

Missouri Communicator

Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Fall 2016 Edition: Improving Access



MCDHH works with individuals, service providers, businesses, organizations, and state agencies to improve the lives and opportunities of all Missourians with hearing loss.

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Improving Access is a Shared Responsibility

*Opeoluwa Sotonwa, MCDHH
Executive Director*



As a community, we know that there are many challenges that Deaf and hard of hearing individuals face in their daily lives. This community contains many distinct cultural groups with different cognitive, social, and emotional developments.

It is these many differences that result in situations that may have many different solutions for each to achieve access.

Regardless of hearing status, the law is complex. It may be difficult to identify whether a person is simply facing day-to-day hardships, or if discrimination or oppression is truly occurring. Workplace issues, personal injury, sexual harassment, medical conditions, and accommodation denial are all contexts that a Deaf or hard of hearing individual may experience. When legal assistance is needed, a lawyer may not understand the factors at play for a client with hearing loss.

At MCDHH, we hear many stories of these injustices. We receive calls about lack of sign language interpreters at medical appointments, inability to understand complex legal documents, elderly people experiencing language isolation in nursing homes, and many other issues on a daily basis. These are not problems that can be solved by one individual, business, or agency alone. We must come together as a network of service providers, organizations, law enforcement, legal practitioners, educational providers, health care professionals, and allies and share the responsibility to provide full communication access to all Missourians. It is only through shared efforts that we can make our community a more vibrant and inclusive place to call home.

Meet Our Commissioners

Donna G. Schreiner, Chair

Seat for Deaf or Hard of Hearing Member

Mary E. Hale, Vice Chair

Seat for Deaf or Hard of Hearing Member

Dr. Thomas Horejcs

Seat for Deaf or Hard of Hearing Organizations

Owen VandeVelde

Seat for Parent of a Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child

Wendy Jensen

Seat for Local Public School Administration

Shelly Jones

Seat for Representative for Interpreters

Ernest Garrett, III

Seat for DESE or MSD

Dr. Katie Barton

Seat for Audiologist

Meet Our Staff

Opeoluwa Sotonwa

Executive Director

Dee Sanfilippo

MICS Coordinator

Jessica Brown

Interpreter Certification Specialist

Christopher Ludvigsen

Community Support Liaison

Emily Fry

Information Program Specialist

Crystal Anderson

Staff Interpreter

Laurie Lister

Office Support Specialist

Thanks for joining us at our exciting events this summer! Our Deaf & Hard of Hearing Awareness Days were bigger than ever!

Six Flags St. Louis: 260
Silver Dollar City: 400
Kansas City Royals: 410



Go to MCDHH's YouTube channel to see videos of our ASL performers from the Royals game!



From Our Commissioners: Breaking Down The Barriers

Donna Schreiner, Chair of the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



Everyone takes things for granted in their daily lives, but for me to have full accessibility can be a challenge—sometimes even impossible—ever since I was born. Communication is a main part of our daily lives and accessing it has evolved over time, requiring us to strive to breaking down the barriers.

Born deaf, raised by deaf parents, and a mother of three deaf children, my personal experience with communication access was and still is a dilemma. In the past, we relied on our hearing relatives and friends to make phone calls until the 1960s when the TTY was invented. We could call our deaf friends and family members, but the barrier remained for us in calling hearing people and businesses. To address this barrier, a volunteer organization established a relay service in St. Louis called Contact, but it didn't completely remove the communication barrier because of limited volunteers and equipment. We often had to wait one hour or longer to make a simple phone call. There were times when my mother ended up driving to the place she wanted to call instead.

It was not until the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed in 1990 that all phone companies were required to provide relay services by 2001 and phone services truly became more accommodating. As the technology evolved over time, new types of barriers came into play. For example, the videophone, which required broadband internet access, more skilled interpreters for the relay services, and limited access when calling two different video relay service providers. And thus, the barriers evolved...

Another aspect of communication access is sign language. I attended an oral school where I had full access to communication. All through high school, I thought I had adequate accommodations; however, that mindset changed when I attended college where I had interpreter for the first time. It was because of the ADA I realized how much information I missed during high school.

My personal experience with interpreters in college allowed me to see what it takes to be an effective interpreter. For me, the two essential qualifications for interpreters are interpreting skills and ethical conduct. The recognition of these two criteria made me question whether other deaf and hard of hearing students had the similar issues with their interpreters as I did. This led me to become proactive in the deaf community as I changed my career to become a paraprofessional working for the Special School District of St. Louis, where I have been working for 13 years.

