

# New Mexico Commission for Deaf & Hard of Hearing



## Quarterly Report FY24 Quarter 3



# FY24 Quarter 3 Board Report

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## **NMCDHH BOARD MEETING**

**Thursday, June 6, 2024**

**3:00 PM**

The meeting will be a hybrid meeting at the Commission's Albuquerque office located at 505 Marquette Ave. NW Albuquerque NM 87102, Suite 1550. The public can view the meeting livestream on YouTube with interpreters and captioning at this link:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjEFmcE3Wbc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjEFmcE3Wbc)

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### **DRAFT AGENDA**

Posted: 5/23/2024

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call
- II. Action Items:
  - A. Approval of Agenda
  - B. Approval of Minutes- March 7, 2024
  - C. Discussion of the Evaluation of the Executive Director
- III. Welcome Deaf and Hard of Hearing Professional Dr. Norm Dawson
- IV. Reports
  - a. Executive Director Report
  - b. Department Reports
    - Community Advocacy
    - Community Engagement
    - Administrative Services
  - c. Report from Trevor Brennan regarding the Community Engagement Position and Hybrid NMCDHH meetings.
- V. Adjournment



**STATE OF NEW MEXICO  
COMMISSION FOR DEAF & HARD OF HEARING**

*Quarterly Board Meeting  
Thursday, March 7, 2024  
3:00pm*

*The meeting was held remotely via Zoom and the public could view the meeting  
livestream on YouTube with interpreting and captioning at*

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpVQQsdO7ml](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpVQQsdO7ml)

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**I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Chair John Hooper called the meeting to order at 2:59pm. Trevor Brennan, Community Engagement Specialist, called roll call.

Present: Mr. John Hooper  
Dr. Jennifer Herbold  
Dr. Meena Mann  
Ms. Casey Stone-Romero

Absent:

Quorum was met.

Eight staff members from NMCDHH were present via Zoom: Executive Director Nathan Gomme, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Deborah Romero, Director of Community Engagement Lisa Dignan, Community Engagement Specialist Jessica Eubank, Community Education Specialist Roger Robb, Technology Coordinator Sean Sinderholm, Community Advocacy Specialist Jennifer Dahlgren, and Trevor Brennan. Jessica Eubank interpreted the meeting along with Rhonda Hall, Jacqueline Trujillo, and Amy Bourque. Francisco Philberto from Partners Interpreting LLC. provided CART transcription.

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chair Hooper asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

**24.7**

Commissioner Herbold made a motion to approve the agenda as written.

Commissioner Mann seconded.  
Mr. Brennan took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Hooper – Yes  
Commissioner Mann – Yes

Commissioner Herbold – Yes  
Commissioner Stone-Romero – Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

**III. APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 14, 2023 MINUTES**

Chair Hooper asked if there were any changes to the minutes from December 14, 2023. Dr. Herbold asked that it be noted that the next meeting will be a hybrid in-person meeting, held at the Commission office in Albuquerque on June 6, 2024.

**24.8**

Commissioner Herbold made a motion to approve the minutes as written.  
Commissioner Mann seconded.  
Mr. Brennan took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Hooper – Yes  
Commissioner Mann – Yes

Commissioner Herbold – Yes  
Commissioner Stone-Romero – Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

**IV. ADOPTION OF REVISED OPEN MEETINGS ACT RESOLUTION FOR 2024**

Commissioners held a brief discussion regarding the revised Open Meetings Act Resolution for 2024. The only changes from the 2023 resolution were to update the resolution date for 2024.

**24.9**

Commissioner Mann made a motion to adopt the updated OMA resolution for 2024.  
Commissioner Herbold seconded.  
Mr. Brennan took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Hooper – Yes  
Commissioner Mann – Yes

Commissioner Herbold – Yes  
Commissioner Stone-Romero – Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

**V. REPORTS**

**a. Executive Director Report**

Before Executive Director Gomme began his report. Dr. Herbold noted that the full name of the PAH! Hiland Plaza complex had been misspelled in the quarterly report. A corrected report will be sent to Commissioners and posted on the Commission website after the meeting. Mr. Gomme shared that the Commission does not currently have representation from the New Mexico Department of Justice (the new name for the New Mexico Office of the Attorney General), and we are awaiting the appointment of a new legal representative. This should not impact day-to-day operations of the Commission or the ability to hold board meetings.

Mr. Gomme discussed his 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter report, including the conversations had with the legislature regarding the Commission budget for the next fiscal year. The Commission did receive its full requested budget. More information can be found in the full report.

Mr. Gomme discussed the vacant positions on the Commission Board. Mr. Gomme traveled to Las Cruces for a recent New Mexico Association for the Deaf meeting in Las Cruces. There are two interested individuals, including one from Southern New Mexico, and Mr. Gomme is working with the state to attempt to fill the vacation positions as soon as possible.

Mr. Gomme discussed the recent legislative session, attempts to address future funding concerns for the agency, and collaboration with other entities such as the 988 hotline who face similar funding challenges. Mr. Gomme and Chair Hooper both worked to have the previously discussed closed caption bill heard during this legislative session, but their efforts were unsuccessful. Mr. Gomme and Chair Hooper are already working to have this bill heard again in the January 2025 legislative session. Mr. Gomme and Commissioner Herbold are working to address a bill related to Deaf education. More information about the legislative session can be found in the full quarterly report.

The Support Service Provider program continues to grow with the contractor, Vancro, operating the program. They are addressing community concerns. Mr. Gomme shared that Ms. Corina Gutiérrez has been working closely with Vancro. At the time that the report was sent to the Board, Vancro had almost doubled the number of Support Service Providers and individuals receiving services. Since the report was sent, they have more than doubled the numbers. They have also hired a case manager who is DeafBlind, and interactions with Vancro leadership such as Vice President Cory Brunner continue to be positive and frequent, and they are staying aware of developments that impact our community such as the Older Americans Act. Chair Hooper shared that community feedback he has received regarding Vancro has also been very positive.

Finally, Mr. Gomme shared that Mr. Brennan and Mr. Gomme are working hard on testing for a hybrid Board meeting in June.

## **b. Department Reports Q & A**

### **Community Engagement**

Ms. Dignan discussed the continued impact that the shortage of interpreters across the state is having on both the Commission and the Deaf community. Ms. Dignan applauded Ms. Eubank for going above and beyond to ensure coverage of needs for Commission staff, and sometimes this means Ms. Eubank solo interprets events that would be better served by teaming.

Ms. Eubank is the Region IV representative for the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and was instrumental in organizing and supporting a National RID board meeting held in Albuquerque in March. Ms. Rhonda Hall, New Mexico RID (NMRID) President was also heavily involved in coordinating this meeting and organizing a social for RID leadership to meet local community members.

Ms. Dignan shared that a person has been selected for the vacant front desk position and will be starting with the agency on April 1, 2024. At that time, the Commission will have filled 15 of its 16 positions, the most staff the agency has had in over 5 years.

### **Community Advocacy**

Mr. Robb presented in place of Ms. Gutiérrez. Mr. Robb introduced Mx. Jennifer Dahlgren to the members of the Board. Mx. Dahlgren is a Community Advocacy Specialist in the Las Cruces office with Ms. Susana Santillan and looks forward to working with our community in southern New Mexico.

Mr. Robb shared that the placard project with several local police departments that has long been in the works is nearing completion with the Albuquerque Police Department, and training with officers and implementation of the project should begin soon.

The Commission and Presbyterian Health Services will be holding a 3<sup>rd</sup> community listening session on March 22, 2024 from 2-4pm in Santa Fe, and Mr. Robb urged members of our community from northern New Mexico to attend. Dr. Herbold shared that the New Mexico School for the Deaf is working with staff to make sure that they can attend. Dr. Herbold also shared that she has had positive experiences with the Presbyterian healthcare system and receiving services.

Finally, Mr. Robb shared that he is working with Mr. Gomme to create mid and end of year review videos, so that the Commission can highlight its work with the community in more accessible formats. These videos will be posted on the Commission YouTube Channel when they are finished and shared on our social media accounts.

### **Administrative Services**

Ms. Romero discussed the Fiscal Year 2025 budget with the Commissioners, and the current FY24 budget. Revenue as previously discussed is an ongoing concern that she closely monitors.



Ms. Romero is looking forward to her new staff member starting in April and having a full Administrative Services Department.

Chair Hooper commended Ms. Romero on her excellent work and handling of the Commission finances.

**c. Report from Executive Director Nathan Gomme, and Sean Sinderholm Technology Coordinator**

Mr. Sinderholm briefly introduced himself to the Board. Mr. Sinderholm recently moved to New Mexico from California, and one of his responsibilities includes the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program.

Mr. Gomme and Mr. Sinderholm discussed with the Board the role of a Communication Facilitator in assisting DeafBlind in communication and how other states such as Oregon, Maryland, and Washington have implemented these programs. Mr. Gomme and Mr. Sinderholm are working to see what the requirements would be for establishing a similar program in New Mexico, and the associated costs. More information will be shared with the Board in future meetings.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

**24.10**

Commissioner Mann made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Commissioner Herbold seconded.

