



TN Department of
Human Services

Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing

2019 Annual Report

Tennessee Department of Human Services

Division of Rehabilitation Services

400 Deaderick Street, Nashville, TN 37243



The Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind & Hard of Hearing (TCDDDBHH) was created in 1978 by the Tennessee General Assembly. The applicable statute can be found at Tennessee Code Annotated 74-4-2102.

An ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 71, Chapter 4, Part 21, relative to the council for the deaf and hard of hearing was enacted by the Tennessee General Assembly and signed by Governor Bill Haslam on May 20, 2013. The act changed the name to the Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing (TCDDDBHH). The act also expanded the council to eighteen members. The Council is located within the Tennessee Department of Human Services and is a part of the Division of Rehabilitation Services.

Our Mission

The Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing exists to serve as an advocate for culturally appropriate services affecting Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing persons through coordination, public awareness, and consultation and education in areas of public service, health care, education, and employment.

Responsibilities

The Tennessee Council for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing has the statutory responsibility to:

1. Advocate services affecting people who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing in the areas of public services, healthcare, education, vocational training, employment, emergency services, resource sharing, and communication;
2. Act as a bureau of information for people who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing to state agencies and public institutions providing health care, employment, vocational, educational services, resource sharing, and emergency services to the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing, and to local agencies and programs;

3. Collect facts and statistics and other special studies of conditions affecting the health and welfare of people who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing in Tennessee;
4. Provide for a mutual exchange of ideas and information on the national, state, and local levels;
5. Encourage and assist local governments and agencies in the development of programs for people who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing;
6. Cooperate with public and private agencies and units of local, state, and federal governments in promoting coordination in programs for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing;
7. Authorize the Executive Director to prepare an annual report and needs assessment to the Council that reviews the status of state services for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing. The Council shall submit the approved report and the needs assessment to the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker of the House of Representatives and make this report available to organizations serving the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing; and
8. Make recommendations for needed improvements and to serve as an advisory body in regard to new legislation affecting the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing.

July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019 Report

Major Activities

The Council was involved in a number of activities during the last fiscal year.

Activities included:

- Provided extensive communication access training covering on-site interpreters, Communication Access Real-time Transcript (CART), Real-Time Texting, computers, CapTel, Video Remote Interpreting (VRI), Video Relay Service (VRS) for consumers and employers, and other information regarding telecommunication equipment. Council members tested communication access software for Video Conference Calls, Communication Access Real-Time

Transcript (CART) mobile, Video Remote Interpreting and Real-Time Text that would benefit Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing TN state employees via laptops and smartphones. TCDDDBHH is working with the six (6) community centers to provide educational workshops focused on understanding and learning how to choose between on-site interpreters and video remote interpreting at local hospitals.

- Continued to consult with the Alternative Workforce Solutions (AWS) Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing employees on the communication access software on their laptops. Employees utilizing AWS have been instructed to use secured networks and the Vital Private Network (VPN) when using communication access software.
- Consulted with an ADA Coordinator at a local hospital concerning the use of Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) and on-site interpreters within the emergency department. Also provided technical assistance regarding effective communication access and patient rights for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing.
- Provided an educational workshop to medical staff members explaining Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) guidelines in a medical setting as it relates to Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing people.
- Hosted meetings to learn concerns and gather feedback from Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing consumers on how to improve statewide services. Information was reported back to Council members and community centers on their behalf. Support was provided to community centers to provide Technology and Deaf Culture workshops. Also, developed training for ADA Coordinators and emergency room staff members regarding ways to communicate with patients who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind or Hard of Hearing in the emergency room when an on-site interpreter is not immediately available.
- Continued to provide information for Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing people by hosting a booth at various events and conferences on behalf of the Tennessee Department of Human Services and TCDDDBHH.

- Hosted workshops to provide training on technology access in the home and workplace for Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing consumers. Training informed learners on how to use technology to access light alerts, fire alarms, security systems and communication access through their smartphones, tablets, and computers. We continue to provide consumers with annual updates.
- A Deaf-Blind Task Force sub-committee continues to develop policy and assist community centers with incentives, hiring, and training for Support Service Providers (SSP), to increase access for Deaf-Blind consumers. The TN Deaf-Blind Coordinator will assist the Council in developing and improving services for people who are Deaf-Blind in Tennessee. TCDDDBHH is continually working with community centers to develop SSP programs (also known as sighted guides) for people who are Deaf-Blind who require these services. TCDDDBHH is assisting community centers in the training and hiring of SSPs for Deaf-Blind consumers. Continued assistance will be given to the centers in order to increase the SSP services across the state.
- A Task Force sub-committee was created to improve the relationship between law enforcement and Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing communities by hosting training workshops on communication access. The Community Centers distributed visor cards for drivers. A new law called the *Deaf and Hard of Hearing Driver Safety Act* was passed. The law established the use of the Vehicle Title and Registration System database system which allows law enforcement agencies access to information identifying drivers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing during a traffic stop.
- The following workshops were provided for staff training at the Community Centers and Tennessee Rehabilitation Centers: Deaf Culture Sensitivity; Video Remote Interpreting and Your Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Patients' Rights: Effective Communication; and Reasonable Accommodations for Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Employees in the Workplace. New educational workshops will be developed in the future.
- TCDDDBHH reviewed ways to improve the level of certification and training of sign language interpreters in the state of Tennessee. More qualified professional sign language interpreters, deaf interpreters, and tactile

interpreters for the Deaf-Blind will be needed to serve persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing. TCDDDBHH facilitated a work group to establish credentials for interpreter licensure in the state of Tennessee. The group recommended licensure, which would require interpreters to meet established requirements to obtain a license in order to practice in the state of Tennessee.

