

Audience members watch the rally that occurred during the 2017 Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Lobby Day.
Credit: Copper & Water



MNCDHH

ANNUAL REPORT

2016–2017



COMMISSION OF DEAF, DEAFBLIND
& HARD OF HEARING MINNESOTANS

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MISSION

The Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing Minnesotans (MNCDHH) is a governor-appointed Commission that advocates for communication access and equal opportunity with the 20% of Minnesotans who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing.

We work with the community to:

- **Identify** barriers to communication access and equal opportunity
- **Develop** solutions
- **Empower** by building community capacity
- **Advocate** through civic engagement

*The beautiful ceiling inside the Capitol Rotunda.
Credit: Copper & Water*



Tactile ASL interpreters, Certified Deaf Interpreters, and computer-assisted realtime transcription provided access to all audience members during the 2017 Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing lobby day. Credit: Copper & Water



Kathleen Marin, from Hearing Loss Association of America - Twin Cities Chapter, testifies at the Senate Aging and Long Term Care Policy Committee Hearing on SF 818, the bill to require training for senior care workers on age-related hearing loss. She is seated next to Senator Karin Housley and MNCDHH Government Relations Director Beth Fraser. Credit: Ryan Johnson

MNCDHH is an advocacy organization that focuses on large system changes and creating new laws designed to improve communication access and equal opportunity. Over a three year period, we successfully passed 19 out of 24 bills, a 79% success rate.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION RESULTS

2017

Number of bills: 10
Number of bills passed: 9
Number of bills not passed: 1

2016

Number of bills: 8
Number of bills passed: 4
Number of bills not passed: 4

Of the four bills that did not pass in 2016, there was one bill we tried again in 2017 and got it successfully passed (acoustical standards).

2015

Number of bills: 8
Number of bills passed: 6
Number of bills not passed: 2

Of the two bills that did not pass in 2015, we adjusted our target area for one bill, tried again in 2016, and got it successfully passed (closed captioning).

A JOINT MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Legislators, Colleagues, Community Members, Advocates, and Friends:

The Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing Minnesotans is pleased to share our annual report. Thanks to your support, we were able to make great progress on our strategic goals and improve outcomes in education, employment, increase awareness and access for people with age-related hearing loss, increase statewide communication access and increase our capacity to provide support to the community.

A lot has happened during these last two years!

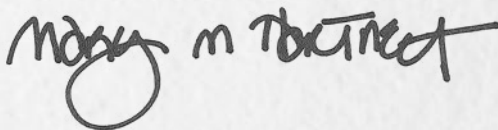
Together with our stakeholders and partners, we:

- hosted the Collaborative Experience Conference for teachers, professionals serving students, and parents of students who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing in both 2016 and 2017;
- led our biennial Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Day at the Capitol in March 2017;
- passed 13 pieces of legislation that increased communication access and equal opportunity with the 20% of Minnesotans who are either deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing,
- organized our largest voter engagement drive ever,
- and so much more!

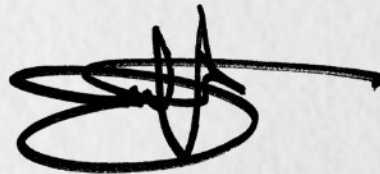
All of our successes are the results of tireless work of legislators, advocates, staff, contractors, and board members; the information shared with us by community members about what barriers they experience in the system that need solutions; and careful, long-term strategic planning.

We look forward to working with you in 2018!

Best wishes,



Mary Hartnett, Executive Director



Jason Valentine, Chair

As a result of working together with all of our partners, we were pleased with the legislative changes in 2016 & 2017.

Senator Fong Hawj speaks at a "Meet Your Legislator" training. Next to him is certified sign language interpreter Megan Bolduc. Credit: Copper & Water



Bills Led by Commission

Education: Increased Funding for Deaf Mentor Family Program

The Deaf Mentor Family Program received an increase in grant funding from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division (DHHSD). The funding request was part of the bill to modernize DHHSD services and increase the funding.

Thanks to Senators John Hoffman, Jim Abeler, and Fong Hawj and Representatives Nels Pierson, Joe McDonald, and Dave Pinto. Thanks to Nikki Fargo, Michele Paulson, and Emily Gold for testifying in support of the funding for the Deaf Mentor Family Program.

