

QUARTERLY REPORT

APRIL 1 - JUNE 30



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OUR MISSION

Provide effective and efficient leadership, education, advocacy and programs to eliminate barriers and to meet the social, economic, educational, cultural, intellectual and health and human services needs of deaf and hard of hearing Kentuckians.



OUR MANDATES

KRS 163.510

- 1) The commission shall advise the Governor and the General Assembly concerning policy and programs to enhance the quality and coordination of services for the deaf and hard of hearing.
- 2) The commission shall cooperate with and assist local, state and federal governments and public and private agencies in the development of programs for the deaf and hard of hearing.
- 3) The commission shall review legislative programs relating to services to deaf and hard of hearing persons and shall conduct studies of conditions affecting the health and welfare of the deaf and hard of hearing.
- 4) The commission shall oversee the provision of interpreter services to the deaf and hard of hearing and may provide services if necessary.
- 5) The commission shall establish procedures for the application and distribution of specialized telecommunications equipment by the promulgation of administrative regulations in accordance with provisions of KRS Chapter 13A.



2024-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Goal 1: Transition of Agency – To create a healthy and effective work culture that promotes staff empowerment and operational efficiency.

Goal 2: Equal Access to Education and Employment – To advocate for and drive systematic changes to ensure equal rights, accessibility, and opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing individuals to receive a quality education and secure gainful employment.

Goal 3: Accessible Health Care – To ensure that individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing have equal access to healthcare services, communication, and information, thus promoting their overall health and well-being.

Goal 4: Safe Communities – To ensure the safety, well-being, and equitable treatment of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in all aspects of community life, including emergency preparedness and the criminal justice system.

Goal 5: Hearing Loss Awareness – To increase the general public's awareness and understanding of hearing loss, its prevalence, and impact on individuals and society.



Commission Meeting Minutes

**Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
185th Quarterly Commission Meeting
April 25th, 2025
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tommy Evans, Melissa Kelly, Michelle Niehaus, Jason Smith, Jeannie Taylor, Nancy Perry, Barbie Harris, Sarah Roof, Mona McCubbin, Marva Johnson, Alexander Ansley, Anita Dowd, ELC Secretary Jamie Link, Amy Hatzel (Emeritus)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Gerry Gordon-Brown, John Perry

STAFF PRESENT: Anita Dowd, Rachel Morgan, Emily Kimbell, Blake Campbell, Mikayla Qualls

COMMUNICATION FACILITATORS: Laura Kogut, Linda Bozeman, Shannon Grider

VISITORS: None

MR. EVANS CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 12:36 PM.

Mr. Evans asked the Commissioners to review the previous meeting's minutes and to suggest any changes. Ms. Dowd noted a correction on page 4: "KBI" should be "KYRID" regarding the spring conference plans.

MS. TAYLOR MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS COMMISSION MEETING WITH MS. DOWD'S REVISION. MS. HARRIS SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED WITHOUT DISCUSSION.

MS. HARRIS MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING AS READ. MS. KELLY SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED WITHOUT DISCUSSION.

Reports

Chair's Report

Mr. Evans began by reporting that Gerry Gordon-Brown (KAD) and Alexander Ansley (A.G. Bell) have been reappointed to their Commission seats by Governor Beshear. He also mentioned that most evaluations for Executive Director Anita Dowd had been received.

A significant portion of the Chair's report focused on the Board Composition Review. This review, initiated by feedback suggesting a need to restructure the board, is intended to ensure optimal representation for the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities. A subcommittee developed proposed changes, and a survey was conducted to gauge Commissioners' opinions.

The recent survey results showed overwhelming support for several additions: a service provider for deaf and blind individuals (15 yes), replacing AARP with an aging and independent living representative (14 yes), a vocational rehabilitation representative (14 yes), an educational service provider (15 yes), two consumers at large who are deaf or hard of hearing (14 yes), and two service providers who are deaf or hard of hearing (14 yes).

