



# Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

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## Quarterly Board Meeting Minutes

Friday, April 18, 2025 MDT, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

In-Person

Vocational Rehabilitation Treasure Valley East, 1755 N. Westgate Dr., Suite 140, Boise, ID 83704

Transcripts available upon request, [dawn.wells@cdhh.idaho.gov](mailto:dawn.wells@cdhh.idaho.gov)

### ATTENDEES

#### Council Members (quorum = 5)

	Steven Birkby, Chairperson	Member who is Deaf and represents an organization of people who are Deaf
	Emilie Banasiak, Vice Chair	Hard of hearing and represents an organization of people who are hard of hearing
	Valerie Player, Executive Committee	Member who is a parent of a child who is deaf
	Sonny Cabbage	Member who is Deaf
	Dr. Abe Vore	Member who is an audiologist
Absent	Matthew McGraw	Member who is Hard of Hearing and over the age of 60
Absent	Dr. Jacob Robison	Member who is a physician
Absent	Vacant	Member who is a parent of a child who is hard of hearing
Absent	Vacant	Member who is an interpreter

#### Ex-officio Members

	Steven Snow	Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CDHH)
	Brian Darcy	Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and Blind (IESDB)
	Miranda Nelson	Idaho Sound Beginnings (ISB)
Absent	Erin Olsen	Idaho Commission on Aging (ICG)
Absent	Kelli Toohill	Public Utilities Commission/Idaho Telecommunications Relay Service (Idaho TRS)
Absent	Terry Gammel	Idaho Department of Labor (DOL)
Absent	Chynna Hirasaki	Idaho State Department of Education (SDE)
Absent	Tabitha Edwards	Idaho Division of Occupational and Professional Licenses (DOPL)
Absent	Brett T. DeLange	Office of the Attorney General (AG)
Absent	Vacant	Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

#### Idaho CDHH Staff

	Steve Snow	Executive Director
	Dawn Wells	Administrative Assistant
	Leah McElwee	Executive Interpreter
	Tara Adams	Human Services Program Specialist
Absent	Vacant	Communications & Outreach Coordinator

Other Attendees: LaVona Andrew Carson (interpreter), Ray Lockary, Brooke Hazen (ISU student)

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Council chair, Steven Birkby, called the meeting to order at 9:16 AM and welcomed everyone. Introductions and representations were made.

**MOTION** – Emilie moved to adopt the agenda as amended. Valerie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**MOTION** – Sonny moved to approve the minutes as corrected; Emilie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## OPEN FORUM

Chynna Hirasaki has resigned from the Department of Education and taken a new position as Special Education Director with Boise school District.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT, Steve Snow

### At the National Level

1. Rule changes with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) require transparency and user-friendly features for video conferencing platforms. The compliance date is January 2027.
  - a. Captioning option
  - b. Interpreter features for visibility
  - c. User interface and control by the individual using the platform
2. Department of Justice (DOJ) is mandating that all websites meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) for accessibility. Compliance for state agencies is by April 2026.
3. Deaf Access to Communication Act is an expansion of the Telecommunications Act. As new technology arises, the laws become outdated, and this Act ensures new technology is included.
4. Social Security Administration (SSA) has updated their guidelines and clarified the determination for hearing loss, along with linguistic and cultural aspects which are new.
5. Office of Special Education (OSEP) set up the National Deaf Education Data Collection. Previously data was collected on students with any disabilities but this component specific to Deaf and hard-of-hearing students will make it easier to find information and statistics on language acquisition.
6. Watching HB500 which proposes a change to Medicare for hearing aid coverage.
7. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was designed for the extra cost of educating children with disabilities. Funds would have been phased up to 40%, which has yet to be reached. Bill passed for annual increases to meet that previous commitment of IDEA funding.
8. Promoting Equity in Healthcare Interpreting (PEHI) is a grant through the Rehabilitation Services Administration. CDHH has worked with ISU to foster that program which is in its fourth year. Many grants have been cut by this administration however, the PEHI grant has not been cut so far.
9. Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program is under the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) but HHS is a very large agency so there is some reorganization to determine best place for the EHDI program.