Age-Related Hearing Loss: Require Good Acoustics and Hearing Loops in State-Funded Construction

From now on, whenever the state helps pay for construction or remodeling of a public gathering space in which it's important to be able to hear, contractors will be required to consider including good acoustics and hearing loops. They can waive the requirements if it is too expensive. After an initial attempt in 2016, this law in 2017 became the first successfully enacted in the nation and sets a new national standard for accessibility.

Thanks to Senators Ann Rest, John Hoffman, Julie Rosen, Matt Klein, and Dave Senjem as well as Representatives Tama Theis, Jeff Howe, Tim O'Driscoll, and Paul Anderson. We also thank John Wodele for testifying in support of the bill. Thanks also to the chair of the Senate Bonding Committee who tried to get this included in the 2016 bill: Senator Leroy Stumpf.

Age-Related Hearing Loss: Training for Staff at Assisted Living Facilities

This new law clarified that many staff who work with senior citizens could take training about age-related hearing loss and have it count towards their training requirements. The Commission brought together a group of stakeholders to develop the training. The group included Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division, audiologists, and the

University of Minnesota. The student group at the College of Audiology at the U developed an online version of the training, and the U has agreed to host the online training. The bill went into effect on January 1, 2018.

Thanks to Senators Karin Housley, Tony Lourey, Kent Eken, Jim Abeler, and Jerry Relph and Representatives Deb Kiel, Tama Theis, Erin Murphy, Susan Allen and Dave Baker. Thanks to Dr. Mark DeRuiter, Kathleen Marin, and Dr. Rebecca Younk for testifying in support of the bill.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division (DHHSD): Modernize the Services and Increase Funding

The new law modernized the way services are provided statewide for deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing adults and children across the state and increased the funding for DHHSD.

Thanks to Senators John Hoffman, Jim Abeler, and Fong Hawj and Representatives Nels Pierson, Joe McDonald, and Dave Pinto. Thanks to Emily Smith-Lundberg, Bren Ackerson, Jamie Taylor, Jaime Munson, and Casandra Xavier for testifying in support of the bill.

Strengthening MNCDHH: Increase Funding to Expand the Commission's Impact for Advocating with Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans

Funding for the Commission increased by \$370,000 per year. The increased funding allows us to put more information into American Sign Language (ASL), continue our work on age-related hearing loss, and spend more time ensuring that laws are implemented the way they should be.

Thanks to Representatives Dave Baker, Bob Gunther, and Karen Clark. Thank you, John Wodele and Andrew Palmberg, for testifying in support of the bill.

Employment: Keep Accommodation Fund for State Employees

The Accommodation Fund for state employees will continue to receive \$200,000 per year. However, the new law also requires agencies to pay half of the cost for accommodations. We tried to convince legislators to change the new policy, but we were not successful.

Thank you to the legislators, including Senator John Hoffman and Representative Sarah Anderson, who supported keeping the accommodations fund as well as those who tried to keep the original 100% reimbursement policy in place. Thanks to Eric Nooker for testifying in support of the Accommodation Fund, which helped legislators see the value of this funding.

Education: Pre-K at the Metro Deaf School

Parents who want their pre-K children to receive a bilingual education (ASL and English) can send their children to Metro Deaf School. The legislature provided ongoing funding to ensure that parents of pre-K students who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing can choose MDS.



Thanks to the legislators who made this happen: Representative Anna Wills, Representative Jennifer Loon, and Senator Chuck Wiger. Thanks to the parents and MDS staff who testified.

Communication Access: Closed Captioning

Beginning August 1, 2016, the closed captioning on TVs in hospital waiting rooms and surgical centers must be kept on at all times. After that date, if someone has turned the closed captioning off, the staff will have to turn it back on as soon as they reasonably can.

Thanks to the bill authors: Representative Brian Daniels and Senator Alice Johnson. Thanks to Jan McCready Johnson and her husband Neil for bringing the idea for this bill to us and for testifying.

Education: Education Reports Due Every Two Years

The Department of Education will now be required to produce reports about education for deaf and hard of hearing children, as well as blind children, every other year, instead of annually. The change was requested by the Minnesota Department of Education since that timetable would align with the biennial MCA testing schedule and streamline the data reporting.

Thanks to the bill authors: Representative Sondra Erickson and Senator Chuck Wiger.