Mr. Brennan took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Hooper – Yes Commissioner Herbold – Yes

Commissioner Mann – Yes

Commissioner Stone-Romero – Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:56pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Trevor M. Brennan

Trevor Brennan

Community Engagement Specialist



# Executive Summary

*G. Nathan Gomme, Executive Director*

Commissioners and Community Members:

It is my pleasure to present the Fiscal Year 24 third quarter report for the New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing. In this report, I will provide some updates to some of the ongoing work that we started in the first half of the year to establish the groundwork for a Communication Facilitator program, the work being done to establish a long-term contract for the Support Service Program (SSP), events I attended for the third quarter and some collaborative work with PAH! Hiland and other possible partners in the future. Finally, I will provide updates on staffing and the work done with the legislative body during the session.

I want to begin with a review of what occurred during this year's legislative session. As I mentioned in the previous report there was a second attempt at a closed captioning bill in House Bill 89. While the bill went through a process of polishing the process for enforcement when addressing noncompliance for the always-on captioning concept across the state, it did not yield the same progress that we saw during the last session. Part of that has to do with the fact that this year's session was a short session and, as a result, it typically means focusing on the state budget and any other matters related to the primary topics of the year. This year there was a strong focus on the safety and security matters related to the state. This created a challenge in the likelihood of getting the bill heard both due to the fact that there was no explicit safety component, and it did not involve a budgetary request beyond the possible costs to enforce the ordinance. This did not deter Board Chair Mr. John Hooper, from working to get this bill heard, and I made several visits to the roundhouse to be available for and helped draft a brief summary of the timeline and impact of the bill if it was approved. After several in-person attempts to get a meeting and see if the bill would progress out of the first committee through traditional methods, we went to speak with the Governor's office. My position was that the captioning always being on as a result of the bill could be seen as a safety point for our community. That suggestion did not result in the bill being heard,

unfortunately. In addition to House Bill 89, a bill was proposed related to Deaf education, Senate Bill 143 was presented and, after speaking with Dr. Jennifer Herbold, my understanding was that the bill would likely not be heard. In the end, this bill did not receive a committee hearing and action was postponed indefinitely. As I briefly mentioned in the second quarter report, during the budget hearings, our analyst from the legislative side had some questions and this resulted in several back-and-forth discussions prior to the session. During the session, the legislative proposal was revealed to be significantly less than the executive proposal. The initial result of the hearings was the adoption of the legislative proposal. I went to the Roundhouse several time to address how the reduction in our budgeted amount would have resulted in limitations in our ability to provide accommodations and fulfill our obligations in the legislative measures as they were presented. This would be the first thing impacted due to the requirement to fully fund relay services as required by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) mandate. We are required to have funds set aside for this mandate. However due to the fact that we don't have the ability to predict the call volume, we would have to work out cost savings in other areas. In addition to addressing these funding challenges, we requested additional funding for the Communication Facilitator services we were hoping to implement in the next fiscal year, which was also a goal of mine, in addition to establishing the framework for the service. The data and information that I explained about the Communication Facilitator role in my executive summary from the second quarter, was included as part of my proposal to the legislature, which played a role in them understanding that we needed funding to test the services in order to adequately determine the potential funding in the future. Near the conclusion of the session, I was informed that our Legislative budget would mostly match the executive budget, with a few minor differences that we will be able to work out with a budget adjustment request. In addition, we received an additional \$200,000 to be used for the Communication Facilitator pilot project within the Support Service Provider (SSP) program. This was a huge success for the potential of the proposal, and I have already worked with our procurement team to add the Communication Facilitator portion of the program to the Scope of Work for the Request for Proposal for the SSP Program that is being posted in February.

With the funding established for the next Fiscal Year, the next steps for creating a Communication Facilitator program center around establishing a long-term contract for the Support Service Program, where the additional funds will be tied to. Typically, the process for establishing a long-term contract, which at minimum we hope will be at least four years, is going through what is called a Request for Proposal (RFP), which is a competitive process different from the Sole Source process which we had done in the past for the SSP program, when the only vendor capable of providing the suite of services in this program was the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf, also known as COPD-NM. With COPD-NM no longer having an established presence in New Mexico and Vancro being the only known provider at this time, it will be helpful to know if there are any vendors in the state or in other states capable of providing these services. More so, it will be a stabilizing result for the SSP's and the community to have a long-term contract with the best vendor possible. In order to proceed with the contract, Mr. Sean Sinderholm, Ms. Deborah Romero and I worked together to develop a Scope of Work which listed a number of items that Ms. Corina Gutierrez and I learned from the previous meetings with the community throughout the previous quarters. The RFP was posted in February, which should provide us with ample time to work on the contract and begin working on the logistics with the awarded vendor to establish the starting place for the Communication Facilitator program. One thing I want to note is that prior to moving forward with the process the current vendor Vancro was informed of this intent, and it was also added to the scope of work for the RFP. Part of the expectation of this service, is to provide the members of the community that will be directly served by the Communication Facilitator with the ability to have natural conversations over video communications. This service goes beyond the limitations of Video Relay Services because often these conversations are done on various mediums from Zoom to Facetime. Another part of the discussion is to not overlap the provision of interpreter services. This does not mean that Communication Facilitators will become another tier of "interpretation". A large concern that has been raised, is the expectation or misrepresentation of what this service is for and, as a result, the rules are only allowing for a Communication Facilitator to operate during a video-based call when two people are not in the same vicinity, replicating Call Assistants provided by relay services and not interpreters in a relay setting. The particulars of the service will be worked out more

and established, as soon as the contract is in place, and we are thrilled to see the additional funds being added so we do not have to take away for the other important aspects of this program. I will be explaining more during the 4th Quarter report as to what we anticipate seeing in the next fiscal year for this.

Speaking of the SSP program, we met with Vancro and PAH! Hiland during the third quarter. As some of you know, a number of people moved into New Mexico as a result of PAH! Hiland and that had quite an impact on the growth of SSP program, both in terms of staffing and people being served. Vancro hired an additional Case Manager, which was very much needed due to the multitude of needs at PAH! Hiland and across the state. The meeting with Vancro and PAH! Hiland was to help clarify the roles and limitations of what we currently are working with. My goal after meeting with them both was to bring in additional tools and resources for PAH! Hiland. To do that I spoke with Seth Bravin from T-Mobile who came in with several possible tools to assist PAH! Hiland and the residents. We discussed accessibility tools such as Aira, which is a “live interpreter” for guidance assistance for people with sight loss and may identify as blind. We talked with Sorenson about Sorenson Express and how that could assist in situations where Video Remote Interpretation would be valuable, and we also discussed hardware and online services that may be provided by T-Mobile. T-Mobile moved forward after our meeting to meet with the community at PAH! Hiland and it seems like there are some discussions about all of the above depending on their value for the community. Vancro is a great resource, but with other resources such as T-Mobile, my hope is that we can reduce some of the communication barriers that are found in the day to day, that don't necessarily depend on SSP's or need them. Part of the work with T-Mobile ties into a lot of the work being done with the CoLab group which includes representatives from the NMDOJ, Commission for the Blind, Developmental Disabilities, and Department of Information Technology, to name a few, who are working to establish better access online and on site throughout the state.

Recently, I was asked to participate in providing a statewide presentation to all of the state Chief Information Officers (CIOs) on the upcoming approval of the rule change to the Americans with Disabilities Act, which includes the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines or WCAG 2.1 level AA compliance, and it includes, for example, live

captioning during live events. The rules will go into effect in April with a deadline for state and local agencies to be in compliance by 2026, this will also include application programs developed for services. T-Mobile's involvement in supporting PAH! Hiland, if that continues, will help ensure members of our community have a resource to communicate with for accessing the web and the applications for things such as food stamps, etc., and the guidelines will ensure improved accessibility experiences moving forward. Part of my presentation will serve to move the state into planning for compliance or remediation to these guidelines. In addition to this conversation, we also have to address the growing possibility of utilizing expanding "AI" services in the space of accessibility tools. While many people talk about things such as ChatGPT, because it is more well known to people, the reality is the tools behind most of the recent conversation, such as Large Language Models and Natural Language Processing, all play into tools we use every day from the Automatic Speech Recognition which provides captioning for some Relay services and also for things such as Zoom or even the captions in Live Transcribe with Android devices. While some of these have practical and important uses for our community, other discussions are occurring in regard to concern for interpreting space, and the impact of AI on Information Technology (IT) security. Mr. Trevor Brennan will be attending a conference discussing Deaf Safe AI and what we are looking to see in the near future. Again, part of the work being done with providers such as T-Mobile and the CoLab has a specific impact on some of our more vulnerable community members but also pose potential security risks.

The New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing staff all worked to attend and participate in several community events during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, in addition to the great outreach already taking place in the community by our team. Sean Sinderholm attended the Hearing Loss Association Albuquerque Chapter event in March, introducing himself to the members since he is taking over the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program and we are already looking at other events for him to participate in once his involvement with procurement work is completed.