### At the State Level

1. CDHH funding for communication access was approved by legislature. Other line items were not approved.
2. Legislature approved a one-time supplemental appropriation of 4.4 million dollars to the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation for their current fiscal year deficit.
3. Legislature passed a \$100 million property tax cut for property owners. This means some programs and funding will not be available.
4. Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) program is now available in Idaho. Individuals who receive SSI or SSDI have long been unable to maintain savings accounts, or their benefits would be impacted or no longer qualify. Now these individuals in Idaho can save without that risk.
5. Foster Care System is primarily funded by legislative appropriations which this year included \$23.2 million appropriation.
  - a. Creates 63 new positions
  - b. Extends foster care to age 23
  - c. Additional monthly payments for children with specialized care

6. Idaho Hands and Voices Leadership Roundtable/Taskforce has invited CDHH among other leaders in the Deaf Community. Currently looking at sports and setting up a little league soccer team in the Treasure Valley with a signing coach and peers.
7. Eastern Idaho College's Disability Services Group invited CDHH to discuss support and access for their future deaf students.
8. CDHH published a report to the Idaho Transportation Department with five recommendations to improve access to the Driver's Education Programs at driving schools, high schools, or the DMV.
  - a. Drivers' Manual/Handbook is currently in English, needs ASL version which would coincide with the ASL version of the driver's exam.
  - b. Expand ASL access for driver's education. So many Deaf youths that want to take Driver's Ed are being turned away.
  - c. Clarify behind the wheel time which is confusing. Instructors don't know how to communicate with the student or where the interpreter goes in the car. Students are told to figure out their own interpreting, the class will not provide it.
  - d. Make sure the information is available to help driving schools and high schools provide appropriate services and programs for deaf and hard-of-hearing students.
  - e. Have information, curriculum, and all materials available in ASL.
9. Foster Care Report with findings and recommendations was published by CDHH.
  - a. Improve recruitment for people that sign to become foster care parents.
  - b. Improve placement options for deaf children, linguistic needs, and cultural awareness.
  - c. Tracking data on kids who use sign language in the foster system
  - d. Mental health service providers who can focus on children.
  - e. Child Protection Act needs revisited with a component of language neglect.
10. Justice Robyn Brody leads the Language Advisory Committee for the Idaho Supreme Court. I serve on that committee and was asked by her to present at the judicial conference.
11. Collaborating with a group including Jeremy Maxand at LINC about driving services and driver's education for people with disabilities.
12. CDHH launched a Domestic Violence Awareness Program for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. Currently meeting with organizations to see about that program having its own coordinator. CDHH running the program is a conflict of interest as we have to advocate for everyone in the system, victims and perpetrators.
13. Trainings for Law Enforcement and First Responders has been challenging. The Association of Idaho Cities which is a nonprofit, is discussing with CDHH how to provide these trainings in their cities.
14. Idaho Department of Corrections (IDOC) has a new director which has asked us to review their policy in the event of a deaf or hard-of-hearing individual that is arrested.
15. CDHH is working on a bit of rebranding. A CDHH logo is being developed.
16. CDHH's lease will not be renewed as the owners are taking the whole building. Our new location will be close to the State Chinden Campus however that lease agreement is still underway.
17. CDHH has two positions that will need to be filled soon. Jahaira Faber resigned and took a job with Idaho State University. Leah McElwee, our interpreter, is leaving us to relocate to Alaska.
  - a. Communications and Outreach Coordinator, part-time
  - b. Executive Interpreter, full-time

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Action Item - Election of Council Officers**

- Council Chair (currently Steve Birkby)

**MOTION** – Sonny nominated Steve Birkby for Council Chair. Emilie seconded the motion, the motion passes by acclamation.