Regarding the implementation of the proposed changes, Ms. Dowd explained that since KCDHH was established by statute, any changes will require action by the General Assembly. She is currently researching state guidelines and regulations concerning board composition, particularly regarding Governor-appointed seats and other potential restrictions, to ensure compliance before finalizing any decisions. Ms. Taylor stressed the importance of understanding these next steps and potential risks, especially concerning the opening of statutes. ELC Secretary Link offered his office's assistance in researching the necessary legal framework. Ms. Dowd confirmed she had already begun discussions with the cabinet and expressed a desire to address this under the current administration, citing a supportive environment. Ms. McCubbin and Mr. Evans highlighted the need to balance statutory requirements with community needs and maintain the representation of deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals on the board. Ms. Niehaus pointed out that many relevant statutes were written shortly after the ADA and that representation needs have evolved. Mr. Evans thanked everyone for their input.

On a personal note, Mr. Evans shared that this would be his last meeting as Chair due to increasing personal commitments, though he will remain on the board. He expressed his gratitude for the board's support during his tenure. The Commissioners also expressed their thanks to Mr. Evans for his service.

THE CHAIR'S REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

Agency Report

Ms. Dowd began the Agency Report by noting staffing changes. She celebrated the hiring of Mikayla Qualls as Interpreter II and noted that decisions on the Executive Administrative Secretary and Information Officer positions were pending.

Ms. Dowd next reported on a recent "Common Ground" meeting involving various organizations serving deaf and hard-of-hearing children. She highlighted ongoing challenges with Kentucky's early intervention system, stating it often fails to appropriately serve all eligible children despite regulation changes. The agency is exploring ways to navigate these issues and is working to align with new HERSA grant requirements for the EHDI system, which now emphasize language acquisition. This led to a discussion about board representation for early intervention: Mr. Evans suggested adding an early intervention representative to the board. Ms. Niehaus proposed that a Public Health representative (where early intervention is housed) could take her current CHFS seat. Ms. Roof suggested a mandated early intervention position on the board. Secretary Link inquired about the fiscal impact of potential legislation, and while no specific costs were put forward, the cost of not serving the community was noted.

Regarding the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), Ms. Dowd shared plans to meet with KDE representatives to foster a supportive relationship. Ms. Dowd expressed that a significant goal for KCDHH is to become a testing site for various interpreter certifications to help address the shortage of qualified interpreters in schools. Nancy Perry underscored the problem of schools hiring individuals with inadequate sign language skills and emphasized the need for proper certification like the SLPI.

Turning to new developments, Ms. Dowd noted a growing relationship between KCDHH and the Department of Dementia. The Department is increasingly recognizing the link between hearing loss and dementia and plans to integrate hearing loss considerations into its initiatives, including public education and support for the DHH community regarding dementia care.

Mr. Evans stressed the lack of coverage for hearing aids under Kentucky Medicaid for adults, contrasting it with Ohio's policy. While a recent bill in the Kentucky General Assembly for children's hearing aids showed promise, it did not pass due to time constraints. Concerns were raised about over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids, with Ms. Dowd highlighting the problems of improper fitting and user discouragement. Past attempts to include hearing aids in the Telecommunication Access Program (TAP) were recalled by Ms. Taylor and Rachel Morgan, noting the complexities involved. Mr. Smith questioned the discrepancy in insurance coverage between cochlear implants and hearing aids. Mr. Evans clarified that Medicare generally does not cover hearing aids, while Medicaid coverage varies by state.

To conclude, Ms. Dowd provided an update on the Moore Safe Nights Program. Issues with some radios not functioning correctly are being addressed, with distribution paused until the issues have been resolved. The volunteer nature of local emergency management personnel presents challenges in troubleshooting.

THE AGENCY REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

Before New Business began; Laura Kogut was recognized for her many years of service as a CART provider for the Commission. Commissioners thanked her and wished her well on her upcoming retirement.