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter I had an opportunity to attend and meet with representatives from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Board, while they visited New Mexico in March. Our staff interpreter, Jessica Eubank, is a wonderful member of the RID Board

representing our region. It was a chance to discuss a variety of topics and see some colleagues from the past. I attended the Town Hall at the Presbyterian Hospital in Santa Fe, I also participated in a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) meeting, discussing the importance of considering tools such as MyMMX, which is a service that can support some of our DeafBlind community, should they be displaced during a natural disaster, and I also agreed to work with them in encouraging collaboration with our upcoming Communication Facilitator Program when they are going to be making phone calls and communicating with loved ones about their safety and situation. Finally, the leadership team and I met with the building management company for our Albuquerque office to discuss renewing our lease for our current location, and addressing some communication, safety, and accessibility concerns we have, which the building has been wonderful in addressing promptly.

During the fourth quarter I will be attending a webinar in June related to the Older American Access Act presented by Deaf Seniors of America with the Arizona Commission to continue learning what steps are being taken to address the needs of our seniors in conjunction with the federal law and its updates and I will be continuing to take part in collaborating and providing resources where possible within our community. I will attend several additional events as I stated in my goals, including; the New Mexico Association for the Deaf (NMAD) meeting in April, and I am also working with Dr. Meena Mann and Mr. Ryan Means from NMAD to establish a future meeting with AccesSOS, sometime in June, to discuss their steps in the state. Finally, I will be meeting with representatives from Lango, alongside Ms. Lisa Dignan and Ms. Jessica Eubank, getting to know some of the new faces taking over what was formerly COPD interpreting.

Our agency continues to take steps towards our measures and addressing the needs of the community. One such area of hot discussions, an area in which I will be reviewing a white paper proposing a collaboration of National Association of State Relay Administrators (NASRA), TDI, and several member states is the decline of Captioned Telephone Services (CTS) and the need for renewed support from the FCC for the replacement of traditional relay services with Real Time Text (RTT), which is set to be released at the beginning of the fourth quarter. During a Hamilton Relay administrators



meeting in January we learned that our data, like many other states, is showing a steep decline in the use of analog-based CTS, while there continues to be large usage of IP-based CTS and a desire for mobile device utilization for relay services, which RTT specifically addresses. This shift has several connections to the expansion of broadband Internet in the state and also should be considered in the equipment distribution where I am looking at the notification tools provided in the wearable technology that could, with the improvements in accessible software by Android and Apple, replace some of our notification technology that is still analog. Some states are looking at no longer being responsible for these services, and while understandable it is unclear if legally the states can stop supporting these services. As an agency, we must evolve with the trends and technology that best serve our community while remaining mindful of the areas where broadband is still absent. In addition, several members of our team continue to serve and support our community in their day-to-day interactions with service providers and hospitals and we continue to work and educate them on their communication access responsibilities. We are also working to improve our internal IT infrastructure and will be working on an IT strategic plan for the next fiscal year. Mr. Brennan and I have already been working with the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) to give our team more autonomy in addressing IT issues in our agency and also helping to educate the team on the new rules and plans. In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, we will be having a staff meeting to discuss several of the items mentioned here, such as the shift in AI, writing reports, and where staff member Mx. Jennifer Dahlgren, who is a Safe Zone trainer, will be discussing how we can improve our allyship and create a safe zone in our offices, in addition to several other topics of discussion\*. We are also working towards the end of the fiscal year which includes wrapping up this fiscal year's projects and contracts.

Thank you for your time and thank you to all of the staff here at the Commission.

*G. Nathan Gomme*

\*Due to illness, this specific training was postponed to a later date.

# Community Advocacy

*Corina Gutiérrez, Director of Community Advocacy*

## **Individual/System Advocacy & Public Policy**

The Department of Community Advocacy continued to work with members of the Hearing Loss community, which includes individuals who are Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, and Speech Disabled, to address communication barriers that they encounter in their daily lives. These communication barriers prevent access to services on both a systemic and individual level. This third quarter of FY24, we addressed communication barriers with health care providers and clinics, the Social Security Administration (SSA), the Albuquerque Metro Detention Center (MDC), the Human Services Department (HSD), the Department of Housing and Urban Development HUD), Adult Protective Services, the Children, Youth, & Families Department (CYFD), schools, law firms, courts, non-profit organizations and retail stores. During the third quarter of FY24, our department worked on various projects. We remain mindful of any potential high-risk situations with COVID-19 and practice safety protocols, when needed.

The Director of Community Advocacy, Ms. Corina Gutiérrez, worked with a staff member in MDC to ensure the provision of an ASL interpreter for services offered to inmates. The staff member recognized the significance of providing an ASL interpreter for Deaf and Hard of Hearing inmates. As a result of our efforts, interpreting services were made available for those in the facility who wish to participate. Additionally, Ms. Gutiérrez supplied MDC with information on how to obtain case management services, ensuring support for Deaf and Hard of Hearing inmates upon their release.

Ms. Gutiérrez and Mr. Roger Robb, Community Education Specialist, met with the managers from the Policy and Program Development Bureau and the Quality Management Bureau within HSD. They addressed communication barriers faced by the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities. Specifically, strategies for resolving issues when community members need to schedule meetings and request ASL interpreters were discussed. Additionally, HSD was interested in having Mr. Robb conduct Hearing Loss Sensitivity training for their staff in the future.

Ms. Gutiérrez received several requests to conduct Deaf Self-Advocacy Training (DSAT) in various states. She worked with those states to organize the hosting of DSAT events in the respective states. Additionally, she actively attempted to engage with the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) to explore opportunities for supporting or participating in the DSAT committee. This collaboration continued throughout the quarter.

Ms. Gutiérrez attended several training sessions this quarter. In addition to several mentioned in the HR section of this report, Ms. Gutiérrez attended the following trainings:

1. Doing the Right Thing: Workplace Ethics
2. Workplace Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response

Ms. Gutiérrez continued to actively engage in monthly/quarterly meetings with the Interagency Transition Alliance (ITA), and the New Mexico DeafBlind Task Force.

Here are some of the accomplishments of Community Advocacy Specialist, Ms. Myra Sandoval:

- Assisted a Deaf individual with Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Fair Housing Equal Opportunities (FHEO) to ensure proper communication access for the individual's formal complaint against HUD. After working with Ms. Sandoval, the organizations understood the requirement to provide appropriate accommodations for meetings.
- Worked with a specialty medical clinic to clarify their responsibility in providing an ASL interpreter for a Deaf individual. Ms. Sandoval was able to clarify with the clinic the responsibility for who pays for interpreters. After working with Ms. Sandoval, the clinic was able to successfully obtain an interpreter for the individual's appointments.
- Advocated for a Deaf individual's workplace communication access following instances of perceived harassment. Ms. Sandoval sought to arrange a meeting with the employer to advocate for use of a licensed interpreter, who would have the skills and ethical knowledge to interpret this type of meeting. A licensed ASL

interpreter was successfully provided. Additionally, Ms. Sandoval worked with her colleague, Mr. Robb, to conduct the Hearing Loss Sensitivity training within the workplace.

- Advocated for a DeafBlind individual with HSD and SSA to educate the organizations about their responsibility to provide an interpreter for the individual's appointments. Understanding the unique needs of DeafBlind individuals, Ms. Sandoval worked to schedule meetings which included use of an ASL tactile interpreter. Ms. Sandoval's work with both organizations was successful, and appropriate communication access was provided for the individual for future appointments.
- Worked with a DeafBlind individual who faced several instances of communication access barriers during medical appointments. Ms. Sandoval advocated for the individual with the medical facility to confirm the individual was properly identified in the system to ensure the facility would automatically request a tactile interpreter when appointments are scheduled. This proactive approach proved successful in resolving the issue for this facility. We continue to work with other facilities in the network to address similar incidents.
- Worked on several levels with Adult Protective Services to secure a specialized ASL interpreter for a DeafBlind individual, facilitating their intake process. During this process there were several layers that needed to be worked through before an interpreter was secured.
- Understanding that a regular ASL interpreter would not be effective during a Zoom meeting, Ms. Sandoval advocated for a Deaf individual's access by arranging for a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI). The outcome proved successful.
- Participated in the HSD's website project, which involved hiring a contractor to conduct testing with members of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities. Ms. Sandoval facilitated the involvement of several community members in the project, allowing them to share their perspectives and provide feedback on the website. This involvement was a result of a presentation that Executive Director Gomme to HSD about website accessibility, as is mentioned in the Community Education section of this report. The project team was open to receiving feedback from the communities to enhance website accessibility. The launch date for the updated website is currently unknown.