Board members Emily Smith-Lundberg and Jamie Taylor testify at House Health & Human Services Finance Committee Hearing to testify in support of HF 774, the bill to modernize and increase funding for DHHSD and HF 952, the bill to require training for senior care workers. In between them is Representative Nels Pierson. Credit: Copper & Water

Bills the Commission Voted to Support and Were Led By Others

Education: Funding and Infrastructure for the Minnesota State Academies for the Deaf and Blind

The Education Budget bill included an increase of almost \$2.8 million for the State Academies over the next two years, which allows them to add staff and update resources. They also received over \$2 million to maintain and update buildings on the campuses and to increase safety for students on campus.

Thanks to Senators John Jasinski, Julie Rosen, Torrey Westrom, Sandy Pappas and Carla Nelson as well as Representatives Brian Daniels, David Bly, Dean Urdahl and Jenifer Loon. Special thanks to Minnesota State Academies Superintendent Terry Wilding and Minnesota State Academies students and staff for testifying.

Education: Assistive Technology in Education

The Minnesota Department of Education is required to analyze how students with disabilities use assistive technology. They must give the legislature a report of their findings in February 2018.

Thanks to Senators John Hoffman and Jim Abeler as well as Representatives Sondra Erickson, David Bly, Peggy Bennett, Glenn Gruenhagen and Ron Kresha. Thank you to representatives from PACER and

Jay Fehrman for testifying in support of the bill.

Employment: Funding for Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Vocational Rehabilitation Services received an additional \$3.5 million per year to help ensure that people with disabilities do not have to wait if they need assistance in finding a job or in getting the support they need once they have a job.

Thanks to Senators Jeremy Miller, Bobby Joe Champion and Gary Dahms and Representative Pat Garofalo.

Education: Funding for Adult Basic Education at Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD)

The Budget bill includes \$400,000 for Communication Service for the Deaf (CSD) and two other programs that provide Adult Basic Education programs.

Thanks to the bill author: Representative Jennifer Loon. Thank you also to Senator Chuck Wiger who agreed to include this in the final Budget bill – and to the people who live in his district who called him to ask him to support this.

Jamie Taylor testifies in the Senate Hearing Room. Credit: Copper & Water



MNCDHH GOALS AND RESULTS

The Commission's 2014–2019 strategic plan includes six goals:

- *Improved Educational Outcomes*
- *Increased Employment*
- *Recognition of Age-Related Hearing Loss and Plan to Address it*
- *Improved Communication Access Statewide/
Stronger Regional Advisory Committees*
- *Increased Civic Engagement*
- *Increased Organizational Capacity*

| *Dr. Laurene Simms works with Deaf Mentors and early childhood educators during her VCSL workshop. Credit: InHouse Media*



Improved Educational Outcomes

Often students who are deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing do not get everything they need to be successful, which is something educators, service providers, advocacy organizations, and families are addressing by working together through the Collaborative Plan.

Under the Collaborative Plan, MNCDHH hosts 50 representatives of stakeholder organizations including school districts, state agencies, and advocacy organizations. The stakeholders are equal partners in this collaboration.

The Collaborative Plan groups have been convening since 2010.

Collaborative Plan Steering Committee

The Collaborative Steering Committee provides support and resources to the Collaborative Stakeholder Groups for developing goals and monitoring progress on the Collaborative Outcomes Plan for children and youth who are deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing.

Collaborative Plan Stakeholders Groups

Four workgroups meet together under the Collaborative Plan. The workgroups are set up according to student age and grade levels. They are Birth–Age 5, Kindergarten–Grade 4, Grades 5–8, and Grade 9–Age 21. Together, they accomplish many things.

Accomplishments

- Developed a process that ensures family access to all available resources and information that is accurate, well-balanced, comprehensive, and conveyed in an unbiased manner.
- Posted an online link to the Resources Binder for Families of Children identified as Deaf or Hard of Hearing, which is in e-reader format to make it accessible for families who live in Greater Minnesota.
- Used the Joint Committee on Infant Hearing (JCIH) systems assessment tool to complete a review of services in Minnesota
- Organized Visual Communication and Sign Language (VCSL) training for Deaf Mentors and Early Interventionists.
- Produced a webinar for parents by parents about Developing a Communication and Language Focused IEP: A Discussion Guide.
- Developed mini-lessons for professionals that are associated with Developing a Communication and Language Focused IEP: A Discussion Guide.
- Distributed a survey to collect information from students who are D/HH about accessibility in the classroom.
- Updated the Social Skills Checklist with the Minnesota Department of Education.
- Pursued data from the State Longitudinal Education Data System.
- Provided technical assistance to local school districts about accessible instruction
- Developed a transition-age Post-School Outcomes Survey, which will be sent out to recent graduates every year
- Created a Guide to Adult Services for transition-aged students, their teachers, and their families. Available online and in smartphone app.