Old Business/New Business/Open Forum

To open the Commission's yearly elections, Ms. Kelly was re-elected as the Service Provider representative. Ms. Hatzel and Ms. Taylor were unanimously approved as Board Emeritus members for a one-year term.

In the Executive Board officer elections, Ms. McCubbin was elected as the new Chair. Ms. Roof was elected as Vice-Chair. After a self-nomination from Ms. Harris and the existing nomination for Ms. Kelly, Ms. Kelly was elected as Secretary. Ms. Taylor reminded the board that the new officers would select two members at large for the Executive Board, and anyone interested in serving should express that to the new leadership. Mr. Evans assured Ms. McCubbin of a transition meeting and ongoing support for the new Executive Board.

Announcements

Mr. Evans announced that the next Executive Board meeting will be held on June 6, 2025, via Zoom. The next full Commission meeting will be on July 25, 2025, in person at the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet in Frankfort, from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm.

MS. PERRY MOVED TO ADJOURN. MS. KELLY SECONDED. The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 pm.



Executive Board Meeting Minutes

**Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
186th Executive Board Meeting
June 6, 2025 via videoconference**

Executive Board Members Present: Anita Dowd, Tommy Evans, Barbie Harris, Melissa Kelly, Michelle Niehaus, Mona McCubbin, Jeannie Taylor

Executive Board Members Absent: Sarah Roof

Staff Present: Anita Dowd

Communication Facilitators: Tracy Lundergan, Lindsay Devine and Mikayla Qualls

Mr. Evans (the Chair) called the meeting to order at 11:15 a.m. and requested members review the minutes from the previous Commission Meeting. He noted that this was a special meeting to begin the leadership transition to Mona McCubbin.

Ms. Taylor moved to accept the minutes as written. Ms. Harris seconded. The motion was carried unanimously without further discussion.

COMMISSION CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. Evans opened the Chair's Report by asking Ms. Dowd to report on relevant updates to the Commission Board composition review.

Ms. Dowd met with Secretary Link, Deputy Secretary Wise, and the Cabinet's legal counsel regarding potential changes to KCDHH's governing statute. Secretary Link expressed two main concerns: that opening statute is always risky, and that a short legislative session may limit the Governor's ability to support issues not directly related to the budget but stated that the Cabinet would set a meeting to discuss moving forward. Ms. Dowd later reached out to those that were in the meeting and noted her concern regarding the current political climate surrounding DEI initiatives. This has led her to question if this would be the right time to attempt modifying the statute. Secretary Link stated that he would support KCDHH decision either way.

Ms. Niehaus suggested conducting a formal risk assessment to make an objective decision. She proposed speaking directly with Secretary Link to understand the risks versus the benefits of moving forward now.

Ms. McCubbin asked for clarification on what actions could be taken that do not require legislative change. Ms. Dowd confirmed that the makeup of the board is defined by law and cannot be altered without opening the statute.

Ms. Niehaus proposed the creation of a study group for the next 1-2 years. This group would function as a pilot project, inviting the types of representatives they would want on the board to discuss what representation should look like in 2025.

This idea received broad support from the board members to continue the work without the immediate risk of legislative action. Ms. Taylor supported the idea based on her positive experience leading a past study group for the deaf-blind community. She stressed that for it to be successful, it must have a strong, detailed proposal with clear goals and action items, noting that it will be a lot of work.

Ultimately, the board reached a consensus to take the study group concept back to the existing subcommittee. The subcommittee will discuss the idea, including Ms. Dowd's reservations and Ms. Niehaus's proposal, and develop a tangible plan to move forward. This plan will then be brought back to the full board by the new chair, Ms. McCubbin.

AGENCY REPORT

Ms. Dowd began by announcing that Ms. Samantha Kapsal has officially joined KCDHH as the Executive Administrative Secretary. The Information Office Supervisor and Administrative Specialist II positions are waiting to be filled.