- Council Vice Chair (currently Emilie Banasiak)

**MOTION** – Valerie nominated Emilie Banasiak for Vice Chair. No second, the motion passes by acclamation.

- Executive Committee 3<sup>rd</sup> Member (currently Valerie Player)

**MOTION** – Steve nominated Sonny Cabbage to 3<sup>rd</sup> Member of the Executive Committee. Emilie seconded the motion. The motion passes without opposition.

#### Action Item - Vote on Budget FY 2027

- Proposed budget of \$673,600 including a new request of \$46,000 for our lease.

**MOTION** – Sonny moved to adopt the budget as proposed. Emilie seconded the motion. The motion carries.

#### Action Item - Vote on Priorities FY 2026

- Priority 1 - Law Enforcement Outreach Training
- Priority 2 – Improvement of State Services
- Priority 3 – Quality Foster Care Services Continuum for Deaf Children

**MOTION** – Valerie moved to accept the Fiscal Year 2026 Priorities as defined. Sonny seconded the motion. The motion passes unanimously.

#### Action Item - Vote on Awards

- 2025 Individual Award of Excellence, Mikkel Nelson
- 2025 Organization Award of Excellence, None

**MOTION** – Sonny moved that Mikkel Nelson receives the Award of Excellence. Valerie seconded the motion. The motion passes unanimously.

#### Action Item – Vote on FY 2026 Quarterly Meeting Dates

- September 19, 2025
- November 21, 2025
- January 15, 2026
- April 17, 2026

**MOTION** – Valerie moved to adopt the proposed meeting dates with flexibility for the January meeting depending on when that works for the legislature. Emilie seconded the motion. The motion passes unanimously.

### EX-OFFICIO MEMBER REPORTS

#### Brian Darcy, Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind

1. May 22<sup>nd</sup> is graduation. There are 20 days of school left.
2. April 30<sup>th</sup> International Dinner fundraiser for the senior class.
3. Basketball team won their first game in 3 years, beating Bliss with 5 blind players on the IESDB team.

4. Track has 15 deaf and hard-of-hearing students & 13 blind, low-vision students.
5. Fortunate to get a 7.4% budget increase.
6. New Positions
  - a. Additional outreach teacher in Region 4
  - b. Additional administrator, Paula Mason will focus on early childhood
  - c. Special Education Director position which is a shift from the vacant principal position
7. Construction Company has been selected and hoping to break ground soon.
8. Vocational Rehabilitation has been a strong partner in our Work Readiness Program but with their recent situation, the program will not be funded. We tried grants, fundraising, all sorts of things.
9. Preschool program is being moved out of West Ada School District. Boise School District stepped up and will put us at Amity Elementary.
10. Treasure Valley Day School is still on the table. Proposal has been made to the Governor.
11. Sawtooth Camp is a go. 14 kids have already signed up.
12. Oh yeah, and I'm retiring. As of June 30<sup>th</sup> I am retiring from my position as administrator for the IESDB. I have been an ex-officio member of this board for around 20 years.

**Miranda Nelson, Idaho Sound Beginnings**

1. Two federal grants funded through Health and Human Services (HHS) which is undergoing a big organizational shift.
  - a. One is through HRSA which we have only received partial notice of award.
  - b. Second grant was applied through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) but they have a big reduction in workforce, so we don't know the impact on our grant.
2. Assessment and data collection through the HRSA grant is already taking place and we can start to see that information will tell us about children's language assessments and their EHDI goals. This will help us improve our program in Idaho.

**Emilie Banasiak, Public Utilities Commission/Idaho TRS**

Last month Kelli and I did a webinar with Idaho Telecom. We discussed the analog to digital conversion and how that could impact TRS.

**ADJOURN**

**MOTION** – Emilie moved to adjourn. Sonny seconded the motion. The motion passes unanimously.

**NEXT MEETING:**

Friday, September 19, 2025, 10 AM – 12 PM over Zoom.