With my district's wide options for accessibility to ensure students' success, SSD has taken many important steps in the prevention of communication barriers. By having full access, it has allowed deaf and hard of hearing students to further themselves in pursuing their goals, develop self-esteem, and build confidence in their future goals. The number of our students enrolling in college has increased over time, which means that there are more educated deaf and hard of hearing people than before. Therefore, the need for educated and qualified interpreters has increased.

My personal experience in dealing with these barriers has encouraged me to become a commissioner for MCDHH as I want to improve the quality of life for all Missourians, including people with hearing loss.

The commission meets a minimum of four times yearly to continue advocating, empowering, and improving the...

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...lives of Missouri's deaf and hard of hearing community. We work with the State Committee of Interpreters and Board of Certification of Interpreters to advocate and improve best practices in interpreting. We also collaborate with the MCDHH staff, which works closely with the elected Missouri government officials on motions, bills, and funding for deaf and hard of hearing Missourians. We cannot do this alone as we need the support from the public in our efforts on breaking down the barriers.

MCDHH commissioners' personal and professional backgrounds are diverse, which provides many advantages. This allows each commissioner to bring their different skills sets, knowledge base, and individual experiences to the table when addressing issues on accessibility and accommodation. The commissioners share the same mission in making lives better for the Missourian people with hearing loss by working together. As long as I am part of the commission, I am committed to breaking down communication and accessibility barriers for current and future generations.



**Effective Teaming
- with -
Deaf Interpreters
Training**

**Nov. 2-7, 2016
William Woods
University**

Open to all interpreters & aspiring CDIs
MO Residents | Deaf: \$100 | Hearing: \$175
Out of State | Contact MCDHH for rate information
Lunch & Lodging are included with registration

Presented by Bradley Christlieb, M.A., CDI
Co-Presented by Brent Bocian, MAI, NIC, SC:L

MCDHH is an Approved RID CMP Sponsor for Continuing Education Activities. This Professional program is offered for 4.8 CEUs at the Basic Content Knowledge Level.

Objectives (based on NCIEC DI Curriculum):
Team Building | Roles of the Team | Key Meetings
Working as a Team | Power Dynamics
Community Implications | Transitioning

Information & Registration: mcdhh.mo.gov/cdi
Register by Oct. 24th

Logos: MCDHH, RID, ACET, SVRS, WW, Moad, Deaf Inc.



Contact MCDHH by Oct. 21st to request special accommodations for this event. No refunds will be given.

Improving Access to Deaf Mental Health Care in Missouri

David S. Kingsbury, Director of Office of Deaf Services at the Missouri Department of Mental Health



The Office of Deaf Services at the Missouri Department of Mental Health (DMH) is dedicated to reducing and eliminating the barriers Missouri's Deaf and hard of hearing residents face and improving their options for receiving mental health services.

DMH is by far the largest provider of services for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Missouri who have a serious mental illness, alcohol or drug use disorder, or developmental disability. In 2015, DMH served nearly 700 people who are deaf or use American Sign Language (ASL) plus over 4,000 hard of hearing who do not use ASL. Programs and policies developed by the Office of Deaf Services ensure that eligible Deaf individuals who need help for a serious mental illness have communication access and can choose how to receive services based on their personal preferences.

One option is culturally and linguistically affirmative services. DMH contracts with BJC Behavioral Health in the St. Louis area and ReDiscover in the Lee's Summit/Kansas City area to run Specialized Outpatient Centers (SOCs) to provide these services. Each SOC has at least one licensed mental health professional who is fluent in ASL and provides diagnostic assessments and counseling services. Staff who provide other services, such as case management or psychiatry, are either fluent in ASL or have training in Deaf Culture and Deaf mental health care. All of these services are available on-site, and some services are also available in the community.

Unfortunately, Missouri does not have enough ASL-fluent mental health professionals to make specialized services available in-person in every part of the state. To help with this problem, the Office of Deaf Services developed policies that allow SOC staff to provide counseling services in ASL through a telehealth video connection at any Community Mental Health Center (CMHC) in the state.

Deaf individuals also have the option to receive culturally appropriate, linguistically accessible mental health services from their local CMHC. The Office of Deaf Services provides training and consultation on Deaf culture and Deaf mental health care free to staff at CMHCs. It has also developed policies that exceed Americans with Disabilities Act requirements for communication access, including providing interpreters.

