fax: (608) 264-9899
dhsodhh@wisconsin.gov
www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/sensory

Director: Linda Huffer
Linda.Huffer@wisconsin.gov
Phone: (608) 266-5641

Human Services Program Coordinator: Melani Kaplan
Melani.Kaplan@wisconsin.gov
Video Phone: (608) 338-0860
Phone: (608) 266-8537

Tap Coordinator: Meta Cucinotta
Meta.Cucinotta@wisconsin.gov
Video Phone: (608) 234-4501
Phone: (608) 266-3118

State Agency Interpreter: Amber Mullett
Amber.Mullett@wisconsin.gov
Phone: (608) 261-7823

REGIONAL STAFF

Deaf & Hard Of Hearing Specialist, Southern Region: Bette Mentz-Powell
Bette.MentzPowell@wisconsin.gov
1 W. Wilson Street, Room 451, Madison, WI 53707
Video Phone: (608) 319-1249

Deaf & Hard Of Hearing Specialist, Western Region: Carolyn Small
Carolyn.Small@wisconsin.gov
610 Gibson Street, Suite 1, Eau Claire, WI 54701
Phone: (715) 836-2107
Fax: (715) 836-2535

Deaf & Hard Of Hearing Specialist, Northeastern Region: Nancy Harbison
Nancy.Harbison@wisconsin.gov
17 Park Place, Suite 175, Appleton, WI 54914
TextNet/TTY/Relay: (888) 241-9430
Video Phone: (920) 659-7317
Fax: (920) 832-4952

Deaf & Hard Of Hearing Specialist, Southeastern Region: Tom Benziger
Thomas.Benziger@wisconsin.gov
141 NW Barstow Street, Room 157, Waukesha, WI 53188
Video Phone: (262) 290-4466
Fax: (262) 521-5302

Deaf & Hard Of Hearing Specialist, Northern Region: Shawnee Thomas
Shawnee.Thomas@wisconsin.gov
911 Jackson St., Wausau, WI 54401
Video Phone: (715) 203-1580
TTY and Fax: (715) 841-4840

Statewide Deaf Disability Benefits Specialist: Jennifer Koehn
JenniferM.Koehn@wisconsin.gov
141 NW Barstow St., Room 157, Waukesha, WI 53188
Video Phone: (262) 347-3045
Phone: (888) 330-5482
Fax: (262) 521-5302

State Agency Interpreter: Chantel Young
Chantel.Young@wisconsin.gov
141 NW Barstow St., Room 157, Waukesha, WI 53188
Phone: (262) 613-9056