

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH)

Mental Health Advisory Committee Meeting

Final, approved 2.27.2025

Date: Thursday, August 15, 2024

Time: 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Location: 4600 Valley Rd. Lincoln, NE 68510

Interpreters: Ben Sparks and Margie Propp

Minutes: Gina Petersen

CART: N/A

Members Present: Cody McEvoy

NCDHH Staff Present: Kim Davis, Sakura Yodogawa-Campbell

Technical Advisors Present: Scott Loder, Diane Meyer

Members Absent: Erik Decker, Briana Stradinger, Linda Witmuss

Technical Advisors Absent: Sara Peterson, Ronda Rankin

I. Meeting call to order:

Mr. Cody McEvoy called the meeting to order at 2:11 PM.

Mr. McEvoy announced the notice of the meeting was duly given, posted, published, and tendered in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, and all board members received notice simultaneously by email. Publication of official notice of the meeting appeared in a legal documents, local documents and general circulation in this state, as required by the Open Meetings Act.

II. Approval of the Agenda:

Not enough members were present to meet quorum; approval of the agenda was tabled until the next meeting.

III. Approval of prior meeting minutes for 5.16.2024

Not enough members were present to meet quorum; approvals of the meeting minutes from February 15th, 2024 and May 15th, 2024 were tabled until the next meeting.

IV. Discussions

- **Introductions**

- Mr. Cody McEvoy introduced himself as a counselor for the deaf and Hard of Hearing from Boystown who contracts with MRP to travel to different mainstream schools in Omaha to work with Deaf and Hard of Hearing children K-12, and occasionally in transition programs.
- Mr. Scott Loder introduced himself to the group, sharing that he has worked for DHHS Behavioral Health at the Lincoln Regional Center for 46 years, from direct care to administration to advocacy and compliance. Mr. Loder stated that he is currently a recovery specialist/peer support specialist and patient advocate.
- Ms. Kim Davis shared that the full commission board appointed Mr. Loder back in June to be a voting member of the Mental Health Advisory Committee. Ms. Davis stated that Scott adds a lot of value to the group as well as ADA coordination services for the Lincoln Regional Center and experience with culturally deaf individuals as well as deaf/blind individuals.
- Ms. Diane Meyer introduced herself to the group as the coordinator for the Omaha Metro Regional Program (MRP), covering 8 counties. Ms. Meyer shared that her program provides activities for students and professional development for parents and families in order to support the social/emotional. Activities can be regional or statewide and are typically at no cost and overnight, apart from K-5 activities. MRP contracts with Boystown to provide mental health counseling and is fortunate to have Cody McEvoy and Jill Dibbern-Manhart as a team.
- Ms. Davis clarified for Mr. Loder that there are five voting members of the group, four of which are active with the vacant position having been filled by Mr. Loder. The other positions are technical advisory positions.

Discussion on advisory positions within MHAC

- Ms. Kim Davis introduced herself to the group as the current representative for the leadership team at NCDHH. Ms. Davis, along with Kelsey Cruz, are acting as interim directors for the agency as it does not currently have an executive director. Ms. Davis explained that her role at The Commission is Lead Advocacy Specialist, and she has been at the commission almost 14 years.
- Ms. Davis announced that she is thrilled to introduce Ms. Sakura Yodogawa as the new Behavioral Health Specialist for The Commission. Ms.

Yodogawa brings a lot of experience to the agency and has also been involved in the agency in the past.

- Ms. Sakura Yodogawa introduced herself to the group. Ms. Yodogawa explained that she originally went to college at Iowa Western for Sign Language interpreting and ended up switching her major to theater but carried her experience with ASL and Deaf Culture with her. Ms. Yodogawa spent ten years working in the reproductive healthcare system, educating a lot of Deaf youth. Ms. Yodogawa both worked at and volunteered for the Women's Center for Advancement (WCA) and was on the attorney general's anti-human trafficking task force which worked with law enforcement and service providers to educate them on anti-trafficking.
- Ms. Yodogawa announced that she will be celebrating 22 years in recovery this month and has trained people across the state on trauma and its impact on mental health. Ms. Yodogawa shared that she is happy that this position allows her to pull in all her favorite work positions and passions and tie it all into one position.
- Ms. Yodogawa mentioned that she was previously on this Committee and worked with Peggy Williams while at the WCA to write a grant for money to provide trainings, so The Commission partnered with the WCA to provide training for interpreters, service providers, Deaf and Hard of Hearing clients, and purchased equipment for the domestic abuse shelter program in the Omaha area.
- Mr. Scott Loder asked Ms. Yodogawa what the process is for voting with vs without quorum. Ms. Yodogawa explained that if quorum is met next meeting, then the committee will have to approve the agendas and meeting minutes from February, May and today.
- Mr. Loder asked what the number for Quorum is, to which Ms. Yodogawa replied that there are only 4 voting members so at least 3 must be present.