Collaborative Experience Conference

Since 2015, the stakeholders of the Collaborative Plan have organized the Collaborative Experience Conference to share ideas and resources for D/DB/HH students with teachers, speech-language pathologists, interpreters, VR counselors, family members, and providers.



Gallaudet University President Roberta J. Cordano, J.D., presents on Understanding Language Acquisition Impacts at the 2017 Collaborative Experience Conference. Credit: InHouse Media



Dr. Elizabeth Walker presents at the 2017 Collaborative Experience Conference on Outcomes for Children with Hearing Loss. Credit: InHouse Media

2017 Collaborative Experience Conference

Over 300 people attended the conference (which is the same from 2016 and 2015). The featured presentation included Dr. Laurene Simms on teaching and successful learning for students with diverse backgrounds, and Dr. Elizabeth Walker on research on whether children with mild to severe hearing loss are at risk for language or academic difficulties, and Roberta J. Cordano, president of Gallaudet University on research shifts in understanding language acquisition impacts in deaf education.

Conference Satisfaction Results

- Extremely satisfied – 50.7%
- Very satisfied – 34.6%
- Satisfied – 13.2%
- Not satisfied – 1.5%

2016 Collaborative Experience Conference

The featured presentations included Susan Easterbrooks on “What’s Really Happening in Literacy Education? Lessons from a National Study;” Mark Rosica on “Social and Emotional Functioning and its Impact on Academic Success;” Linda Lytle on “Weaving Strong Connections in Mainstream Settings;” and Marc Marschark on “How Deaf Children Learn (and why sometimes they don’t).”

Conference Satisfaction Results

- Extremely satisfied: 47.9%
- Very satisfied: 35.4%
- Satisfied: 13.9%
- Not satisfied: 2.8%

Presentations and Published Works

Coordinator of Educational Advancement & Partnerships Anna Paulson participated in the following collaborative efforts:

- Co-presented at the 2016 EHDI conference with Nicole Brown on using "The Joint Commission on Infant Hearing Assessment Document" to measure statewide success.
- Published a position statement along with Becca Jackson and Suzanne Raschke on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Division for Communicative Disabilities and Deafness titled, "Teachers of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing," which expressed support for ensuring that credentialed teachers are used in order to meet the needs of students, also required by IDEA and the ADA. (2017).
- Chaired the Committee on Deaf and Hard of Hearing, which is a part of the Council for Exceptional Children.
- Co-presented with Becca Jackson and Suzanne Raschke at the 2017 Association of College Educators-Deaf/Hard of Hearing (ACE-DHH) event on "Clarifying and Supporting the Role of Teachers of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing."
- Co-presented with Becca Jackson at the 2017 Charting the C's conference on "The Evolving Role of Teachers of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing."

Board members Brenda Ackerson, Michele Isham, Jamie Taylor, Piper (dog), John Wodele, Roberta Johnson, Nancy Diener, and Lloyd Ballinger are shown standing together and smiling in a corridor of the State Office Building. Credit: Copper & Water



Increased Employment

In 2011, MNCDHH board member Alan Parnes proposed that an Employment Task Force be established to address deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing individuals' unmet employment needs. The task force convened from 2011–2015 and set several goals, which MNCDHH included in our current strategic plan.

In 1999, ten percent of state employees had a disability. The number had plummeted to 3.8% in 2014. MNCDHH led negotiations with Governor Dayton's Office that resulted in Executive Order 14-14, an order that requires that state agencies increase the percentage of state employees who self-identified as having a disability to represent at least 7% of all state agencies' workforce by August 2018. Every year, we track the progress made. At the end of 2017, more people with disabilities were hired, and the numbers rose to 6.78%. We led a cross-disability coalition, the Disability Agency Forum. The forum includes the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division, State Services for the Blind, the Minnesota State Council on Disabilities, and the Ombudsman's Office for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, the Olmstead Implementation Office and the MN.IT Office of Accessibility.

The Commission co-created the Executive Order 14-14 landing page that tracks the percentage of employees with disabilities and also has a spreadsheet that breaks it down per state agency. The landing page includes information on disability etiquette and laws and policies. We believe we will reach the goal of 7% by August 2018, the goal set in the order.