KCDHH is re-establishing a testing center for both RID (CASLI) and EIPA interpreter certifications. There will be a strong focus on developing training and support for K-12 educational interpreters to improve recruitment and retention.

KCDHH will partner with Kaylie Hatzel, a graduate student in public health, on her research project focusing on health literacy for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. This project will partner with the Community Impact Council (CIC) and has plans to collect data and develop online training for healthcare providers and the DHH public.

Dr. Petrey from the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) has requested KCDHH assistance in creating staff training on various topics related to hearing loss. This will be an ongoing collaboration.

Ms. Dowd will co-present with Dr. Ingrid Edwards (audiologist from Heuser) at an upcoming dementia conference to discuss the intersection of aging, dementia, and hearing loss.

Initial discussions have started regarding DeaFestival 2026. KCDHH is waiting for its funding partner, KCD, to finalize administrative matters before booking a date and venue.

To conclude, Ms. Dowd announced that she will be having cataract surgery on July 14th and July 21st and will keep the board informed of her work availability during her recovery.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOARD TRANSITION

Mr. Evans will schedule a transition meeting with incoming officers Ms. McCubbin, Ms. Roof, and Ms. Kelly to discuss agenda planning, best practices, and other operational details.

The new executive officers (Ms. McCubbin, Ms. Roof, Ms. Kelly) are currently tasked with selecting two members at large for the e-board.

Ms. Kelly noted that Ms. Harris and Jason Smith had expressed interest. Ms. Taylor recommended Ms. Niehaus for consideration, who stated she is willing to be considered. To ensure transparency, a reminder will be sent to all commissioners inviting them to self-nominate for the at-large positions. The bylaws state that the Chair (Ms. McCubbin) appoints these members in consultation with the other officers.

Mr. Evans will work with Ms. McCubbin and staff to finalize the implementation of the new commissioner shared drive.

Ms. Dowd will schedule a day for Ms. McCubbin and Ms. Roof to visit the office for an in-person orientation and to meet the staff.

Ms. Taylor encouraged the new e-board to familiarize themselves with the bylaws, emphasizing their importance in guiding and protecting the board.

OPEN FORUM/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Niehaus and Ms. McCubbin formally thanked Mr. Evans for his dedicated leadership during a significant period of transition for the Commission.

The next full board meeting is scheduled for Friday, July 25, 2025, from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. Dates and times for future e-board meetings are to be determined by the new executive board.

Ms. Taylor moved to adjourn, and Ms. Harris seconded.

Adjournment: 12:39 p.m.



Agency Report

ICON KEY



Community Support



Conference



Meeting



Outreach



Personnel



Presentation



Social Media



Training

REQUESTS AND CONTACTS

REQUEST:

When a person or organization asks KCDHH for assistance.

CONTACT:

Interaction between KCDHH staff and the person/organization asking for assistance (and sometimes others) in order to gather additional information, provide appropriate information, services, and resources.

i.e. emails, phone calls, letters, meetings, text messages and other forms of communication.

Administrative Activities

PERSONNEL



The Executive Administrative Secretary position has been filled. The Information Office Supervisor and Administrative Assistant II positions remain vacant. **(GOAL 1)**



On April 11, the Executive Director and Information Coordinator met with **National Association of State Agencies of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NASADHH) Law Enforcement Training committee** virtually. Maine joined the meeting to provide information about the new curriculum that was added to state law enforcement training after the October 25, 2023 mass shooting that claimed 18 lives, including four that were deaf. The committee is taking a closer look at the ME curriculum as it is current and addresses many of the objectives that have been priorities since this committee was formed. **(GOAL 4)**