Here are some of the accomplishments of Community Advocacy Specialist, Mr. Dennis Stidham:

- Worked with a municipal courthouse to secure an ASL interpreter for a wedding. Initially, the court asserted an interpreter would not be provided since it does not charge Deaf individuals for weddings in the courthouse. Mr. Stidham educated them on the significance of communication access for all Deaf individuals and provided resources, including a fact sheet. After understanding the importance, the court agreed to provide an ASL interpreter for the wedding.
- Provided education to the Children, Youth & Families Department (CYFD) regarding appropriate communication for a DeafBlind individual. Initially, CYFD proposed using Video Remote Interpreting (VRI), but Mr. Stidham explained that this method was not effective, as the individual could not see the video or the interpreter. Mr. Stidham advocated for a tactile interpreter, and as a result, the CYFD arranged for one.
- Also, worked with the CYFD case workers to educate them on the necessity of providing a tactile interpreter for home visits for DeafBlind individuals. Mr. Stidham provided a fact sheet detailing how to find an interpreter, leading to the provision of ASL tactile interpreter for future home visits to the DeafBlind.
- Advocated for a DeafBlind individual to ensure that the Social Security Administration (SSA) office arranged for an ASL tactile interpreter for their appointment. Mr. Stidham persisted in reaching out to the manager until receiving confirmation that SSA would provide the necessary interpreter.
- Worked with a law firm to clarify their responsibility in providing an ASL interpreter for a Deaf individual. Mr. Stidham shared the fact sheet detailing how to find an interpreter. The law firm promptly arranged for an interpreter to facilitate their meeting and preparation for a hearing.
- Advocated for a Deaf individual to ensure that a retail organization arranged for an ASL interpreter during their training sessions. Mr. Stidham persisted in educating the organization's staff about the importance of communication access, despite frequent turnover. The retailer complied and provided an interpreter for the training.
- Worked with a specialized medical clinic to ensure provision of an ASL tactile interpreter for a DeafBlind individual. On previous occasions, the individual came for an appointment and then discovered there was no interpreter scheduled. Mr.

Stidham worked closely with the clinic to ensure that the necessary interpreter was provided for the individual's appointments.

- Advocated for a Deaf individual to secure an ASL interpreter for their parent/teacher conference. Despite the individual's attempts to advocate for themselves with the school, they faced challenges. Mr. Stidham provided education to the school on the importance of communication access. Subsequently, the school agreed to provide an interpreter for the conference.

### **Community Education**

A total of 11 presentations were provided by Community Education Specialist, Mr. Robb, and other staff members.

Ms. Lisa Dignan, Director of Community Engagement, conducted two presentations for the UNM Signed Language Interpreting Program. The presentations covered:

- SLI Licensure requirements & application process
- NM Mentoring

Ms. Jessica Eubank presented to the UNM Signed Language Interpreting Program. The presentation covered:

- NMCDHH Apprentice Program & application process

Mr. Robb provided 3 presentations/trainings during the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2024. This is the breakdown of the presentations/trainings Mr. Robb provided:

- Deaf Culture – 2
- Hearing Loss Sensitivity – General - 1

The entities that Mr. Robb provided the presentations/trainings to were:

- AAA Events & Tents
- Aural Rehabilitation Class at UNM
- Presbyterian Santa Fe Medical Center

Mr. Sean Sinderholm provided a presentation about the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program at PAH! Hiland Plaza for residents with hearing loss. Ms. Sandoval and Ms. Gutiérrez were also present. The presentation was a success, with several

participants expressing their interest in the program. Mr. Sinderholm will continue to assist residents with their applications as needed, and will maintain a working relationship with PAH! Hiland for possible future presentations or events.

Mr. Thomas Sena from Hamilton presented twice this quarter, 2/1/24 Captel and 3/8/24 Captel/RFB.

Mr. Gomme provided presentations on website accessibility to Human Services Department (HSD) in January and also to several state Public Information Officers in February of this quarter.

### **Systemic Advocacy**

This is a summary of the Systemic Advocacy Cases that Mr. Robb focused on for the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2024:

- Patient & Family Advisory Council (UNM Hospital) – Mr. Robb actively engaged in the monthly meetings. Each month, various departments are invited to present on their services and solicit feedback on ways to enhance inclusivity and improve services.
- Presbyterian Santa Fe Medical Center (SFMC) –
  - Mr. Robb and Ms. Gutierrez visited the Presbyterian SFMC to assess the suitability of their community room for hosting a town hall event. It was determined that the room was, indeed, a suitable venue. Mr. Robb took photos of the various routes to the community room for a vlog.
  - The third collaborative Community Needs Assessment Town Hall event took place on Friday, March 22, 2024, at the Presbyterian SMFC. Mr. Robb was a co-presenter with Ms. Ryan Baca, Care Experience Executive Director and Director of Language Access for Presbyterian Hospital and Ms. Gutiérrez facilitated the meeting. Several northern New Mexico community members attended, sharing their individual stories that were both inspirational, and heartbreaking. By sharing these stories, members of the hearing loss community provide valuable feedback to Presbyterian staff, on both positive and negative experiences. Staff present at the event took note of this feedback, aiming to improve the services provided by Presbyterian Health System (PHS). A common theme that has been reported at all three events, is the ongoing severe shortage of sign

language interpreters across the state. Presbyterian will take the feedback that they received from all three events, to form a strategic plan to continue to improve the accessibility of their services. The NMCDHH is grateful for the opportunity to work with Presbyterian, and address the needs of our community.

- ADA Advisory Council (ADAAC) -
  - Mr. Robb participated in monthly council meetings. The ADAAC Retreat was held in January and proved valuable as it provided clarity on the council's purpose and each individual role and related responsibilities. The council increased membership successfully during the third quarter, ensuring quorum requirements were met.

### **Special Projects**

- Mr. Robb produced two vlogs for the Presbyterian Santa Fe Medical Center Town Hall event. One vlog provided details about the event itself and how to register for it. The other vlog offered guidance on navigating to the community room where the event was held.



# Support Service Provider Program

## *As Reported by Vancro Integrated Interpreting Services*

During the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2024, Vancro has continued to provide SSP services to NM DeafBlind, Deaf Plus (Deaf/Hard of Hearing with a significant disability) and Deaf Senior community in the New Mexico.

Vancro has experienced significant growth in the past quarter. We have organized numerous booth events and have been invited to present on multiple occasions. Our focus remains onboarding and training SSPs.

A highlight is our strong partnership with NMCDHH, where we have met regularly to address client issues related to communication access and interpreting needs. We have encouraged clients to communicate directly with the commission when facing language access challenges. A productive meeting involving Vancro, NMCDHH, and PAH! Hiland helped define roles and scopes, addressed resident concerns, and enhanced communication.

We are thrilled to welcome a new Case Manager/SSP. In his first 90 days, this individual has already made significant contributions to our team.

Additionally, we have worked to make Vancro's materials accessible in English and ASL. Our newly created Release of Information form in ASL can be viewed here - <https://youtu.be/GJGNHDUnUrE> . This form will be used by the Case Management staff during clients onboarding.

We are committed to serving the New Mexican Deaf Senior Citizens, Deaf Blind, Deaf Plus and community. Below are the key metrics Vancro is tracking for this contract. These are our baseline metrics and will allow us to compare quarterly.

Number of Support Service Providers: 27 (+7 since last quarter)

Number of Program Participants: 82 (+5 with 4 new applicants pending)

Number of complaints addressed: 4  
Number of SSP hours: 1835 (YTD- 4858)  
Number of SSP requests 583 (YTD 1332)  
Number SSP trainings offered: 2  
Number of 1:1 SSP trainings: 2

**Community Events and Engagement and Training:**

January 9th - Meeting with APS about working with DeafBlind Community Members  
January 19th – Job Fair at Kirkland Airforce Base  
February 6th - Disability Day at the State Legislature  
February 16th - NM Team Retreat  
February 23rd – Job Fair at Kirkland Airforce Base  
March 4th – Presentation at New Mexico Community College Vice President  
March 5<sup>th</sup> Presentation at New Mexico Community College  
March 12<sup>th</sup> – SSP Training ABQ  
March 19<sup>th</sup> – SSP Training ABQ  
March 22<sup>nd</sup> – Eastern Mountain Career Fair

## NMCDHH Activities During Q3 FY24



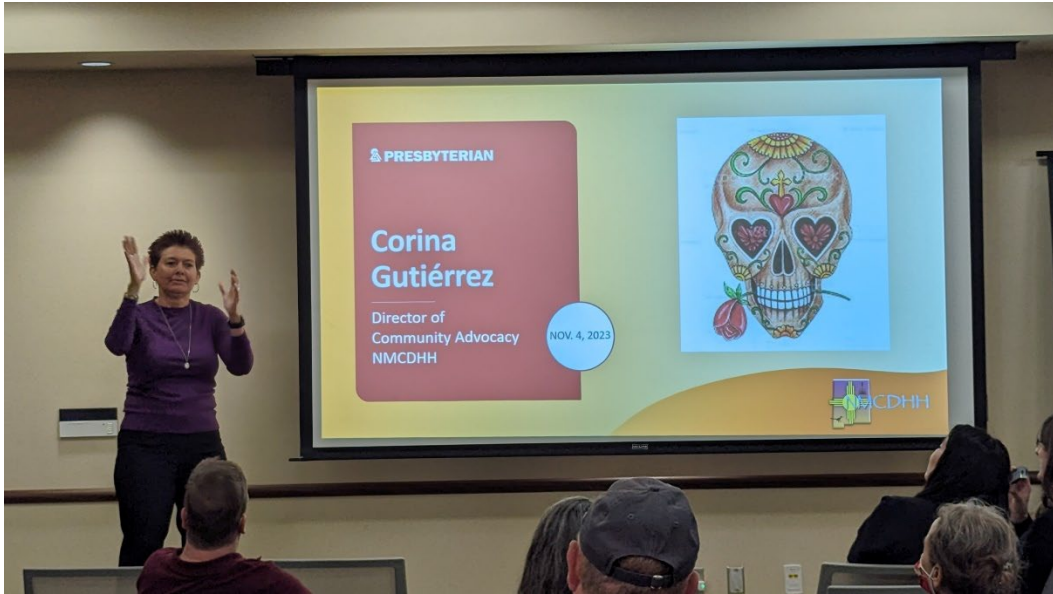
Several NMCDHH staff members attended a training hosted by the State Personnel Office: "Building Cultural Equity with Native Nations". This class helps staff have a better understanding of how to engage and collaborate with Native communities in New Mexico.