V. NCDHH Agency Updates

- Management Team reports
 - Ms. Kim Davis announced to the group that The Commission has partnered with Innivee strategies to do a nationwide search for an executive director. There are 5 different phases and They currently in the 2nd phase. A survey has been posted on The Commission's Facebook page, with today being the last day to fill it out. Hopefully someone will be hired before the end of the year

- Ms. Davis shared that summer has been very busy for all staff within the agency. There have been a lot of outreach events, such as baseball games and zoo days. The agency is doing a lot of promotion to get the word out about NCDHH, attending nationwide conferences. Two of NCDHH's advocacy specialists are going to the Association of Late Deafened Adults Conference (ALDA) in Florida, as their presentation proposal was accepted and will be presented at that conference.
- Behavioral Health Coordinator Reports
 - Ms. Sakura Yodogawa shared that she attended Pride in Omaha and is also partnering with the Kim Foundation to collaborate with NCDHH to build community relationships and awareness. Ms. Yodogawa stated that she has been in contact with her extensive professional circle and is also working on use of the enrichment grant funding, for which she has been in touch with a presenter, Rachel Pointer, who will be coming to Nebraska to present a workshop on self-advocacy for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing on October 24th.
 - Ms. Yodogawa shared that she is working with Ms. Davis on putting together another grant application to get funding for next year in order to host a 2-day workshop.
 - Ms. Yodogawa shared that she has a presentation coming up with Project Harmony in September to educate 4 service providers on working with Deaf/Hard of Hearing clients, how to find an interpreter and why you need one, and if you don't have an interpreter where to go to get one or how else to communicate with someone in front of you.
 - Ms. Diane Meyer asked Ms. Yodogawa to touch base during her presentation on the reminder that even though the police department says to use the school interpreter or whoever was transporting the child, that will not work. Mr. McEvoy agreed with Ms. Meyer, stating that it is a constant reminder that must be made to law enforcement. Ms. Davis mentioned that that State Law requires that interpreters must be licensed in Nebraska regardless, so educational interpreters should not be used.
 - Ms. Meyer clarified that the educational interpreter is usually present until the licensed interpreter arrives and then takes a backseat to them. However, there have been 3 situations in which Ms. Meyer was told that the educational interpreter will be used and was told that she would be arrested if she did not let the educational interpreter be used, despite being told the state law.

- Mr. Scott Loder asked the group if the Commission has access to the DHHS legal department in the event that law officers aren't observing statutes.

Discussion on working with law enforcement

- Ms. Diane Meyer mentioned to Ms. Yodogawa that another thing to touch on is asking for Caution: Deaf Child signs to be placed in areas where they are necessary. Ms. Davis added that children still need to be taught to stop and look, even if the sign is there.
- Ms. Davis mentioned that she was contacted by Amy Tyler Krings with information on the Project Lifesaver program, which includes organizations working with the police for Autism and other diagnoses, if someone gets lost it will send an alert to the team who is monitoring. Ms. Meyer mentioned that it works similar to Life Alert.

VI. Committee Member Updates

- Ms. Diane Meyer shared that in July the statewide sign language development workshop was held, which was very well received. Family camp is planned for this year in Cozad, Nebraska, starting Friday night, lasting all day Saturday and until Sunday. There will be activities for families to interact and learn sign, moving through the curriculum together and then coming together for the weekend to sign.
- Ms. Meyer announced a Sign Skills conference in March for interpreters, professionals and parents in Kearney. Space camp will also be this in October for 8th 9th and 10th graders.
- Mr. Cody McEvoy shared that schools is now in session and that he has been working with Jill to reach out to families and students, doing a lot of networking. Mr. McEvoy also attended pride, commenting that the event was very big
- Mr. Scott Loder shared that he finished all his ADA coursework and will be taking his examination soon. Mr. Loder called attention not a comment previously made regarding art therapy and emphasized the importance of it as a way to connect, express, and process emotions, mentioning also that such programs often get "lost in the weeds."
- Mr. Loder announced that there will be a mental health awareness walk in September.
- Ms. Sakura Yodogawa mentioned that next month there is suicide prevention week and Mor Tomorrows Chalk it up event. Through the Kim foundation you

can request free kits of chalk to draw positive things outside, and there will be a suicide prevention walk in Omaha.

- Mr. Scott Loder shared that he neglected to mention his work with Brian health on the mental illness awareness committee for about 10 years. They bring in speakers to talk about mental health and the stigma surrounding it.
- Ms. Diane Meyer asked Mr. Cody McEvoy if Deaf Centric Hospital will be taking place in the spring, to which Mr. McEvoy replied that Ronda Rankin had the ball rolling and would be the best person to contact regarding that.
- Ms. Diane Meyer mentioned that law enforcement should have something similar, to which Ms. Davis responded that she and Ashley Altman, Youth and family Advocacy Specialist, are working on developing new training materials, but it seems it must be limited to 2 hours or most will not participate. Ms. Davis also suggested looking into the announcement that the state patrol and local police department and how they will be doing that.

VII. Next Meeting Date

- Thursday, November 14, 2024 via Zoom

VIII. Meeting adjournment

- Mr. Cody McEvoy Adjourned the meeting at 3:35 PM.