



# Idaho Council *for the* Deaf and Hard of Hearing

12592 W. Explorer Dr., suite 100, Boise, ID 83713

## Quarterly Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 15, 2026, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM Mountain Time

In-Person

CDHH Office - 12592 W. Explorer Dr., suite 100, Boise ID 83713

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

### ATTENDEES

#### Council Members *(quorum = 5 or more than 50% of positions filled)*

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

#### Ex-officio Members

	Steven Snow	<i>Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CDHH)</i>
	Paula Mason	<i>Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and Blind (IESDB)</i>
	Erin Olsen	<i>Idaho Commission on Aging (ICG)</i>
	Monique Marshall	<i>Idaho Sound Beginnings (ISB)</i>
	Jacque Hyatt	<i>Idaho State Department of Education (SDE)</i>
Absent	Kelli Toohill	<i>Public Utilities Commission / Idaho Telecommunications Relay Service (Idaho TRS)</i>
Absent	MiKayla Monaghan	<i>Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)</i>
Absent	Terry Gammel	<i>Idaho Department of Labor (DOL)</i>
Absent	Tabitha Edwards	<i>Idaho Division of Occupational and Professional Licenses (DOPL)</i>
Absent	Vacant	<i>Office of the Attorney General (AG)</i>

#### CDHH Staff

	Steve Snow	<i>Executive Director</i>
	Dawn Wells	<i>Administrative Assistant</i>
	Tara Adams	<i>Human Services Program Specialist</i>
Absent	Vacant	<i>Executive Interpreter</i>

Other Attendees: LaVona Andrew Carson (interpreter), Holly Thomas-Mowery (interpreter), Ray Lockery, Galina, Mikhail

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Council Chair, Steven Birkby, called the meeting to order at 12:57 PM and welcomed everyone. Introductions and representations were made. Open forum discussion on the morning's Meet and Greet at the capitol.

### NEW BUSINESS

**ACTION ITEM – Sonny moved to approve the agenda; Emilie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**ACTION ITEM – Emilie moved to approve the minutes as amended; Sonny seconded the motion. None opposed, motion carries.**

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT, Steve Snow

Everyone has in front of them a Welcome Packet which explains the history of CDHH, our structure, and includes a list of common acronyms that may be used in these meetings.

### At the National Level

- White house has established a YouTube channel for American Sign Language access, restoring access.
- A reminder to all representatives of government agencies that websites must be compliant with ADA requirements for accessibility including social media
- FCC recently strengthened robocall rules by clarifying that consumers, including people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, must be able to revoke consent to robocalls through any reasonable and accessible method, not just voice calls.
- Department of Justice, as of December 2025 has emphasized ADA enforcement activities and focused on DeafBlind activities. An ongoing challenge, especially in medical settings, is fewer qualified interpreters for DeafBlind individuals.
- Facilities like daycares, or YMCA that offer classes often resist providing interpreters. Two states have won their court cases and now those cases apply to all states.
- National Association of State Agencies of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (NASADHH) is a nonprofit organization that includes the executive directors from state all states, of which I serve as vice-president. One common issue is a lack of interpreters throughout the country, especially in healthcare.
  - Some states are conducting studies, and we are really looking at how to create a pipeline for interpreters.
  - One solution would be to specifically hire deaf community healthcare workers. There are some who work throughout the state increasing awareness and providing education about diabetes or a variety of things, but not any that are deaf. Providing that information directly in sign language would reduce the burden of interpreting needs.

### At the State Level

- State agencies had a 3% budget cut including CDHH. As a small agency, we didn't have a lot of places to take that cut so we had to give up our part-time communications outreach position. That puts additional burden on the remaining staff, but further cuts are not anticipated at this time.
- Idaho has a reduction in state revenue, however the state did get \$1 billion federal Rural Health Transformation grant for over 5 years, specific to rural health care. Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals facing barriers in rural areas have been on our radar, so this is a perfect time to move forward.
- DOGE has a state level taskforce looking at agencies like CDHH, IESDB, DHW, DVR, ICDD, Potato Commission, and agricultural commissions. It's important that legislators understand what's on the table and what we bring to Idaho.
- As part of the Cross Disability Task Force (CDTF), we advise City of Boise on accessibility after touring different buildings. Boise Airport is working on improved access.
  - Signs by the gates now have captioned announcements.
  - Sunflower Program is a lanyard or wristband with a sunflower that signals to staff, someone who may need additional assistance.
  - Phase 2 will make live announcements accessible
  - Boise airport will have a large expansion in 2027 and want to ensure accessibility is idea when that expansion opens.
  - Dr. Vore added Auracast allows a single audio source to stream to earbuds, hearing aids, and headphones. It's like a new generation telecoil and could be a useful feature.

- CDHH is looking at DHW policies to make sure their cases are protected with the appropriate interpreting services. Child Protection Services (CPS) that require the use of interpreters, specifically educational interpreters. Even if an educational interpreter holds a valid interpreting license, there is a conflict of interest, so in any CPS situation, using an educational interpreter is inappropriate.