Mr. Sinderholm and Mr. Brennan hosted a booth at the CNM Conference on Teaching and Learning in Albuquerque, with Ms. Eubank interpreting.



Pictures from the Presbyterian Community Listening Session on March 22, 2024 in Santa Fe.







Pictures from the Presbyterian Community Listening Session on March 22, 2024 in Santa Fe.





Ms. Santillan attended 25 of the 29 booths during the third quarter.



# Outreach & Telecommunications

## Telecommunications Equipment Distribution (TED) Program

The Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP) lends telecommunication devices at no cost to qualifying New Mexico residents who need assistance in communicating via telephone. Equipment includes amplified telephones, iPads, speech assistive devices, notification systems, loud ringers, and assistive listening with neckloops.

### Equipment:

During the third quarter, Mr. Sean Sinderholm took over the processing of all applications and TEDP inquiries. Mr. Sinderholm reached out to many individuals who had incomplete applications at the time of the departure of Mr. Jason Siergey, and was able to help several of them complete their applications and receive equipment. Mr. Sinderholm attended the HLAA Albuquerque Chapter meeting in March.

Mr. Sinderholm also presented to the residents of the PAH! Hiland Plaza complex. More information can be found in the community engagement section of the report.

Mr. Sinderholm was heavily involved with a Request for Proposal process related to Support Service Providers as detailed in the Executive Directors report. This process will be ongoing during the fourth quarter.

In the third quarter, TEDP distributed a total of 393 pieces of equipment. The equipment distributed is outlined in two tables below.

Phone	Total Items Distributed
Clarity Alto	0
Clarity Alto Plus	8
Clarity D714	0
Clarity JV35	13
Clarity XLC2+	0

Clarity XLC8	15
Clarity XLC8 with GLT	26
ClearSounds A1600BT	0
ClearSounds CSC600ER	0
Panasonic KX-TGM430B	0
Panasonic KX-TGM450S	0
Geemarc Ampli550	0
Geemarc AmpliPower60+	0
CapTel 840	28
<b>iPad</b>	
Deaf Package	0
Hard of Hearing Package	24
DeafBlind Package	0
Speech Package	16
<b>iPad mini</b>	
Deaf Package	0
Hard of Hearing Package	8
DeafBlind Package	0
Speech Package	8
<b>iPhone</b>	
Deaf Package	0
Hard of Hearing Package	0
DeafBlind Package	0
Speech Package	0
<b>Total Phone/iPad Equipment Distributed Count:</b>	<b>146</b>



<b>Accessories</b>	<b>Total items distributed</b>
Amplicom NL100 Neckloop	0
Bellman Mino with neckloop	0
Bellman High Powered Neckloop (no device)	0
BeHear SMARTO	33
Clarity SR100 Super Phone Ringer	0
Clarity HA40 In-line Telephone Amplifier	0
ClearSounds ANS3000 Answering Machine	5
ClearSounds CS-CR200 Phone Ringer	0
ClearSounds CS-WIL95 Amplifier	0
Geemarc LH10PK Neckloop	0
Geemarc V2T-10	0
GLT with V2T-10	48
GLT	22
Provox® SolaTone® Plus	0
Provox® TruTone® EMOTE®	0
Provox® TruTone® Plus	0
ROMET® R700 Electronic Larynx	0
Krown RA 05 Amplified Ringer with Strobe	0
Serene Innovations CentralAlert CA360QK	32
Serene Innovations CentralAlert CA380	0
Serene Innovations RF-200 Alerting System	10
Serene Innovations SA-40 Cell Phone Amplifier	0
Serene Innovations UA-45 Universal Phone Amplifier	0

Silent Call Medallion Kit	60
SonicAlert HA360MKBR-II	39
Surge Protector (Phones and accessories)	3
<b>Total Accessories Equipment Distributed Count:</b>	<b>247</b>
<b>Total Overall Equipment Distributed Count:</b>	<b>393</b>

### **Outreach**

During the third quarter of FY24, Mr. Sinderholm and Mr. Trevor Brennan attended and hosted a booth at the Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) Conference on Teaching and Learning. During this event they were able to interact with faculty and staff members from CNM and educate them about the many services that the Commission provides.

Mr. Sinderholm and Mr. Stidham hosted a booth at the Roadrunner Food Bank Center on Jan 31. In total, we interacted with 70 individuals at these booths.

<b>Q3 Events</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Visitors</b>
CNM Conference on Teaching and Learning	Albuquerque	1/5/2024	35
Roadrunner Food Bank	Albuquerque	1/31/2024	35
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>70</b>

**Relay New Mexico (RNM)**

Mr. Sena attended and hosted booths in 2 additional locations.

<b>Q3 Events</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Visitors</b>
Children's Law Institute	Albuquerque	1/10- 12/2024	250 a day
New Mexico Academy of Family Physicians	Albuquerque	2/24/2024	150
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>900</b>

# Las Cruces Satellite Office

## **Individual Advocacy and Service Coordination**

Ms. Santillan and Mx. Dahlgren assist the Hearing Loss community in Southern New Mexico by providing advocacy and service coordination to remove communication barriers.

## **Susana Santillan (Community Advocacy Specialist) Accomplishments**

- Advocated for a Deaf individual who experienced difficulties obtaining ASL interpreter services at a local healthcare provider Ms. Santillan worked with the Risk Management Department, who oversees the accessibility for this facility, to address the communication needs of the individual and ensured that the appropriate communication access would be provided.
- Continued to collaborate with a local community college Student Accessibility Services Office to ensure that a Deaf individual received ASL interpreter services.
- Ms. Santillan attended a local court hearing, as an advocate, to ensure CDI and ASL interpreters were provided, as requested by the Deaf Individual. The court did provide both CDI and ASL interpreters.
- Continued to collaborate with local employers to share their available job openings with her constituents who are seeking employment.
- Continued to serve on the following committees to provide guidance and resources regarding reasonable accommodations for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and - Hard of Hearing New Mexico community/ies:
  - Behavioral Health Local Collaborative 3 Member
  - Behavioral Health Local Collaborative Policy & Advocacy State Committee
  - City of Las Cruces Americans with Disabilities Act Advisory Council
  - NM Workforce Connection Disabilities Committee
  - NM Workforce Connection Monitoring/Performance Committee

## **Community Collaboration**

This third quarter, Ms. Santillan built several new relationships with local community partners to promote NMCDHH's visibility in the community-by-community collaboration involvement with the following entities and many ongoing:

Access Dental & Orthodontics  
Accounting, Inc.

Behavioral Health Professional Workforce Resilience ECHO Program  
Calibre Post Acute  
Casa De Peregrinos  
Casa Del Rio Apartments Complex  
Celestial Hearing Solutions.  
Chaparral Department of Health  
City of Las Cruces Americans with Disabilities Act Advisory Committee  
City of Las Cruces Compliance Specialist / Human Resources  
City of Las Cruces Council  
Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico  
Counseling Las Cruces  
Desert Rise Insurance Services  
Doña Ana Community College (DACC) Workforce Center Career Development  
Dona Ana County Human Resources  
El Paso Community College (EPCC)  
Interagency Council  
La Clinica De Familia  
Las Cruces County Americans with Disabilities Act  
Las Cruces New Mexico Workforce Connection Business Consultant  
Las Cruces New Mexico Workforce Connection Local Veteran Employment  
Luna County DWI Program  
Luna County Health Council  
Mesilla Valley Hospice & Palliative Care  
Mesilla Valley Hospital  
New Mexico APEX  
New Mexico State University Enterprise Instructional Technology Administrator  
New Mexico Workforce Connection Las Cruces Business Consultant  
North Central New Mexico Economic Development  
Peak Behavioral Health Community Liaison.  
RE/MAX Classic Realty.  
Resilience Leaders  
Southwest New Mexico Workforce Partner

Southwestern Area Workforce  
 The Honorable Gabe Vasquez District Director.  
 The Honorable Gabe Vasquez Senior Field Representative.  
 The I.T. Grunts  
 Tresco Inc.  
 Truth or Consequences Housing Authority  
 United University Methodist Church  
 VA Audiology Department  
 Vet Center Readjustment Counseling Technician  
 Veterans Advisory Board  
 Workforce Development and Career Readiness Doña Ana Community College  
 Career Development Coordinator  
 Zynex Medical

**Booths and Presentations**

During the 3rd quarter, Ms. Santillan attended twenty-five (25) booths and did not provide any presentations.