Since then, the Commission has played a lead role in increasing the number of people with disabilities in state employment, including but not limited to people who are deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing. In 2016–2017, this included:

Central Accommodations Reimbursement Fund

In 2014, we advocated for legislation that required Minnesota Management and Budget and the Commission

to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of a centralized accommodation fund. We researched the success of programs in other states and surveyed state hiring managers and learned they would be more likely to hire people with disabilities if they knew the accommodation costs would be covered. We submitted the report to the legislature in January 2015 and during the FY15 session introduced and passed a bill that created the fund M.S. 16B.4805. The Central Accommodation Fund was passed with \$200,000 in the base budget. It was launched on December 18, 2015, and housed in the Minnesota Department of Administration and administered by the Minnesota STAR Program. It removes intentional or unintentional bias based on a hiring manager's ability to pay for accommodations. In 2017 legislation was introduced to eliminate the fund. We were able to save it, but the amount was cut to \$100,000 a year and requires a 50% match from agencies requesting reimbursement. Most of the accommodations are for the cost of sign language interpreters and CART. A breakdown of the expenditures can be found on the Department of Administration's Website.

Connect 700 Program

Part of the Governor Dayton's Executive Order 14-14 was to require MMB to relaunch MS 42A.15 the Connect 700 program, a non-competitive work program that allows eligible individuals with disabilities the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to perform a specific job for up to 700 hours and then become eligible for regular employment. The law had been in place since 1981 but hadn't been used. On October 2016, a press conference was held to announce the program relaunch with remarks by Governor Mark Dayton, Olmstead Implementation Office's Executive Director Darlene Zangara, Dr. Colleen Wieck, and Alan Parnes.

MNCDHH led efforts to develop a guide for state hiring managers written by state experts that explain what they should do to make sure the work environment is accessible and welcoming for people

with disabilities and explain how to implement the program. This guide has been distributed to the hiring managers by Minnesota Management & Budget.

Employment Services

The Commission successfully advocated for policy change and funding to ensure ongoing employment supports and transition skills to people who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing. From 2001–2014 funding would get cut for deaf and hard of hearing employment programs. The Commission learned that there were state laws that required that people with mental illness and people with significant disabilities get employment supports, but there was nothing in state law that required the employment supports for people who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing.

In 2014, MNCDHH, along with students and staff from VECTOR and workers and employers who had benefited

from the Minnesota Employment Center, successfully advocated for 268A.16. This law requiring employment services for people who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing also includes grants for adults and employment services for transition-aged youths. We were able to get the policy bill passed in 2014 but didn't get funding. In 2015, we went back and during the special session successfully advocated to have \$1 million added annually to the state's base budget for grants to groups like VECTOR, MEC and Employment Endeavors to provide employment supports for adults and youth who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing. The Department of Employment and Economic Development, Vocational Rehabilitation Services administers the grants program.

MNCDHH staff Emory David Dively, MNCDHH board members Brenda Ackerson, Kathryn Rose, Nancy Diener, and John Wodele are shown during the May 2017 full board meeting. Credit: Copper & Water



Recognition of Age-Related Hearing Loss

One of the goals of the Commission's strategic plan was to have age-related hearing loss (ARHL) recognized as a public health issue. Age-related hearing loss is associated with dementia and the loss of cognitive functions, such as memory. Age-related hearing loss can lead to fatigue, depression, and loneliness. Approximately one in three people over the age of 60 have hearing loss and over half of people older than 75. Of adults aged 70 and older with hearing loss, only 30% have ever used hearing aids. People with age-related hearing loss are more likely to fall. With an aging population, more people will experience age-related hearing loss.

MNCDHH has followed the recommendations of the Age-Related Hearing Loss Task Force (2014–2015, led by Tom Huntley and John Wodele) to improve health outcomes for older adults with age-related hearing loss.

We have worked with the University of Minnesota and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division (DHHS) to develop first-of-its-kind online training for staff at assisted living facilities and home care providers to reduce isolation for senior citizens with age-related hearing loss.

We have advocated for legislation that was passed requiring hearing loops to be considered in all state-funded construction if financially feasible. MNCDHH is working

with Loop Minnesota to develop guidelines for the Bureau of Labor and Industry to guide developers who receive state contracts so they can comply with the new law.

We supported federal legislation that was passed this year to allow over-the-counter hearing aids, which offers adults with suspected mild to moderate hearing loss a new option to get affordable and easily accessible hearing aids. Over-the-counter hearing aids are not expected to be available on the market for a few years as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) must first decide on safety rules and regulations as well as collect public comments.