The Executive Director and Information Coordinator gave a presentation titled Silent Emergency: Communicating with Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Emergency Situations on April 16 at **Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Volunteer Summit** in Louisville. The presentation focused on helping MRC volunteers, ranging from medical professionals to morticians, understand how to effectively communicate with DHH individuals during emergencies. KCDHH also had an exhibitors booth to share information and resources related to KCDHH and its programs and services. **(GOAL 4)**



The Executive Director attended the St. Joseph's Health **Patients and Families as Partners (PFAP) Council** virtual meetings on April 15 and June 17. Regional facilities shared their experiences during the May 16 Somerset/London tornado event. Online patient and family information has been updated, and members were asked to review it and provide feedback. The 'Walk a Mile' program was introduced. This program involves leadership and council members posing as patients during overnight stays in order to observe different shifts, experience facility meals, and gain other valuable patient care insight and provide feedback based on their experience. This will be very similar to "secret shoppers." **(GOAL 3)**



The Executive Director gave a presentation titled "Understanding Hearing Loss" at the **Hodgenville Women's Club** on April 15. The presentation was an introduction to hearing loss and its impacts. **(GOAL 5)**



On April 22, the Executive Director met with the Health Program Administrator and the Audiology Services Administrator with the **Kentucky Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI)** program along with other stakeholders to discuss the disparity within the Kentucky EHDI data that is reported to the CDC annually. The EHDI staff were able to explain some of the gaps in the data and what they are currently doing to improve it. **(GOAL 2)**



On May 1 and June 4, the Executive Director met with the Director and the Connector from the **Regional Early Acquisition of Language (REAL) South** and the Kentucky Hands & Voices (HV) Executive Director to discuss the current state of the KY Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program. REAL South is a collaboration between Gallaudet University's Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center and Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) and their mission is to ensure every child has access to language and that each family has the resources they need to thrive. The purpose of these meetings was to identify gaps in state data, identify possible missing stakeholders and look at different EHDI models across the U.S. to determine if any of them would help address the current gaps in the KY EHDI system. These meetings will be ongoing **(GOAL 2)**



The Executive Director and Information Coordinators met virtually with the Executive Director of the **Office of Victims Advocacy** on April 29. The meeting was held to discuss the possibility of KCDHH developing a training for victim advocates who work in local prosecutors' offices across Kentucky on how to work with DHH victims effectively. KCDHH has agreed to create the training, and it will take place in August. **(GOAL 4)**



During this quarter the Executive Director and Information Coordinators have had several meetings with a **Public Health graduate student** who must design an applied research project addressing a community health issue as part of her degree requirements. She is interested in health literacy for deaf and hard of hearing as well as other issues related to hearing loss so the KCDHH staff along with staff from Population Health have partnered to assist her in creating goals for and completing this project. Meetings will be ongoing. The project is scheduled to start mid-August and will end in December 2025. **(GOAL 3)**



The Executive Director and Information Coordinator joined the **Access to Video Conferencing** webinar hosted by the Great Lakes ADA Center on May 15. Two members of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) explained the accessibility requirements set forth by the Advanced Communication Services to meet the FCC's policies and rules when using video conferencing. The webinar included requirements for access to captioning, sign language interpreters, and telecommunications relay services.



The Executive Director attended the Advisory Committee on the Need for Services for Individuals Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing meeting on May 21. The main focus of the meeting was the new Biennial Report. A draft of the report was shared with committee members for an in-depth look and feedback on content. **(GOAL 3)**



The Executive Director and several KCDHH staff participated in a two-day virtual training provided by the Department of Behavioral Health Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities on May 28 and 29. The training, **Providing Deaf Services in a Changing Community**, focused on how to best engage with refugees, immigrant, and asylum-seeking individuals with a hearing loss. The staff were able to participate in breakout rooms to analyze and discuss hypothetical situations and appropriate resources needed to deal with each situation effectively. **(GOAL 4)**



The Executive Director and Information Coordinators met virtually with the **Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD)** Principal and Professional Development Coordinator on May 30 to discuss KCDHH creating professional development trainings for KSD staff. **(GOAL 2)**