The Office of Deaf Services recently launched the Deaf Services Advocates Program, the first of its kind in the country. This program provides CMHC staff with more extensive training in identifying the barriers Deaf and hard of hearing individuals commonly experience when trying to use mental health services and how to address these problems. These staff are then designated as Deaf Services Advocates and work with other staff in their CMHCs to reduce or eliminate these barriers and serve Deaf and hard of hearing people more effectively. Advocates can also meet with their CMHC's Deaf or hard of hearing clients to address individual concerns. Six Advocates have completed training, and six more are in the process. An additional 12 to 15 CMHC staff will train to become Advocates this fall.

But improving access to mental health services for Deaf people requires more than just training current mental health providers in Deaf culture. Mental health interpreting is a highly specialized area of practice, but in most parts of the country, there are limited opportunities for advanced training in this area. To address this need and improve the quality of interpreting for mental health services in Missouri, the Office of Deaf Services contracted with the Deaf Wellness Center at the University of Rochester to develop a 40-hour Introduction to Mental Health...

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Don't miss out!



October 7-9 | Columbia, MO

In Search of Excellence

Dee Sanfilippo, MICS Coordinator for MCDHH, Chair of Missouri Interpreters Conference

Years ago, I read a book that changed the way I work. *In Search of Excellence*, by Thomas J. Peters, showcased the best practices of more than 43 of the best American companies. This 1982 book was credited by some for creating the management consultant business. Although his emphasis on “management by wandering around” and always attempting to “celebrate what you want to see more of,” might seem a little dated, I still follow the original concepts: look for success, celebrate it, and encourage more things like it. In all types of business, best practices add to the work that holds our focus.

As the Coordinator for the Missouri Interpreter Certification System (MICS), my main focus is professionally-certified sign language interpreters. We have a commitment to professional development and best practices among interpreters. Several years ago, MCDHH made the decision to upgrade their interpreter certification system, to encourage the development of more professional, prepared, and evaluated interpreters in the state. We chose Texas’ BEI (Board for Evaluation of Interpreters) evaluation instrument, which is largely viewed as the state-of-the-art certification system, featuring high reliability and validity. BEI features both a written test of English proficiency and a performance test evaluated by trained raters who review and rate each test. Offered in four states, the BEI is seen as the test with the highest standards and value, raising the bar for certification all across the country.

It is our hope at MCDHH that raising the standards for certification will provide a better product for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities. To come up to the baseline threshold for BEI, we’re phasing out two levels of certification; Apprentice and Novice. Interpreters holding those certifications will need to level up by the end of next year, and many have already done so. Last year, we added a requirement of .30 annual CEUs in Ethics, and we recently wrote and submitted Administrative Rules covering Certified Deaf Interpreters and a Learner’s Permit

**Keynote & Entertainment
presented by Trix Bruce**
Onsite BEI TEP
Ethics CEUs
**Friday session by
April & Jeffrey Dunlap**
30+ exhibits
Dance hosted by MO-RID
Networking
Wide variety of topics
Holiday Inn Executive Center
Free ethics workshop with SCI



process for those who have passed written but not performance tests. These changes are scheduled to become effective by the end of the year.

Each year, to create the annual interpreter conference, we “wander around” the state, collecting topics and ideas that exemplify excellence. We review evaluations and recommendations from past conferences, selecting speakers and workshops to meet requests and what we’d like to see “more of.”

With our 23rd Annual Missouri Interpreter Conference theme, Access to Excellence, we pay tribute to the changes of the past two years. Striving for excellence as a goal, conference planners selected the theme and began to select presenters and topics that would help promote excellence among our 703 certified members. We’ve added new points of access for interpreters: a pre-conference workshop to hone professional work skills; an on-site opportunity to take the TEP written test toward certification; a MO-RID sponsored dance to encourage community building and socializing; and a free SCI-provided ethics class worth .15 CEUs.

For our Keynote Speaker, Entertainer, and several workshops, we’re thrilled to feature special guest Trix Bruce. Trix brings years of experience as deaf poet, keynote speaker, workshop presenter, mentor, performer, entertainer, and interpreter evaluator. Her work with interpreter education emphasizes ASL Linguistics and Deaf Culture. In all of her work, she places emphasis on the need for continued improvement in interpreter skills:

“Overall, I love working with interpreters and I enjoy guiding them as they upgrade their professional skills and knowledge. Appreciation for professional interpreters strengthens our Deaf world!”