### At the Community Level

- While ISB is doing newborn hearing screenings, Idaho is one of 4 or 5 states that don't mandate hearing screenings. There is a core group in the process of approaching legislature with a bill.
  - A larger second-tier committee will prepare it to go before legislature in the 2027 session.
  - CDHH will bring this to the board for approval at our April meeting.
  - With the board's blessing it goes before the Executive Agency Legislation (EAL) for approval.
- Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections has been reviewing and revising their policies in terms of access for incarcerated juveniles. When that is finalized CDHH will be providing a pre-recorded training for them to put on their training portal. Everyone of their officers will be mandated to take it.
- Promoting Equity in Healthcare Interpreting (PEHI) training grant has been cut. This project was overseen by Dr. Elizabeth Schneidewind and there is some content that is already developed. The work might be able to continue through the Rural Health Transformation grant on a smaller scale.
- CDHH had a vacant full-time interpreting position that has been split into two part-time positions. We are hopeful that skilled community or freelance interpreters will be attracted to this part-time position with benefits.
- Since the move to the new building, the new CDHH website was put on hold. Between IT, the building, and the firewall we did not have access to go through it with the web building team.
- The DMV's Driver's Handbook does not have an ASL version. The written exam has been translated to an ASL version but there is a disconnect with the written handbook. ITD has recently put out a Request for Quote (RFQ) to create an ASL handbook.
- CDHH Holiday Families had 3 families this year. The community support has been tremendous, making such a difference. These bring real joy into the lives of these families, these children.

### EX-OFFICIO MEMBER REPORTS

#### Paula Mason, Idaho Educational Services for the Deaf and the Blind

- January 31, 2026 IESDB will present our budget to JFAC.
- At the IESDB Board Meeting, it was announced that the new superintendent position should post in March
- Transfer of Idaho Sound Beginnings from DHW to IESDB is underway. More about that from Monique's report.
- Kelly Fletcher is the new Career & Technical Education (CTE) teacher. Current pathways courses:
  - Digital Literacy
  - Workplace Learning
  - Personal Finance
  - Request was submitted for a formal Culinary Arts course in the fall.
- Jerome High School wanted to partner with IESDB in their play of the Hunchback of Notre Dame. Four IESDB students will participate including one of them as the hunchback. Our ASL Specialist, Austin is working with the play director on access and how that will look. It's been a beautiful collaboration. Performance is February 18-21<sup>st</sup>.
- Campus Projects
  - This summer campus will be under construction and have limited used. We are getting accessible sidewalks & parking lots, new bus barn, new generators
  - Work Readiness Camp, needs location
  - Sawtooth Camp

- New website is coming but we dont currently have a timeline.

#### **Erin Olsen, Idaho Commission on Aging**

- ICOA website has been renovated. We are currently unable to update information, so the Falls Prevention information is not current. We are still discussing a page on hearing loss and linking to CDHH's website.
- Current ICOA workshops:
  - Chronic pain
  - Diabetes
  - Mind over Matter (incontinence without medical intervention)
  - PTC - Powerful Tools for Caregivers
- Falls Prevention continues. Any person with disabilities has a 2x greater risk for falling. As of last year, there are new brochures on Falls Prevention. We also have Falls Prevention business cards with questions to ask someone who has fallen. For example, have you fallen in the last 6 months? Then there is a QR code with helpful resources.

#### **Monique Marshall, Idaho Sound Beginnings**

- ISB intended to be under IESDB by the end of 2025 but that did not happen.
  - HRSA grants year end is the end of March. ISB will be able to apply for a carryover of funds. When that is approved, we can submit transition paperwork to move from DHW to IESDB.
  - We reached out to CDC about the transition, they said, they will let us know.
- While still under DHW, ISB was able to continue funding and amend contracts with Deaf Mentors so we are transitioning under a contract and still providing as many services as we can.
- Idaho does not mandate hearing screenings. Currently most hospitals and birthing centers have equipment to provide testing, but smaller centers or midwives will pass on the contact information for the parents to reach out and schedule the hearing screenings.

#### **Jacque Hyatt, Department of Education**

- Debbie Critchfield and other leadership have been very supportive of special education needs and finding ways to improve their practices.
- Idaho funding for special education is given to districts per student. Last spring a report stated there was a \$1 million gap in what was needed and what was being provided by Idaho for special education services.
- Discussion for rural services looked at creating regional resource centers to coordinate personnel, maybe shared positions. There is a legislative request to change allocation of some funds to create a center. We would start with east Idaho. This would be an opt-in program to provide direct in-person services.

#### **ADJOURNED**

**ACTION ITEM – Emilie moved to adjourn; Sonny seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 2:54 PM

#### **NEXT MEETING:**

Friday, April 17, 2026

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

In-person at the CDHH office