The Executive Director and Information Coordinator attended the **KY Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Summit** on June 13. The all-day event provided a variety of presentations and an exhibitor's area. Presentations ranged from Language Rich Learning Environments and Hearing Health in Rural Areas to an interactive Parent Panel. The summit was well attended by various providers as well as parents. **(GOAL 2)**



The Executive Director attended the **Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Advisory Board** meeting on June 23. Members gave updates on their respective agencies and the EHDI staff shared their experience with the EHDI Summit. The main focus of the meeting was review and discussion of the Cytomegalovirus (CMV) Toolkit that was created for birthing centers and other providers. **(GOAL 2)**

On June 28, the Executive Director, Executive Staff Advisor, Information Coordinator and Program Coordinator attended Heuser Hearing and Language Academy (HHLA) annual **Hear on the River Gala** fundraising event. **(GOAL 2)**



Access Center



REQUEST FOR
INTERPRETER

157

REQUEST FOR
CAPTIONER

3

CONTACTS

1,884



The Interpreter II and Executive Staff Advisor attended the “**Interpreting For A Changing Community: New Sign Terminology & Best Practices**” workshop hosted by KYRID on April 17.



The Interpreter II and Executive Staff Advisor attended an **Interpreter Networking Event** hosted by Eastern Kentucky University on April 18. This was a “get-to-know you” event for current Interpreter Training Program (ITP) students to network and build professional relationships with interpreters currently working in the field.



The Interpreter II and Executive Staff Advisor attended a two-day conference hosted by the **Kentucky Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf** on June 16 and June 17. The workshops focused on legal interpreting.



Telecommunications Access Program



NATURE	REQUESTS	CONTACTS
Request for Application	71	259
Application Received	205	894
Status Check	39	138
Equipment Received	69	188
General TAP Inquiry	29	106



On June 11, the TAP Program Coordinator attended the **Kentucky Assistive Technology Services (KATS) Network Advisory Council** meeting, which provided updates on KATS Network activities, including program developments at the Coordinating Center and regional AT resource centers. Agency representatives shared updates to enhance collaboration and service delivery.



The Program Coordinator provided equipment training to a consumer in Louisville on June 20.



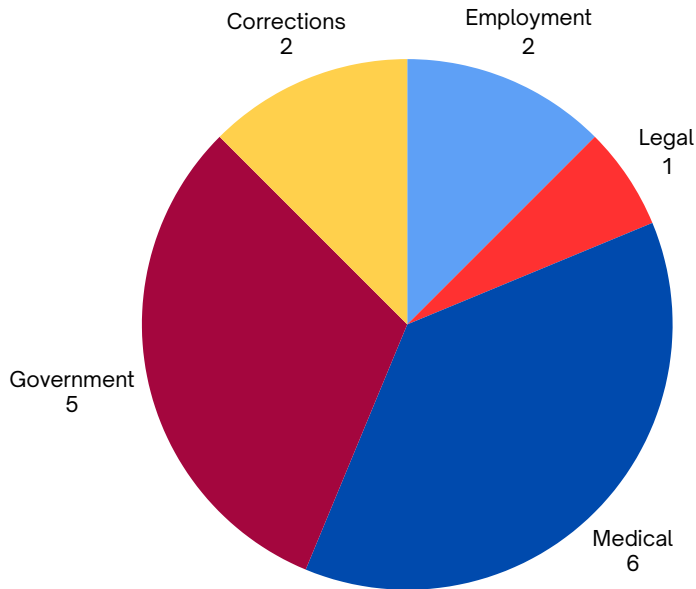
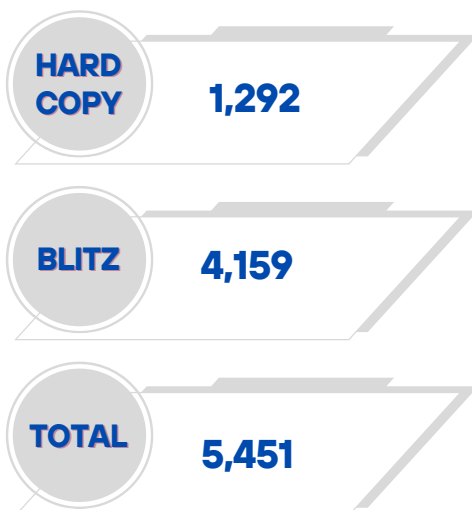
The Program Coordinator attended monthly virtual **Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association (TEDPA) Board** meetings. The recent focus is preparing for the Virtual Business Meeting this fall and the annual conference in 2026.