Here at MCDHH, we clearly share Trix’s commitment to upgraded professional skills among Missouri interpreters. The MICS mission is an easy one to live, as we strive to “be a courteous, responsive resource for Interpreters and the Profession of Interpreting in Missouri.” Providing access, we expect excellence.

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...Interpreting course. This course is among the best and most advanced trainings in mental health interpreting available anywhere. Since it was launched in 2014, 26 interpreters certified in Missouri and 19 interpreters from other states have completed training.

A priority for the Office of Deaf Services is improving access to direct mental health services from providers who are fluent in ASL. The greatest challenge DMH faces in accomplishing this is the shortage of qualified providers who are fluent enough to provide direct services in ASL. The Office of Deaf Services is exploring options to establish at least two more Specialized Outpatient Centers to expand access to in-person direct services over the next few years, but whether or how quickly this expansion happens will largely depend on how long it takes to recruit ASL-fluent staff.

To help address the shortage of qualified, ASL-fluent providers, the Office of Deaf Services is working on a plan to help a university establish a bachelor's degree program with a major in Deaf human services. Graduates of this program would be fluent in ASL, competent in Deaf culture, and qualified to provide case management and service coordination to Deaf individuals who have a serious mental illness or developmental disability. Graduates would also be prepared to enter master's programs in counseling, social work, or deaf education. If successfully implemented, this program will significantly increase the number of providers in Missouri who are ASL-fluent and able to provide specialized services.

Improving access to mental health services for Deaf and hard of hearing Missourians is a complex challenge, but our system is much better than it was several years ago. Solving problems like the shortage of ASL-fluent providers will take time, but the Office of Deaf Services is working hard to find creative solutions that improve access. To learn more about DMH Deaf Services, visit dmh.mo.gov/deafservices.

Dave Kingsbury is the director of the Office of Deaf Services at the Missouri Department of Mental Health. He holds a master's degree in counseling psychology from Bethel University and a bachelor's degree in psychology and Deaf culture studies from North Central University. He completed his undergraduate psychology internship and master's clinical practicum under a leading Deaf psychologist, and his master's thesis is the largest empirical study of deaf marriages in over 100 years. He has experience providing independent living skills counseling, psychiatric rehabilitation counseling, clinical counseling, and diagnostic assessments to Deaf consumers. He also worked as director of the Department of Student and Outreach Services and the Resource Center on Deafness at Missouri School for the Deaf where he oversaw statewide early intervention services, deaf education consulting, and audiology and assistive technology programs, as well as on-campus professional services.



Conversations Across Missouri (CAM) is a creation of MCDHH and part of a broader mission to serve our community, our great state, and our world through engagement and dialogue.

CAM are gatherings of people for self-guided discussions on topics relevant to the **Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, service providers, and their families.**

CAM will be hosted across Missouri from time to time in our efforts to learn, listen, think and inspire genuine conversations that will lead to real change at all levels and to make Missouri a model for others.

JOIN or INVITE us to initiate REAL CONVERSATIONS!

Community Perspective: Turn On The Captions!

Kansas City's chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA-KC) has been working hard to make movies, television, and live entertainment more accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Since the start of its campaign for open captioning (OC), the group has convinced several local theaters and businesses to offer captioning and gathered a large following of people that look forward to attending OC events. MCDHH interviewed HLAA-KC's president Terri Shirley to learn more about the project.

MCDHH: How did HLAA-KC's campaign for OC get started?

Shirley: When open captioning disappeared from the Olathe AMC Theater, most of us didn't understand the film industry was changing. Theaters were switching from 35mm film to hard drives. During that time, movies were not coming with OC on the hard drives. Our group got in touch with the General Manager on ways to bring captioning back to the theaters.

MCDHH: What results has your group seen from your efforts?

Shirley: We have seen growth by merging with other OC advocates. We support each other's events and work as a central coordinator between advocates and theater chains to bring Metro Kansas City more diverse captioned media in terms of movie genres, venues, and schedule options. Just this year the Alamo Drafthouse Cinema in Downtown Kansas City went from only one OC Sunday afternoon movie to adding an additional OC movie on Tuesday afternoons. Since July, AMC is beginning an OC pilot in Metro Kansas City once a month. We expect AMC will be running OC on Saturday afternoons and one OC show during the week. We also promote OC events coordinated by other groups at B&B Theatres, which usually runs OC movies one Saturday morning each month. Boulevard Drive-In occasionally runs two or three OC movies on a weekend night. It is great to see so many deaf and hard of hearing people line up at 6:30 to see a movie that doesn't even start until dusk—sometimes hundreds show up to these showings!