<b>Q3 Events</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church	Tortugas	1/8/2024	35
Vado - Del Cerro Multipurpose Center	Mesquite	1/9/2024	45
Calvary Baptist Church	Las Cruces	1/10/2024	37
Mesilla Valley Hospice & Palliative Care 2Nd Health and Wellness Fair	Las Cruces	1/12/2024	44
Lighthouse	Las Cruces	1/16/2024	56
Hacienda Orgullo Apartments Office Conference Room	T or C	1/17/2024	5

Peace Lutheran Church	Las Cruces	1/18/2024	23
Butterfield Community Resource Center	Butterfield	1/19/2024	30
Veterans of Foreign Wars	Anthony	1/22/2024	39
San Jose Catholic Church	La Mesa	1/23/2024	19
Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church	Hatch	1/25/2024	10
VA Clinic Resource Booth	Las Cruces	1/26/2024	13
St. Thomas Moore Catholic Church	Chaparral	2/6/2024	22
Radium Springs Community Center Mobile	Radium Springs	2/8/2024	37
Silver City Senior Center	Silver City	2/12/2024	11
Truth or Consequences Housing Authority	T or C	2/14/2024	8
		<b>Total</b>	<b>654</b>

**Jennifer Dahlgren (Community Advocacy Specialist) Accomplishments**

- Advocated with the State of NM General Services Division to update their Defensive Driving Course Exam.
- Successfully advocated for a Deaf individual to receive interpreting services for a job interview for the public schools.
- Successfully advocated for Deaf individual to receive services with a Sign Language interpreter with NM Legal Aid, NM Victims' Rights Project, Dona Ana District Attorney Victims' Rights office, Domestic Violence shelter, New Mexico Immigration Legal Center, Catholic Charities of Southern NM.

- Successfully advocated for a Deaf individual to receive interpreting services at all court matters in a local Judicial Court as well as Magistrate Court and successfully advocated for a Certified Deaf Interpreter.
- Advocated for desired outcome for a Deaf individual at NM Early Childhood Education and Care department, individual did the full process with interpreters and was awarded benefits.
- Worked with NMDVR to get a Deaf individual an appointment with an interpreter to review services provided by NMDVR.
- Successfully advocated for on-site interpreters for a Deaf individual in a specialty medical setting.
- Advocated for Deaf individual needing accommodations for sick visits, beyond pre-scheduled appointments, on-call VRI services were set up.
- Was able to connect 2 Deaf individuals to the Modest Means helpline, a program that offers free legal advice.
- Completed the following workshops and trainings:
  - National Deaf Center
    - Attitudes and Biases as Barriers for Deaf People
    - Coordinating Services for Deaf Students
    - Legal Frameworks and Responsibilities for Accessibility
    - Finding Data about Deaf People
  - Dona Ana County
    - Mental Health First Aid

### **Community Collaboration**

Mx. Dahlgren began work at NMCDHH in the beginning of January. They reached out to the following agencies to introduce themselves and share what services they can provide.

- New Mexico State University
- New Mexico State University – Alamogordo
- Dona Ana Community College
- City of Las Cruces
- Dona Ana County
- Catron County
- Socorro County



- Lincoln County
- Chaves County
- Roosevelt County
- Lea County
- Eddy County
- Otero County
- Sierra County
- Grant County
- Luna County
- Hidalgo County
- NM Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Program Managers covering Southern NM
- Social Security Administration Managers overseeing Southern NM offices.
- El Paso Community College
- State of Texas – Health and Human Services – Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services
- Provided Fact Sheets to the following agencies and businesses:
  - o NM Legal Aid
  - o Catholic Charities of Southern NM
  - o NM Immigration Law Center
  - o H and R Block
  - o NM Victims' Rights Project
  - o NM Early Childhood Education and Care Department
  - o 5 law office in Las Cruces
  - o BCA pediatrics – Roswell
  - o Heart of NM
  - o Links of Life
- Mx. Dahlgren was also appointed to City of Las Cruces – ADA Advisory Committee

### **Booths and Presentations**

Mx. Dahlgren did not do booths or presentations this quarter but looks forward to future endeavors with booths and presentations.



# Community Engagement

*Lisa Dignan, M.Ed., CI and CT, Director of Community Engagement*

## **Director of Community Engagement Highlights**

Ms. Dignan was involved in a broad range of tasks and projects in the third quarter of FY24.

- I continue to work closely with the interim Board Administrator for the Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board (SLIPB), Pauline Varela. I am grateful for our excellent working relationship that allows us to regularly collaborate to resolve issues for interpreters. They have posted the administrator position and hope to have it filled by the fourth quarter.
- The new NM-PLUS online system for licensure applications and renewals has been a game changer. We have worked with SLIPB staff regarding what documentation from the system needs to be provided to the Application Review Committee and have created a smooth system. The Fact Sheets regarding applying for and renewing licenses have been further revised to reflect the details of the NM-PLUS system. Reinstatements are not handled in the online system and are still paper form based.
- We resolved a large number of issues of missing or incorrect information in the License Verification database from the system conversion. As additional issues are identified they are quickly resolved when communicated to the SLIPB staff.
- The SLIPB meeting scheduled for February was cancelled and rescheduled for April.
- In the third quarter I continued to respond to a broad range of questions about licensure from interpreters, hiring entities, and the SLIPB staff. Most frequently asked questions are about qualifications for different license types and the application process, so I continue to update our Fact Sheets on these topics. They prove to be very helpful. My goal is to answer these questions within a couple of hours of receiving them and at least during the same business day since most are time sensitive.
- The new Statewide Price Agreement (SPA) for signed language interpreting services was released in January. Several new interpreter referral agencies were added, and prices increased significantly. Some companies based in or with a New Mexico presence were added, as well as some that are nationwide companies with no history in New Mexico. In 2019 the average hourly cost for interpreting services on the SPA was \$65/hour. In 2020 that increased to \$67/hour. On the current SPA the

average hourly rate is \$87 for on-site work and upwards of \$150/hour for Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) if the request is submitted less than 48 business hours in advance. All of these rates have a two-hour minimum.

- In order to remain competitive, we have increased the hourly rates we pay to our certified and pre-certified direct contract interpreters. Even paying the increased rates, the cost savings we realize by using direct contract interpreters instead of agencies are dramatic – approximately one third to one half the cost in most cases.
- We are working to prepare for interpreting and CART services for the June NMCDHH Board Meeting. Since the meeting will be hybrid instead of remote, we require six interpreters instead of three to assure full access in the conference room and on the YouTube livestream. If we can cover the meeting with all direct contractors, we can keep the cost to approximately \$1,300 for interpreters and CART, but that depends on the availability of our limited number of direct contract interpreters. If we need to utilize services through an agency, the cost will be closer to \$2,700 for interpreters and CART.
- The Community Outreach Program for the Deaf’s interpreting business was acquired by Lango Southwest, LLC. We have been working out a number of issues with the transition.
- The increases in interpreting costs have added to the challenge of creating the Fiscal Year 2025 budget plan for my department since the rates have increased so much since the submission of the original budget request.
- With the employment of Mx. Jennifer Dahlgren in our Las Cruces office, we have added agreements with direct contract interpreters in southern New Mexico. Mx. Dahlgren has also assisted with adding additional resources to several Fact Sheets with resources serving that region of the state and we are grateful for their assistance and collaboration.
- We are quickly approaching the end of our 10-year lease for the Albuquerque office. In preparation for lease renegotiation, several members of our staff have been meeting with the building management company, Lotus Office Management, to discuss improvements that are needed in the suite.
- I continue to serve on the New Mexico Council for Purchasing from Persons with Disabilities and attend their meetings monthly via Zoom.
- Webinars provided by The Solutions Group, the State Personnel Office, and others have been beneficial to my work.
- I provided guidance to several entities on issues related to communication access including:

- New Mexico State Independent Living Council
- Coffee and Canvas
- Santa Fe Schools
- Thentia Staffing
- The Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board Administrator and Staff
- Law Offices
- Interpreter referral agencies and staffing agencies
- Several other individuals and private businesses

### **Community Engagement Activities**

- Our social media contacts grow each quarter. Currently we have 2465 connections across Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, which is an increase of 33 over the last quarter, and we have 108 subscribers to our YouTube channel. We have 335 subscribers to the bi-weekly email newsletter, an increase of 9 from last quarter. Information shared includes meetings and events, open captioned movies in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Las Cruces, webinars, job postings, and other information of interest to our constituents.
- Sharing booth events in advance continues. The events are listed on the NMCDHH website calendar ([www.cdhh.nm.gov/events](http://www.cdhh.nm.gov/events)) and shared on social media and in the bi-weekly email newsletter. We appreciate all staff who go to booths for their assistance compiling the details for upcoming booths and providing photos to share on social media and in agency reports.
- We continue to respond to questions submitted via the “Ask the Expert” form on the website or directly to the [NMCDHH.Info@cdhh.nm.gov](mailto:NMCDHH.Info@cdhh.nm.gov) email address which is monitored by Mr. Brennan and Ms. Dignan. Contacts in the third quarter included questions about hearing aids, interpreter licensure, affordable internet services, behavioral health resources, assistive technology, and presentation requests from the community.
- Mr. Brennan assists many community members over the phone and via mail. During the third quarter he addressed 321 communication barriers via phone or email. The most common request was for advocacy assistance. The remaining questions in order of frequency were requests for information about the TEDP program, how to find an interpreter, financial assistance for hearing aids, and who pays for interpreting services. This will be the last full quarter that Mr. Brennan will be answering the front desk phone for the Commission, as we anticipate a new Administrative Operations Specialist starting at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, who will take over many of the Front Desk duties that Mr. Brennan is currently

performing. This will allow him to fully transition into his role as the Community Engagement Specialist.