Information, Referral & Advocacy



NATURE	REQUESTS	CONTACTS
ASL & Linguistics	3	6
Assistive Technology	19	65
Deafness & Hearing Loss	5	23
Education & Employment	9	33
Families & Children	7	20
General KCDHH Inquiry	11	35
Hearing Aid Banks	34	96
Interpreting	9	23
Mailing List	6	12
Mental Health Services	1	10
Moore Safe Nights	104	156
Senior Citizens	2	5
Social & Recreation	2	4
Visor and ICE Card	7	18
TOTAL	219	506

ADVOCACY REQUESTS**CONTACTS: 99****WEB HITS****10,392 Visitors****Top 3 pages viewed:****1 KCDHH Home****2 KCDHH Contact Us****3 Moore Safe Nights****PR DISSEMINATION****SOCIAL MEDIA****9,146 Followers****18,465K Reach****304 Followers****402 Reach**



In recognition of **Earth Day** on April 23, the KCDHH staff worked together to remove trash and debris from outside the office. The shrubbery in front of and on the side of the office was also trimmed and weeds and overgrowth were removed from around the building and the parking lots.



The Information Coordinator attended the **Assistive Technology Convene monthly meeting** on May 22. The May meeting focused on Recreational Adaptive Equipment for individuals with physical disabilities. Stakeholders were able to gain knowledge of what is available and how to access the equipment. These monthly meetings, hosted by the Center for Accessible Living (CAL) and the Appalachian Assistive Technology Loan Fund (AATLF), are dedicated to enhancing access to assistive technology (AT) financing across Kentucky.



The Information Coordinator attended the annual **Hearing Loss Association of America Convention** June 11 through 14 in Indianapolis, IN. Sessions related to current trends in assistive technology and the latest reports from federal agencies such as the FCC were open to attendees. It was announced that the 2026 Convention will take place in Louisville, KY. After this was announced, the Kentuckiana HLAA chapter representatives and the Information Coordinator met with the HLAA headquarters staff for a “meet and greet” and to offer support for the 2026 Convention.



The Information Coordinator attended the meeting of the **Education and Labor Cabinet (ELC) Diversity and Inclusion Council** virtually on June 16. This meeting allowed each focus area work group (Professional Development, Diversity and Inclusion Training, Recruitment and Retention, and Workplace Culture) to provide updates on their ability to identify matters within the ELC that should be improved and to create a proposal for improvement. Some original council members have left the group so there was some discuss about restructuring the workgroups.



The Information Coordinator attended the quarterly **Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation Board** meeting on June 18. The Board's administrator shared that a new lending partnership is still under development. The coordinator informed the board that the Hearing Loss Association of American Convention will be held in Louisville in June 2026 which creates a great opportunity to promote KATLC and the Appalachia Assistive Technology Loan Fund.

STRATEGIC GOALS

GOAL 1: TRANSITION OF AGENCY



The first phase of the KCDHH office renovation is nearly complete as the upstairs painting is finished and the carpets have been cleaned. Work will begin in the office space downstairs in the next few weeks.