Publications and Presentations

Deputy Director Emory David Dively presented on good acoustics and looping at the Gov IT Symposium along with Steve Walsh and Rick Korinek of Loop Minnesota and Matthew Wasson of Tierney Brothers (2017).

Emory also presented at HLAA Twin Cities on looping & acoustics (2017).

Board members at the table at a full board meeting (May 2017). Visible are Kathryn Rose, Nancy Diener, John Wodele, Jason Valentine, and Jamie Taylor, and interpreters Paula MacDonald, Shawn Vriezen, and Robyn Lehmann-Doane. Credit: Copper & Water



Improved Communication Access Statewide/Stronger Regional Advisory Committees

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division: Regional Offices

We supported activities to strengthen the capacity of DHHSD Regional Offices. Our activities include:

- MNCDHH board and staff participated in the needs assessment and planning process for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division and the Telephone Equipment Distribution strategic planning process(es).
- Successfully lobbied for new legislation that modernized DHHSD's services and mandated an independent website and higher focus on providing training and resources on topics such as ProTactile American Sign Language.

Dana Wahlberg, director of the Emergency Communication Networks, is speaking during the Text-to-911 press conference. To her side is Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) Shawn Vriezen. On the far side are several individuals representing organizations who are impacted by Text-to-911, including Alicia Lane-Outlaw, National Association of the Deaf (NAD) board member, and Maggie Bangert, an advocate at ThinkSelf Minnesota Deaf Adult Education and Advocacy. Credit: Minnesota Department of Public Safety Emergency Communication Networks

Text-to-911 is Here in Minnesota!

In 2017, the State of Minnesota completed a three-year process to introduce Text-to-911 information sharing, so that people who have any degree of hearing loss have a direct way to communicate with 911 centers. The Commission, along with DHHSD, partnered with the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Communications Office to share the good news about Text-to-911 with Minnesotans who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing.



Increased Civic Engagement

Lobby Day

In 2017, we continued our 16-year tradition of organizing Lobby Day, drawing over 350 advocates to the Capitol for a rally and award ceremony. Some 170 people also made appointments to meet with legislators to discuss key legislation. We hosted several “How to Meet with Your Legislator” trainings: one with Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens, one with Minnesota DeafBlind Association, one with Deaf ABE & Minnesota Deaf Muslim Community, and at the Capitol on Lobby Day. Organizing and hosting this event was successful thanks to the help of legislators, organizations, and community members.

Lobby Day has become a foundational event for the D/DB/HH community, helping to build relationships and commitment to common causes that sustain our work throughout the year.



Voting stickers to wear with pride: DeafBlind & I Vote, Hearing Loss & I Vote, Hard of Hearing & I Vote, Deaf & I Vote. I will vote!



Organizations

- CSD Minnesota
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Role Model Program, the Deaf Mentor Family Program, Minnesota Employment Center, and Minnesota Hands & Voices of Lifetrack Resources
- DeafBlind Services of Minnesota
- Hearing Loss Association of America – Twin Cities
- Keystone Interpreting Solutions (KIS)
- Metro Deaf School
- Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens
- Minnesota Deaf Muslim Community
- Minnesota DeafBlind Association
- Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID)
- Minnesota State Academies
- St. Paul & Minneapolis Black Deaf Advocates



Legislators

- Representative Matt Dean
- Senator Karin Housley
- Senator John Hoffman
- Representative Peggy Flanagan
- Senator Ann Rest
- Senator Fong Hawj