- TCDDDBHH continues to work with the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security and Tennessee Association of the Deaf to distribute resources and provide ongoing support for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Truckers. The Tennessee Highway Patrol and staff members at weigh stations must acknowledge that the state currently has Deaf and Hard of Hearing truck drivers with the standard Commercial Driver License and their special permission of the exemption from the hearing standard requirement by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and National Association of the Deaf.
- Continued to update the TCDDDBHH website and each of the six Community Centers' websites to increase public awareness on research, education, and informational activities about the abilities and capacity of persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, or Hard of Hearing. The updated web address is <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/ds/councils-and-committees/tcddbhh.html>

Community Centers for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing

The Tennessee Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services provides funding for Community Centers for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing in Johnson City, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, Jackson, and Memphis. These Community Centers report to the Council during quarterly meetings and submit their statistical data to the Executive Director of TCDDDBHH who compiles the information for the Division. The Division provides funding in performance based contracts for the six (6) regional community centers to provide:

- Interpreting services
- Information and referral
- Peer counseling and independent living skills

- Hosting educational workshops and Interpreter Training Workshops
- Access to community services
- Service Support Providers for the Deaf-Blind

The following statistics demonstrate the wide array of services provided by the six centers:

Service contacts of Deaf/DB/HH	22,813
Hours of Interpreting Services	64,482
Hours of Interpreting Services at no cost	1,663
Units of Technical Assistance Provided to Employers	206.5
Units of Independent Living Skills Training	556
American Sign Language Classes	591
Workshop/Seminar Hours on Deafness	105
Outreach and Referral	1,692
Support Service Providers for the Deaf-Blind	325.75



Memberships:

Members are appointed to the Council by the Governor and serve voluntarily without compensation. Most seats on the Council are mandated by statute. The current members of the Council are:

April Haggard	Tennessee Association of the Deaf
Naomi Pritikin	Hearing Loss Association of America
Will White	Tennessee Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf
Mandy Johnson	Tennessee Department of Human Services
Robin Beamon	Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security
Dr. Vicki Kirk	Tennessee School for the Deaf
Tiffany Kelley	Tennessee Department of Human Services
James Smith	Deaf Consumer Representative
John Evans	Hard of Hearing Consumer Representative
Eric Fleet	Deaf Consumer Representative
Ken Tedford	Hard of Hearing Consumer Representative
Alex King	Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
Lori Wyke	Deaf-Blind Consumer Representative
Louvisia Conley	Minority Consumer Representative
Rebecca Walls	Tennessee Department of Health
Kodi Ogle	Tennessee Hands and Voices
Monique Brazelton	Tennessee Regulatory Authority
Patrick Sheehan	Tennessee Emergency Management Agency

TCDDDBHH Statewide Goal Plans:

- A mental health provision may be needed for those who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing. Currently, there are no facilities that provide mental and behavioral health services specific to these communities. TCDDDBHH (DHS) assisted in forming the Tennesseans for Behavioral Health Accessibility affiliation in partnership with Disability Rights Tennessee (DRT) and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS). Strategies have been discussed, and a survey has been developed to obtain more specific input from these communities. We only have a few trained interpreters who are certified in mental health interpreting who can serve our mental health clients in working with doctors. TCDDDBHH is invited to attend the Tennesseans for Behavioral Health Access meetings.

- Mental Health Interpreting Services with People who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing: The Centers have a few interpreters who have completed mental health interpreting training. We need to provide more training on how to utilize interpreters to use a practical approach to mental health services with the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing mental health patients.
- More qualified professional sign language interpreters, deaf interpreters, and tactile interpreters for the Deaf-Blind will be needed to serve persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing. Tennessee has developed a bill to propose licensure and should go before the legislation in 2020.
- TCDDDBHH has helped to develop Emergency Awareness and Readiness Services (EARS) in 2008. This group has been very active in training weather spotters, hosting First Aid courses, and providing much needed alerting devices, such as visual smoke detectors. TCDDDBHH has continued to work with EARS in improving effective communication access with live closed captioning and on-site interpreters on local news stations, as well as receiving news alerts via text messaging. Alliances have formed with the National Weather Bureau, Tennessee Emergency Management Agency, Tennessee Association of the Deaf, Tennessee chapters of the Hearing Loss Association of America, and several organizations for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing. TCDDDBHH and EARS are developing the toolkit of the Emergency Access for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing for the six (6) TN centers.
- TCDDDBHH is continuing to support two of the six Tennessee Community Centers: Bridges for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Nashville and Knoxville Center of the Deaf, to improve community services in the Cookeville/Crossville area. Our goal is to improve services and reduce wait time for interpreters to arrive at hospitals, emergency rooms, courtrooms, and police stations. The collaboration between the two centers will strengthen services such as job placement, social work, advocacy, educational workshops, and assistive technology training for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing community in Cookeville/Crossville area.
- TCDDDBHH is approved to develop statistical reports on Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing victims who have experienced domestic violence at home and

had a lack of communication access at courts, police stations, hospitals, workplaces, and other services. We will assist Centers in collecting data to improve services and provide training for the police department, court system, workplace and hospitals.

- TCDDDBHH continues to support the work with the Tennessee Highway Patrol and staff members at weigh stations to acknowledge the legitimacy of Deaf and Hard of Hearing truckers.
- TCDDDBHH representatives continue to attend conferences related to Technology Accessibility for Emergency Message Alerts, Video Remote Interpreting, Interpreting Services, Rehabilitation Services, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Programs, and Accessibility at the workplace for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing. TCDDDBHH is continuing to develop a professional network system that is focused on interactions and relationships of businesses and government services for the benefit of Vocational Rehabilitation and Community Center clients that are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing.

Reported and Submitted by Tiffany Kelley, Area Director

TCDDDBHH Website:

<https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/ds/councils-and-committees/tcddbhh.html>