- More NMCDHH Fact Sheets were updated and uploaded to the website. This is an ongoing project with collaboration between several staff members.
- Ms. Dignan shared information with the interpreting community via her email distribution list, which continues to grow. Entities around New Mexico regularly request that information be shared. Messages regarding professional development opportunities, job postings, certification testing changes, licensure board and professional organization meetings, and other information relevant to interpreters were shared with an average of one email per week to well over 200 subscribers.
- Except for the website and our email accounts, all the platforms on which we engage the community are used at no cost to the agency.

### **Community Engagement Specialist Highlights**

- Mr. Brennan continues to transition into his new role as the Community Engagement Specialist while still performing some duties related to his previous Administrative Operations Specialist position. Mr. Brennan now handles most of the day-to-day functions of our social media, website, and biweekly newsletter. Ms. Dignan and Mr. Brennan work closely together to assure information shared with the community is accurate and timely. As mentioned previously, a new Administrative Operations Specialist will be starting with the commission at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.
- Mr. Brennan continues to assist the Administrative Services Department (ASD) as needed due to his knowledge base, having worked in the department for three years.
- Mr. Brennan has been working with ASD staff and the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) on several projects, preparing equipment for new staff starting in the third quarter, and a new office Xerox machine. When Mx. Dahlgren started working for the Commission in Las Cruces, Mr. Brennan traveled to the Las Cruces office to ensure Mx. Dahlgren was properly set up and able to use their equipment. This IT work, and continued demands from DoIT related to cybersecurity, continue to require a large, and unexpected amount of Mr. Brennan's time.
- Mr. Gomme and Mr. Brennan continue to work on establishing a viable method for our June hybrid board meeting. The commitment to access for all during this meeting has required Mr. Gomme and Mr. Brennan to dedicate many hours to researching, learning about, and testing the necessary dedicated equipment which has included audio, visual, and streaming software/hardware. This work also had to

incorporate budget and personnel considerations, which has meant Mr. Brennan will have increased responsibilities during hybrid board meetings becoming a “hybrid” cameraman, audio technician, and streaming coordinator. This will only be possible due to the addition of our new Administrative Operations Specialist, who will be able to assist Mr. Brennan during these meetings. This work has overall been a net positive for the agency, as what has been learned and incorporated into our technological abilities will also be used to enhance our work in other areas such as Outreach and Advocacy.

- Mr. Brennan and Mr. Gomme are monitoring the rapidly increasing presence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in the world, and how it impacts the day-to-day operations of the Commission, and the constituents it serves. This trend closely ties into ever-heightening cybersecurity concerns that governments have on both the state and national level.
- Mr. Brennan met virtually with an AI technology company that is currently developing an AI tool to create captioned media content. Mr. Brennan was able to share his own experiences as a Hard of Hearing person who has been a consumer of captioned media for most of his life. Additionally, he was able to discuss the difficulties in captioning various forms of media, and how there is still a large need for human involvement in both the captioning and interpreting fields.
- Mr. Brennan and Ms. Dignan attended a webinar on Navigating Legal and Technological Developments related to the interpreting field.
- Mr. Brennan attended several webinars hosted by HLAA related to technology in the workplace, and Over the Counter (OTC) hearing aids.
- Mr. Brennan continues to serve on the SLIPB Licensure Board and is able to answer questions related to Licensure when Ms. Dignan is unavailable.
- Mr. Brennan worked with the State Personnel Office (SPO) to ensure that ASL interpretation was provided for several trainings this 3rd quarter, as further detailed in the HR section of this report.
- As is further detailed in Outreach and Telecommunications section of the report, Mr. Brennan hosted a booth at CNM’s Conference on Teaching and Learning with Mr. Sinderholm. Prior to this conference, Ms. Dignan and Mr. Brennan worked together to create a QR code to use at future booth events that directs visitors to the Commission website when the QR code is scanned. We will be using this QR code at future community events as another approach to broadening our ability to reach the community, while also saving on natural resources.

- Mr. Brennan closely monitors the 4 theaters showing Open Captioned Movies around the state (located in Las Cruces, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe). When Mr. Brennan notices that no movies have been posted, he contacts the theaters to ensure that Open Captioned Movies will continue to be offered around the state.

### **Communication Development Specialist Highlights**

Ms. Eubank continued to work within our dynamic interpreting field to provide support and information about interpreting, as well as providing interpreting services to the agency, during the third quarter of FY 24. Her work includes the following:

- Ms. Eubank participated in the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf's (RID) Affiliate Chapter Leadership Summit this quarter. This was a two-day virtual conference that discussed how to enhance interpreters' leadership efficacy within their communities. It was a fantastic networking opportunity and included excellent brainstorming and idea sharing from interpreters nationwide.
- In March, the RID Board of Directors came to Albuquerque for a series of board and membership meetings. Ms. Eubank helped them get connected to the New Mexico Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (NMRID) and to plan an interpreter and community social. This was an excellent opportunity for the RID Board to meet with our constituents and learn more about the interpreting dynamics in New Mexico. Interpreters and community members from across the state attended.
- Ms. Eubank continues to work with pre-certified interpreters who are interested in taking the CASLI certification exams. The Hearing Interpreter Performance Exam (HIPE) is nearly finished with its beta testing period, meaning that interpreters can expect a faster turnaround on their scores. This has led to an increase in interest and questions regarding the exams that Ms. Eubank has been happy to field.
- Ms. Eubank had the opportunity to meet with the UNM Signed Language Interpreting Program's senior class to discuss the NMCDHH Apprentice Interpreter Program. Students expressed interest in the program, and we are hopeful for a good number of applicants this year.
- NMCDHH provided a total of 112.5 hours of interpreting services in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. During Legislative Session, Ms. Eubank was asked to keep availability to interpret at the Roundhouse as necessary. This contributed to an additional 17 interpreting hours held in reserve should services be necessary.
- NMCDHH continues to work around the severe shortage of interpreters in New Mexico. Of all of the interpreting hours provided in the third quarter, only 38 were covered with independent contractors, the rest by Ms. Eubank alone.



- Referral agencies were used once this quarter.
- There were two unfilled interpreting requests this quarter.

### **The Apprentice Interpreter Program:**

As New Mexico continues to experience a severe interpreter shortage, NMCDHH has felt a significant impact in our Apprentice Interpreter Program during the third quarter. Due to the amount of need in the local community, both apprentices were working hours that left them little availability for working with NMCDHH this quarter. There was a significant drop in the number of hours of apprentice engagement this quarter. That does not mean that the apprentices were not needed, nor slacking on their work, but rather that we needed to pivot priorities in order to meet the communication access needs of our community. Program highlights for this quarter are as follows:

- Both apprentices continue to work with Ms. Eubank on professional skill development. Because of tight schedules this quarter, most interactions were conducted via email rather than the typical mentor meetings.
- Vancro offered a professional development opportunity for our apprentices to observe their interpreters working in settings outside of those typical to our apprentices' usual experiences, which was an excellent learning opportunity.
- Apprentices engaged in 12.5 hours of observation, interpreting, and professional development work in the second quarter.

### **Human Resources**

The third quarter kept Ms. Dignan busy with still more HR activities:

- Coordinating the timely submission of financial disclosures to the office of the Secretary of State.
- Completing the hiring and onboarding process for Mx. Jennifer Dahlgren as the new Community Advocacy Specialist in our Las Cruces office.
- Coordinating the purchase of photo ID badges for all new staff members.
- Re-posting the Administrative Operations Specialist position, then working with Ms. Romero on coordinating interviews, selection, and preparation for hiring the selected candidate who will be onboarded in April.
- Processing in-band pay increases for four staff members who had fallen below midpoint in their respective pay bands.
- Continued to work with the management team on employee and manager evaluations. More evaluations were successfully opened this quarter.