**DEAF, DEAFBLIND
& HARD OF HEARING
Day at the Capitol**



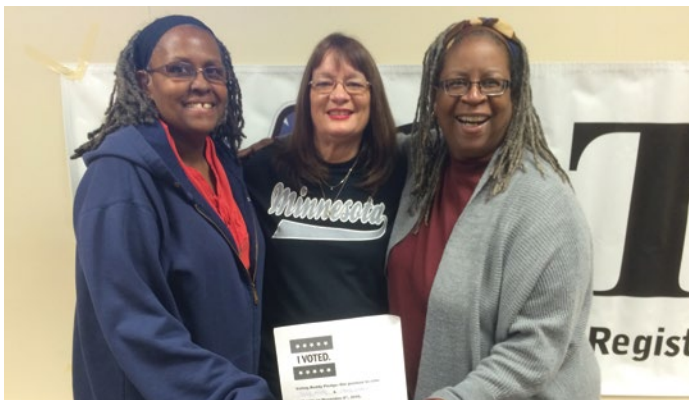
KIS



Voter Education

Before the 2016 election, MNCDHH hired ZenMation to film and edit 14 videos that explain Minnesota's voting process in American Sign Language. The videos also include English voiceover, descriptive transcripts, and closed captions, making them accessible to most Minnesotans, regardless of hearing and vision status and whether they are fluent in ASL, English or both. Sarah Houge, CDI, was the ASL talent and Emory K. Dively, CDI, was the ASL Master. Find the videos on MNCDHH's website, MNCDHH's YouTube account or DeafMN.

We also reached around 400 people at 17 voter outreach activities all over Minnesota with five Deaf contractors leading the workshops. 85% who completed the workshop evaluations said that they felt more confident about voting after the workshop. We hired 5 Deaf Outreach & Civic Engagement Specialists to teach the workshops. They are Jessalyn Akerman-Frank, Fardowsa Ali, Sarah Arana, Kim Wassenaar, and Shawn Vriezen.



Cheryl Moody, Cheryl Anderson, and Kim Wassenaar (MNCDHH's Outreach & Civic Engagement Specialist) at a voting workshop in 2016. They are members of Minneapolis-St. Paul Black Deaf Advocates.



Steve Oglesbee tries out an accessible voting machine.

Removed Barriers to Voting

Throughout 2016–2017, MNCDHH board member, Jamie Taylor, and community member Jessalyn Akerman-Frank served on the Disability Advisory Board for the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State. Jamie and Jessalyn provided important deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing perspectives on voting barriers and other civic engagement related issues.

For example, they tested out different voting machines used in specific counties. They hosted an event so that deafblind community members could try out the various accessible voting machines and ask questions. They trained Election workers on how to work with voters who are deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing on topics such as the role of Support Staff Providers (SSPs).

Jamie and Jessalyn also helped the Secretary of State's office with the language used on their website about accessible voting.

Outreach & Civic Engagement Specialists Sarah Arana, Jessalyn Akerman-Frank, and Shawn Vriezen at a voting workshop in Duluth. They are holding up a sign that says VOTE.

Increased Organizational Capacity to Support and Report our Work

In April 2017, we hosted a community conversation to allow people to offer feedback about what the Commission was doing. The community conversation helped us understand we needed to increase our two-way communications. In response, we created a full-time Director of Community Engagement position. We also launched “Ask MNCDHH,” an online form that community members can use to send us their questions for us to respond to either through a newsletter or directly to the person asking. Also, we began sending out surveys on various topics for the community to send us feedback.

Anna Paulson, Jessica Eggert, and dog Matt are chatting at Mall of America during a ProTactile Rocks event.



Our high-performing MNCDHH staff, contractors, and vendors have increased the Commission's ability to get the work done:



Mary Hartnett, *Executive Director*

Emory David Dively, *Deputy Director*

Anna Paulson, *Coordinator of Educational Advancement & Partnerships*

Beth Fraser, *Government Relations Director*

Anne Sittner Anderson, *Communications Coordinator*

Jessalyn Akerman-Frank, *Director of Community Engagement & Project Management*

Dalena Nguyen, *Project Analyst Intern*

Fardowsa Ali, *Outreach & Civic Engagement Specialist*

Sarah Arana, *Outreach & Civic Engagement Specialist*

Emory Kevin Dively, *Outreach & Civic Engagement Specialist*

Shawn Vriezen, *Outreach & Civic Engagement Specialist*

Kim Wassenaar, *Outreach & Civic Engagement Specialist*

AllOut Marketing Inc.

Copper & Water

Digiterp Communications

Commission Members

Jason Valentine, *Chair; At-Large Member*

Brenda Ackerson, *Vice Chair; Upper Northwest Region Representative*

John Wodele, *At-Large Member*

Lloyd Ballinger, *Southeast Region Representative*

Rosanne Kath, *West Central Representative*

Kathryn Rose, *Metro Region Representative*

Emily Smith-Lundberg, *At-Large Member*

Jamie Taylor, *At-Large Member*

Rebecca Thomas, *At-Large Member*

Peggy Nelson, *At-Large Member*

Dr. Mohamed Mourssi-Alfash, *At-Large Member*

Michelle Isham, *East Central Representative*