MCDHH: Why is OC so important, compared to other forms of accommodations?

Shirley: In 2013, HLAA and AMC Theatres announced a partnership that would increase access to for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing by making personal closed captioning devices available. On the national level, HLAA finds many of their members enjoy being able to access any show they choose as these devices are available at any time. That being said, accommodations are not one-size-fits-all. HLAA understands that local communities sometimes see things differently, as HLAA-KC advocacy promotes the locals' preferred captioning method, OC, as well as theaters keeping the CC devices. OC signals come without an additional cost to theatres, making it an attractive option without the expense and maintenance of CC devices.

Benefits of Open Captioning

- It's usually free!
- No maintenance complications
- Words appear in the same place as the action, so the movie-goer doesn't miss anything by looking away
- Frees hands for carrying your favorite theater snack instead of a captioning device

Benefits of Closed Captioning

- Flexibility for the movie-goer; makes captioning available at many showings
- Doesn't interrupt the movie experience for hearing people in the audience

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SSP Task Force Starts On Statwide SSP Program

Emily Fry, Editor, Missouri Communicator

Members of MCDHH's newly established Support Service Provider (SSP) Task Force met for four days in August to discuss the future of Missouri's SSP program established by House Bill 1696. Task Force members include Dee Sanfilippo (MCDHH staff), Mary

Hale, Beth Jordan, Emily Fry (MCDHH staff), and De Linda Brite. Although the details are not all finalized, there are fundamental values that will be core to the program. It is a priority of the group that the role of a DeafBlind consumer is to make their own decisions, and the SSP is to empower the consumer through assistance limited to guiding, transportation and safety, and facilitating communication. DeafBlind consumers should be empowered to choose a SSP that is compatible with them. These SSPs should be paid a fair wage. The size and scope of the program at its inception will depend on funding. Allocations from the legislature will be known in Spring 2017. Keep an eye out for more information as we continue to develop Missouri's SSP program!

**Empowerment Through
Technology has been
postponed**

**The Missouri Disability
Symposium scheduled
for October 15 has been
postponed until December 17.
More information coming soon!**



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MCDHH: What has been the hardest part of HLAAC-KC's push for OC?

Shirley: The hardest part is collecting signatures for our petition, Kansas: Turn On the TV Captions Now! This was developed with help from the founders of Portland: Turn On The TV Captions Now to ask local businesses to turn on and leave on TV captions during normal business hours. While Portland successfully passed this into law for their city, we are pushing to pass the law for the whole state of Kansas. We have

mini-campaign cards to use for an advocating tool to get everyone involved. One of the other hardest goals is to get OC for live theater since it can be costly to hire a stenographer. Turning on the TV captions is free to business owners and the state.

MCDHH: Is there a particular moment that made you feel your work has truly paid off?

Shirley: When I get one medical office to turn on their TV captions and return a week later to see that they are still on. When that medical office asks other offices in the building to also sign the petition. Or when the man wearing hearing aids in the car repair lobby is extremely bored watching the muted TV, suddenly sits up interested when the TV captions were turned on. It will take a long time leaving our footprints at every business. If everyone helps leave a footprint, we hope to make it a statement to bring this to legislative action.

MCDHH: What advice do you have for other groups that may want to start similar campaigns?

Shirley: Seek the support of several organizations for endorsements before becoming public with your campaign, and make connections with your state's commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for support.

Find more information about open captioning in Kansas City at <http://hlaakc.com>.

Mark Your Calendar! **For Upcoming MCDHH Events**

- October -

1-14: No BEI Testing Offered

- November -

2-7: Effective Teaming with Deaf Interpreters

- December -

17: Empowerment Through Technology (NEW)

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editor at [Emily.Fry@mcdhh.
mo.gov](mailto:Emily.Fry@mcdhh.mo.gov).**



**Missouri Commission for the
Deaf and Hard of Hearing**
3216 Emerald Lane, Suite B
Jefferson City, MO 65109



We've Moved!

On August 9, community members gathered at MCDHH's new office for a ribbon cutting ceremony and open house celebration.

What do YOU want to see in the next Missouri Communicator?

Share your ideas with us. Submit your article topics, newsletter themes, photos, or *Community Perspective* proposals to the editor at Emily.Fry@mcdhh.mo.gov for consideration.