- Worked with Director Gomme on further updates to the agency’s internal COVID-19 policy and procedure.
- Communicated with staff about Employee Handbook updates, policy changes, and the respective schedules of individuals on approved Alternative Work Schedules.
- Partnered with the State Personnel Office (SPO) Learning and Development Department for them to provide interpreting services to staff from all departments participating in several different professional development courses provided via Zoom. By coordinating, we can maximize the number of NMCDHH staff participating in each session, making the provision of interpreters more cost effective for SPO.
  - Seven NMCDHH staff members participate in the Effective Workplace Communication class.
  - The Building Cultural Equity with Native Nations course was attended by nine staff members.
  - The Customer Service Excellence training program involves six self-paced online courses followed by an instructor-led Capstone course. Eight staff members completed the online courses and will attend the Capstone session in the fourth quarter.
  - Three members of the management team attended the updated training on Conducting Performance Evaluations. This included a self-paced online course followed by an instructor-led course on Zoom.
  - Additionally, four staff members attended the Request for Proposals Training offered by the State Purchasing Division (SPD).
  - Our ongoing relationship with both SPO and SPD enables us to work collaboratively with them to ensure our staff receive appropriate accommodations for communication access. We are also invited to provide feedback regarding our experiences so that they can improve their accessibility.
- The agency Organizational Chart was updated to reflect current positions and employees.
- The weekly “Employee Handbook Minute” emails to agency staff continue to provide reminders about HR Policies and Procedures to share updates. These are helpful for new staff members and an effective reminder for everyone.
- I continue to attend State Personnel Board Meetings and webinars offered by SPO, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), Department of Finance Administration (DFA) Payroll Bureau, and the Employee Benefit Bureau (EBB).

**NMCDHH Library**

- Library patrons may not enter the library to browse the collection, but individuals who contact us requesting to borrow materials may pick them up by appointment.
- The online library can be accessed at <https://NMCDHH.librarika.com>, where people can view all of our library materials, reserve items, and review their loan history.
- Currently 115 people have registered for access to the database.

<b>Library Usage - FY 2024</b>					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Patrons	1	2	0		3
Items Loaned	2	3	0		5

# Administration & Finance

*Deborah Romero, Director of Administrative Services*

FY24 – Third Quarter Board Report						
Category		2024 Budget	Expenditures	Encumbered	Remaining Budget	% Expended
200	PERSONNEL SERVICES	1,613,400.00	844,860.00		768,540.00	52.37%
300	CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	1,229,300.00	553,489.00	516,185.00	159,626.00	45.02%
400	OTHER	282,100.00	183,226.00	39,685.00	59,189.00	64.95%
500	OTHER FINANCING USES	116,500.00		116,500.00	0.00	0.00%
Total		3,241,300.00	1,581,575.00	672,370.00	987,355.00	48.79%

FY24 Collected Revenue March 31, 2024		
Month	General Fund Allotment	TRS Revenue
Subtotal	\$1,219,653.00	\$770,770.94

## Data & Statistics

*As required by Legislative Performance Measures*

### **Fiscal Year 2024**

<b>Legislative Performance Measure</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Year to Date</b>	<b>YTD % of Goal Met</b>
Number of workshops & training sessions conducted	135	74	55%
Number of outreach events coordinated	122	84	69%
Average number of relay minutes per month	10,000	4545.57	48%
Number of accessible technology distributions	1,070	1,248	117%
Number of communication barriers addressed	20,000	15,417	77%
Number of interpreters in CDHH sponsored professional development	200	87	44%

### **Fiscal Year 2023**

<b>Legislative Performance Measure</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Year to Date</b>	<b>YTD % of Goal Met</b>
Number of workshops & training sessions conducted	135	135	100%
Number of outreach events coordinated	122	161	132%
Average number of relay minutes per month	10,000	4,849.42	48%
Number of accessible technology distributions	1,070	1,342	125%
Number of communication barriers addressed	20,000	22,022	110%
Number of interpreters in CDHH sponsored professional development	200	212	106%

## Community Members by Region



	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	Year to Date
Region 1	31	11	5		47
Region 2	19	9	13		41
Region 3	89	32	80		201
Region 4	13	3	9		25
Region 5	50	24	52		126
<b>Total Members by Quarter</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>159</b>		<b>440</b>

## Individuals by Self-Identified Disability

	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	Year to Date
Deaf	85	20	51		156
Hard of Hearing	56	31	41		128
DeafBlind	7	3	7		17
Speech Disabled	1	0	9		10
Hearing	53	25	51		129
<b>Total Individuals by Quarter</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>159</b>		<b>440</b>





**To:** Nathan Gomme, Executive Director  
New Mexico Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**From:** Casey Stone-Romero, Director  
New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

**Date:** May 10, 2024

**Re:** MOU Goals and Performance Report for Third Quarter SFY2024 (**January 1-March 31, 2024**)

**NMDVR Liaisons**

**New Mexico Association for the Deaf** – Currently vacant.

**NM Chapter – Hearing Loss Association of America** – Christine Fuller  
Supported Employment and Deaf & Hard of Hearing Coordinator.

**NMDVR Service Provision:**

**Order of Selection (OOS):** NMDVR is currently under active OOS. All categories are open, and all who are eligible are being served.

**Information and Referral (I&R):** I&R is a list of entities within the community where the applicant may be able to receive assistance.

**Counseling and Guidance** – Counseling and Guidance is available to all DVR-eligible individuals receiving services under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).



**Other Hearing Impediments-** This category within the DVR AWARE database includes individuals who have hearing impediments such as Tinnitus and Meniere's disease.

**Performance Measures** – All statistics are for this quarter only.

**Relevant Hire:** Ms. Lia McEnaney is the new VR Counselor serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing caseload in the Albuquerque Research Office.

**Sign Language Interpreting:** Twelve individuals have received sign language Interpreter services. A total of \$8,492.82 has been authorized and expended for this service.

**Hearing Aids or other hearing devices:** Sixty individuals received hearing aids or other devices. A total of \$312,474.95 has been authorized and expended for this service.

**Closed Successfully Rehabilitated (employed):**

No individual who is Deaf-Blind has been closed and successfully rehabilitated.

Five individuals who are Deaf have been successfully rehabilitated.

Twenty-four individuals who are Hard of Hearing have successfully rehabilitated.

Six individuals who have other hearing impediments have been closed and successfully rehabilitated.

**Employment Information**

The average number of hours worked for individuals who are Deaf/Deaf-Blind/Hard of Hearing or have Other Hearing Impediments is 31.83 hours per week. The average wage is \$18.45 per hour.

**Caseload Activity**

Of the two hundred-sixteen individuals who are Deaf/Deaf-Blind and on a DVR caseload, forty-two have been opened or opened and closed.

Of the four hundred sixty-seven individuals who are Hard of Hearing or have Other Hearing Impediments on a DVR caseload, one-hundred thirteen have been opened or opened and closed.

**Ineligible for VR Services**

No individuals who are Deaf/Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing, or Other Hearing Impediments have been determined as ineligible for VR services.

**Transition Services**

One hundred sixty-two individuals who are Deaf/Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing, or Other Hearing Impediments have been identified as receiving Pre-ETS or Transition services.

**How the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is providing services:**

- All DVR offices are open, and staff work full-time in the office.
- Individuals with disabilities can complete an online referral form electronically via our web page at [www.dvr.state.nm.us](http://www.dvr.state.nm.us) or in person.
- All who complete an online or in-person referral will be contacted by staff to schedule an initial interview.

Respectfully Submitted:

*Casey Stone-Romero*

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Casey Stone-Romero-Director  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



## Collaborating Agency Quarterly Report

Agency Name: Signed Language Interpreting Practice Board, RLD  
Report By: Pauline Varela, Interim Board Administrator  
Expiration Date: June 30, 2024

Quarter Reported:

1<sup>st</sup> (July-Sept) \_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> (Oct-Dec) \_\_\_ 3<sup>rd</sup> (Jan-Mar) X 4<sup>th</sup> (Apr-June) \_\_\_

### Memorandum of Understanding:

New Mexico Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing will:

- A. Transfer \$25,000 as appropriated in the General Appropriation Act of 2023 to the Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board for purposes of carrying out the provisions of the Signed Language Interpreting Practices Act at NMSA 1978, Section 61-34-1 to 17.

Regulation and Licensing Department will:

- A. Deposit the transfer of \$25,000 with Signed Language Interpreting Practices Fund and use the funds only for purposes of carrying out the provisions of the Signed Language Interpreting Practices Act per NMSA 1978, Section 61-34-13.
- B. Provide quarterly reports to the NMCDHH Director of Community Engagement including:
  - a. Number of licenses issued
  - b. Dates of Signed Language Interpreting Practices Act Board Meetings
  - c. Number of complaints
  - d. Number of license denials, suspensions, and revocations

C. Provide budget reports for the Signed Language Interpreting Practices Fund upon request with appropriate advance notice.

**Performance Report**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Licenses Issued	10	7 Community, 1 Educational, 2 Provisional
Complaints	0	
License denials, suspensions, and revocations	0	

**Dates of Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board Meetings:**

Last meeting: July 17, 2023

Next meeting: April 4, 2024

Agendas and draft minutes are available at the Board website:

[www.rld.nm.gov/boards-and-commissions/individual-boards-and-commissions/signed-language-interpreting-practices/slip-board-information/slip-board-meetings](http://www.rld.nm.gov/boards-and-commissions/individual-boards-and-commissions/signed-language-interpreting-practices/slip-board-information/slip-board-meetings)