GOAL 2: EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT



The Information Coordinator met with the regional representative for the **Helen Keller National Center (HKNC)** and the DeafBlind Coordinator and Employment Specialist for the DeafBlind with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation virtually on May 27. The DeafBlind coordinators and specialist were all new to their positions, so the purpose of the meeting was for everyone to meet and discuss ways to collaborate. Also discussed were new projects taking shape in Kentucky that will improve services for DeafBlind individuals and enhance training opportunities such as employment services and Support Service Providers (SSPs).



On June 26, the information Coordinators joined the 4th Thursday ADA Talk hosted by the Southeast ADA Center. The June 26 topic was **Artificial Intelligence, Disability and Access to Work**. The webinar provided insights into the use of AI in the workplace by sharing community research and disability perspective. Attendees were able to gather practical guidance, resources, and ways to get involved and understand how to use AI in the workplace.

GOAL 3: ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE



The Information Coordinators met with the Health Policy Specialist of **Population Health** (formerly Health Equity) within the Department of Public Health on April 1. Discussion focused on ways to improve training opportunities for Kentucky Community Health Workers who help bridge the gap between medical providers and patients by addressing the social determinants of health.



The Information Coordinator participated in the **Dinner Table Project** hosted by the Seven Counties Prevention Team on April 8 in Louisville. The Dinner Table Project focuses on encouraging families with deaf and hard of hearing children to engage in conversation around the dinner table to foster relationships and reduce the risk of mental health issues. Deaf and hard of hearing stakeholders participate to connect families with resources that are available.



The Information Coordinator joined other deaf and hard of hearing individuals on a **Communication Access Virtual Panel** on April 24. Mental Health providers were able to gain knowledge of how communication looks different for each individual with hearing loss and every situation. Individuals with hearing loss were able to share past experiences and tips for providers on how to improve mental health services.



The Information Coordinator joined a virtual webinar, **Effectively Serving the Forensic Populations with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) and Hearing Loss** on June 2. The webinar shared experiences of DHH individuals with SMI and the communication barriers and discrimination they faced in the criminal legal system. Recommendations for reducing communication barriers and preventing discrimination were also discussed.

STRATEGIC GOALS



The Information Coordinators joined a webinar series hosted by the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Service Branch within the KY Division of Mental Health. The June 28 topic was **Understanding Hearing Assistive Technology and National Resources**. Mental health providers and professionals were able to learn about assistive technology devices that are available that could improve communication access for deaf and hard of hearing patients when receiving mental health services.

GOAL 4: SAFE COMMUNITIES



The Information Coordinator is participating in a nine-month virtual **Social Security Webinar series** hosted by West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WVCDHH) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) on April 24, May 22 and June 26. The purpose of this series is to keep agencies updated on anything new related to SSA benefits and services.



The Information Coordinator attended the **KY Access and Functional Needs Collaborative** meeting in Frankfort on June 10. The Director of Development from United Way of Kentucky provided an informative summary regarding 2-1-1 Referral and Resources. 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember access number for information and referral services for crisis, emergency and disaster, food, housing and utilities, and much more. The meeting was wrapped up with Kentucky Department for Public Health Planning Section Chief presenting an overview for the major responses the Preparedness Branch's ESF-8 team has responded to in 2025.

GOAL 5: HEARING LOSS AWARENESS



The Information Coordinator was invited to present at the **Woodford County Woman's Group** on April 2. Members were provided with resources to improve communication within their club, families, friends, and community partners. The Information Coordinator provided hearing loss information packets and provided a Q&A session.



The Information Coordinator was invited to the **Shelby County High School** to meet with the deaf and hard-of-hearing students on April 11. The coordinator discussed how KCDHH assists with information on hearing loss, makes referrals to appropriate agencies, and advocate for communication access.



The Information Coordinator met with deaf and hard of hearing elementary students at **Sandersville Elementary School** in Fayette County on May 21. Different challenges related to interacting with hearing peers and being a DHH student in public school were looked at and solutions for each challenge were discussed.